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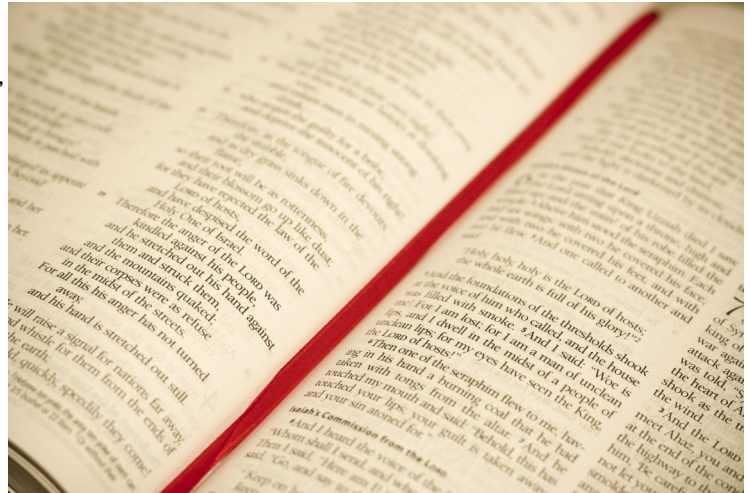
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“He who has ears to hear let him hear.” ~Matthew 13:9

- 1) Read Matthew 13:1-9. What did you think the meaning of the parable was before hearing Jesus' explanation? Is there anything from the sermon or passage that you found confusing, surprising or encouraging?
- 2) Define what a parable is in your own words. In vs. 18-23, Jesus explains the parable. What is the source of change for the Christian? What keeps it from working? What does this tell us about the relationship between a Christian and their mind?
- 3) What is your preferred way of reading and studying Scripture? Do you have a plan for this next year?
- 4) Why does Jesus teach in parables? How should this teaching shape our prayers for ourselves and others? How should it increase our gratitude and wonder?
- 5) George Whitfield in a sermon long ago gave some instructions on how to listen well. They are on the back of this page. Take the time to discuss why listening and understanding are two different things. The suggestions were for how to listen to a sermon. I would add that they are helpful in being intentional in listening to the Word. Feel free to add to the list.
- 6) Take time to pray that God would continue to change you through the power of the Seed and the Grace of the Sower as you read and listen to the Scriptures.

Jesus said, 'Therefore consider carefully how you listen' (Luke 8:18). Here are some cautions and directions, in order to help you hear sermons and read God's Word with profit and advantage.

- 1. Come to hear the Word, not out of curiosity, but from a sincere desire to know and do your duty.** It'd not helpful to us or pleasing to God to listen in order to be entertained rather than have our hearts changed.
- 2. Give diligent heed to the things that are spoken from the Word of God.** If an earthly king were to issue a royal proclamation, and the life or death of his subjects entirely depended on performing or not performing its conditions, how eager would they be to hear what those conditions were! And shall we not pay the same respect to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and lend an attentive ear to His ministers and teachers when they are declaring, in His name, how our pardon, peace, and happiness may be secured? \
- 3. Do not entertain even the least prejudice against the minister.** Remember that the preachers and teachers are beggars showing other beggars where to find bread. They are sinners too. Jesus Himself was not listened to because they were offended by His humanity and His ordinariness .
- 4. Be careful not to depend too much on a preacher or Bible teacher, or think more highly of him than you ought to think.** Preferring one teacher over another has often caused conflict and division in Christ's church. See 1 Corinthians 1:12; 2:3-5).
- 5. Make particular application to your own hearts of everything that is delivered.** When our Savior was discoursing at the last supper with His beloved disciples and foretold that one of them should betray Him, each of them immediately applied it to his own heart and said, 'Lord, is it I?' (Matt. 26:22). Ask the text how both the bad and good news apply to you before worrying about others (Matt. 7:3).
- 6. Pray to the Lord, before, during, and after every sermon,** to give the minister/teacher with power to speak, and to grant you a will and ability to put into practice what he shall show from the Book of God to be your duty.

Paul begged the Ephesians to pray to God for help communicating the gospel. If an apostle need prayers so also do the ordinary preachers and teachers of the Word.

If only all who hear me this day would seriously apply their hearts to practice what has now been told them! How ministers would see Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven, and people find the Word preached sharper than a two-edged sword and mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the devil's strongholds!

*adapted from: <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/howtolisten.html>