

How Should You Hear the Word of God Preached?

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Q. 160. What is required of those that hear the Word preached? [From the Westminster Confession, 1647]

A. 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.

1. You should attend to it with **diligence**.

It is as if you were going to meet with the king of the land himself, one would most certainly plan accordingly, come with punctuality and listen with diligence. So it must be for the children of God who listen to the preacher herald God's Word. God's people must diligently come to be fed divine truth. An earnestness must be exuded from God's people as they have one primary object on their minds on the Lord's Day — God. Nothing else captivates the believer's mind like Christ does. Nothing ravishes the believer's heart like Christ does. Nothing wins the affections and nothing woos the saint's love more than the saving gospel of God's grace freely bestowed in Christ's death on behalf of repentant sinners. So come! Come with diligence! Come with Christ-centeredness! Come with eagerness! Come with expectancy! Come with frequency! Come with sobriety and expectation to meet with, commune with, and hear from the Living God.

2. You should attend to it with **preparation**.

As one would prepare for an important business meeting, so God's people should also prepare to meet with the God of all creation. To prepare is to make oneself ready to meet with, come before, and stand in the presence of God Almighty. Preparation must begin with prayer. It must continue with sufficient sleep. Preparation includes the reading of the scripture text that will be preached on the following day. Preparation demands arriving to corporate worship early to meditate, pray, expect, and adore God. Without preparation, one cannot worship properly. One gets out of worship what one puts into worship. Without preparation, little heart warming and soul feeding will occur. As one would prepare equipment, leave early and take diligence to arrive on time to a sporting or entertainment event, how much more should God's child prepare his heart, his Bible, his wife, his children and leave early and arrive promptly to worship God. A prepared heart is a ready heart. A prepared heart is a humble and willing heart. A prepared heart is a moldable and shapeable heart.

3. You should attend to it with **prayer**.

To pray is to take hold of God's power and beseech God to rend the heavens, come down, descend powerfully, and with supernatural power. Only God can convert. God's people must pray for the conversion of sinners, the edification of God's people, and the magnification of God's Triune name and work in salvation. God's people must pray in repentance to rid themselves of all known sin before the Word comes. God's people must pray that the minister of the Word would speak with supernatural power. Indeed, the mouth is that of a man but the voice is that of God. Pray for unction — the sovereign, effectual power of the Spirit in and through the preached Word — as the man of God preaches the Word of God to the people of God. All God's people should pray for God's help on the way to hear the sermon preached. Believers must pray and ask the Lord to grant assistance while the Word is heard. And saints must pray for a soft, humble, and willing heart to specifically apply and implement the sermon throughout the course of the week. O the danger of not hearing sermons well! O the danger of distractions while the sermon is going forth! O the danger of hearing the Word and allowing Satan, like a pecking bird, to snatch the seed of the Word so that it bears no fruit. Nothing prepares a man of God for worship more than earnest wrestling with God in prayer. Expect God to work. Pray for God to revive. Adore God as preeminently worthy! Confess! Rejoice! Pray!

Just as people of old would bake bread on Saturday evenings so it would be warm on Sunday morning, so the people of God should read, pray, and study the Scriptures on Saturday nights so that their hearts are warmed and prepared for worship on Sunday.