

Learning to Listen

THEME:

The Bible places a huge emphasis on Listening. Jesus often began a conversation with the word “listen.” You could argue that Jesus might simply have been trying to get the crowd’s attention, but I think there’s more to it than that. This morning we took a look at three mountain-top experiences found in scripture that pointed to the importance of listening- perhaps none more telling than the transfiguration. Today as He did with the first disciples, God the Father still calls us to listen to His Son.

ICE BREAKER:

There is a very distinct difference between hearing and listening. Brainstorm for a few minutes, taking time to compare and contrast what it means to both hear and listen.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

“Son, I know you can hear me, but I don’t think you are listening...” If I had a dime for every time I’ve either thought of, or actually followed through and said these words, I would be in the process of collecting a small fortune. I’m sure that many of you who are parents can identify with me. When I ask one of my children to pick up their toys, or to put down the iPad because its time to come eat dinner, I expect them to act upon my request. I believe the same is true when God speaks. He’s not in the habit of wasting words.

In a sense, listening could be defined as hearing that leads to action. The words of scripture challenge us to move beyond merely acknowledging what we have read or heard, to actually becoming “doers of the Word” (James 1:22). This is the call of God in our lives, to hear him clearly, and then in faithful obedience, step out in faith. As Martin Luther is famous for saying, “It is faith alone that saves us, but true, saving faith, is never alone.”

THINK:

- Perhaps you’ve heard the African parable about the ostrich, who, when the lion comes near, buries his head in the sand believing that since he can’t see the lion, the lion can’t see him either. This parable teaches us something important about human nature- discuss some of these implications.

- There are many voices competing for our attention. Which voices do you feel you often hear the loudest? Which voices are you tempted to ignore? Do you feel there are times when you may ignore the voice of God?
- If you became convinced that you needed to listen more carefully to God's voice, what would be the first step you might take in an effort to hear Him more clearly?

EXAMINE:

Luke 9:28-36 to answer the following questions:

- Why do you think Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him onto the mountain?
- When the disciples woke up from their "nap" they were stunned by what had been taking place while they were asleep. Peter immediately jumps to action. Luke tells us that he did not know what he was saying. What does this particular textual insight point out to you?
- Are there times, when like Peter, you just want to do "something"…?
- What is the significance of God's words in verse 35, especially in light of questions 2 and 3?
- What are some ways that we can ensure we are listening to Him? (Hint...this may be similar to your answer to question 3 in the "Think" section. In light of the passage of scripture we've just been looking at, you may have some additional insights).

THIS WEEK: As you progress through your week, make sure you are taking time to stop and listen to God. We hear Him speak through time spent in scripture, as we pray, and as we walk with and are led by His Spirit. And remember, listening is more than just hearing what he says; it means that we agree to act upon the message we've heard.

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts...”

Hebrews 3:15