

HOW TO HEAR GOD SPEAK
Learning to Hear God's Voice - Part 1 of 4
Luke 8:4-15
Rick Warren

Luke 8:4-15

"Jesus said.... `He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (vs. 8b)

- * The Farmer - *God*
- * The Seed - *His Word*
- * The Soil - *My Mind*

How To Hear God Speak

I. CULTIVATE _____

"... some seed fell along the path: It was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up." (vs. 5)

"Those along the path are those who hear, and then the devil comes along and takes away the word from their hearts, so they cannot believe and be saved." vs. 12

The hardened path - _____.

3 Causes

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"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." James 1:21

II. ALLOCATE _____

"Other seed fell on shallow soil with rock beneath. This seed began to grow but soon withered and died for lack of moisture." vs. 6 (LB)

"Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away." (vs. 13)

The shallow soil --

III. ELIMINATE _____

"Other seed fell among thorns which grew up with it and choked the plants." vs. 7

"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, riches, and pleasures, and they don't mature." vs. 14

The soil with weeds -

3 types of weeds

IV. COOPERATE _____

"The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it and by persevering produce a crop." vs. 15

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!" James 1:22

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One of the most basic claims of Christianity is that God speaks to people. All through the Bible you see the phrase, "*And God said...*" Pretty soon you get the idea that God really does speak to people. God wants to have a relationship with you. He wants to have a personal relationship with you. There is no relationship without communication. God has chosen to speak to us.

The problem is communication is often misunderstood. When my wife speaks to me I often, a) don't hear it, and b) misunderstand it. I'm sure I'm the only man that ever felt that way! Men, there are two things you need to understand about women.... and nobody knows what they are! If I have that much difficulty with my wife who I spend my entire life with and love and know and still we don't always communicate clearly, how much should you expect there to be communication problems with God? There are communication problems with God.

Frankly, I am very skeptical of people who always have a clear word from God. A lot of stupid things have been done by people who claim that God has spoken to them. I've very skeptical when people tell me, "God told me this ..." They always have a clear word. Some people think that pastors always understand exactly what God wants us to do. That's not true. I am often as confused as everybody else about what is God saying, what is God trying to say. Some of you think I have a little red telephone in my library and I pick up the God-phone. God tells me what to say to you and I talk with him that way. God does not send me e-mail. He doesn't send me telegrams. I don't have a fax of God. Sometimes I'm just as much in the dark about hearing God as you are.

On the other hand, there are times in my life when God speaks when I have no doubt at all that God is speaking to me. Just like when my wife calls me on the phone, I don't have to ask who it is -- I know her voice. There are times when God speaks to me when I know exactly who it is, who's putting that idea in my mind. I know where that impression is coming from.

What makes the difference? The difference is attitude.

This morning we're beginning a new series I'm calling, "Learning to Hear God's Voice". Nothing is more important to you than understanding that God wants to talk to you and that you can actually hear Him if you just tune in. Jesus once said in Luke 8:8, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*" Get your ears on! You've got to be tuned in order to hear God speak.

Some cordless phones have different channels on them. If you pick up a cordless phone and it's not real clear, you have a lot of static and noise, you keep changing the channel until you get to the right one and then all of a sudden it's crystal clear. Many times, God has spoken to you, but it hasn't come through crystal clear because you're not on the right channel. Right now the room is filled with radio waves, but you don't hear them because you're not tuned in. They're even going through your body. There are television waves going through the air right now. You don't even see them. If you had a receiver and you tuned it in right, you'd get the picture. Right now, God is speaking to many of you. You don't see it, but He really is. But your reception is a little fuzzy.

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Jesus told the story in Luke 8, a parable, in which He says, Let me explain to you that it's all about mental attitude. There are four kinds of attitudes that will depend whether you get the message clearly from God or whether you don't. This is so important. Obviously, if you can tune into God He can direct you, He can save you a lot of time from making wrong mistakes, He can comfort you when you need comfort, He can guide you, and so on.

