

Expository Listening

A Handbook for Hearing and
Doing God's Word
(Ken Ramey)

Summary

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Expository Listening

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Preaching is not a one-sided endeavor. For you to receive the maximum benefit from a sermon, you must partner with the preacher.

Nothing creates a more explosive, electrifying, life-changing atmosphere than when the lightning bolts from a Spirit-empowered preacher hit the lightning rods of a Spirit-illuminated listener. -Ken Ramey

Ramey presents this book as a tool to help us become:

- Discerning hearers of His Word.
- Diligent doers of His Word.
- Devoted lovers of His Word.

1-Biblical Audiology: a Theology of Listening

Four Theological Statements about Listening

1-God has spoken and commands us to listen to and obey what He has said.	God's nature and Word	Heb 1:1-2 ; 2Pet 1:20-21 ; 2Tim 3:16-17 ; John 14:24 ; John 5:24-25 ; Psa 138:2 ; Heb 4:12-13 ; Mat 17:5
2-We all fail to listen to and obey God and deserve punishment from Him.	man's nature and sin	Rom 5:12 ; Psa 51:5 ; Eph 2:1-3 ; Rom 8:7-8 ; John 8:43 ; 1Cor 1:18 ; 1Cor 2:14 ; John 9:27 ; Heb 5:11 ;
3-God grants us the ability to listen to and obey Him by His Holy Spirit, whom we receive through faith in Jesus Christ.	Holy Spirit & Christ's nature and salvation	John 3:3-8 ; Eph 1:13 ; Eph 6:17 ; 1Pet 1:23 ; Rom 12:2 ; Eph 4:22-24 ; Luke 8:21 ; John 18:37 ; Heb 4:2 ; John 14:16 ; 1The 2:13 ; 1John 4:5-6
4-God promises to bless us both now and for all eternity if we listen to and obey Him.	sanctification and future	Pro 1:33 ; Luke 11:28 ; John 6:63

2-Hearing with Your Heart

The reason we respond differently to sermons we hear has more to do with our hearts than our ears. In the parable of the soils, Jesus explained how this happens. ([Luke 8:5-8](#))

- Jesus Christ is the sower, the one who preaches the Word.
- The seed is the Word of God.
- The soil on which the seed falls is the human heart.

Four Different Heart Responses to God's Word:

1. Hard-packed path: The heart is unreceptive to God's Word because sin has hardened it. ([Rom 1:18](#), [Heb 3:13](#), [2Cor 4:4](#))
2. Inch-deep earth: The heart impulsively responds to God's Word without committing to the cost. ([Mark 4:17](#), [1Cor 5:11](#), [1John 2:19](#))
3. Death by weeds: The heart receives God Word, but preoccupation with things of the world chokes it to death. ([Mat 6:24-25](#), [1Tim 6:9-10](#), [1John 2:15-16](#))
4. The right soil: The heart understands the Word and commits to the cost. ([Mark 4:20](#), [Luke 8:19-21](#), [Gal 5:22-23](#), [Jas 1:22](#))

3-Harrowing Your Heart

Before you plant, you need to break up the soil to soften it and make it ready to receive the seed. [\(Hos 10:12\)](#)

Way to Prepare Your Heart to Hear His Word:

- Read and meditate on God’s Word each day. [\(Psa 1:1-3\)](#) To meditate is to think intensely about the text, repeatedly mulling over it like a cow chewing its cud. Begin by asking yourself the following questions when you read a Bible passage.

2Timothy 3:16	
What did I learn?	Teaching
Where do I fall short?	Reproof
What do I need to do about it?	Correction
How can I make this a consistent part of my life?	Training

- Pray that God: makes your heart receptive to His Word, shows you how His Word applies to your life, and speaks through your preacher to transform people’s live for His glory. [\(Heb 13:21, 2The 3:1\)](#)
- Humbly confess your sins to prepare yourself to receive God’s Word. [\(Psa 51\)](#) Unconfessed sin is like wax in your ears. Sin deceives us, leading us away from God, making our hearts unprepared to hear His Word. [\(Gen 3:13, 2Cor 11:3\)](#)
- Reduce your media intake. Media saturation has a dulling effect on your heart.
- Schedule your week around worship service. Get adequate sleep the night before service. Eat a healthy meal before service. Arrive early with an expectant heart. [\(Psa 119:18\)](#)
- Be consistent in attending worship services. When you must miss a message, watch it later online.
- Worship with all your heart.
- Listen with diligent discernment. God holds you responsible for determining the biblical accuracy of what the preacher says. [\(1John 4:1, 2John 1:7-11\)](#)

4-The Itching Ear Epidemic

Unsound teaching is on the rise because people want to have their ears tickled instead of being confronted with the truth. [\(2Tim 4:1-4\)](#) They only want encouragement and entertainment.

