

Active Listening

Two men sit in the same auditorium and listen to the same lessons week after week. One man is growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18). The other man is double minded and unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). The first man is productive in the work of the church and seeks opportunities to teach everyone who will listen. The other man is only seen during worship services and is forever silent about Jesus. The first man is diligent in laying up treasures in heaven. The other man's treasures are rooted in this world.

How can these two men be so different when they hear the same messages each week? Perhaps the answer is that they really do not "hear" the same message. Often we hear what we want to hear. We can predetermine what we will listen to and ignore what could truly be helpful. We can sit and listen through hundreds of sermons without making the needed application or changing wrong behavior. James 1:25 says, *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*

Luke 8:11 says, *"The seed is the word of God"* and we must go out and sow it! If farmers wanted soil to be productive, they must plow the soil to make it receptive again. What measures must be taken to gain the attention of those who have stopped the listening? What kind of "plow" must be used before the soil of one's heart will become sensitive and fertile to God's truth? Will it take sickness, affliction, financial failure or is it already too late? This is what we need to think about when God's truth is being proclaimed. Are we truly listening or are we hearing only what we want to hear?

Adapted From Bill Bryant