So He says, Let me tell you a story. There was a farmer who goes out to sow seed and as he went out to sow seed, his seed scattered all over in different types of soil. Back in the Middle East in the old days they didn't plant one seed per spot and cover it up with dirt. They did what was called broadcasting. A farmer would have a pouch on his side filled with seed and, as he'd walk through the field which he had already tilled, he would toss it out, scattering it. That's where we get the term broadcasting from. Obviously some of the seed falls on good soil and some of it doesn't. He says these four soils represent four mental attitudes. They're not four kinds of people, but actually all of us have been all four of these types. We vary from them from time to time. Sometimes we're very open to God to what He wants to say to us. Sometimes we're very closed.

How do I hear God speak to me?

1. I MUST CULTIVATE AN OPEN MIND.

I've got to want to hear from God, be eager, be receptive. I've got to be ready and willing to hear God. Some of you today are not believers. You're seekers. You're checking out Christ. We welcome you here. We're glad you're here. Others of you are new believers. Others have been believers for many years. But if I were to ask you, Have you ever heard God speak to you? there are many of you who would say, "I can't think of a time in my life where I ever actually heard God speak to me." I'm not talking about an audible voice, but an impression in your mind that you knew that is from God.

Why is that? One of the possible reasons is that you've never been open to the possibility of it. Maybe you didn't even know it was possible that God does want to speak to you directly. You've thought maybe God doesn't speak to you and maybe you don't even believe in that. When you've got a closed mind, obviously, God is not going to get through.

This is the first type of soil. v. 5 *"Some seed fell on the path and it was trampled on and the birds of the air came and ate it up....[v. 12] Those along the path are like people who hear and then the devil comes along and takes away the word from their hearts so they cannot believe and be saved."*

On every farm, in every field there's a footpath that the farmer would walk down. As he went he would sow the seed out onto the land that was tilled. There are two characteristics of a footpath. One, they're hardened because of the constant traffic of people walking. The soil is compacted and it's not fertile and tilled like the field. It's hard. The other thing about a path is it's narrow.

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Do you know anybody like that? They're closed minded, narrow minded, hard hearted. They're not even open to the possibility that God might speak to them. As a result, Jesus says the farmer sows seed but it can't penetrate because it's hard and compacted. It can't take route, it can't sprout, it just lays on the surface of the ground and the birds come along and eat it. It never even gets a chance.

This is true with us many of the times. God wants to speak to us, but He doesn't even get a chance because our minds are closed, our hearts are hardened, we've made up our mind, we're unwilling to listen, we've already decided what we're going to do so we don't want to hear from God. We've already decided what we're going to do in the situation.

What causes us to have a closed mind?

1. **Pride.** Pride causes us to have a closed mind. When I think, "I don't need God. I don't need to hear from God. I can make this business decision on my own. I don't need God. I know what to say to my children.... I don't need God. I know how to handle this date.... I don't need God. I can ace this test without praying." Anytime you fail to pray about something, you're basically saying, "I don't need God in this. I can handle it on my own. I can resolve it. I can solve it. I can handle this mess. I can correct this error. I can resolve this conflict. I don't need God." That's called pride. When I'm full of pride, I close my mind to God and He can't get in and say anything to me because I think I've got it all figured out. So I don't pray.

2. **Fear.** Sometimes we're just afraid of what God might say to us. What if I pray or open my mind to God and God tells me to do something I don't want to do? He might tell me something hard. He might tell me to do something unpopular. He might tell me to do something I think I can't do or I don't want to do. So I'm afraid. If I let God speak to me, I might become a religious fanatic. I'll become like one of those nuts on TV and have to wear a bouffant hairdo! Or wear a shiny leisure suit. And say all kinds of weird stuff. Maybe God will make me some kind of loony religious nut. So I'm afraid. I'm afraid I'll lose my freedom. I'm afraid I'll lose my fun. I'm afraid I'll lose my fulfillment in life. No thanks, God. So I close my mind. Some people close their mind to God simply out of fear.

