

Learning to Listen to God's Word Series

Listen with Intentionality (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

By
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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Listen with Intentionality

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Reading the Entire Bible

1. It has been mentioned several times throughout this series that my experience with the word of God was a huge struggle as I first started to read the Bible for myself. Because my contact with the word of God was such a struggle, my spiritual growth was stunted. I wasn't moving forward very quickly. In fact, it didn't feel like I was moving forward at all. There were even times when it seemed as if I was taking steps backward.
2. As I read through the Bible, it wasn't until the third and fourth times going through the Bible cover to cover that the content of the Bible began to be understood and absorbed. The first few times I read the Bible, I didn't get much out of it. My first time through, I was simply getting exposed to what was in the Bible, and I was lost and confused because everything was new and unfamiliar. I didn't have a clue what was going on. The second time reading the Bible, I was somewhat familiar with the content because I had at least been exposed to it already, but this time was also a matter of seeing a lot of new things that I didn't see the first time. Finally, on my third and fourth time reading the Bible, I got my bearings a bit and started to see items in the text that were helpful in meeting some of my spiritual needs.
3. As I was learning what the word of God said and the expectations and requirements God had for me, I began to feel the weight of how far off course my life was compared to what God expected from me. My eyes were starting to get opened to the depth of my spiritual need. I realized the story I told myself about how good I thought I was wasn't true—God had a very different perspective of me than I did. There were a lot of changes I needed to make to become more like Jesus and grow into the person God wanted me to be. This fueled a deeper desire for the word of God.
4. While still stuck in a lot of ways, I was finally taught some skills for how to study the word of God in a way that would help me better understand what I was reading. Once I received a set of skills, I could use them when I went to the word of God and could spend productive time learning about and understanding the message God was communicating. Using these skills, I began taking significant steps forward in my journey with Jesus. Once equipped, I started genuinely enjoying my time with God's word.

- B. If we are going to learn how to become a good listener to the word of God, we need to discover what we should be looking for and paying attention to as we interact with the Bible. Disciples who fail to develop the skills needed to draw spiritual nourishment from the word of God will not move forward in the Christian life—they will remain stuck in spiritual infancy. Forward movement with Jesus is not automatic. My momentum was stuck for thirteen years before being provided with what was needed to take steps forward.

- C. Disciples who desire to focus their mental attention on the word of God in the right way as God’s word is encountered need to understand how the word of God works in their lives according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. When we know how God intends His word to operate in our lives, we can direct our attention in a way that harmonizes with how God has designed His word to work in our lives and experience productive results. Trying to use the word of God in ways inconsistent with the purposes of God will not work.

II. God’s Word Works in People with Spiritual Life

- A. As Jesus told His disciples to be careful how they listen, a major element of obeying that command is to understand what to pay attention to as the word of God is being communicated to us, whether that be verbally through teaching and preaching, in written form through reading, or even visually through watching videos presenting the word of God. Whatever form it takes, disciples need to learn how to direct their mental focus toward the elements of the word of God that will help them become spiritually healthy and mature. We need to learn how to interact with the word of God with intentionality. Disciples can learn to purposely engage with the word of God so that their spiritual needs are met as they take steps forward with Jesus in their Christian life.
- B. We can begin to be intentional in the way we respond to the word of God by realizing how God wants us to use His word:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for... (2 Tim. 3:16)

- C. The word of God is intended by God—the author—to be used in specific ways (“All Scripture is...beneficial for”, v. 16).¹ When the word of God works in a person’s life, they receive practical benefits.² The writings that come from and find their original source in God promote and enhance our well-being.³ God has designed His word to produce positive effects on us and our lives so that we benefit from it. The word of God does us good. The Bible brings the blessings of God into our life. The emphasis here is not on the nature of the word of God as being inspired or having its source in God (although that is clearly mentioned), but on the impact the word of God has on people—its effective usefulness.⁴ God Himself tells us that He communicates what He does, “for your good” (Dt. 10:12-13) and “for our good” (Dt. 6:24) repeatedly.⁵ The word of God promotes and leads to our best interests so that we can flourish in life. This is the motivation and intention behind the word of God.

- D. Paul explains in a little more detail what He means by this statement in another passage:

¹³ For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of *mere* men, but as

¹ This adjective only appears in two other text in the New Testament: 1 Timothy 4:8 and Titus 3:8. Robert W. Yarbrough, [The Letters to Timothy and Titus](#), ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 430.

² George W. Knight, [The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 449.

³ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 2 Timothy 3:16 “beneficial”

⁴ I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, [A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles](#), International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 790.

