

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 23, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## **LISTEN** **Up** LEARNING TO LISTEN TO GOD “How Well Are You Listening?” *James 1:22-25*

Are you a good listener? I mean, do you really listen when others are speaking, giving them your undivided attention and really honing in on what they are saying when they speak? And when they are finished speak you really got what they said, you really listened? Or are you one who half listens, maybe your thoughts drift when others speak, or you are easily distracted when others speak? We live at such a fast-paced and self-consumed speed that we often fail to really listen up when other are speaking, and listen up to the world around us and what is going on. The following is a quiz called “The Listener Quiz” that may help you evaluate how good a listener you really are. Give it a try.

### THE LISTENER QUIZ

*How good a listener are you? Perhaps you consider yourself a good listener, but do others, and have you really taken an inventory at how good a listener you may be. This question may be more important than you think because it may relate not only to how well you listen to others, but how well you listen to God and if you are able to hear Him when he speaks.*

*Are you a good listener? Let's find out... okay try this first:*

**On a scale of 25-100 (100 = highest), how do you rate yourself as a listener? \_\_\_\_\_**

*Now let's find out how accurate your perception is. Read each of the following statements and rate yourself using this scale: **4 = Usually, 3 = Frequently, 2 = Sometimes, 1 = Seldom.** When you have completed rating yourself on each statement total you score. At the bottom you will see where this particular quiz puts you as a listener.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I try to listen carefully even when I'm not interested in the topic.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm open to viewpoints that are different from my own.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I make eye contact with the speaker when I'm listening.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I try to avoid being defensive when a speaker is venting negative emotions.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I try to recognize the emotion under the speaker's words.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I anticipate how the other person will react when I speak.

7. \_\_\_\_ I take notes when it's necessary to remember what I've heard.
8. \_\_\_\_ I listen without judgment or criticism.
9. \_\_\_\_ I stay focused even when I hear things I don't agree with or don't want to hear.
10. \_\_\_\_ I don't allow distractions when I'm intent on listening.
11. \_\_\_\_ I don't avoid difficult situations.
12. \_\_\_\_ I can ignore a speaker's mannerisms and appearance.
13. \_\_\_\_ I avoid leaping to conclusions when listening.
14. \_\_\_\_ I learn something, however small, from every person I meet.
15. \_\_\_\_ I try not to form my next response while listening.
16. \_\_\_\_ I listen for main ideas, not just details.
17. \_\_\_\_ I know my own hot buttons.
18. \_\_\_\_ I think about what I'm trying to communicate when I speak.
19. \_\_\_\_ I try to communicate at the best possible time for success.
20. \_\_\_\_ I don't assume a certain level of understanding in my listeners when speaking.
21. \_\_\_\_ I usually get my message across when I communicate.
22. \_\_\_\_ I consider which form of communication is best: email, phone, in-person, etc.
23. \_\_\_\_ I tend to listen for more than just what I want to hear.
24. \_\_\_\_ I can resist day-dreaming when I'm not interested in a speaker.
25. \_\_\_\_ I can easily paraphrase in my own words what I've just heard.

\_\_\_\_ Total

#### Scoring

75-100 = *You're an excellent listener and communicator. Keep it up.*

50-74 = *You're trying to be a good listener, but it's time to brush up.*

25-49 = *Listening isn't one of your strong points. Start paying attention.*

How good a listener are you? Again, we live at such a fast-paced and self-consumed speed that we often fail to really listen up when other are speaking, and listen up to the world around us and what is going on. And if we have begun to run at such a hurried pace that we aren't hearing what is right in front of us chances are that we are not listening up very well when it comes to our relationship with God. Many of us have never learned to really listen to God. This study is entitled "Listen Up." It's not just about listening up, it's specifically about listening up to God... learning to hear and discern His voice when He speaks in the midst of our hurried and haired world. This study will seek to answer many of the question that surround the subject of hearing God: Is God still speaking today? What is His goal in communication? How does God get our attention? How do I identify the voice of God among all the other competing voices? Why are there times when I can't seem to hear God? What hinders my hearing of God? and more.

Just to get started let's start with a simple New Testament passage that speaks to the subject of listening to God. James writes in James 1:22-25:

*<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting*

*what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.” – James 1:22-25 (NIV)*

The Lord wants all believers to walk in close relationship with Him... like any relationship that includes communication... the art of listening. The Bible reveals the Father’s overall plan for the world and provides general guidelines for life. But how can we know His *specific* plans for us?

**Here is life principle to be remembered that will be key to this study:**

***“Listening to God is essential to walking with God.”***

In other words, in order to know the Father’s will, we must learn to hear His voice... to listen up to God.

