

Devoted to the Apostles' Teaching (Acts 2:42)

Where Were the Apostles Teaching?

In the _____ courts – Acts 3:11; 5:12,25,42.

From house to house – Acts 5:42; 20:20.

Where is the Apostles' Teaching Found Today?

In the _____ – The New Testament was written by apostles & companions of apostles.

The New Testament is "...the mystery **of Christ**, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been **revealed by the Spirit** to **God's holy apostles** and prophets" (Eph 3:4-5).

This is why Paul says that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles" (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14).



Ways to Be Devoted

Personal:

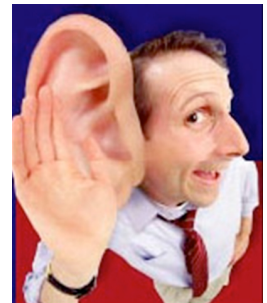
As Families:

As a Congregation:

Listening to Sermons (Based on an outline by Pastor Gary Henry.)

Introduction

- A. Contrary to popular opinion, teaching/preaching is not a "spectator sport."
 1. It involves some participation by those receiving the preaching.
 2. It is an active, rather than passive, event.
- B. Jesus said, "Take heed how you hear" (Luke 8:18).
 1. There are few things any more indicative of our real interest in spiritual things than our "listening habits" during the worship service of the congregation.
 2. If the sermon seems dry, it may be because we have no thirst for righteousness! Cf. Matthew 5:6.
- C. The following are some suggestions — from the vantage point of the teacher/preacher — on how we can be active listeners and contribute to listening that accomplishes growth as God intends.



"You have dug out my ears!" *Psalm 40:6*

I. Some Wise Counsel

A. Bring your Bible to every service of the church!

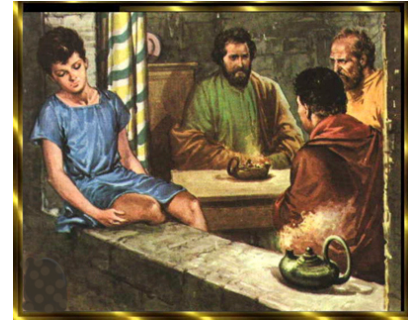
Reason: You cannot live the Christian life on one sermon a week. You are responsible to abide in Jesus' word each day (Psalm 1:1-2; John 15:7). The Bible helps us grow in maturity, reveals our shortcomings, prepares us for service, blesses us, and is useful as we help others. As you follow with the preacher, you will become familiar with your Bible and it will seem less strange. A good preacher will also teach you how to study the Bible as he preaches. Having your Bible present will help you to learn this.

B. Sit closer to the front.

Reason: Your position helps the preacher and offers less distractions for you. It shows your interest to the preacher and sets you in the mood for eager listening.

C. Try to stay awake.

Reason: You can't listen if you are asleep. Sermons can be boring, but sometimes the problem is that we didn't get enough sleep on Saturday night. The battle for Sunday morning is often won on Saturday evening. Go to bed at a decent time. Set out your clothes and items you will bring to church on Saturday evening, so you are not rushing around looking for them on Sunday morning. Come to church unruffled because you prepared ahead and because you are refreshed from a good night's sleep.



Eutychus – The patron saint of all who fall asleep in church.

D. Don't be overly concerned about the clock.

The preacher should be concerned about the clock, since people in our society have a very short attention span. But you shouldn't be overly concerned. If your attention span is short or the sermon is too long, use the time to study your Bible. There are a number of examples in Scripture of rather lengthy times of Scripture reading or preaching. Cf. Acts 20:7-12.

E. Watch your "body language." Posture, etc. indicate interest and attitude.

F. Maintain eye contact with the speaker, as if you were in private conversation.

G. Listen sympathetically. Be eager to place the best possible construction on what is said, ignore insignificant slips, etc.

Reason: The preacher will make mistakes, say things in improper ways, and even sin in what he says. James 3:2 says, *"We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man."* There are no perfect preachers. If you look at it from a preacher's perspective you will see that this person is being asked to speak continuously for 20-45 minutes (usually repeatedly) each week to a crowd of people each with different perspectives, experiences, and mental filters. Since preachers are also sons of Adam, it really is impossible not to offend or err. Of course, in some cases the offense is God's conviction, not the preacher.

H. Resist distractions. Movement in the room, children making noise, room temperature, etc. are distractions that adults can rise above.

I. Avoid being a distraction.

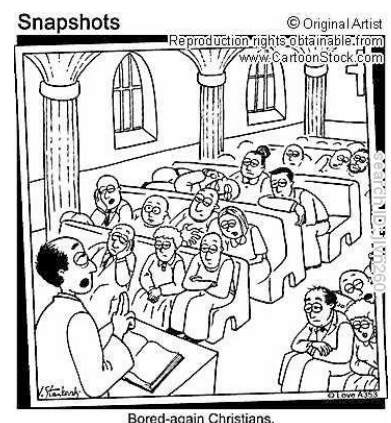
1. Minimize comments to your neighbor, just as you would in private conversation – these are discourteous and distracting to others.
2. Minimize going in and out of the room.

