

## INTRODUCTION

A week or I had the privilege of having lunch with Ray and Martha Phillips. Ray showed me his clinic where he tests people's hearing. And as I was looking at all of his equipment, I thought, Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could devise some piece of equipment that could give people a diagnostic test to see how well you hear the word of God? I'm convinced that some people hear it better than others, and hope you'll submit yourself to a spiritual examination. And at the end of this Bible message maybe you'll be able to answer the question: How well do I hear the word of God?

When you don't hear the right thing you can get in trouble. An elderly woman said to her husband, "I'm so proud of you." He said, "And I'm tired of you too. If you hear the word of God wrong you can get into deep trouble."

James 1:19-26 (NIV). "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."

There are six ways that you are to hear the word of God.

### 1. HEAR THE WORD QUICKLY

"Everyone should be quick to listen." (vs. 19) That means when you hear the word of God, you ought to be on the edge of your seat, leaning forward. You want to be paying close attention to the word of God not be quick to hear.

Have you ever been in a hospital room and you just had a test and the doctor is coming in to give you a report on that test results? I've been in many hospital rooms when the doctor comes to give result of a biopsy or the results of the surgery. It's amazing how well people listen in that situation. Family sits there and they listen intently as the doctor shares with them. They hang on to every single word he says. The Bible says that's the way we ought to listen to the word of God.

When you go to your Sunday school class or your Bible study class, are you that way? Do you really want to hear what the word has to say? When you come to worship service and the Word is going to be preached, are you excited? Do you want to be quick to hear? When you open your

Bible in your private devotions every morning, are you so quick to hear what the word of God says or are you nonchalant in the way you handle the word of God?

Being quick to hear means you are listening all the time, wanting to do what the Word says. There is an interesting story in 2 Samuel 23 about the life of King David when he was running from Saul and he makes a statement. "Oh, that I could drink from the well of Bethlehem!" David was from Bethlehem and there was something about the water from that well at Bethlehem that would quench his thirst. And here was David, out in the wilderness. Saul and his armies held Bethlehem. David was just wishing out loud and the Bible says three of his mighty men overheard that. So they went to Bethlehem and risked their very lives and brought back a container of water for David from the well of Bethlehem. They were quick to listen, they heard what he said and they were quick to respond to it. That's the way we ought to be. When the word of God says something, we should be quick to hear it and then go and do it.

As a pastor, I understand that you have to be careful what you say, because a lot of times people hear it and then react on it. I have learned not to say from the pulpit what my favorite food is, because then I get fed that all the time, because some people are just that quick to listen and I appreciate that. One time when I was a youth pastor in college, I made the terrible mistake of saying how much I loved red velvet cake—I don't like it anymore—but at that time, I really loved red velvet cake and I said it from the pulpit. There was a high school named Priscilla Cox, she wasn't very good at baking, but every weekend when I got to the church, there on my desk was a big red velvet cake. Cindy and I were married and we tried to eat one piece of a couple of those cakes. It was as dry as cardboard, the icing was hard. It just tasted awful and we were forced to put it in the garbage. I didn't want to tell her and crush her spirit. One weekend, after she had been doing this for six or eight weeks, she put me on the spot. "How do you like my red velvet cake?" I didn't want to lie so I said, "Priscilla, a cake like yours doesn't stay around our house very long." At least she was quick to listen, and that's good. That's the way we ought to be with the word of God.

## **2. HONOR THE WORD QUIETLY**

"Be slow to speak." (vs. 19) When you hear the word, don't just immediately argue with it and say something else. Listen to the word and honor it quietly. I tell my two girls, why do you think God gave you two ears and only one mouth? It's because he wants you listen at least twice as much as you talk.

In the book of James there is a lot to say about the tone. I'll be giving a message later in this series called "Hung by the Tongue." Because I believe a person's mouth can get them in trouble more than anything else in their life. But by the same token, your tongue to be a tremendous blessing in your life. And that's what this verse is talking about. Don't be so quick to speak. Have you ever met anybody who has a hair-trigger tongue? It doesn't take much to set them off, talking as fast as they can. Sometimes you wonder if they just like to talk to hear themselves talk. The book of Proverbs says, "He who holds his tongue is wise." (Proverbs 10:19) My daddy used to say you can keep your mouth shut and people will only suspect you're a fool,

but you can open your mouth and then that will settle the issue for sure. So don't be so quick to speak when you hear the Word of God.

### **3. HANDLE THE WORD CALMLY**

"Be slow to become angry." (vs. 19) Some of you who have a problem with losing your temper. Your temper is much too valuable a thing to lose. The Bible has a lot to say about anger and wrath and how you should not be quick to get angry. The Bible says, "be angry, but sin not; do not let the sun go down on your wrath." The Bible says about God is slow to anger. He is long-suffering and slow to anger. God doesn't lose his temper. Unlike many people I know, their temper is right on the surface, and so easily, they lose it in a flash. I want to tell you different. You will not have victory in the Christian life until you can learn to control that evil temper.

