

"Are You Listening?"

by Wilson Adams

Our youngest, Luke (age 6), likes to reminisce about days past when he was a "kid" - you know, when he was three or four. Like the Sunday morning in his younger years when he mounted the pulpit after most folks had already left the church building and announced to the few who remained: "Sit down, I'm gonna preach!" So we did. And he did. "Repent!" he yelled as he glared at his audience. So far so good. "Be baptized!" he shouted enthusiastically. He then slapped his hands, leaned low and yelled, "Are you listenin'?" Those who stayed said it was the best sermon of the day. Hmm.

Out of the mouth of a babe came a sermon title that cannot be improved upon. Are you listening? It's a good question.

Scripture has always placed a premium on hearing God's voice. The great command from God to Israel through His servant Moses was this: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" The people in Nehemiah's day were commended because they "were attentive to the book of the law" (Neh.8:3). "Blessed is the man who listens to me" proclaimed God through Solomon.

It's no different in the New Testament. Jesus began the story of the farmer sowing his field with the words: "Listen to this!" (Mk.4:3). Rev. 3:20 issues the great invitation, which is conditioned upon hearing. Every letter to the seven churches of Asia concludes with these words: "He who has an ear, let him hear." And may I remind you of this: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Are you listening?

People of the Book

There was a time when members of the church of Christ were noted for being "people of the Book" i.e., people who knew their Bible. It was a stigma of the highest compliment. But no more. And for one simple reason -we don't read the Bible like we used to.

If there is one thing I emphasize in my preaching work it is encouraging, motivating and persuading people to read their Bible every day. Every day. There are some things you do daily. You eat. You drink. You breathe. You read your Bible. Those things are non-negotiable.

I write these words the first of January at a time when many resolve to make personal improvements. And that's a good thing. Some need to begin a discipline of exercise and weight loss. Others need to be more diligent when it comes to organization.

Still others need to be more in touch with their family. But ALL OF US need to resolve (and stick with it!) to spend a few minutes every day in the Book.

Read the Bible a Little at a Time

The Bible is not a newspaper to be skimmed over but a gold mine waiting to be quarried (Prov.2:4-5). I've had people boast - "Bro. Adams, I just finished reading the Bible cover to cover." Good. Now how much of it do you remember? Did you read the Bible just to say you read the Bible or... did it affect you and change you? I think those are fair questions.

When God sent the manna in the Old Testament, He didn't dump the whole load all at once. He sent enough each day to provide for their needs. I think that's a good principle to employ when it comes to reading the Bible.

I would rather dedicate the year to reading and rereading one book of the Bible - Mark, James, Ecclesiastes, etc., (it's Luke & Acts this year) so that at year's end I know that book frontward and backward. Seems to me that would be more helpful than superficial skimming.

Here it is: Pick one book of the Bible and find a quiet place. Start on any day with verse 1 and read until you find the one verse that hits home. And when you find that verse, STOP. Yes, STOP. You've gathered your manna and quarried your gold. Underline and highlight that verse. Make that verse your "soul food" for the day. Then bow your head and ask God to help you apply that truth.

And the next day, go gather a little more

You don't have to spend an hour and read four chapters a day to learn the Bible. It would be advantageous if we would spend a few minutes in smaller sections and give some thought-time to what we read.

Your Bible is the best friend you have. Wear it out. Invest some time every day reading the Word. There will be nothing you can do that will profit you more. Are you listening?