3. **Bitterness.** Whenever we've been hurt and we hold on to those hurtful memories, it causes us to close our minds to God. We start saying things like "God, why did You allow this? Why is this happening to me? If You're such a great loving and powerful God, why did this happen?" You're going to be hurt in life. You will have pain in life. This is not heaven, this is earth. God has given us a free choice and so people are free to do wrong things and the result is innocent people suffer. Not everything that happens in this world is God's will. He's given us the freedom to choose. So people get hurt. You're going to be hurt in life. What you do with that hurt will determine whether you become a better person or a bitter person. A bitter life is a wasted life. When we become bitter and when we hold on to our hurts, it only prolongs the pain. What we tend to do is ... "They hurt me so I'm going to close myself off, build up walls, hide in my shell, and I'm not going to let anybody get close to me. Not even God, because God let it happen." We start blaming God for things other people did to us. As a result, we close our mind. People who have been deeply hurt often have a hard time opening up their minds and their hearts to God. They've held in so much and they hurt.

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Obviously in a crowd this size, some of you have been deeply hurt in the past. Some of you maybe have lost a loved one, maybe recently, maybe a child, a young child. You still feel that pain. Some of you were abused as children or you were molested. You may have even been raped. Some of you were verbally abused, physically abused, emotionally abused. Some of you have known the betrayal of a spouse who was unfaithful to you and that still hurts. Some of you have even been hurt by other people who claim to be Christians. Or you were in a church situation and supposedly Christian people didn't act very Christian, very Christlike. They hurt you and you got burned in a church experience. The tendency is to say, If that's what Christianity is all about, no thanks, God! We blame God for what other people have done to us.

If you have been deeply hurt, let me say two things to you: One, I'm sorry you hurt. I really mean that. I'm sorry you hurt. God hurts with you. He weeps with you. He understands the pain you've gone through. At a funeral one time, a woman said, "Where was God when my son died?" I thought, "The same place He was when His son died. On the cross." God has not promised to exempt us from pain. I'm sorry you hurt. God hurts with you.

Two, I want to say to you, when you are in pain and when you are hurt, don't run from God. Run to God. He's the one who can help. He's the one who can comfort. He's the one who can care. He's the one who can make a difference. He's the one who can bring healing to your emotions and your body and your past. Nobody else can do that. When you run from God out of pain, you're running from the only person who can heal it. Don't do it. Don't turn from Him. Turn to Him in your moment of crisis. Turn to Him with your hurt instead of holding it in. Give it to Him. Never allow any other human being or experience to block your relationship to God. That's dumb. Even if they claim to be a Christian and you've been hurt by that. You can be hurt by them. Give that hurt to God. You don't turn off to God because somebody else did something to you. Give it to God. Don't close your heart and don't close your mind. The tragedy of that hard beaten path is that it is barren. Nothing can grow there. It's unfruitful. A bitter life is a wasted life. It only prolongs the pain. Jesus says the birds come along and eat the seed. That kind of life is for the birds!

Instead, look at James 1:21 *"Get rid of all the moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept [circle "accept"] the word planted in you which can save you."* Let God love you, drop your defenses and open up your mind.

The first step in hearing God speak is I must cultivate an open mind.

2. I MUST ALLOCATE TIME TO LISTEN

I've got to make time to hear Him. I've got to slow down, be quiet, plan it in my schedule. We schedule everything else in life -- vacations, dentist appointments, dates, homework, everything else. Do you schedule time for God in your schedule? Or does God just get the leftovers. The second reason a lot of people never hear God speak is we're in too much in a hurry. Americans are always in a hurry. We're in such a rat race society that we're always in a hurry. *American Demographics* said juice in jars is now outselling frozen concentrated juice because it takes too long to thaw and Americans don't want to put up with thawing anything. Even overnight Federal

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Express mail isn't fast enough any more. The cyber space, computer hackers call that snail mail because it goes so slow. You can set down at a key board and type it out and it goes in a nano second to wherever you want it to go. We're always in a hurry. This is nothing new. De Toqueville, a french philosopher said 150 years ago, Americans are always in a hurry.

When we live in a hurried lifestyle, God gets shortchanged, shuffled to the back of the deck. He gets the leftovers of our time. We want to hear God speak, yes, but what we say is, "God, I'm in a hurry, so do it quick! I only have a minute!" As I'm running out the door to my next project or assignment or job I'm saying "OK God, speak to me, but do it right now!" As a result, we miss what God wants to say to us.

v. 6 "Other seed fell on shallow soil with rock beneath. This seed began to grow but soon withered and died for lack of moisture." v. 13 "Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe it for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away."

