

How To Listen to a Sermon

It might be shocking to be able to see and measure how much Bible material the typical church-goer actually retains and uses from his time in the pew. If we truly desire for God to use His Word in our lives, we must make the effort to be involved in the pastor's sermon, not merely observe it. The tool that God uses to change us into a more Christ-like person is the Bible, and if we are not tuned in when His Word is preached, we are not really making use of the tool He has given us.

Here are some pointers on what to do to make the Sunday messages more meaningful in your life, and your family's life.

1. Preparation for the message begins long before you sit down in the auditorium. What is your attitude in coming to church? Is it duty? Obligation? Are you there mostly to see other people, or is your focus primarily on worshipping the Lord and receiving a blessing from His Word?

Probably the single most important preparation you can make

is to **pray**. Pray for God's Word to be blessed with authority and power. Pray that God would grant clarity of thought and liberty of speech to the pastor. And pray for yourself, that God would help you to listen and fully receive His message to you. Sometimes the Word has things to say that you may not like to hear, but which you desperately need. Prayer will keep you from throwing away the biblical truths that will challenge and change you.

Another very practical question to ask about your arrival at church on Sunday is, are you tired? If you knew that you were going to have a very important interview or meeting, or were going to have an exam in the morning, would you try to get a good night's rest? Of course you would; that is only logical. Yet often church-goers drag themselves into church yawning and drifting off before the preliminaries have even begun. Why not treat your time in church as though it were a very important meeting with the Lord Himself? It is, isn't it?

2. Taking notes is a great benefit to internalizing God's Word. Jotting

down the main thoughts while the pastor is preaching enables you to keep your mind focused and thinking along with him. Not every sermon is fitted for a point-by-point outline; but you can almost always identify chief ideas and key references. Even if you throw the notes away after the service, the process of writing down notes helps many people remember the main ideas of the message.

3. After the service is over, and you've gone home to Sunday dinner, the message is finished, right? *Wrong!* It's just beginning! Why not **discuss the message** over dinner? Certainly the Word of God is more enlightening conversation than politics, the weather or sports. See who can remember the outline of the message; see if anyone caught the main application, or if anyone can repeat the major verse or reference.

4. Take it a step further. Why not see how the Word of God can be **put into action** in your life this week? This is a great family activity, but individuals can certainly benefit

from it, too. Get a notebook and write down the date, the title of the message, the main idea and an outline, if you can remember it, or if you can copy it from your notes. Now, looking at your notes or reading one of the key verses from the sermon, write down as many ways as you can think of to put the Bible principles you learned into practice this week. What has God commanded you to do? What did He tell you to think about? How does He want you to change? What habits should you work on to get rid of? What do you need to pray for, in order to accomplish these goals?

Save your notebook, and get it out next Sunday. Look it over, and see how you did at putting the Bible into practice. Did you generally have victory, or was there a lot of failures? What prayer requests has God answered? Then repeat the process for today's message: What was God's Word saying to you today?

The goal of Bible preaching is not to kill a couple of hours on Sundays, but to internalize the eternal Word of God, so that the Holy Spirit can use it to make us

more like Christ. If you invest yourself in the message of Scripture, God will greatly bless you with understanding and growth in the Christian life.

“But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers...” James 1:22.

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