

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Listen Carefully

Luke 8:4-21

October 7th, 2018

Main Point

Hearing the truth of God's word is a critical component to spiritual growth. However, we must pay close attention to the truth in order to be changed by it.

Getting Started

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who is the best listener you know and why?

What is the difference between hearing something and listening to something?

There are few things more rewarding than knowing you have been heard and understood. Experiences like that inspire us to be great listeners ourselves. This is good for many reasons, not least of which is the desire God has for us to hear His Word and respond obediently. This is our topic of discussion today. As you read this passage, pay attention to how many times Jesus mentions *hearing* or *listening* to the Word of God. Consider the ways in which you hear God's Word and apply what he says to you.

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Luke 8:4-8.

What is a parable? Why does Jesus use parables?

What did Jesus describe in this particular parable? Is this a parable about the sower, the seeds, or the soil? Why?

What were the predominant characteristics of each kind of soil?

From this point forward, Jesus used the parable approach to teach much more. In an agricultural society, everyone would have understood what happened when a sower went out into a field to sow his seed. At least one path ran through most fields, and much of the terrain in Israel was rocky under a thin layer of topsoil. Dropping seeds along such paths was futile. Many fields had thorn bushes along the perimeters. Seeds falling there had no chance to grow and survive until harvest time. Others, however, did fall on fertile soil and produced a bumper crop (100 times what was sown).

Why do you think so many people heard the words of Jesus but then didn't understand them?

What about Jesus' identity and/or mission made Him hard to listen to?

Do you see similar things happening in culture today? In what ways do you see people hearing the words of Jesus but not really listening to them?

Too many people suffer from selective hearing. They either hear only what they want to hear, or they refuse to understand what they do hear. Far worse are those who hear and understand but do not act on what they hear. *Anyone who has ears to hear should listen* is a challenge to carefully consider the story and its hidden meaning and practical implications.

Have a volunteer read Luke 8:9-15.

Based on Jesus' interpretation, what character traits would be representative of each kind of soil?

Which of the soils produce similar results? What do these results portray? Which soil is unique and how so?

In His parable, Jesus described four types of soil, with soil representing people who hear the gospel. The first three refer to people who are not saved but who have varying responses to the seed of the Word of God. Then Jesus contrasted those types of people with people whose hearts are good ground. The same good seed fell on all four types of soil, but only this last example refers to a person who has been born again.

Do you know people represented by each of these soils? What kind of "soil" best represents you now? Five years ago?

When we share our faith with others, we are the farmer spreading the seed. What help do you get from this parable about sharing your faith?

According to verse 15, what are the characteristics of a person who has been born again?

First, the person hears the Word of God with an honest and good heart. The second characteristic of people whose hearts are good soil is that they hold on to Christ's teaching. Finally, Jesus said the seed in the good soil would bear fruit with endurance. True believers make a faith commitment that endures to the end. Their lives are spiritually productive, and they consistently live in obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Have another volunteer read Luke 8:16-18.

According to Luke 8:16-18, what's wrong with putting a light under a basket or a bed? What's wrong with acting as though faith in Christ is a private matter?

What differences have you noticed in your life when you are applying God's Word and living in His truth, compared to times when you stray from it?

How does the parable of the lamp relate to the parable of the sower?

The truth of the parable and the illustration of the lamp point out the importance of how people listen—what they do with what they hear. Echoing the words of verse 8b, Jesus urged the disciples to take care. They should not be “hearers only” (James 1:22), but rather should apply what they have heard to their lives. People genuinely committed to Jesus will show it by what they do and how they grow spiritually.

Have another volunteer read Luke 8:19-21.

Who came to see Jesus and why could they not see him?

How did Jesus respond to those who brought to his attention that his family could not see him?

Who did Jesus identify as his true mother and brothers? What did Jesus mean by responding this way?

Again, Jesus emphasizes the role of hearing and doing the Word of God as the mark of a true follower of Jesus. Disciples hear and respond to God's Word, period. Those who follow Jesus oftentimes have more in common with their brothers and sister in Christ than with those in their biological family who do not follow Jesus.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What active ways can we till the soil of our hearts to make us ready to receive the word of God? Before worship? Before our group? Before our personal time with God?

Keep in mind that faith in God and the power to obey God come from God Himself. And yet he tells us to pay close attention to how we hear from him.

Why is it not enough to just hear the word of God? What does putting it into practice reveal about our commitment to Him? Tell God you need help to hear and obey him! Let him know about your desire to follow him. Spend time praying together as a group, asking God to help you hear and obey the voice of God.