Just as the hardened path represents the closed mind, the shallow soil represents a superficial mind. It's shallow. When He talks about rocky soil here He's not talking about soil with a bunch of rocks in it. In much of the middle east and particularly in Israel, much of Israel is built on a bedrock of limestone with about 3-4 inches of topsoil on top of it. That means plants can grow down 2-3 inches but that's about it. So when summer comes and the heat is on, the plants wither. They die because they don't have any roots because there's a bedrock underneath that does not allow them to develop deep roots.

He's saying this represents the superficial type of hearer who hears the word of God. It sprouts up and they're all excited about it but it doesn't last. When the heat is on and when the problems come they will wither and fall away. Likewise we do this. Sometimes we hear God and we get all excited about it and we're superficially moved and we react emotionally and we're moved impulsively. But we never give it the time to sink in to our bodies, to sink in to our minds. I can't tell you how many people have told me, "I was so moved by that message! I was really touched. I was moved to tears!" But a month later there is still no perceivable life change or behavioral difference in their life. They're still living the same way. They got excited about the message but they didn't do anything about it. As a result they are just shallow, superficial. They have no roots. When the heat is on, they're not going to last.

Why is it that we don't have change? The United States Air Force did a study and found that we forget 90-95% of everything we hear within 72 hours. If you want a statistic that will depress a pastor, that's it! We labor to produce these magnificent masterpieces of sermons, realizing that by Wednesday, you've already forgotten everything we've said on Sunday except maybe 5%. I don't remember what I preached on last week! That is why we have the sermon outlines. Write it down and later on review it. The shortest pencil is longer than the longest memory. If you don't write it down, you're going to forget it all. If you forget it, you can't work on it.

This is a problem that all of us have, even pastors. I went to a conference and heard a message. God spoke to me, "You need to work on this area of your life." I thought, "You are right. I really need to work on this area in my life." I was motivated and charged up. But somehow

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those notes I had taken got misplaced and I found them this week in another pile. When I pulled them out, I realized that in the two months I had done nothing. I had already forgotten what I was so excited and motivated about recently.

I asked an earlier service, "How many of you would say I accept and believe in the Ten Commandments?" Everybody raised their hands. Then I asked, "Which of you would like to come up on stage and quote them?" My guess is most of you could not even name all ten. How can you say you base your life on the Ten Commandments if you can't even name all ten? Unless you are retaining and reviewing what God says to you, you're just kidding yourselves. How is it that people can come to church year after year and never really be changed? Because it goes in one ear and out the other.

The verse says the second kind of person -- v. 13 -- *"They received the word with joy [circle that] but when they hear it they don't have any root."* In other words, they don't retain it. He's saying you can be thrilled without being transformed. You need to write it down in a journal, or a binder of sermon notes, when you're in a Bible study, you take notes. Then you regularly review those things so you don't have to learn the same lesson over and over.

Some of you say, "I've been a Christian for 27 years..." No, you've been a believer for 27 years but you haven't had 27 years of experience. You've had one year of experience, 27 times. You have to keep relearning because you're not retaining it. You've got to take time to let it sink in. You need to schedule time every day where you set down with your Bible and read, think about your life, maybe review some of the lessons you've learned, write things down and keep growing by reviewing.

Having pastored in this church for sixteen years I've seen many people who have started off great. When they first became believers they were excited and enthusiastic and full of joy. Today you can't find them anywhere. They had enthusiasm but that is not enough to make it in the Christian life. It takes commitment. It takes the commitment to say, "I'm going to set down and regularly review what I'm being taught." Why should God teach me new things if I haven't put into practice what He taught me last week? or yesterday? or last night? Why do people have no roots? Because they don't take the time. How do you get roots? Allocate time to listen. Say, God, I'm going to spend 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes every day. It's not the amount of time. Just get started so that everyday you get alone with God and say, "OK God, what's next? What's the next step in my career? What's the next step in my marriage? What's the next step in my family? ..." God can't talk to you unless you slow down.