J. Actually listen. Pay attention. Listen as if:

1. Your own son was preaching.
2. You had a non-Christian visitor with you in the assembly.
3. You knew your children were watching how you listen. (They are.)

K. Study, think, and exert mental effort. Be an "active" listener, engaged and involved in what is going on.

L. Look up some of the passages cited, but not necessarily all.



Bored-again Christians.

- M. **Make notes, if so inclined.** – Especially notes in your Bible of significant points that Christ reveals to you.
- N. **Listen looking for ideas for practical application.**
1. We ought always to be looking for information to increase the quality of our obedience. Cf. Deuteronomy 29:29; Ezra 7:10; John. 7:17.
 2. “Hearing” the word of God also means that we ought to be concerned with “doing” it. – Matthew 7:24-27; James 1:22-25.
 3. As we listen to gospel preaching, we get the most from our listening if we listen with a view to personal application, seeing the relevance of the subject to ourselves. What does God want me to understand, feel, or do?
- O. **Be excited about the gospel.** Cf. Acts 10:33,44; 13:42-44. It will be obvious to the preacher and will encourage him.
1. Audiences, as well as preachers, can be boring.
 2. Just as some preachers are more interesting than others, some audiences are more interesting than others.
 3. Audiences have a collective “personality” — you can help the audience of which you are a member to have an “interested” personality that is encouraging to the speaker.

II. Heart Warnings

- A. Against _____
e.g., "I always bring my Bible, and she never does" or "My children never make noise like theirs do!"
- B. Against _____
e.g., "My children are the noisiest ones here!" or "But I can't even find Luke's Gospel, so why should I bother!"

III. Listening “In View of Eternity”

- A. Jesus taught that His word will be that which will judge us in the last day – John 12:48-49.
- B. Our eternal destiny depends on what we do with what we hear from God’s word.
- C. When we listen to God’s word, we need to do so “in view of eternity.”



Conclusion

- A. The Bible contains some amazing examples of people spending time listening to God’s word. – Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Joshua 8:30-35; Nehemiah 7:73-8:12.
- B. How much “endurance” do we have when it comes to hearing God’s word?
- C. The Lord is with us when we assemble. – What does He observe?
- D. It is an old saying, but at least partially true: *we get out of the preaching about what we put into it.*
- E. Whether we get the opportunity to hear and understand more of God’s word will depend greatly on how eagerly we receive what we do hear! Cf. Luke 8:18.
- F. May we be like those who “heard Him gladly.” – Mark 12:37.

What Should We Listen For in Teaching?

Five Distinctives of Christ-Centered Application (Application that Avoids Moralism)

	<i>Moralistic Application</i>	<i>Christ-Centered Application</i>
More than Duty	What must we do? What does the text require of us?	What must we do? What is our motive, our enablement, our provision in failure? What does the text offer us?
All of Grace	Many texts: human moral effort Little emphasis on divine grace	Every text: God as the giver of grace to the undeserving & needy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • justifying grace • sanctifying grace • glorifying grace
Grace from Christ	Only some texts: emphasis on Christ Especially texts dealing with the need for forgiveness	Every text: Christ as the means of saving grace Talking about God's goodness to sinners = talking about Christ!
Obedience and Grace	Obedience = securing God's blessing, approval Causing grace	Obedience = enjoying God's blessing, approval Responding to grace
One True Hero	Stress on heroic character & deeds of Biblical figures (I need to be like the Bible's "spiritual giants.") No relation to divine grace	Stress: human faithfulness is always a response to divine faithfulness God & Christ are always upheld as the ultimate heroes

Christ's Provision to Help Us Be Devoted to the Apostles' Teaching

- The apostles' teaching IS _____ Teaching.
 Before Jesus left earth, He made promises to His apostles. He pledged that the Holy Spirit would:
 - Teach them what they ought to say – Luke 12:12, Matthew 10:19.
 - Give them perfect recall of Jesus' words – John 14:26.
 - Guide them into all truth – John 16:12-13b.
 - Tell them what is yet to come – John 16:14b.
 - Convey the very words of the resurrected Jesus to them (a continuing open line of communication between Jesus and His apostles) – John 16:14-15.
- The apostles speak from the Holy Spirit – Acts 1:2; Eph 3:3-5.
- Christ sends teachers to communicate the apostles' teaching to others – Eph 4:11-13.
- The _____ _____ helps believers to hear, accept, and mature from the teaching – 1 Cor 2:12-16.

Morning Star Church
July 10, 2011

