

“Take Heed How You Hear!”

Ten Practical Preparations for Hearing the Word of God on Sunday Morning

A Meditation on Luke 8:18, RSV

Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.

1. *Pray that God would give you a good and honest heart.*

The heart we need is a work of God. That's why we pray for it. “I will give you a new heart” (Ezekiel 36:26). “I will give them a heart to know Me” (Jeremiah 24:7). Let's pray, “O Lord, give me a heart for you. Give me a good and honest heart. Give me a soft and receptive heart. Give me a humble and meek heart. Give me a fruitful heart.”

2. *Meditate on the Word of God*

“O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). On Saturday night, read some delicious portion of your Bible with a view to stirring up hunger for God. This is the appetizer for Sunday morning's meal.

3. *Purify your mind by turning away from worldly entertainment.*

“Putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21, emphasis added). It astonishes me how many Christians watch the same banal, empty, silly, trivial, titillating, suggestive, immodest TV shows that most unbelievers watch. This makes us small and weak and worldly and inauthentic in worship. Instead, turn off the television on Saturday night and read something true and great and beautiful and pure and honorable and excellent and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8). Your heart will unshriveled and be able to feel greatness again.

4. *Trust in the truth that you already have.*

The hearing of the Word of God that fails during trial has no root (Luke 8:13). What is the root we need? It is trust. Jeremiah 17:7-8 says, “Blessed is the man who *trusts* in the Lord, and whose *trust* extends its *roots* by a stream” (emphasis added). Trusting in the truth you already have is the best way to prepare yourself to receive more.

5. *Rest long enough Saturday night to be alert and hopeful Sunday morning.*

“All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12, RSV). I am not laying down any law here. I am saying there are Saturday night ways that ruin Sunday morning worship. Don't be enslaved by them. Without sufficient sleep, our minds are dull, our emotions are flat, our proneness to depression is higher, and our fuses are short. My counsel: Decide when you must get up on Sunday in order to have time to eat, get dressed, pray and meditate on the Word, prepare the family, and travel to church; and then compute backward eight hours and be sure that you are in bed fifteen minutes before that. Read your Bible in bed and fall asleep with the Word of God in your mind. I especially exhort parents to teach teenagers that Saturday is *not* the night to stay out late with friends. If there is a special late night, make it Friday. It is a terrible thing to teach children that worship is so optional that it doesn't matter if you are exhausted when you come.

6. *Forebear one another Sunday morning without grumbling and criticism.*

“They grumbled in their tents; they did not listen to the voice of the Lord” (Psalm 106:25). Sunday morning grumbling and controversy and quarreling can ruin a worship service for a family. When there is something you are angry about or some conflict that you genuinely think needs to be talked about, forbear. Of course if *you* are clearly the problem and need to apologize, do it as quickly as you can (Matthew 5:23-24). But if you are fuming because of the children’s or spouse’s delinquency, forbear, that is, be slow to anger and quick to listen (James 1:19). In worship, open yourself to God’s exposing the log in your own eye. It may be that all of you will be humbled and chastened so that no serious conflict is necessary.

7. *Be meek and teachable when you come.*

“Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21, RSV). Meekness and teachability are not gullibility. You have your Bible and you have your brain. Use them. But if we come with a chip on our shoulders and a suspicion of the preaching, week after week, we will not hear the Word of God. Meekness is a humble openness to God’s truth with a longing to be changed by it.

8. *Be still as you enter the room and focus your mind’s attention and heart’s affection on God.*

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10, NKJV). As we enter the sanctuary, let us come on the lookout for God, and leave on the lookout for people. Come with a quiet passion to seek God and his power. We will not be an unfriendly church if we are aggressive in our pursuit of *God* during the prelude and aggressive in our pursuit of *visitors* during the postlude.

9. *Think earnestly about what is sung and prayed and preached.*

“Brethren, do not be children in your *thinking*; yet in evil be infants, but in your *thinking* be mature” (1 Corinthians 14:20, emphasis added). So Paul says to Timothy, “*Think* over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything” (2 Timothy 2:7, RSV, emphasis added). Anything worth hearing is worth thinking about. If you would take heed how you hear, think about what you hear.

10. *Desire the truth of God’s Word more than you desire riches or food.*

“Like newborn babies, long for [*desire*] the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2, author’s translation). As you sit quietly and pray and meditate on the text and the songs, remind yourself of what Psalm 19:10-11 says about the words of God: “More to be *desired* are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.”

John Piper – from *A Godward Life – Book Two*

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