Is there something you have been hearing and not doing? Repent and decide to obey Christ! Tell someone in your group about your decision to turn to Jesus in this area.

Prayer

As a closing prayer activity, spend time listening to the prayer requests of the people in your group. Encourage each group member to share. In addition to basic needs, ask

your group members to voice specific prayer requests concerning areas of their lives where they are struggling to apply God's Word.

Commentary

8:1-3 As Jesus was traveling and preaching in Galilee, He was accompanied by the Twelve and several well-to-do women who, out of gratitude for being healed by Jesus, financially supported Him and the apostles. Mary Magdalene (i.e., of the town of Magdala), who became a well-known follower (Mt 27:61), is introduced here. Joanna, who is also mentioned in 24:10, was married to a man who held a responsible position under Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. Nothing else is known about Susanna.

8:5-8 From this point forward, Jesus used the parable approach much more, the purpose of which is explained in verses 9-10. In an agricultural society, everyone would have understood what happened when a sower went out into a field to sow his seed. At least one path ran through most fields, and much of the terrain in Israel was rocky under a thin layer of topsoil. Dropping seeds along such paths was futile. Many fields had thorn bushes along the perimeters. Seeds falling there had no chance to grow and survive until harvest time. Others, however, did fall on fertile soil and produced a bumper crop (100 times what was sown).

8:9-10 His disciples, probably indicating the Twelve, inquired of Jesus what He meant. The introductory then suggests the disciples were motivated by the parable to know more about its meaning. Jesus complimented the disciples because they asked about His teaching. Others did not want to understand, did not put their faith in Jesus, and did not understand. Thus, they fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9, which Jesus quoted. After calling for the crowd to listen responsibly to His parable, Jesus explained that some harden themselves to the gospel but those who are willing to trust Him can understand its truth.

8:11-12 In explaining the parable to the Twelve, Jesus focused on the one consistent aspect, the seed. While different types of soil are described, the sower did not discriminate as to where he sowed. He distributed the seed—the word of God—all along the way. Jesus described four types of soil. The first three refer to people who are not saved but who have varying responses to the seed of the Word of God. The hard soil of the path represented people whose hearts were hardened. In the agriculture of Jesus' day, fields were crisscrossed with paths where people normally walked from one place to another, wearing the soil into a compacted state, making it resistant to the seed strewn by the hand of a sower. This soil rejects the seed. It represents those who allow the Devil to take the Word from their hearts. Jesus was not saying that the Devil had the power to take the gospel out of the hearts of those who had been saved. Instead, the phrase comes from the Greek word that means "from" or "away from" as opposed to "from within."

8:13 Referring to the seed falling on rocky soil, Jesus depicted people who liked what they heard but who did not receive His message or teaching into their hearts. Many

people hear the good news of Jesus and welcome the idea of being saved but do not receive Jesus by faith into their lives. When a time of testing comes, the proof of their lack of receiving Christ is shown by their departure.

8:14 The thorny soil represents people who are not committed to Christ, even though they have heard the Word of God. Instead of making a faith commitment to Jesus, they merely add their thoughts of Christ to the periphery of their lives. Other matters, such as worries, riches and pleasures of life are more central to their concerns. Consequently, such people do not produce mature fruit that would denote seed that had taken root in their lives.

8:15 Lastly, Jesus contrasted the first three types of people with those whose hearts are good ground. The same good seed fell on all four types of soil, but only this last example refers to a person who has been born again. Only those who genuinely commit themselves to Jesus Christ will be saved, and they will live consistently in obedience to Him and His Word.

8:16-17 Jesus used the illustration of a lamp to show the absurdity of someone claiming to be a believer but trying to keep it a secret from others. A true believer displays faith not in a self-righteous or self-glorifying way but, so others may see the light and come to Christ.

8:18 The truth of the parable and the illustration of the lamp point out the importance of how people listen—what they do with what they hear. Whoever hears, understands, and acts with commitment based on God's Word will gain more insight into that Word. However, those who have not received Christ's teaching will lose what they think they have. Thus, Jesus gave further instructions on listening to Him, calling for genuine commitment that is openly shared and leads to continued spiritual growth.

8:19-21 The brothers of Jesus are most naturally understood as the sons born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus' birth. For Jesus, spiritual relationship, were more important than physical ones. Thus, his real family is made up of those who hear the Word of God and do it.