

One thing we must remember: hearing the Word rightly is of utmost importance!

If you would hear the word aright, [then] practice what you hear ... hearing only will be no plea at the day of judgment—merely to say, “Lord, I have heard many sermons.” God will say, ‘What fruits of obedience have you bought forth?’ The Word preached is not only to inform you, but reform you, conform you, and transform you...

(Thomas Watson)

What is most alarming is the risky willingness of many professing Christians to gamble eternity on an emotional one-time experience, a “sinner’s prayer” properly prayed, or a feeling of substantial relief at a juncture in time, without ever taking a serious look at what is evident now, at this moment. Is eternal life of so little value that it seems unnecessary to examine yourself for evidence of it? Is there nothing to lose? Hell is engorged with people who once thought of themselves as Christians. Is there no danger for you?” (Jim Elliff)

Joseph Alleine — “Come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your KNEES!

THESIS — This is a very sobering parable because we are brought to a very convicting and probing question: HOW DO YOU HEAR THE WORD? or, HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU? or, WHAT DO YOU DO WITH WHAT YOU’VE HEARD?

I. THE PARABLE (1-12)

- A. The setting (1-2) - crowds on the hillside
- B. The story (3-9) - Jesus teaches about a sower & seeds!
 - 1. Note the bookends: **LISTEN/hear WELL!** (3, 9)
- C. The specification (10-12)

Westminster Larger Catechism Q:160: What is required of those that hear the Word preached?

Answer: It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine: What they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and speak of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

II. THE PRINCIPLE (13-20)

Mark 4:1-20 — “The Parable of the Soils: How Do You Hear God’s Word?”*4 different kinds of “Hearers of the Word”***(1) unresponsive (15)****(2) impulsive (superficial; emotional) (16-17)****(3) distracted (preoccupied; worldly) (18-19)****(4) fruit bearing (responsive/receptive; obedient) (20)**

how to be a good hearer of the Word? how to improve and excel still more?

- (1) Be present to hear the Word!*
- (2) Be humble in hearing & accepting the Word!*
- (3) Be earnest in understanding the Word!*
- (4) Be holding fast to the Word!*
- (5) Be persevering as you rely on the Word*
- (6) God will produce fruit in & thru you as you hear it rightly*

- This includes **preparing diligently, listening attentively, practicing obediently!**

Thomas Watson said: we need diligence in the hearing of the Word:

1. Prepare to hear the Word by bathing your soul in prayer.
2. Come to the Word with a holy appetite and a tender, teachable heart.
3. Be attentive to the preached Word.

Mark 4:1-20 — "The Parable of the Soils: How Do You Hear God's Word?"

4. Receive with meekness the engrafted Word (James 1:21).
5. Mingle the preached Word with faith.
6. Strive to retain what has been preached and pray about the Word proclaimed.
7. Put the word into practice; be doers of it.
8. Beg the Spirit to accompany the Word with effectual blessing.
9. Familiarize yourself with the Word by sharing it with others.

SHOW US CHRIST

Prepare our hearts, O God
 Help us to receive
 Break the hard and stony ground
 Help our unbelief
 Plant Your Word down deep in us
 Cause it to bear fruit
 Open up our ears to hear
 Lead us in Your truth

Your Word is living light
 Upon our darkened eyes
 Guards us through temptations
 Makes the simple wise
 Your Word is food for famished ones
 Freedom for the slave
 Riches for the needy soul
 Come speak to us today

Show us Christ, show us Christ
O God, reveal Your glory
Through the preaching of Your Word
Until every heart confesses Christ is Lord

Where else can we go, Lord
Where else can we go
You have the words of eternal life

Directions for Profitable Hearing the Word Preached

from Richard Baxter's "Christian Directory" 1673

I shall give you such directions about the personal, internal management of your duty of hearing the Word preached, as I think most necessary to your edification. And seeing that your duty and benefit lies in these four general points:

1. That you hear with **understanding**.
2. That you **remember** what you hear.
3. That you be duly **affected** with it.
4. And that you sincerely **practice** it.

So what is the right way to listen to a sermon? With a soul that is prepared, a mind that is alert, a Bible that is open, a heart that is receptive, and a life that is ready to spring into action. (Phil Ryken)

How Should You Hear the Word of God Preached?

Geoffrey R. Kirkland

Q. 160. What is required of those that hear the Word preached? [From the Westminster Confession, 1647]

A. *It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.*

1. You should attend to it with **diligence**.

It is as if you were going to meet with the king of the land himself, one would most certainly plan accordingly, come with punctuality and listen with diligence. So it must be for the children of God who listen to the preacher herald God's Word. God's people must diligently come to be fed divine truth. An earnestness must be exuded from God's people as they have one primary object on their minds on the Lord's Day — God. Nothing else captivates the believer's mind like Christ does. Nothing ravishes the believer's heart like Christ does. Nothing wins the affections and nothing woos the saint's love more than the saving gospel of God's grace freely bestowed in Christ's death on behalf of repentant sinners. So come! Come with diligence! Come with Christ-centeredness! Come with eagerness! Come with expectancy! Come with frequency! Come with sobriety and expectation to meet with, commune with, and hear from the Living God.

2. You should attend to it with **preparation**.

As one would prepare for an important business meeting, so God's people should also prepare to meet with the God of all creation. To prepare is to make oneself ready to meet with, come before, and stand in the presence of God Almighty. Preparation must begin with prayer. It must continue with sufficient sleep. Preparation includes the reading of the scripture text that will be preached on the following day. Preparation demands arriving to corporate worship early to meditate, pray, expect, and adore God. Without preparation, one cannot worship properly. One gets out of worship what one puts into worship. Without preparation, little heart warming and soul feeding will occur. As one would prepare equipment, leave early and take diligence to arrive on time to a sporting or entertainment event, how much more should God's child prepare his heart, his Bible, his wife, his children and leave early and arrive promptly to worship God. A prepared heart is a ready heart. A prepared heart is a humble and willing heart. A prepared heart is a moldable and shapeable heart.

3. You should attend to it with **prayer**.

To pray is to take hold of God's power and beseech God to rend the heavens, come down, descend powerfully, and with supernatural power. Only God can convert. God's people must pray for the conversion of sinners, the edification of God's people, and the magnification of God's Triune name and work in salvation. God's people must pray in repentance to rid themselves of all known sin before the Word comes. God's people must pray that the minister of the Word would speak with supernatural power. Indeed, the mouth is that of a man but the voice is that of God. Pray for unction — the sovereign, effectual power of the Spirit in and through the preached Word — as the man of God preaches the Word of God to the people of God. All God's people should pray for God's help on the way to hear the sermon preached. Believers must pray and ask the Lord to grant assistance while the Word is heard. And saints must pray for a soft, humble, and willing heart to specifically apply and implement the sermon throughout the course of the week. O the danger of not hearing sermons well! O the danger of distractions while the sermon is going forth! O the danger of hearing the Word and allowing Satan, like a pecking bird, to snatch the seed of the Word so that it bears no fruit. Nothing prepares a man of God for worship more than earnest wrestling with God in prayer. Expect God to work. Pray for God to revive. Adore God as preeminently worthy! Confess! Rejoice! Pray!

Just as people of old would bake bread on Saturday evenings so it would be warm on Sunday morning, so the people of God should read, pray, and study the Scriptures on Saturday nights so that their hearts are warmed and prepared for worship on Sunday.