

Do You Know How To Listen?

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[0:00] We're going to be reading beginning at verse 129, 119, and beginning at verse 129, 119, and beginning at verse 129.

! Your statutes are wonderful, therefore I obey them. The unfolding of your words gives light. It gives understanding to the simple.

I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands. Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name. Direct my footsteps according to your word.

Let no sin rule over me. Redeem me from the oppression of men, that I may obey your precepts.

Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your decrees.

Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed. Righteous are you, O Lord, and your laws are right.

[1:16] The statutes you have laid down are righteous. They are fully trustworthy. My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words. Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts. Your righteousness is everlasting, and your law is true.

Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight. Your statutes are forever right. Give me understanding that I may live.

Do you know how to listen? Last week we looked at a command for fathers, and this week we're going to turn our attention especially for our younger believers.

And by younger believers, I don't mean young of age, but young in the faith. And I trust that it will be of benefit to all of us, no matter how long you've been in the faith.

[2:26] As I prepared this message, it blessed me. And so I pray that it would do the same for you. Do you know how to listen? Back in 2010, David Petraeus, the general in charge of the war in Afghanistan, was giving a briefing in front of the Senate.

And about an hour into the hearing, Senator John McCain was asking a question when General Petraeus slumped over on the table in front of him and promptly passed out.

He had fainted. And people rushed to help him up, and he went back into the foyer or whatever they call that at the Senate. He had a couple of glasses of water.

He ate a banana, and he came back for some more questioning, ready to continue. Why do people faint? Well, they don't have enough food or water in their systems.

They have dehydration, low blood sugar. That's why you have to encourage brides on their wedding day to eat and drink something.

[3:35] Everyone's excited, but if you don't get something into your system, you're going to be in trouble when you're in front of 200 people in a hot church. Why do people faint spiritually?

Why do they faint spiritually? Jesus is in the desert, and he's hungry, and he's thirsty. And the devil comes to him, and he says, if you are truly the Son of God, why don't you turn these stones into bread?

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Why do people faint spiritually?

Well, it's not because they don't have enough food or water physically. It's because they don't have enough spiritual food in their systems. They're running along.

They're keeping up. And then all of a sudden, they're down. They've passed out. They don't care.

They've fallen into some deep sin. Well, what happened, we could ask?

[4:45] And I'm sure there's lots of things that you could say, but it's almost certain that the Word of God was not dwelling in them richly. They had spiritual anorexia.

They were spiritually starving themselves. So are you starving yourself? Well, if you're here this evening, I trust that you're not. But are you starving yourself?

You need the Word of God living in you. You need it running around inside of you all of the time.

Why? Well, let's turn in our Bibles to 2 Timothy 3, verse 14.

2 Timothy 3, verse 14. And let's see what the Apostle Paul says. Last week, we just looked at one little phrase, fathers, do not exasperate your children.

But today, we are going to be skipping and turning all over the Scriptures. So I hope you'll keep up with us on our first passage of 2 Timothy 3, verse 14.

[5 : 51] And Paul is writing to Timothy, his son, his younger brother in the faith. And he says, Paul is writing to Timothy.

Timothy is not a baby in the faith. He's not a baby in the faith. But Paul says, continue in the Scriptures. Continue in the Scriptures because they can make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Do Christians still need to be made wise for salvation? Paul evidently thought so. You need the Scriptures running around all the time in you because it makes you wise unto salvation.

But then Paul goes on. Look at the next verse. Verse 16. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching.

That's doctrine. That's the intellectual truth of Christianity. Christianity isn't just, Oh, I feel this and I hope this to be so. No, we say there are things that are true.

[7 : 11] There are things that are false. The Bible is able to teach young Christians what is true and what is false. What is to be believed and what is not to be believed.

It says it's useful for rebuking. That's saying no to sin. That's stopping us in our sin. Correcting. So you have stopping, rebuking, and then correcting.

It's putting someone back on to the path of righteousness. It's straightening out their path. And then training in righteousness. That's building a righteous life.