I guess it's everywhere. I was driving down on the loop a few weeks ago and I was stopped at a light. I took my eye off the light, and I was the first one in line. There was a red pickup truck behind me and the light changed. It couldn't have been green more than three seconds, even the cars next to me hadn't gone yet. Apparently this guy behind me had his eye on the light. He treated it like a dragstrip; as soon as it turned green he wanted to go. So he laid on his horn. As we started to go, he whipped around me, looked at me and his face was red. This guy lost his temper over the fact that he had to wait at the traffic light three extra seconds. We had a saying when I grew up, that the emptier the pot, the quicker it boils. The emptier a head, the quicker you lose your temper.

Education can't do everything for you. I have been a lot around some of the most educated people in the world I have been around some that weren't so educated. There are many who aren't educated who succeed and do a lot in life. I have discovered that education usually allows people to talk about their differences without getting angry, if nothing else. So be slow to become angry and don't be sudden to anger.

Now look at those three emotional speed limits: quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry. Warren Wiersbe has an excellent little commentary on James and he makes a very interesting point at this place. He says in all of his years of serving as a pastor and working with churches, he has known of many churches that had what he called a church fight. He said that in every case, without exception, people did the opposite of these three emotions. He said they weren't quick to listen—they were slow to listen. They didn't want to listen. They weren't slow to speak—they were quick to speak. And he says they weren't slow to become angry. Rather, they were quick to become angry. Some people are just that way. They are as predictable as Old Faithful, every 56 minutes they blow their stack. But the Bible says it should not be that way; you want to honor the word calmly.

### **4. HIDE THE WORD PURELY**

"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth." (vs. 21) The King James Version calls it "superfluity of naughtiness." What does that mean? It means an overflowing filthy mind or habits. Before you

can honor the Word, you've got to be pure in your heart. You don't have to be perfect, but there's a difference between being pure and being perfect.

Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." The reason you memorize scripture is not so you can pass Masterlife or so you can brag, but memorizing scripture keeps you clean. Memorize scripture and hide it in your heart. I have a little sign in the front of my Bible. In fact, it's in the front of every Bible I have. It's a very simple thing I learned years ago. It says: This book will keep me from sin or sin will keep me from this book. Have you found that to be true in your life? The more you're into the Word, studying it, memorizing it, the holier you are. Let's say on the other hand you get involved in some kind of sin, whether it's a habit or an attitude problem. You just don't want to read the Bible anymore. You have to make yourself open it.

A pastor in New Orleans talked about something that happened in his church. He said there was a man in his church who was a church member of another denomination and attended his church, but had never truly been born again. This man came to their church and through a series of circumstances became a genuine believer. He became a Christian and trusted Christ. This pastor said the man, who was in his mid-thirties, was revolutionized. He was one who got excited about the Lord and he said one of the things that changed his life is that he had a newfound hunger for the Bible. Before that, he always hated the Bible before; it was always a drudgery. He had to make himself read it. But after he became a Christian, he said he would open the Bible and it was if someone had turned a light on. Before he couldn't see it but now he could understand it. I never saw that before. I can understand it now is that is like somebody turned the light on.

This guy had lived a pretty worldly lifestyle. In fact, he had a subscription to *Playboy* magazine and between the time he was saved and began reading the Bible, he had not canceled his subscription. And by the testimony of this pastor, one day the man went to his mailbox and there was Playboy magazine. You know what that is—it's pornography. And he said to himself, "What's the harm? I'll just read the articles." He took it out and began to go through it. He went through for it for a while and then put it down. Then he said he went to his Bible. He opened his Bible and he said it was like somebody had turned off the light. He called his pastor and said something was wrong and explained to him what had happened. The pastor said, "You need to get rid of that filth, you need to turn from it and make your life pure so you can receive the Word." That's what the Bible says in verse 21. Get rid of all moral filth so you can receive the word. The word for filth used there is the Greek word *rhuparia*. It is the same word in Greek that means ear wax. Sin in your life will act like wax in your ear; it will stop them up and you won't be able to hear the word of God. So hide it in your heart purely.

## 5. HOLD THE WORD HUMBLY

"Humbly accept the word planted in you." (vs. 21) The King James Version says, with meekness receive the engrafted word. That means the word is planted in you and you're to receive it with meekness, humility. Basically, it says you're not really argue with the word. You are not to cut on the word; the word is to cut on you and you are to let it do it. The Bible says the word is

sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and it is a discerner of the intents and purposes of the spirit and soul and mind. And sometimes when the Bible cuts on us, we don't like it. This passage says to let the Word do it. Receive the word.