Cultivate an open mind and allocate time to listen.

3. I MUST ELIMINATE THE DISTRACTIONS

A lot of times we miss hearing God because our minds are crowded with other thoughts. Our minds are filled with concerns of daily living, worries, plans, goals, ambitions, bills, all these different kinds of things. When our mind is full and always thinking and never give God a chance in silence to talk to us, He can't get through.

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Many of you did what I did this last Mother's Day. You pick up the phone and dial your mom to say "Happy Mother's Day" and as you were doing it you get the same little message, "Sorry, but all the circuits are busy." Everybody else in America was calling their mother.

Many times God has wanted to talk to you and He's got a busy signal. Many times God has wanted to talk to you in your life but the line was off the hook and you don't want to do Call Waiting with God. You've got to make time. When you're too busy -- and there are many things that are good but they can distract you -- you're too busy to listen to God.

v. 7 He says, "Other seed fell among the thorns [weeds] which grew up with it and choked the plants. v. 14 This seed that fell among the thorns stands or represents those who hear the word but as they go on their way they're choked by life's worries, riches, and pleasures."

The soil with weeds, this third kind of soil that the farmer is throwing seed on, it represents a preoccupied mind. We're distracted. The seed sprouts and grows but it's choked by the weeds before it can bear fruit.

Why is it that so many people live unproductive lives? I talk to people in their 30's, 40's, 50's and even 60's who say, "I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing with my life." That tells me one thing: You're not spending much time with God. God had no intention for you blowing and wasting your life. If you'd spend as much time with God talking about your life as you do worrying about it, you'd have a whole lot less to worry about. God is not playing games with you. He has a plan and purpose for every life. But you're not going to get it watching soap operas or listening to the radio. You've got to get time with God. We get distracted and we allow everything and anything to push God out of our lives. I used to have a sign in my office that said, "Beware of the barrenness of a busy life." Don't ever confuse activity with productivity. There are a lot of you who are on the go all the time. But you're going in circles is what you're doing. There's no focus to your life. There's no rhyme or reason or general purpose. You haven't discovered why God put you here. Why? Because you're not talking to Him and you're not letting him talk to you. You've got to eliminate the distractions.

Jesus says that distractions are kind of like weeds. He gives us three examples. First, worries can distract you from hearing God speak. You can't pray and worry at the same time. Worries are the problems and the pressures of daily life. The Greek word is the word that means to be pulled in different directions. Have you ever felt that? Pulled in different directions. That's the Bible definition of worry. When you're worrying you can't hear what God wants to say to you. You're preoccupied, distracted.

Riches can be a weed in your life. We can be so busy making money we don't have time for God. So busy making a living, we don't really live. We don't really enjoy life. We just get up in the morning and go to work. We work hard to pay the bills and catch up and get even and keep up with the Jones' and we flop into bed at night, get up the next morning and do the same thing. God gets crowded out. God gets the leftovers in your life. In the desire to make money you can forget God.

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Another weed can be pleasures. There's nothing wrong with pleasures. Who do you think gave you the ability to enjoy pleasure? God did. God thought up the fun in the world. God gave you the senses and the abilities and the tactile senses you have in order to enjoy pleasure. God wants you to enjoy pleasure. But He's saying you can be so busy having fun that you forget God. When recreation replaces worship -- "It's summertime! I don't think I'll go to church this week end. . . I'll cut that Bible study.... We're on vacation so I won't have a quiet time." Who are you having a vacation from? God? You can be so busy having fun (and God wants you to have fun) but when it becomes number one in your life, guess who's getting crowded out?

There are a lot of different kinds of weeds. You can make your own list of the things that tend to crowd out God. It could be a relationship, a responsibility, anything. A weed is anything that distracts me from making time to be with God. To set down, be quiet and pray and say, "God, is there anything You want to say to me today?" Some days He will and some days He won't. But you've got to have the line ready, so He can talk to you.