Brick by brick, living a righteous life. And so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. The Word of God keeps you from fainting.

It rebukes you. It corrects you. It teaches you the way to think, what to think. It teaches you what to do. It thoroughly equips you to live the Christian life.

[8 : 14] To do everything that God calls you to. Now, you might be thinking that what I'll say next is, and that's why you need to read your Bibles every day.

And I hope you do. Amen. Jim's amen. But that's not what I'm going to say. I hope you all take it that direction. I hope you think, yes, I do need to be doing that.

But did you know I can't command you to do that? And I can't command you to read your Bible every day because the Bible doesn't command you to read the Bible every day.

Because God doesn't command what is physically impossible for some Christians to do. And what I mean is this.

And don't take me wrong. And don't take this in a way that discourages you from reading your Bibles every day. That's not the point. We're going somewhere with this.

[9 : 15] And so I want you to think and realize that for the first 1,500 years of Christian history, since Christ came, very, very few individuals had Bibles.

And up to the invention of the printing press, Bibles were astronomically expensive. So here we are, a church back in 900 A.D., and we want to buy a Bible.

We as a congregation want to buy a Bible. And so we all pitch in. We take the contribution. We pass the plate. And we're able to just buy one. Because the Bibles had to be handwritten out.

You didn't have a copy and I didn't. We would have to share a copy. And that's why in the medieval church, you would see something very strange if you were to come in. You would see something that you might, you would find very peculiar.

You would see a Bible on the lectern, on the pulpit, on a table, and the Bible would be chained.

There would be a chain, like a dog chain, tying the Bible to the lectern.

[10 : 27] And the reason is, is not because they don't want people to read it. They didn't want people to study it. It was because they didn't want people to steal it. People couldn't afford Bibles and most people couldn't read.

The idea, and I think we assume it so easily, is that every Christian has a Bible and every Christian can read it. It's a very modern idea.

But hear me, and this is the important point, that through that whole time, God's people were not helpless. It didn't mean they couldn't meditate on God's Word like what we saw in Psalm 119. It didn't mean that the Word of Christ didn't dwell in them richly. That was God's promise after all. What we just saw in Isaiah 59 this morning.

But if they didn't have Bibles, or if they had to share one Bible, well, how'd they do that? Well, we need a little history lesson, and here's an example of this is what I'm saying.

[11:34] Remember in Acts 11, the first Gentile church happened in Antioch. And it got started, and then Barnabas came along.

Remember the friend of Paul, he came along, and he started preaching at this church in Antioch, and it was going so well, and there was so much to do, that he said, Paul, you come here, and you preach with me.

And so for a year, Paul and Barnabas preached God's Word in Antioch. And the church in Antioch grew, and it matured, and they went from two pastors to five pastors.

Men were being trained for the ministry. And then in a few more years, that church in Antioch became the first missionary, the first sending church. They sent out Paul and Barnabas.

Well, how did they get from point A to being nothing, a Gentile church with no knowledge of God, to point B, having five good men ready to send out missionaries?

[12:37] Preaching. They learned the Word of God through preaching. Early church members came together to hear the Bible preached.

They didn't have their own copies, but the Word of Christ dwelt in them richly, and it happened through the preaching of God's Word.

Now, young people, young people, high schoolers especially, but junior high people, high schoolers especially, that's why you have to be a part of a church where the Bible is preached.

Sometimes Christians get this funny idea that they advance far enough, and that if they have their Bibles, that's enough. That's not God's way.

It wasn't then, and it's not now. This is why you need to be a part of a church where the Bible is preached and preached well. So when you go off to school and college, that needs to be a part of your decision-making process.

[13:43] Do you know the church is available to you? Parents, I hope that you will make your children think about these questions and answer them. Is there a church where the Bible is preached?

Young people, you wouldn't go to a school that didn't have your major, would you? If you wanted to go into finance, you wouldn't go down to the Knox Beauty College, would you?

