

LISTENING TO GOD – “Beyond Words”

Proverbs 4:4- “Take hold of my words with all your heart...Get wisdom, get understanding...this requires the ability to listen to God and listen to those with wisdom already.

1. Participants will better appreciate the need to take hold of God’s message within the context of listening for wisdom.
2. Participants will be reminded of the need to stay true to God’s message and direction in their lives.
3. Participants will practice meditating and listening to God’s advice and direction for their own lives.

We have been studying about “Listening to God” in many different forms and depths of understanding. As we have found out this takes both an intentional approach and a willingness to hear for the meaning by seeking the wisdom of God’s message. It is within this message that we share and grow together as God’s family. We do this by not only sharing in the Work but also by seeking together and listening together for God’s direction in our lives.

This week the core scripture for our reading comes from Proverbs Chapter 4. This chapter lets us hear from Solomon as he speaks to his “sons,” which for us provides valuable insight as we gain understanding in the benefits of Godly wisdom. The first 9 verses give us a defense against the difficulties of sin.

Basically, what should we avoid and what should we seek is covered in verses 10-19. It is a fundamental list of “do’s and do not’s”. We should seek “the paths of the righteous” and walk in the bright light of security. The chapter ends with instructions on how to avoid the path of the wicked. The last few verses provide a straightforward analogy of staying true to the path – “Do not swerve to the right or the left” – stay true to God’s direction! (verses: 20-27). Phil 3:14 Do not Look back Lk 9:62 Do not look around Matt 14:30

Take 3 to 5 minutes to meditate on the following 2 translations of Verses 1- 9. Think of the advice given to Solomon’s sons concerning keeping God’s commands, getting wisdom and not forgetting the Words of God. Then after the few minutes we will share the words, phrases and sentences and pray the verse back to God.

4 Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. 2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. 3 For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. 4 Then he taught me, and he said to me, “Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live. 5 Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. 6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have,^[b] get understanding. 8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. 9 She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.” (NIV)

4¹⁻² Listen, friends, to some fatherly advice; sit up and take notice so you'll know how to live. I'm giving you good counsel; don't let it go in one ear and out the other.³⁻⁹ When I was a boy at my father's knee, the pride and joy of my mother, He would sit me down and drill me: "Take this to heart. Do what I tell you—live! Sell everything and buy Wisdom! Forage for Understanding! Don't forget one word! Don't deviate an inch! Never walk away from Wisdom—she guards your life; love her—she keeps her eye on you. Above all and before all, do this: Get Wisdom! Write this at the top of your list: Get Understanding! Throw your arms around her—believe me, you won't regret it; never let her go—she'll make your life glorious. She'll garland your life with grace, she'll festoon your days with beauty." (MSG)

Take 3 to 5 minutes to meditate on the following 2 translations of Verses 10- 19. Think of the advice concerning guarding your life and staying on the true path (road) and avoiding the wrong road. Then after the few minutes we will share the words, phrases and sentences and pray the verse back to God.

¹⁰ Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. ¹¹ I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. ¹⁴ Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. ¹⁶ For they cannot rest until they do evil; they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble. (God is able to keep us from stumbling if we keep ourselves in his wisdom (Jude 24) [Jude 24] ¹⁷ They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. (NIV) Know God's Word.

Dear friend, take my advice; it will add years to your life. I'm writing out clear directions to Wisdom Way, I'm drawing a map to Righteous Road. I don't want you ending up in blind alleys, or wasting time making wrong turns. Hold tight to good advice; don't relax your grip. Guard it well—your life is at stake! Don't take Wicked Bypass; don't so much as set foot on that road. Stay clear of it; give it a wide berth. Make a detour and be on your way. ¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Evil people are restless unless they're making trouble; They can't get a good night's sleep unless they've made life miserable for somebody. Perversity is their food and drink, violence their drug of choice. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ The ways of right-living people glow with light; the longer they live, the brighter they shine. But the road of wrongdoing gets darker and darker travelers can't see a thing; they fall flat on their faces. (MSG)

Take 3 to 5 minutes to meditate on the following 2 translations of Verses 20- 27. Think of the advice to listen with your heart and being steadfast in all your ways. Then after the few minutes we will share the words, phrases and sentences and pray the verse back to God.

²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. ²¹ Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; ²² for they are life to those who find them and health to one's

whole body. ²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. ²⁴ Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. ²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. ²⁶ Give careful thought to the^[a] paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. ²⁷ Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil. (NIV)

²⁰⁻²² Dear friend, listen well to my words; tune your ears to my voice. Keep my message in plain view at all times. Concentrate! Learn it by heart! Those who discover these words live, really live; body and soul, they're bursting with health. ²³⁻²⁷ Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts. Don't talk out of both sides of your mouth; avoid careless banter, white lies, and gossip. Keep your eyes straight ahead; ignore all sideshow distractions. Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the dust. (MSG)

God's message requires both listening of the mind and heart to follow the path of life! His message is one that makes our life better and allows his grace into our lives. **Proverbs 4 admonishes us to turn our ears to His Voice. To hear the Voice of Wisdom is Beyond Words** Think for a moment of the invitation of Jesus to those who were chanting the Hallel (Psalm 113-118) on the last and greatest day of the Passover Feast - "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." John 7:37-38 How could they have heard over all the noise of joy and celebration, except that it be the Voice of Wisdom speaking to be heard only with their heart? To listen with our heart may be one of the hardest things we learn to do, but we will find it worth every ounce of effort. It also requires us to stay true to His Word as we work together and live together as His Body.

Our attitudes and desire to know God and His Word will have a huge impact on us and on our interaction with/toward others.

📖 Obedience is necessary, not just as a matter of duty or responding to a command but because we love Him (John 14:23)

📖 We need to read and study His Word; listen to the voice of wisdom so we know how to put it into practice. Knowledge without application is worthless. God has given us specific instructions in His Word.

The challenge is to consider each of these comments. Read them carefully and then pray about your reaction. It will be even more effective if you'll write out your reaction to each, kind of a "self-evaluation". No one will read your answers except you. It's to help us identify where and how we could do better. Compare your answers to Scripture. It's easy to grade others but far more difficult to be honest with ourselves. We want to leave with ideas and/or suggestions to help us.

Our challenge and even desire is to grow spiritually. Let's not ever be content with where we are but continually seek Him and His Word. As we go through this exercise, we may realize what Proverbs 4:4 says: "Take hold of my words with all your heart. . . Get wisdom, get understanding. . ." This requires the ability to listen to God and listen to those with wisdom already. We may hear Him speak very clearly.

As stated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*author: The Cost of Discipleship*) He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life. . . . Anyone

who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies.

“The best ministry you might do today is to listen to someone’s pain all the way to the bottom.”