

A QUICK-REFERENCE GUIDE FOR LISTENERS

The following are some practical suggestions for individuals and families regarding your responsibility as a listener that will help you get the most out of the sermons you hear.

ANTICIPATION: THE LISTENER'S RESPONSIBILITY **BEFORE** THE WORD IS PREACHED

Spiritual Preparations

1. Spend time reading and meditating on God's Word every day (personal quiet time).
2. Men, lead your wife and children in regular times of worship throughout the week (family worship, Bible reading, prayer, and singing).
3. On Saturday night or Sunday morning, take time to get your heart ready for worship.
4. Read a portion of God's Word that focuses on worshipping God and/or personal cleansing from sin.
5. Thank God that through Christ you can come boldly into His presence to worship Him.
6. Seek God's forgiveness for any sins you have failed to confess and repent of during the week.
7. Express to God that you understand that your best, most fervent attempts at worship are nowhere near what He deserves, and beg Him to help you worship Him wholeheartedly in spirit and in truth.
8. Plead with God to make your heart soft and receptive to His Word so that it will take root and grow up to bear lasting fruit in your life.
9. Ask God to graciously illuminate your mind to understand what the Word means and how it applies to your life and to cause you to be a doer and not just a hearer of the Word.
10. Pray for those who will be preaching/teaching God's Word, that His Spirit will empower them to speak clearly and boldly and be powerfully used by Him to accomplish His work in your life and in the life of your church.
11. Take the initiative to make things right with anyone you have sinned against or has sinned against you (your spouse, parents, children, brother, sister, fellow church member, etc.).
12. Come to church with a spirit of anticipation, fully expecting God to speak to you through His Word in ways that will change your life forever.

Physical Preparations

1. Make it a habit to be home on Saturday night (Sunday morning starts Saturday night).
2. Be careful not to do, watch, or read anything that will cause lingering distractions in your mind the next day.
3. Get things ready on Saturday night to alleviate the typical Sunday morning rush (lay out clothes, set the table, write offering check, prepare diaper bag, load car, etc.).
4. Get a good night's sleep so you can be sharp and energetic to worship God and listen to what He has to say to you.
5. Eat a good breakfast that will adequately hold you over until lunch.
6. Work hard at helping one another get ready.
7. Seek to establish and maintain a godly atmosphere on the way to church (listen to praise music, sing, pray, etc.).
8. Arrive at church ten minutes early instead of ten minutes late (plan ahead!).

We are told men ought not to preach without preparation. Granted. But we add, men ought not to hear without preparation. Which, do you think, needs the most preparation, the sower or the ground? I would have the sower come with clean hands, but I would have the ground well-plowed and harrowed, well-turned over, and the clods broken before the seed comes in. It seems to me that there is more preparation needed by the ground than by the sower, more by the hearer than by the preacher.

C. H. Spurgeon

ATTENTION: THE LISTENER'S RESPONSIBILITY WHILE THE WORD IS PREACHED

1. Greet one another warmly when you arrive at church.
2. Sit down a few minutes before the service starts, and spend a few moments in silent prayer to prepare your heart for what you are about to hear.
3. Follow along in your own Bible when the Scripture is read, taking special note of the verses that most apply to you.
4. Sing joyfully and enthusiastically, thinking about the words and considering them personal prayers of praise or petition.
5. Listen attentively to the prayers that are prayed, and respond by affirming what you hear with an appropriate "Amen."
6. Take notes during the sermon so you have something tangible to take home and reflect on. Write down the outline and any key principles and implications you want to remember.
7. Seek to encourage the preacher by your attentiveness while he is preaching (maintain eye contact, smile, nod your head, say "amen," etc.).
8. Fight off all distractions (concentrate, sit up front, etc.), and make sure you are not a distraction to others (talking, fidgeting, getting up and down during the service, etc.).
9. Exercise discernment by making sure what the preacher says matches up with what God has said by comparing everything you hear to the Scriptures.

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.

Westminster Confession Larger Catechism

APPLICATION: THE LISTENER'S RESPONSIBILITY **AFTER THE WORD IS PREACHED**

On the Lord's Day

1. After the service is over, let the preacher know specifically how the message encouraged or challenged you.
2. Get together with family and/or friends for lunch or in the afternoon or evening to discuss what you learned at church. Ask each other the following questions:
 - What was the Sunday school lesson/sermon about?
 - How did God speak to you personally?
 - How does your life need to change as a result of what you heard?
3. Spend time in prayer for one another.
4. Thank God for what He taught you from His Word.
5. Ask God to help you to live out what you learned.
6. Ask God to continue to work in the hearts of everyone who heard the Word that day (believers and unbelievers).

During the Week

1. Read over the verses covered in the sermon, along with your sermon notes, and mull over in your mind what you learned and how you plan to change. You may want to write out specific answers to these questions:
 - How does God want me to change (a specific belief, behavior, or attitude)?
 - What must I do to change?
 - What is the first step I must take to change?
 - Where and when will I begin?
2. Attend a small group with other like-minded believers who can provide the necessary encouragement and accountability to follow through with the changes you need to make in your life.
3. Begin preparing your heart in anticipation of the next sermon you will hear.

Congregations never honor God more than by reverently listening to His Word with full purpose of praising and obeying Him once they see what He has done ... and what they are called to do.

J. I. Packer