No, you wouldn't. You'd go somewhere else. You wouldn't go to a school that didn't fit your needs. Should you go to a city where your spiritual needs cannot be met, where there isn't a church that preaches the Bible?

So the word preached, the word preached is how God's people grew and matured. It's what kept them from fainting. It was what made them wise unto salvation.

It's what corrected them and rebuked them and trained them in righteousness. And it thoroughly equipped them for every good work. That was God's way then. And it's God's way still today.

[14:46] And that's why I started with that question that we began with. Do you know how to listen? Do you know how to listen? Do you know how to listen to preaching?

So let's talk about that. And I have three points this evening. Three simple points about listening to preaching. First, what do you do before the preaching of God's word?

What should you do before the preaching of God's word? Turn with me to 1 Peter 1.23. 1 Peter, near the end of your Bibles, 1.23.

Our Peter is talking about the word of God. And listen to what he says. Now catch what he says next.

And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

[16:15] Like newborn babes, crave pure spiritual milk so that you may grow up in your salvation. So young believers, you want to grow up.

You want to grow up. How do you grow up? By drinking the spiritual milk of God's word as it is preached. But did you notice that Peter said, There's something that you should do before receiving the word of God as it's preached to you.

What did chapter 2 verse 1 say? Look at it again. Rid yourselves of all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Get rid of sin.

Get rid of sin. So let me ask you, are you bringing garbage to the table? Are you bringing spiritual garbage to the table?

Personal garbage to the table of God's word? You wouldn't do that in your house, would you? You wouldn't get the garbage out of the garbage can and put it on your back and then sit next to the chair beside you when you're eating at your house.

[17:25] But Peter says there's people that do that when they come into God's house to hear God's word and to feed on the word of God. Peter's saying don't do it when you come into God's word.

So none of that. He didn't say that right. He didn't do this. She did that. I think they're saying this about me. I can't believe they bought that.

I can't believe what they did. I haven't been invited there. I haven't been invited here. They think they're better than me. Malice. Envy.

Slander. Garbage about your brothers and sisters. Garbage about the preacher. Garbage about yourself. Thinking you have it all together.

And how often are we accusing and finding fault with other people? And we feel free to slander them. And we might not call it that, but slandering them. Finding fault with other people because we think we have the right to.

[18:29] That we've somehow attained a higher level of spirituality. We think we're good enough to look down on others. Hiding our own sin. Hiding it from ourselves.

Telling lies to ourselves. Hiding the truth about our own needs. Our own desperate spiritual needs. Hypocrisy. Deceit.

Peter says get rid of it. Dump the garbage before you come to the table. Now turn a couple pages back to James chapter 1 verse 21.

Right before 1 Peter is James. So a couple pages back should be James 1.21. James. James says the same thing that Peter says.

Get rid of sin. Get rid of sin. Sin puts dirt in our eyes.

[19:43] It puts wax in our ears. So we can't see and we can't hear. And so we can't be surprised that if we bring sin. If unconfessed, cherished sin.

That we're not getting rid of. We can't be surprised if we come in here and we don't see any glory in what is preached. Because sin has a way of blinding you and making you deaf to what God is saying.

And so men, women, you might think that movie that you watched last night will have no effect on what goes on on Sunday morning. What is preached on Sunday morning.

But you're wrong. The pollution of sin clogs up your hearts. And the pollution of sin may keep the Holy Spirit from coming near to you in the preaching of God's word.

Didn't we see that in Isaiah 59? What separates people from God? It's sin. God's word comes powerfully to you. When the Spirit takes it and puts it in your hearts.

[20:53] When He puts it there. In your inmost places. And if we offend the Spirit. And grieve Him. Then we are effectively throwing sand in our own eyes.

And in our own ears. So men. Are you looking at porn? Not getting rid of it. Not doing what needs to be done to be done with it.

Not confessing it. Not repenting of it. Not killing it. Then you can't be surprised that if the word of God has lost its flavor. And the grace of God isn't so amazing anymore.