A very theological question: How much effort does it take to grow weeds? No effort at all. My backyard where I'm growing stuff, I'm starting a weed farm and seeing how many known weeds I can grow. The difference between a plant and a weed -- a flower is something you cultivate, you fertilize, you trim, you water it and it doesn't grow. A weed you do nothing to and it explodes. That's the difference. You don't have to water weeds. They grow! Weeds are a sign of neglect. When I start neglecting time with God on a daily basis, when I start neglecting a small group, when I start neglecting getting together with other Christians in worship, going to a Bible study -- any of those things -- the weeds are going to grow up in my life and the Bible said they're going to choke the spiritual life out of me. I'm going to lose my joy, my peace, my purpose, my sense of calmness, my ability to handle stress, etc. The weeds will choke the life out of you. And they all come just by neglecting spending time with God.

4. I MUST COOPERATE WITH WHAT HE SAYS

God talks to people who decide in advance that they are going to do whatever He tells them to do when He tells them. Most of us want God to talk to us and then we'll decide if we're going to do it or not and God says, "No, no. We don't play that game." God talks to people who are going to do what He tells them to do once He tells them.

I know of a church who had a choir special "Yes, Lord, Yes!" That was basically the whole song. When they finished it, the choir director turned around and said, "OK, God, You've already heard our attitude. Now tell us what to do."

That's what God wants you to do. If you want God to speak to you, you need to say, "OK God, I'm going to do what You tell me to do whether I understand it or not, whether it makes sense or not, whether I'd think I'd like to do it or not, because I know it's the right thing and I know You know what would make me happy more than I do." It's a matter of trust.

The fourth soil represents a willing heart. Willing to do whatever God tells you to do, before He even tells you. v. 15 *"The seed on the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart*

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who hear the word of God and retain it and by persevering produce a good crop." Circle "retain". They not only hear God's word but they retain it. They write it down, they listen to it, they think about it and go over it. The result is a productive life.

Would you like to make your life count? Would like to have a productive, fulfilling, satisfying life? Then do what James 1:22 tells us, *"Don't merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourself. You kid yourself if you think you're growing just by going to church. Do what it says."*

Wendy's testimony on how she's learning to hear God's voice:

I'd like to share with you on how I'm learning to hear God speak to me. We must have the right attitude in order to hear God. We have to cultivate an open mind in order to hear God's voice. This took a long time for me to develop because of some major hurts in my past.

My childhood was peppered with molestation. I grew up thinking the only value I had to give to anyone was sexual. As I became a young adult my lifestyle reflected that belief. This created a deep sense of guilt and feelings of worthlessness in me. Even after I dedicated my life to Christ in 1978, I still struggled with those feelings of worthlessness and guilt. I knew the Bible said I was forgiven for my past sins but I felt like God must be disgusted with me. Every time I would pray I felt like God was saying, "Who are you to talk to Me?" Of course if you think God feels that way about you, it doesn't motivate you to spend much time with Him or listen to Him. I thought I had to be perfect if God was going to love and accept me so I threw myself into every Christian service and ministry possible. I visited the elderly, I taught Sunday School, I sang in the choir, I dragged my husband off to Wednesday night Bible studies and I went to church twice every Sunday. But I still felt worthless.

Slowly God began to soften my heart with His love and open up my closed mind. I discovered that He loved me completely and unconditionally. His purpose for asking me to meet with Him on a daily basis and to do good works was not so that He would love me, but because He already did love me. He wanted me to live in response to His grace and not in pursuit of it. This truth made me want to hear God speak to me.

Next I had to learn to make time for God in my schedule. Since I'm not a naturally self disciplined person, I've tried all sorts of ways to help me develop a consistent habit of listening and talking with God. I've participated regularly in various Bible studies and small groups. I've been involved in Life Perspectives and Word Bible study programs here in our church. As an active mother I haven't always had time for these Bible studies but I'd make time for them. I've learned that when I make time for God's word He helps me with the other areas in my schedule. I can keep my eyes on Him and listen to Him and the stress and problems and worries of life, the distractions, are not so overwhelming. On the other hand, if I look only at my circumstances that's all I see. Some of my attempts to make time to listen to God in my schedule are rather clever I think. For instance, recently I've begun setting the alarm in my bathroom, so I have to get up and go in there to turn it off. Once I'm up I go ahead and do my quiet time. I don't want anything to rob me of the thing that has become most important in my life and my desire is to do whatever it takes to make time to listen to God.