## **I. LISTENING TO GOD**

### **A. There are two types of listeners –**

#### **2 Types of Listeners:**

- 1. Purposeful Listeners** - Purposeful listeners attend church each week expectantly. They also put into practice what they learn.
- 2. Passive Listeners** - Passive listeners may enjoy a sermon but have no intention of applying what is taught - Although church attendance might be part of their lives, they fail to grow spiritually. (See James 1:22-25.)

### **B. How do I really “walk with God?”**

#### **6 Helps for Waling with God:**

- 1. Commit to discovering and obeying the Father’s will –**
- 2. Begin with faith—believing that God exists and that you have a new life in Christ.**
- 3. Pursue continual fellowship with the Lord, and seek to live in His presence daily—even when difficulties arise.**
- 4. Walk in truth, obeying Him cheerfully, and your relationship with Him will grow more intimate.**
- 5. Allow the Holy Spirit to work within you to bring peace, confidence, security, and joy into your life.**
- 6. Separate yourself from sin, and strive to make a positive impact on the lives of others. Rely on the Spirit to help you live in a way that pleases God.**

### **C. Biblical teaching of listening intently.**

#### **3 Biblical Passage That Teach Us To Listen:**

- 1. Matthew 17:1-5** – What was God’s word to these closest of Jesus’ follower? In Matthew 17:5, the Father told Peter, James, and John to listen to His Son. How well were they listening? If it was important for Peter, James and John it is certainly important for us to “listen to Him.”

**2. Mark 4:1-20** - Christ began the parable of the sower by telling His followers, “Listen!” (Mark 4:3). **What does the “Parable of the Sower” have to do with listening to God.**

**3 Things the Parable of the Sower Teaches us About Listening:**

**(1). The parable of the sower teaches us that God is speaking** – In the parable God did sow his seed... His word does go out. He speaks.

**(2) The parable of the sower teaches us that our ability to hear Him when he speaks is related to our heart** - Hardness, the enemy (Satan), hardships (persecutions) all the things that effect our heart may affect our ability to hear.

**(3) The parable of the sower teaches us that with our really listening and hearing Him we cannot grow** –

**3. Mark 7:1-14** - To the crowd, our Lord said, “Listen to Me, all of you” (Mark 7:14). What does this passage have to do with listening to God? What the danger here of not listening to God?

**D. God has spoken throughout history –**

**2 Examples of Speaking Throughout History:**

**1. Biblical history** - God spoke to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Saul of Tarsus, the apostle John, and many others.

**2. Church history** - Reformation came because God spoke to Martin Luther about salvation by grace. (See Galatians 2:16.) This revelation transformed Christianity.

**E. What happens when believers don’t listen to God?**

**When We Don’t Listen To God:**

**1. When we don’t listen to God news articles, television shows, and the advice of friends may become our primary influences** – What is wrong with this?

**2. When we don’t listen to God and His word, we can be easily deceived and drift into sin.**

**3. When we don’t really listen to God we develop a tendency to reject biblical passages that condemn our choices -**

**4. When we don’t listen to God unwise decisions and sinful choices mark our lives and almost always hurt those around us -**

**F. How do we listen to God?**

**5 Helpful Hints at Learning to Listen to God:**

**1. Read the Bible** - He will never tell you something that contradicts His Word.

**2. Listen to the Holy Spirit** - One of His jobs is to guide you by speaking to *your* spirit.

**3. Pray** - Prayer is talking *and* listening to God. Read at least a small portion of Scripture each day, and ask God to speak through it.

**4. Be watchful** - Look for the Lord to reveal Himself to you through circumstances. When life takes you by surprise, ask Him what He is doing. Watch for Him to guide you through open and closed doors.

**5. Expect Him to guide you through others** - He will use pastors, parents, friends, family members, and at times even strangers to lead you. Just be careful to evaluate everything in the light of Scripture.

## **II. LEARNING TO LISTEN TO GOD**

A lot of listening... really listening has to do with the condition of our heart, as we have seen. We often must be in the proper frame of mind to really hear. It is no different in our relationship with God. What's the appropriate "attitude" of listening to God? In closing this introduction to our study on "Learning to Listen to God" here are some important attitudes we must have if we really want to learn to listen.

### **5 Appropriate Attitudes for Listening to God:**

- 1. Reflective**—Meditate on biblical passages. That is, slowly and thoughtfully read a section over and over.
- 2. Prayerful**—As you read God's Word, ask for His help in applying it.
- 3. Submissive**—Be willing to obey whatever the Lord tells you to do.
- 4. Expectant**—God promises to speak to us; anticipate that He will meet you in a personal way.
- 5. Patient**—On important decisions, it's sometimes necessary to pray for weeks before understanding what the Lord is saying.

Nothing in this world compares to hearing God's voice. The Sovereign of the universe holds all power, and He has the resources to meet every need you have. Don't you want to intimately know that kind of Person? You can—simply be willing to listen to Him.