Sound preaching originates directly from the Bible. The preacher explains what the passage was saying to the original audience then shows how it applies to us today. [expository preaching]

If, after listening to a sermon, you do not have a better understanding of God’s purpose for your life, then either:

- What you heard was not sound preaching.
- Your heart was not prepared to hear God’s Word.

To avoid falling prey to the itching ear epidemic:

- Learn to discern truth from error. [\(Mat 24:23-24, Acts 20:29-31, 2Pet 2:1-3\)](#)
- Examine God’s Word to see if what you heard or read is biblical. [\(Acts 17:11, 1The 5:21-22\)](#)

Bible Test	See if it matches the Bible.	Isa 8:20, 1Tim 6:3, 2Tim 1:13
Spirit Test	Listen to the Spirit.	2Tim 1:14, 1John 2:27
Jesus Test	See if it matches how the Bible portrays Jesus.	1John 4:1-3, 2John 1:7-11

- If something passes the test, embrace it wholeheartedly. [\(Titus 1:9, Jude 1:3\)](#)
- If it fails the test, separate yourself from it. [\(Rom 12:9\)](#)

5-The Discerning Listener

To protect ourselves from false teachers, we must train ourselves to hear God's voice. ([John 10:2-5](#))

How to Sift Out False Teachers

- Test everything you hear or read against what the Bible says. ([Eph 2:20](#), [1Tim 6:3-5](#), [2Tim 1:13](#)).
- Notice whether the teacher's words help believers grow in their walk with Christ. ([Eph 4:11-16](#))
After listening:
 - ▶ Do they grow in their love for God and others? ([John 13:35](#))
 - ▶ Do they turn away from sin? ([Mat 5:8](#))

- ▶ Does their conscience let them know what is right and wrong? ([Rom 2:14-15](#))
- ▶ Is their faith sincere? ([2Tim 1:5](#))

- Observe the teacher's demeanor. Is it humble or conceited? ([1Tim 6:3-5](#), [Titus 1:10-11](#))
- Assess how clearly and accurately the teacher explains salvation. ([2Tim 1:9](#), [Titus 2:11-14](#), [Rom 3:20](#), [Gal 1:8](#))

The Law	shows us why we need salvation
The Gospel	shows us how we can get saved

6-Practice What You Hear

Listening to God's Word is hard work. You must:

1. Determine if what you heard is actually what God's Word says.
2. Look at your life to see what changes God desires.
3. Apply those changes as you lean on Him.

Failure to apply God's Word is not simply lazy listening. It is sin. ([Jas 4:17](#))

The Receptive Heart:

- Is utterly teachable. ([Jas 1:19-20](#))

attentive, careful listener	Mat 13:9 , Luke 8:18 , Rev 2:7
reserved, careful speaker	Mat 12:36 , Pro 10:19 , Ecc 5:1-2
contrite, humble listener	Gal 4:16

- Purifies itself before listening. ([Jas 1:21](#), [Eph 4:22](#), [1Pet 2:1-2](#))

- Approaches God's Word with humility. ([Heb 4:12](#), [1Sam 3:10](#))
- Welcomes God's Word. ([Jas 1:21](#), [1The 2:13](#))
- Takes God's Word seriously. ([2Tim 3:15-17](#), [1Pet 1:23](#), [2Cor 2:15-16](#))

Listening Is:

- Obeying. ([Deu 6:3-4](#), [Luke 6:47-49](#), [Luke 8:21](#), [Luke 11:28](#))
- Loving. ([Deu 6:5-9](#), [Psa 119:127](#), [John 14:15](#), [1John 2:3-5](#))