And the preaching of God has lost its power. Those two things are not unrelated. They go together. So brothers. Get rid of it.

And then come and hear the preaching of God's word. Now. That's what you do before the preaching of God's word. Get rid of sin. What about during the preaching of God's word?

[21:54] During the preaching of God's word. The apostle John tells us. Turn to 1 John 4.1. 1 John 4.1. So. That's a few pages to the right.

Further. Toward the end. 1 John 4.1. So now we're talking.

You're sitting here. This is for. This has direct application to exactly this moment. That you find yourself in right now. 1 John 4.1. Dear friends.

Do not believe every spirit. But test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Because many false teachers have gone out into the world. What do you do during the preaching of God's word? You test the spirits. You test what is being said. No matter who is preaching it. You test it. So you get hold of all of the Bible knowledge that you have.

[22 : 55] Be it little. Or be it much. You get your arms around as much of God's word as you have already up here. And bring it to bear. Or bring it down.

On to what is being preached. Does this line up with what the word of God says? Or very simply. As you're looking at the text.

Is the preacher preaching what the text says? Test the spirits. Does it line up with what the Bible says? Now you have to be careful here.

And you're testing. Because just because you haven't heard something before. Doesn't mean it's false. There are new things. New things to learn.

New things to bring into that knowledge that you have of the Bible. I imagine the first time some of you heard of the doctrines of grace. You just said that's an election and predestination.

[23 : 54] And you probably said that just can't be. That doesn't seem right. What about this verse? And what about that verse? And what about what this guy says? And all that. What I'm saying is just because it's different.

Just because you haven't heard it before. That doesn't necessarily mean it's false. Doesn't necessarily mean it's true. The question is what does the Bible teach?

That might mean you might have to put on hold whether you believe it or not. Until you have time later on to test it. But we should do more than test it.

See that has a way of making it seem like I am manipulating it. And I can just keep it out here at arm's length. And so I'm a little scientist. And I just need to think about whether it's true or false. But we are only scientists and we can't keep God's word out here. Because again and again you read in the Bible that we are to receive it. To accept it. And so we have to humbly accept it.

[24 : 53] Turn with me to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13.

Paul is so thankful for the folks in Thessalonians. For the Thessalonians. And I would echo his thanksgiving once you hear what he's so thankful about.

1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13. And we also thank God continually because when you receive the word of God.

Which you heard from us. You accepted it not as the word of men but as it actually is the word of God. We can't keep as the word is being preached.

You can't keep it out here. You have to bring it in. And accept it. And receive it. And so men what would you think of. So you're watching a football game.

[26 : 01] And the wide receiver catches the ball. And he catches it out here. But he never brings it in. Right? So he's running with it way out here. He's going to lose it in a moment.

And how many sermons do we lose? Because we've always kept it out here. We've never brought it in and put it into our hearts. It's more than studying the food.

It's eating the food. It's more than studying the MRI machine and going all around it. It's actually crawling in and letting it examine you. So there's accepting it and receiving it.

And that means you have to listen to what it says about you. You have to let it have its way with you. Does it say something about your sin?

Repent. Confess. Does it say something good about what Jesus has done for you? Rejoice and believe. Is there a promise?

[27 : 04] Act faith on that promise. Believe it. Receive all of what it says. Some Christians, I think, are wired to receive some things.

And then they sort of filter out other things. So some Christians, and I want to just speak to a certain variety now, and I understand that others are different.

But some of you receive God's word about sin with no problem. And what I mean is you can take that in, and that hits you, and you can go away convicted and sad as can be.

But can I encourage you to take in what it says about Jesus as well? Because the God who says, I am angry with sin, he has also sent a Savior.

They're one and the same God. And so what he says about one thing, he says about Christ and the gospel. And we want to not just believe one and receive one and cherish one, but we want to take

in both.

[28:07] So if you believe what God says about your sin, shouldn't you believe what he says about Jesus? Jesus, God's own son, humbled himself.