Perhaps you have been to the home of Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson was not a Christian, he was a Deist. He believed in a Supreme Being, but didn't necessarily believe Jesus Christ was Lord. That doesn't mean that he wasn't a great leader of our nation. But in his home under glass is a copy of his Bible. And if you've seen this, you know there were parts in his Bible he did not like and agree with. So he took a penknife and he cut out parts of his Bible. His Bible has entire sections cut out of it. That's the opposite. We're not the cut on this word. This word is to cut on us and with humility we're to receive the word and let it do it.

How teachable are you? Would you say you have a teachable spirit or would you say you have a stubborn, resistant spirit when it comes to the word of God? I admit there was a time after I'd had a lot of education where I thought I knew all there was about the Bible and I had all the answers. I'd taken systematic theology, read all the great minds, all the great theologians. I pretty much had it all figured out. There was a number of years ago when the Holy Spirit of God just convicted my heart and I came to the point where I said, "God I am not an expert on the Bible and I will never call myself a Bible scholar. I will always call myself a Bible student." I'm always wanting to learn. I'm always wanting to be taught and if it's in the word of God, I want to receive it with humility. Some people don't have a teachable spirit. They're the kind that don't want to be confused by the facts. Their mind is made up. They have already decided what they want to believe.

## **6. HEED THE WORD OBEDIENTLY**

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (vs. 22) I want to clear up a popular misconception. I heard a man say one time in a testimony that you can deceive your friends and just about everybody, but you can never deceive yourself. That's not true. Look at verse 22. It is possible to deceive yourself and that ought to make you careful, because it is possible according the Bible for you to be guilty of self-deception. In other words you can convince yourself of something and even deceive yourself doing it. How? When you only listen to the word of God, but you refuse to obey it. When you walk out of a church service, Sunday school class or a Bible study and say, "I'm okay." You, my friend, are deceiving yourself. You're not okay. If you hear the plain word of God taught to you and decide not to obey it, you're disobedient.

God will bless ignorance, because he's blessed me all my preaching ministry. Ignorance is not knowing the truth and the word of God but God will not and cannot bless disobedience. Disobedience is informed ignorance that refuses to change. Have you ever come to time a in your life when you said, "Lord, if it's in the word, I will obey it. Lord, the answers is yes, what is the command? I will be obedient." Then James gives two interesting illustrations. "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." (vs. 22-24) This is the idea not of gazing intently at themselves but just glancing in the mirror and

walks off and he forgets it. That's the way some people handle the Word. They briefly look at it, picking up a word here and there and then go about their merry way. That's the picture of someone who looks in the mirror but doesn't really take care of themselves.

I'm not overly concerned about my appearance. I shave and do everything I'm supposed to do and then leave. I want to commend all you ladies who use one of those lighted makeup mirrors, because you look in one of those things and they reveal every single flaw. One day I was getting ready to leave for church and I looked in the mirror and thought I looked fine. Cindy's makeup mirror was nearby, so I sat down in front of it and said, "Oh my!" There were a couple of whiskers I hadn't completely gotten and there were some flaws. I said, "No, thank you!" Sometimes it's better for your personal appearance if you just glance and go on. But the Bible says it is not so with the word of God. Don't just glance at it nonchalantly.

In the second example he gives on the other hand, "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does." (vs. 25) Your Bible may state be not a forgetful hearer but be a doer of the word.

Your problem is not in hearing. I daresay that many of you have heard the Word all of your life. You've heard many preachers and great preachers and had great Bible teachers. You've heard it—the question is: Are you obeying it?

## **CONCLUSION**

One of my professors at Southern Seminary was a great man named Bryant Hicks, who was a professor of missions. He served as a missionary for in Indonesia for 20 years and he came to Southern Seminary to teach. I thought he was rather harsh in his evaluation, but I've since live to see the proof of it. Having served in Indonesia and taught the word where he said the Christians in Indonesia were not only so hungry for the word, but quick to obey it. Bryant Hicks said, "In America, on the other hand, our pews are filled with sermon-soaked pagans." You've heard so many sermons, you've heard the word enough to change the world. The question is: Are you willing to obey it?

## OUTLINE

1. HEAR THE WORD QUICKLY *quick to listen vs. 19*

2. HONOR THE WORD QUIETLY *slow to speak*

3. HANDLE THE WORD CALMLY *slow to become angry*

4. HIDE THE WORD PURELY *get rid of all the moral filth*

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." *Psalm 119:11*

5. HOLD THE WORD HUMBLY *humbly accept the Word*

6. HEED THE WORD OBEDIENTLY *do what it says*

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas*

---