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But having an open mind and making time for God is not enough. I've found if I want God to speak to me I must be willing to cooperate with whatever He tells me to do. That isn't always easy. For instance, when I married Tony it created a real problem between me and his little girl. To put it bluntly, I felt like my step daughter hated me. She was hurting, and of course her anger hurt me a lot. I prayed and prayed that God would change her attitude. But nothing happened for years. I began to get a little frustrated with God for not changing God then one day God said to me, "Wendy, she's not the one with the problem. You need to go ask her for forgiveness." This was not what I wanted to hear from God. It's my nature, and probably yours too, that I only liked to cooperate with God when He asks me to do what I already wanted to do. I wanted Him to tell me what I liked to hear, but I found that God always tells me the truth whether I like it or not. Finally, I admitted that God was right and I was wrong. I told God that I knew the right thing to do, but He was going to have to give me the desire and the power to do it. The amazing thing is that whenever I let go of my pride and asked God to change my heart, He does. My heart changed. And when I cooperated with God, even though it was difficult, the hurts between us were healed. My stepdaughter is 28 now, she has three children. I'm a Grandma and our relationship is wonderful.

Through the years as I've grown in my relationship to Christ, God's word has become the most valuable treasure that I have. I could put my confidence in God's word without fear of disappointment because it never changes. When I'm hurting or when someone else is in pain it gives me comfort. When I've made a mistake it gives me correction. When I'm not sure which way to go, listening to God's word gives me guidance. I find that I use God's word every day of my life. Recently, I've been impressed with the importance of memorizing God's word so He can bring it to my mind whenever I need it. If the only time that God can speak to me is when I'm reading the Bible, I'm going to miss out on a lot of help. When I have a verse memorized, God can bring it to my mind the exact moment that I need it. I decided though that there has to be a better way to memorize Scripture besides repeating it 4000 times. I thought it would be more fun and interesting to memorize God's word with other people. At first as I began praying about this, I thought it would just be a few women from my Thursday morning small group and we would meet at my house once a week. Then it expanded and a few more women and I thought we might be able to get together at the park. Now we're planning to meet here at the church campus for six weeks this summer. I like things to be fun. I've found several resources such as music, visual aids, memorization techniques rather than repetition, repetition... Not only will we memorize scripture but we'll learn how to memorize. so if you're one of those people who wants to memorize God's word but you think your brain is scrambled, you qualify as memory impaired and this is the class for you -- Scripture memorization for the memory impaired.

If I was able to hook up a machine to your brain right now and show the contents on one of these visual screens, some of you would be embarrassed. Some might have a blank screen. What kind of spiritual brain scan would show up? Would you have a closed mind? Would you have a superficial mind that gets excited about the service and then walk out and forget it all? Would you have a distracted mind that wants to do the right thing but you're just too busy right now? Or would you have a willing mind?

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Here's the question I want to close with: What are you going to do as a result of today's message? The Bible says "*be doers of the word, not hearers only.*" Do something. The moment you walk out the door, there's a little bird that's going to try to steal the seed of what we talked about today -- the devil. He's going to get you distracted, get you to think about where you're going for lunch, about the jerk who pulled in front of you in the parking lot, or any number of other distractions.

If you want to make this count, otherwise this morning was a waste, I want to give you a homework project. Do one thing as a result of today's message. It may be join a Bible study, start memorizing a Bible verse a week, start having a quiet time every day -- 5, 10, 15 minutes. Do something! Don't waste it.

Prayer:

Lord, You've told us what to do. You've said that You want to speak to us. Help us to have open minds, not closed minds. Help us to not be shallow minded but to really review and think about and study and to go over the things we've learned and you've taught us through many different ways. When you speak to us help us to care enough to write it down, otherwise we'll forget it. Forgive us for having to learn the same lesson over and over. Help us not to be distracted by good but secondary things that would keep us from spending time in your Word and spending time listening to You and talking to You in prayer. Help us to have an open and willing heart to do what You want us to do. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.