

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

1201 Meeks St. Corinth, Ms. 38834

Phone – (662) 287-2187

Visit Our Website at:

MeeksstreetchurchofChrist.com

April 21, 2019

“How To Be A Good Listener”

By Brian Meade

Our Gospel meeting starts today and God’s word takes center stage! Allen Shepherd will be our guest speaker for the week, and I am very thankful for his work in spreading the gospel of Christ. Gospel preachers all over the world have an awesome responsibility in teaching and preaching God’s word wherever they are called to do so (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:5, 2 Timothy 4:1-2).



I look at myself, and other preachers, as instruments by which God uses today, in an uninspired way, to speak the Word that is inspired by God (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 1:8).

One of the greatest responsibilities of the church is to listen well to the gospel, as it is being preached among us.

There’s a lot to be said for *how* we listen to the message that comes from God. Our focus needs to be on becoming the best listener we can possibly be in order to understand and put in practice the message we hear from God.

In light of this, do we ever think about our listening skills? Do we have good habits that help us to remember what was said in the pulpit in our hearing? Or do we have bad habits that hinder us from listening to what was said? I thought I would take a few minutes to elaborate on what will help us improve our skills (or remind us of that need) every time we come together as the church. To improve, we need to:

(1) Keep Silent As Others Are Speaking.

One of the many lessons our parents may have taught us while we were growing up: is to be quiet when others are saying something to us, especially something important. We do this out of politeness and to show courtesy to the one speaking. It is often perceived as rude when we keep talking, when we should be listening. And even beyond that, we are often hindered by having to focus on what we are saying, that we miss what someone is saying to us.

James 1:19 tells us, “*This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;*”

Our focus should be on being more ready to hear than always speaking. Someone once said, “God gave us two ears and only one mouth because He wants us to listen more than we talk.” That’s not always easy, especially for preachers, but we must learn to do differently so we can be a better listener.

(2) Keep Our Eyes Focused Where They Need To Be.

When the preaching part of the service is going on, where should our eyes be? We should be making eye contact with the speaker so we can be listening carefully to the message from God. There are times when that can

be difficult, especially for parents watching babies or small children; that is understandable. But what is generally not understandable is when we are slumped over, constantly turning around to look at others, passing notes to others beside us, or even talking during the preaching (see point #1).

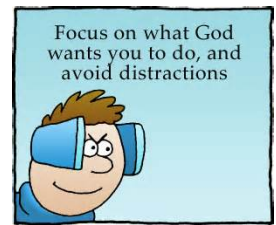
Our eye contact shows something about where our attention is focused. And if we are bored, disinterested, or distracted—it usually shows in our lack of looking at the speaker or following along in our Bible.

Now if we are taking notes (see point #5) and following along in our Bibles, or looking at the slides of the lesson's powerpoint—that's different; that's paying attention and focusing our eyes where they need to be. But the bottom line is: developing good eye contact is crucial to becoming a good listener.

(3) Eliminate All Distractions From Hindering You.

In our efforts to be good listeners, we need to be intentional about getting rid of any and all distractions to listening well. A distraction is defined as: "To draw or direct (as one's attention) to a different object or in different directions at the same time. (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

Distractions come in all shapes and sizes and most often are unexpected. It may be a cute baby sitting in front of us vying for our attention, an open window that shows the outside weather or scenery, it may be some commotion that happens behind us, it could be kids fidgeting in the pews, or even friends trying to talk to us or pass notes. Whatever we see as a distraction, that is drawing us away from listening, needs to be identified as such and avoided. We can let our friends know that we can talk after services are over, not during the time devoted to God. There's a time and place for everything, and it is simply not appropriate to let any trivial and unimportant matters distract us from the truly important matter of God's word.



We also need to remember that what we do in services can distract others from hearing the word and possibly obeying it. What if we were doing something that distracted someone from being convicted and giving obedience to Christ that day they hear the gospel? How sad it would be if they never have opportunity again to obey it! Don't be that kind of distraction to others!

Eliminating distractions may be a sacrifice, but it is a needed one so that we can put God's kingdom and work first in hearts (Matthew 6:33) and be pleasing to God (2 Timothy 2:4).

(4) Concentrate On What Is Being Said.

Our focus needs to be on trying to listen and fully understand the message being presented to us. If we are not careful we could miss certain information, that is vital to understanding what the speaker is trying to convey; all because we weren't concentrating on listening as we should.

As the speaker is speaking, we should be thinking about the words and the message being preached. Some lessons from Scripture require more thought and putting all the pieces together to get an accurate understanding of what God's will is and how to perform it. Subjects like baptism, repentance, humility, forgiveness should be somewhat easier to understand. But there are more complicated elements like the organization & work of the church, how to establish Bible authority for what we do, and how law, grace, and works relate to one another. Especially in light of some very popular, yet false, teaching on these subjects make it a challenge to fully understand every thought or idea expressed in a sermon— unless we are fully concentrating.

(5) Take Notes So You Can Remember Better.

The power to remember what we hear is greatly improved by taking notes. Notes enable us to refresh our memory well after the spoken lesson and even when our memory alone fails us to retain everything.

Studies have shown that relying on our memory alone tends for us to forget things. Information that we do not use is more likely forgotten, if we don't have a written copy to remind us. After 24 hours, we can retain about 60% of what we hear without reinforcement. But that number drops to about 40% after 48 hours, and even drops further to below 20% after 7 days! (The Curve of Forgetting graph originally called *The Ebbinghaus Curve*)

Having said that, we may want to have important points and maybe even key excerpts that stand out in understanding the message. I strive to put together powerpoint slides to help others in taking notes; with every main point, there are Bible verses that go along to *back up* the thought expressed.

(6) Pray To God To Help You Be A Better Listener And Doer.

When we have done all we can to be a good listener, we are to be sure to ask for God's help in understanding and doing what we have been taught (James 1:22). This needs to be in our daily prayers! (Matt. 7:7-8; James 1:5)

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Karey Trimble. Katie Ward Coburn.

Our Gospel meeting with Allen Shepherd begins today.
Monday —Friday 7:00 PM Nightly. (22nd-26th)

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.
Preaching: Allen Shepherd
Sermon #1: *"Simon, Jesus, and the Sinful Woman"*

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am: Allen Shepherd
"Hindrances to Assembling Together"

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Fred Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Brian Meade
John 20:26-29
Song Leader: Jerry Kennemur
Lord's Supper: Doug George
Assisting: Paul Busby & Chris Callahan
Preaching: Allen Shepherd
Sermon #2: *"The Resurrection of Jesus"*
Closing Prayer: Russell Briggs

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

April 24th:

Announcements: Brian Meade
Gospel Meeting: Allen Shepherd
Song Leader: Paul Busby
Closing Prayer: Doug George