He humbled himself. And he was born, and he was born under the law. That means he was required to keep the law. The lawgiver was required to keep his own law to be righteous.

And Jesus did that, and he obeyed the law perfectly. And then he went to the place of punishment and death for his people, and he died for us in our place.

And now there is a righteousness from God that has nothing to do with what we've done, are doing, have done, will do, but it's everything about what Jesus has done.

It's a righteousness that is from God, that is by faith from first to last. And your works have nothing to do with it. And so, Christian, you are right with God because of what Jesus has done.

[29:07] Are you believing that? And if you are not saved, and if you're not sure about this, you can have peace with God. We sang it, peace with God because of sins forgiven.

There is a way to have your past deleted, your sins obliterated, forgiven, washed, thrown away. And it happens through Jesus Christ.

You can be righteous in God's sight. And you don't have to do a thing except repent. That's turn away from your sin and say, I can't go that way anymore.

I'm not going that way anymore. Turning away from it and believing the promise that is in Christ. So God talks to you about your sin.

And God talks to you about the gospel, brothers and sisters. But grace has the final word. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. So he just doesn't say, you're sick.

[30:07] He says, but I can heal you. So let's hear the, you're sick. And let's also hear the, I can heal you. So you're accepting all that he says. What else should you be doing during the hearing of God's word?

Hebrews 5 has something else. Turn to Hebrews 5, chapter, Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 12 through 14. Hebrews 5, 12.

Now, as I read this, try to see what God wants us to be doing when we're hearing his word preached.

Hebrews 5, 12. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.

You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

[31:13] But solid food is for the mature who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. So what should you be doing while you're hearing the word of God preached?

Use your mind. Use your mind. Now, I saw a news clip a couple weeks ago.

And it was about a man who was in his mid-30s. He was in his mid-30s. He was about 35 or so. And up until he was about 25, he was fine.

He was going along just normal, doing everything that a 25-year-old can do. And then something happened. And he actually started to slowly go backwards mentally and emotionally.

And so now, it was a very strange and disturbing thing. But now he has the mental capacity and the mental desires of a four-year-old.

[32:23] And he likes to play with cars. He's in his mid-30s. He likes to play with cars. He likes to play with toys.

He thinks and he acts like a four-year-old. And his parents have to treat him like a four-year-old, even though he's a grown man. He's a child in an adult's body.

And the author to the Hebrews says, that's what some Christians are. They're children in adults' bodies.

They're Christian babies when they should be Christian adults. Why? Because they won't use their minds. They won't distinguish.

They won't do the hard work of thinking about God's Word. They don't want the meat. They just want the milk. And if something takes some chewing, they spit it out.

[33:27] And so, my young believers, especially, I want to say to you, I plead with you to use your minds. Use your minds.

Don't become like that man who's a four-year-old and a 35-year-old's body. Don't stay a baby. It's okay to be a baby at the beginning.

We expect that. That's what we, that's normal, that's good. But mothers grow worried when their babies don't thrive. When they start falling back further and further on those height and weight charts.

And pastors worry about their people too. when they don't thrive. When they stay the same. They never grow.

So, I plead with you then to use your mind. The difference between a mature Christian and an immature Christian and their progress, again and again, if you look at it, is the mature people put their minds to work.

[34 : 33] and the immature are just fine with the way things are. So, I plead with you, use your mind. Use it during the preaching of God's Word. Now, after hearing.

So, we've talked about before, during, now, after. What should you do? Keep using your head. Keep using your head. Who is the blessed man? Psalm 1 tells us.

Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on that law he meditates day and night. Meditation. Meditation. That's thinking about it.

So, that scripture is running around in his mind all the time. Day and night. And that man, Psalm 1 says, he's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season.

He's planted by the Word of God and as the Word of God has its way in that man's life by the power of the Spirit, that man bears fruit. Continually.

[35 : 34] Fruit. So, do you want to be an effective, fruitful Christian? Then meditate. Keep using your mind after the sermon. How much benefit we lose because we just take it and then we walk out and we don't think about it again.

