

Listening to God

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If you are an average person, and for the sake of this article, let's just suppose that you are, then according to information which I found, you spend about 10 percent of your communication time in writing, 15 percent on reading, 30 percent on speaking, and 45 percent on listening. And according to what was stated, we perform the part of listening the worst of any of the above means of communication.

Communication between each of us is an important part of our lives. So much depends on it; and our lives would be incomplete, even impossible, without it.

However, it is this last means of communication which I would like to take a look at with you in this article. If we believe what is stated above, then just about half of our communication is spent listening, and we do this worse than any other form of communication.

We are all too well acquainted with our own sinful natures to know that it is not easy to be a good listener. We are always facing the temptations of this life which tell us not to listen.

All young people seem to go through a time in their lives when they will listen to no one but themselves. No parent, teacher, minister, or even friend has any effect on them. They simply refuse to listen.

If you stop and consider with me all of the examples of this very sin which are presented in the pages of the Bible, we quickly come to the conclusion that this sin has been with us from the very beginning of time.

Think of the example of Adam and Eve in the Garden. They refused to listen to the direct command of God and instead turned to the lie of the devil and ate of the forbidden fruit.

Or still, who doesn't know of the history of Pharaoh and his refusal to let the people of God go. The evidence before him was plain. God was in complete control and yet Pharaoh refused to acknowledge that fact and submit to God's

Think also of the testimony of Christ Himself which He gave to His disciples when He told them that He must suffer and die. The disciples refused to hear what Christ said. Peter even went so far as to rebuke Christ for what He had said.

It is a constant struggle for all of us to take the time required to be a good listener. It takes work and self-discipline to be a hearing listener. We could say that listening to God is as important to us as breathing. It is the oxygen that keeps us spiritually alive and well.

Perhaps there is no greater importance that we can put on being a good listener than the importance of listening in church. The success or failure of the church as the body of believers depends, to a large part, on our listening to what is spoken by means of the preaching. We consider preaching to be the most important part of our church life. It is special because it is a means of Grace and as such is a mark of the true Church.

Besides the preaching of the Word, there is the listening that we experience between members. Here there are so many different ways that we can improve our relationships. We all fall so far short of what we should do.

How many of us really take advantage of the means given to us in our churches. Do we always come to our society meeting prepared to hear the testimony of God's Word, or of fellow saints?

Are we always sensitive to the spiritual and physical needs of other church members? We must use more than our ears to hear with. All of our senses must be receptive to the needs of others. We must be what has been described as a gut-level listener.

But perhaps of even more importance for us than listening to members of our churches, we must be receptive to the cry for help as it is heard from outside our churches.

As churches we are called to go forth to preach the glad tidings about Jesus Christ. We have a God-given responsibility to tell others of the benefits of the glorious truth preached in our churches and the benefits of the communion of saints among us.

But just because the church is officially called to tell the wonderful truth of God's Salvation, that doesn't mean that we are excused from doing anything. Quite the opposite is true. Others must be able to see in our walk on this earth that being a Christian does make a difference. Our listening to God will fill our lives with a Christian witness that will not quit. We will be more than ready to tell others about what we believe and why. So that if it pleases God, He will use us as instruments to bring His own to Salvation. They will hear God speak in their hearts through what we say. They will see our walk and glorify God for it.

What we are really saying is that our whole life must be a reflection of the joy of Salvation in our lives.

Our ability to listen to God is God-given. We cannot listen to His Word by ourselves. Natural man wants no part of what God has to say; and by his very nature, he is unable to even begin to understand anything of God. The Lord gives true wisdom, and out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Prov. 2:6.

And I am convinced that if we put a real effort in listening to God - first by reading His Word, then by hearing that Word preached from Sunday to Sunday, and then by hearing the Christian witness from member to member - we will be headed in the right direction.

You can be assured that the devil wants nothing more than to turn your hearing ear away from God and follow him. But God gives us strength from day to day, and He guards us in our pilgrimage on this earth. We can be confident that He who has started a good work in us will see it finished. And we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

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