

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” - Psalm 119:105

April 24, 2005

How to Listen in Church

Robert F. Turner

Ever get sleepy during the sermon? (Not mine, of course.) Truth is, any one of us may find our attention wandering now and then. Long attention spans are difficult under the best of circumstances. The preacher bears a heavy responsibility here, for subject matter, style of presentation, relevance, and many other factors which contribute to a “live,” wide-awake audience. But the speaker cannot do it all. Nor is it enough to prove by the Scriptures that we should be vitally interested. We know that and yet we may need motivation. Perhaps we could even learn how to become better listeners.

Jesus said, *“Take heed ... how ye hear”* (Lk. 8:18). Not with dulled hearing and closed eyes, shunning the truth (Matt. 13:15-16); nor with preconceived notions that prevent our receiving truth (Matt. 16:21-23). The people I now have in mind do not belong in these categories. But there are “good” people whose minds wander, or are easily distracted; and this article is bold to make some suggestions for getting more out of the sermon and of worship as a whole.

1. Sit toward the front of the auditorium; close enough to feel the speaker is talking to you. Do this not just to better hear the speaker, but to improve the “oneness” of feeling essential to good communication. It puts fewer distractions between you and the speaker, allows you to better “read” his expressions, gestures, etc. It also makes for better singing and a “closer” feeling for the Lord’s supper and other worship. Yes, there are mothers with babies who need to sit closer to the nursery; sick and elderly who need easier access to the rest rooms; and always a certain number who “couldn’t care less” about the worship, but come (now and then) for unknown reasons. Leave the back seats for them.

2. Become a participant, not an observer. In Christianity all saints are priests in a holy, royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Each is a worshiper; praying and singing with the leader, remembering Christ in the communion, giving freely with the Lord’s work in mind, and learning – repeating in your own mind – that which is being taught. Being a true learner is not a passive process, but requires distinct participation with the teacher.

3. Take notes, learn to outline the message. Some are content to jot down the Scriptures used – and that is good. But this can be done without much thinking with the speaker. If we would make an effort to jot down his main points (in our own brief wording) and note their relation to one another and to the subject, we would find ourselves much more of a participant – and certainly a much better listener.

4. Question what you hear. Is that a valid point, proven by the Scripture used? You will not be able to think the matter through during the sermon, but a question mark beside the point will remind you to “check it out” when you are home. This word of caution: one can be a “noble Berean” (Acts 17:11) without becoming a habitual critic of the work of others. Learn constructive criticism, and apply it to your own work.

5. Listen with the intention of making this your message, when you have time to think it through. How would you tell this to others? How could you improve on it, to fit someone you need to teach? This point of view can have an amazing effect on your attention span.

6. Make self-application of the lesson. How can this improve my life for Christ? How does it fit my personal needs? Listen with a tender conscience, ready to learn, and adjust your life accordingly.

You can have the blessings of Jesus Christ if you will learn to be a good listener. The Savior said, *“Blessed are your ears, for they hear.”* He also said, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (**Matt. 13:16; 5:6**). With a little practice on the above, and this kind of incentive, you may not notice the preacher ran overtime.



“Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law” (**Ezra 8:2-3, 9**). “From early morning until midday is a long time to listen attentively to anything, but they valued the word of God highly enough that they did. May we all have this same level of devotion to and respect for God’s word.

“Tell to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.” – **Psalm 78:4**

Family News

Mary Burnett had more pain than usual this past week.

Nell Ferrell remains in room # 110 at NHC. She continues to eat and improve some. She is awake more and is talking more. She is in pain much of the time.

Brenda Fuqua is able to eat sometimes. She is weak and tired most of the time. She has some days that are very bad. She also has some days that are relatively good. She had mostly bad days this past week. Sometimes her pain level is not effectively alleviated, or even ameliorated, by medicine.

Estelle Hayes went to a different doctor Monday. He gave her some exercises to do (which so far have only increased her pain and have not yet helped any).

James Hunt goes to the doctor tomorrow to have some spots on his skin checked. **Sandra** was in the hospital on and off two and three weeks ago. She has been doing better this past week. She returns to the doctor on Tuesday.

John Jenkins, whose son Robert has been attending with us, has lung cancer

(to answer a question you may have: he smoked years ago, but has not smoked in a very long time). He is taking chemotherapy. The cancer has spread.

Fran Pickens was admitted to Centennial Medical Center three Thursdays ago. She was released and returned home yesterday! She had a variety of health issues at first but many of these have been healed and she is much better.

Cotton and **Nancy Read** both returned to the doctor on Friday for checkups. He declared them both "OK but not great" (maybe not an exact quote). All jokes aside: they are both doing much better than they were earlier this year (for which we are thankful); however, they both have some ongoing health issues.

Laura Reed continues to have problems with very bad arthritis.

There is no change in **Georgia Taylor**. Her birthday is tomorrow.

Ame White is trying different combinations of pain medicine in an effort to better control her pain (the doctor told her to do this experimentation).

Robert Wray goes to the doctor on Thursday. He is mostly about the same.

Out of town, traveling, visiting: **Bonnie Brown Joyce Werner**

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).