

THE BIG IDEA: How we listen determines how we live.

The Take-Off

If you're like most people, the gap between hearing and remembering can sometimes get pretty big. I've found myself at the store trying desperately to remember everything Wendy asked me to get and yet being too embarrassed or stubborn to call her and ask.

It's been a few weeks since we were in Luke 8, so a little "context" review will help us prepare for today's passage. 2 weeks ago we looked at the parable of the sower (or, as we suggested, the soils) and talked about the condition of our hearts having a major role in the way God's word grows in our lives.

When Jesus was telling that, He went immediately into the passage we'll look at today, and so the word is still what He's focused on.

In the soil parable, the emphasis was on how we receive the word.

In today's passage, it's all about how we HEAR the word.

Listening isn't always our best skill, is it? Unfortunately, that's really true of men.

Did you know men can only devote 6 minutes of listening to their wives before checking out mentally?

Guys just hit this auditory wall - a lot like this picture

[IMAGE from Big Bang Theory]

But right in the middle of our passage, Jesus tells us to consider carefully how we listen.

Why? Because how we listen determines how we live.

That's the Big idea, and I want to simply take each half of that statement and drill down on them.

Let's start with the first half...

1. How we should listen

- a. When Jesus said "consider carefully how you listen," He means pay attention to your listening - or your lack of listening - skill
- b. I think He also intends for us to improve our listening skills, and so here are 3 tips that will help all of us be better at listening.
 - Remember WHO is speaking
 - we tend to give more weight to words when we're giving more respect to the speaker
 - in this case, the speaker is God
 - by this time, Luke has already established that Jesus is God - the Messiah
 - so these aren't just any words to listen to; they're God's words
 - Psalm 119:105
 - Remember WHY He is speaking
 - we all know people who talk just to hear themselves talk
 - most of us tend to ignore most of those people most of the time
 - but God speaks with a purpose, and that purpose is change in us
 - 2 Timothy 3:15
 - we're changing from private to public; from darkness to light; from isolation to illumination
 - too often we listen to increase knowledge, but Jesus wants us to listen to increase obedience
 - Remember WHAT was being spoken
 - if we don't remember it, we can't do it!
 - everything God says is important (2 Tim. 3:16-17), there can be no selective hearing in His kingdom
- c. So that's how we should listen. Now, let's turn our attention to how we should live if we've listened well.

2. How we should live

- a. Remember our Big Idea: how we listen determines how we live.
- b. Before we talk about 3 specific marks in the lives of those who listen to God's word carefully, let me just point out to you how all of us already know the truth of this
- c. In every arena of life, it is those who listen well who often find themselves excelling
- d. If you don't listen well, you miss an important instruction or fact or warning
- e. The difference between a good marriage and a great marriage could simply be attentive listening
- f. I don't think that I'm overstating it by saying that something like listening could determine our futures

- g. This is why Jesus said to CAREFULLY CONSIDER how we listen, and if we do that, I believe our lives will be marked by 3 qualities found in these 6 verses:
- SHINE
 - in Jesus' day, it was a bit of a task to get the lamps lit, and so Jesus posed a rather comical (or stupid) scenario: going through all that work just to hide the benefit
 - when the word is in us, the light will shine from us
 - sin isolates; grace illuminates
 - light doesn't shine for the purpose of exposing our sin as much as for exposing our enemy
 - the word of God should be the world's worst kept secret
 - [IMAGE - Frozen, Conceal]
 - we might want to hide our noisy stomachs, but we should never want to hide the word of God in us
 - in fact, it takes no effort to shine, but it takes work to hide the light
 - in some ways, salvation is when God puts the light in us, and sanctification is how He gets the most light to shine out from us
 - SERVE
 - this doesn't need a ton of explanation because we talk about serving a lot, but notice in verse 16 that the light is put on a pedestal so others can see
 - not so others can see how great we are at shining the light, but so others can see the light - Jesus
 - SURROUND
 - Jesus said that if we hear God's word and then put it into practice (by shining and serving), then we would be part of the family
 - that's the third mark - we surround ourselves with a family that is also hearing and doing the word
 - Jesus put such a value on hearing and doing that He said it was what made you a part of His family
 - His family got it, too, because later on His step-brother, James, would write these words: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

The Landing

You could say that Jesus' actual family got the power of the Big Idea: that listening affects living.

The question this morning is, do we?

How well do you listen? How much does what you hear impact how you live?

If you find yourself on the "I could do a lot better" side of those questions, here are some practical things you can do:

1. Memorize Scripture - we won't do what we don't remember, so commit to one verse a week
2. Get quiet - most of our prayer life is a one-sided conversation, so remove the distractions and learn to be quiet. I love the quote on your note sheet about "listen" and "silent" having the same letters.
3. Journal - writing it down helps us remember, and every time I've been in the grocery store trying to remember what Wendy asked me to get, I've wished I had written it down. Journaling what God says in the word and in prayer is a huge step toward listening well, and in turn, living well.

Lots to think about, for sure, but pick one or two of the things that have stood out to you and let's close this morning praying about that, ok?

Let's pray.