

Draw Near 4

Scripture, March 24

Purpose

Hearing is so important as Christians. We need to be able to hear each other. We need to be able to hear God. God speaks to us through his Word: the Bible. The best way to hear Him is to read it slowly and carefully. This week we will look at one way to study and meditate on scripture.

Sharing Time

Has everyone completed all four devotionals from this past week? There is no penalty for not completing them. They are there to help you and guide you. Let's share for a minute what we have learned from those you have done.

Learning Experience

1. Introduction:

1. Hearing is a challenge for our children, especially our teen children. We love them. But we are often frustrated when we say things to them and they do not hear, they do not get it! The same thing can be true of co-workers or husbands or wives!
2. Unfortunately, when we read the Bible, we find Jesus fighting the same battle with His followers: Matthew 7:24, 26; 11:15; 13:9, 13. These are all examples of His followers needing encouragement to listen, and examples of them not listening well.
3. Read Ephesians 3:17-19. Here Paul writes about "knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." How can we attain that kind of knowledge? Where does it come from? It has to come from the knowledge of scripture first. To surpass knowledge, you must begin with knowledge.
4. How well do you know the scripture? How well do you listen to God through the Bible? If you are like me, you may find you need time to soak up a passage. Well, there are some practices that believers have done over the past 2000 years to become closer to God that can help us focus our minds and hearts on God's Word. The Latin term is "Lectio Divina", but if you like the English term: "Divine Reading".
5. Today we are going to talk about how to do it, then we will have some time to practice before the end of class.

2. Divine Reading of Scripture:

1. First Step: "Reading" This practice requires you to read a text three times. The first time is a simple reading of the text. This is best done reading it out loud - as it was done for the first several centuries after it was written. But as you read it, read it slowly paying attention to any words or phrases that jump out at you. It may be helpful to have some paper nearby to write down these words or phrases.
 2. Second Step: "Meditating" The second time you read the text - meditate on it. So read through the text, then choose one word or phrase and meditate on how that phrase is used in the text. You can ask several questions at this time: "Why did this word or phrase catch my attention?"; "What is it about my life that needs to hear this word today?" Your goal is to hear what God is saying to you from scripture.
 3. Third Step: "Prayer" Read the text again, and this time respond to it by confessing sin if that is what is needed, or prayerful gratitude for something God reveals or has done for you, or if He has committed you to action, making plans on how that can happen.
 4. Fourth Step: "Contemplating" Now, instead of reading it again, spend some time in silence with God, allowing God to rest in your soul with His calming and wonderful words. Assuring you of His great and powerful love.
3. Listening to Jesus' Voice:
1. Fresh out of college, Priscilla Shirer landed a job hosting a live televised show on CBS. She was very nervous because so much can go wrong when you are live! What if my train of thought derails on air? What if my mind goes blank? The producer knew she was thinking these things, so he introduced her to a marvelous invention: The Ear! It is a small device that fit into her ear. Hidden from viewers, it would allow Shirer to hear the producer while on air. No matter what happens, the producer could guide her through. (Priscilla Shirer, *Discerning the Voice of God*, 2007)
 2. Would that not be nice in life? When your kid asks the tough question to have an ear to God? When you are confronted at work by an angry co-worker, wouldn't it be great to have an ear to the Father?
 3. Well, if God is always around us, and always knowing, He is in a way always there ready to help, but how can we hear Him? The obvious answer is through listening.
 4. Read John 10:1-10. The sheep listen to the shepherd. There are a lot of other voices out there to listen to, and they can work to drown out the shepherd, but the shepherd is always there, we just have to listen. Lectio Divina can help with that.
 5. We have God's Word in our hand, we only have to listen to it effectively. This is one method among many.

4. Now let's practice this as a class - I will guide you through this using Mark 10:46-52.
 1. Before we begin, a moment of silence to put ourselves in the presence of God.
 2. Step 1: "Reading" Read the text out loud, read it slowly paying attention to any words or phrases that jump out at you. It may be helpful to have some paper nearby to write them down.
 3. Step 2: "Meditating" Read the text again, and this time enter it in your imagination, smell the smells, hear Jesus speak, hear the people speak. Imagination is God-given and can be quite helpful used in a godly way. What do you hear and experience as you watch this scene unfold?
 4. Step 3: "Prayer" Let's spend some time writing down our response to the passage. Then spend some time in quiet prayer - what do we need to say to God about this?
 5. Step 4: "Contemplating" Now, instead of reading it again, spend some time in silence with God, allowing God to rest in your soul with His calming and wonderful words. Assuring you of His great and powerful love.
5. Conclusion:
 1. Please do not be like the Israelites of Isaiah 42:18-20:
 "Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see!
 Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send?
 Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the Lord?
 You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen."

Practice

1. I cannot emphasize enough that these practices are not to be done for God's approval - God already loves you as much as He will ever love you. These practices are for you! They will help you come to love God more, love life more, love others more, and love your possessions less.
2. This week you have four devotionals on the Practices Sheet. Each will take about 10 minutes. You can do them Monday through Thursday, or Wednesday through Saturday, or every other day. However you want to do them. They are offered to you for help in your walk. Next week, as we come to class let's talk about what we experienced this week with God.
3. We have been given a wonderful gift. We have four great opportunities to use this gift this week. Be sure to find the 10 minutes on four days this week to practice this marvelous gift. Start today and do it!