Take Care How You Listen

Zanesville, OH | November 17, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Lk. 8:18

**Intro**:

* One of the greatest gifts we have received from God is the bible. The bible is one of the only books, if not the only one, whose message still in perfect condition despite time, criticism and efforts to destroy it. All this points to the reality that what’s in this book is so important and too important for any one individual to ignore and reject. The Creator has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure we have His untainted, life-giving message (2 Pet. 1:3). What is our responsibility to this message? In Luke 8:18, Jesus encouraged His audiences to ***“take care how you listen”*** as He spoke parables and teachings suited to salvation and spiritual growth.
* God will hold us all accountable for the kind of effort we put forth in paying attention to His word. There is a significant difference in just hearing something and listening to it. Hearing requires very little concentration and effort as the words leave the mouth coming to our ears. Listening on the other hand, requires our undivided attention and much effort as we seek to apply into our lives what is being taught so we can be better for God but also better for each other. What are some things we can do to ensure that we are properly listening to the word of God in order to know what the Creator wants for His creation?

1. **Prepare to listen**
   1. When I was in college, I would observe that many of the college students would stay up very late Saturday night often into the wee hours of Sunday morning. They would get very little sleep and then go to worship services hoping to learn something or to be of some help to someone.
   2. That mindset didn’t work. I know this, because I tried it a couple times. I would often find myself struggling to stay awake during worship and leaving right after the services ended so I could sleep. Not only did I wrong God but I also wronged the brethren.
   3. One cannot focus properly on God’s word if they aren’t preparing to do so. This includes getting the rest we need and foregoing things that are not as important as worshipping God and nourishing our souls with the bread of life.
   4. We put a lot of preparation into things that sometimes are nowhere as important as God’s word. How much more should we be preparing ourselves to concentrate on the message that is guaranteed to change us and make us better if we allow it to?
   5. How can one prepare to listen to God’s word properly? Prayer, proper rest, appropriate planning and scheduling are some things that we can do and we can control that will affect our learning and understanding. Knowing how important the message is, we ought to make sure that we prepare.
2. **Get rid of distractions**
   1. We must ensure that we do our best to rid ourselves of any distractions that may affect the way we listen and pay attention to the word of God. This can be especially difficult when our lives are plagued with so many different things that are burdening, painful and hurtful.
   2. The positive to these things is that it pushes us to come closer to God for His help and His guidance. The more we rid ourselves of these distractions, the more we will learn how we can overcome them and endure through them as we listen carefully to God’s word.
   3. Paul is a great example of someone who had many distractions in his life but because of the importance of His spiritual relationship with God and the brethren he did everything he could to get rid of them.
   4. On one occasion Paul spoke about the burden and pain of his past and the fact that it presented him with obstacles and distractions that prevented him from being the best he could be (Phil. 3:13-14).
   5. On another occasion, Paul spoke of his physical suffering as he desperately pleaded to Jesus for some relief and some comfort. He realized that he would take that distraction and use it to his spiritual benefit (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
3. **Get rid of preconceived notions** 
   1. When we come together to hear the word of God being preached and every time we open up our bibles to study, we must rid ourselves of any preconceived notions we may have.
   2. With respect to preaching, we may be tempted to think that we already know everything about the bible and that the speaker can’t relate anything that we don’t already know and therefore we tune him out.
   3. With respect to bible study, we may be tempted to think that we already know everything about a certain topic, book or verse and therefore we ignore it or simply glance over it without any real focus or effort.
   4. Take for example genealogies in the bible. We may think they are just a long, pointless list of names we can’t pronounce and therefore we don’t bother to read them because it’s a waste of our time.
   5. This is wrong and incredibly unwise. There is always something we can learn from God’s word and there is always a message we need to be reminded of even if we have heard it before.
   6. The other aspect to having preconceived notions is that we will be tempted to disagree with the bible if it doesn’t meet our standards, feelings or conclusions. Take for example things like musical instruments, women preachers or fornication.
   7. Ridding ourselves of our preconceived conclusions will allow the gospel to do exactly what it was intended to do: **change our lives and save us from our sins!** If we fail get rid of any preconceived notions we have or we just don’t want to do it, we will never receive the grace God wants to impart to us and the reward it will ultimately grant us if we are willing to just let the gospel do its job.
   8. It may hurt our pride to let go of our pre-drawn conclusions but it may end up saving our souls and granting us life eternal. Which would you prefer?

**Conclusion:** We would all do well to heed the words of Jesus and take special care to how we listen to His word. This is the key to whether we grow and get better or digress and get worse. May we put effort and preparation into how we listen to God’s word. Let’s do our best to get rid of the distractions and endure through the obstacles. May we seek to swallow our pride and come to God in humility by listening to the truth and removing all the preconceived notions we may have. Are you taking care to how you listen?