But it's the man who meditates on the Word of God day and night that he bears fruit. So, keep using your head. Next, use your heart.

Use your heart. So, use your head. Keep using your head. Use your heart. And what I mean here is enshrine, enthrone that Word in your hearts.

Love it. Enthroned God's Word in your heart and in your affections. So, fasten it there. Fasten it there and set your love upon it.

Read Psalm 119. It's a man, it's about a man who is in trouble. It's not just about the Word of God.

[36 : 38] It is about a man who is in trouble. And he's feeling the weight of his sin. He's feeling the weight of persecution. He's going through what people go through when they want to live a righteous life.

It's a hard life and that man is in trouble but that man is hanging in there. He's not fainting. He's still pressing on. And what is sustaining him?

Well, that, it's God's Word. And he loves it. I open my mouth and pant. I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands.

Could you say that about yourself? That man has worked that Word into his heart and he said, those commands, I love them. They're good. Trouble and distress have come upon me but your commands are my delights.

Troubles and distress on one hand, delight on the other. Your statutes are wonderful therefore I obey them. That man obeys God's law because he thinks it's good.

[37 : 44] Not just because he has to, but because it's wonderful and he wants to do something wonderful and so he obeys it. See, he's taken the Word of God and he's put it into his heart and he's set his love upon it.

So use your heart then. Next, use your tongue. One last passage that we're going to turn to.

Deuteronomy chapter 6. And many of you already know what this says.

Deuteronomy, all the way back at the beginning. Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 7. Well, let's back up to verse 6.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. That's using your heart. You're supposed to put them on your heart. Then, impress them on your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up. That's a lot of talking. God's people talk about God's Word.

[38 : 49] God's people talk about the Word that they heard preached. They talk about it with their children. They talk about it with each other. And that's all part of the impressing it upon your own

heart.

That's all the way you use your head. You talk through things. So talk about it. So what are you talking about to your children?

What are you talking about after the sermon? What could you be talking about tonight on your way home? Use your tongue. Then for our very, very last point, and it's the very next verse, verse 8, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your forehead.

Write them on the door frames of your house and on your gates. Jews actually did that. They would take little scraps of Scripture, put them in a box, tie those boxes onto their hands and onto their forehead.

I don't think that was God's point. He's talking symbolically. He's saying, tie them to your hands.

What would it be to have the Word of God connected to your hands?

[40:06] Well, whatever you did with those hands, it would be directed and guided by God's Word. We saw in Isaiah 59 that sinners use their hands to do evil.

God's people are meant to use those same hands as instruments of righteousness. Well, how do you know what righteousness is? Let that Word of God direct your hands.

So, use your tongues and use your hands. put them on your head. Let it govern your thinking. Put it on your house.

Let it govern your family life and everything that happens. In other words, God is saying, let the Word of God rule in your life. In what you say, in what you think, in what you do, in how you lead your families.

let it guide and direct you. In other words, James 1.22, do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves.

[41:10] Do what it says. So, we'll end where we began. Do you know how to listen? Do you know how to listen?

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, you know how many sermons we've wasted because we haven't thought about them anymore.

We haven't put them into practice. We sat and we gained nothing by it. Will you forgive us for wasting and squandering your generosity?

For having such a lack of reverence and awe and fear over you and your Word. Lord, I pray that you would change us.

That your people would fear you. And I pray that you would save sinners and bring them into the fear of God. That they might worship you with joy and delight and reverence and awe where now they do not fear you.

[42:15] They do not love you. Pray, Lord, go on. changing your people and making them more like Christ. Making us more like Jesus who listened, who loved, who did your Word.

Pray that we could be more like him. We thank you that he is our Savior. We thank you that he is still available for sinners. Pray that some would believe even tonight. Bless us as we go on our way for Christ's sake.

And it's in his name. Amen. Take your Trinity hymnals and turn to hymn 574. Hymn 574.

Hymn 574.