⁵ Genesis 22:17-18, Deuteronomy 6:3-7, Jeremiah 32:39, Psalm 1:1-2, John 15:11, 17:13

what it really is, the word of God, which also is at work in you who believe.

(1 Thess. 2:13)

- E. According to the apostle Paul's thinking, the word of God will be at work in the lives of those who accept the Bible as the word of God ("accepted it...as...the word of God", v 13) and who trust Jesus ("at work in you who believe", v. 13). The word of God is active and produces results in the lives of those who respond to the message of Jesus as God the Father intended.⁶ The word of God will not bring its benefits to those who reject it—or Jesus. God is the One who empowers people to be able to benefit from His word through the Holy Spirit. Not everyone who has contact with or knows the Bible experiences the work God's word accomplishes in people's lives. There are requirements that must first be met, and if these requirements aren't met, the word of God will not benefit them. The word of God is not a magic book that we can use to wield its power to our benefit. It's benefits only come to those whose hearts are surrendered and submitted properly to Jesus. The Bible provides everything we need to do all that God wants.
- F. Here is a challenge for you: look around and observe the quality of life of those who have a deep understanding of the Bible and who live it out faithfully. Compare the lives of those who operate in life according to the teachings of the Bible to those who are unfamiliar with and neglect the word of God. What do you see? How are their lives different? When we do this, we will observe a significant difference. We will instantly see how good the word of God is for us.

III. Listen to Learn

- A. The word of God works in the lives of those who have spiritual life and the work God is doing through His word is good. But what work does the word of God do? If a person is benefitting from the word of God by paying attention to the word of God in a way that moves them forward with Jesus, what happens to them? It is to this question that we will direct our attention, and which will occupy the rest of our time. The word of God is designed and intended by God to accomplish four specific works in the life of every person. We can learn how to be a good listener to the word of God by intentionally focusing our attention on the following spiritual activities of the word of God. We can read and study the Bible productively by paying attention to these four activities of the word of God in our lives.
- B. The first work God accomplishes in our lives through His word is:
 - ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, (2 Tim. 3:16)
- C. God changes our perspective and how we think as He uses His word in our lives ("for teaching", v. 16). Teaching refers to all the activities of education—the imparting of knowledge and skills.⁷ Frequently Paul uses this term to refer to doctrine (ideas about God).⁸ Doctrine is both the individual convictions (specific ideas or positions about God) as well as the group of accepted teachings promoted by Jesus and the Bible (called sound doctrine). The word of God provides an accurate worldview and the proper way to think according to what is true. The Bible is useful

⁶ Hebrews 4:12

⁷ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 2 Timothy 3:16 "teaching".

⁸ Eph. 4:14, 1 Tim. 1:10, 4:6, 4:13, 4:16, 5:17, 6:3, 2 Tim. 4:3, Tit. 1:9, 2:1, 2:7

to educate people in a knowledge of God. Learning from and adopting the ideas of the Bible make our doctrine and thinking healthy.⁹

- D. Paul had just got done explaining how this teaching impacted Timothy's life:
- ¹⁴ You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:14-15)
- E. The word of God provided Timothy with spiritual wisdom and a knowledge of how to not only be right with God, but also live rightly before God ("able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith", v. 15 and "continue in the things you have learned", v 14). This is a good summary of what the word of God teaches us. In short, the word of God teaches right thinking and right living through spiritual wisdom.¹⁰
- F. An example of using the Bible for the purpose of teaching can be found in the life of Apollos (Ac. 18:25-26). While this teacher of the word of God understood a lot, he still needed someone else to fill in the missing pieces that he did not yet understand. Two more experienced disciples, Priscilla and Auela, explained the way of God to him more accurately. The word of God can be used to educate people on the missing pieces so that they have all the puzzle pieces of the Christian worldview and lifestyle put together. The word of God supplies and fills in what is lacking in every individual's faith until they reach spiritual maturity (1 Thess. 3:10, Col. 1:28).
- G. What missing pieces do you have in your thinking and understanding? As you have contact with the word of God, direct your mental energy toward learning new truth about God, how to relate to Him, and how He wants you to live. If there is something that you don't understand, search to find answers. Allow the word of God to become the way you see yourself and the world. The Bible teaches us how to think correctly. Our personal convictions should be drawn out of the word of God. Where do you lack knowledge and understanding regarding God and the things pertaining to Him? Use the Bible as a tool to learn and expand your thinking in the areas you fall short. Be taught how to think from a true and accurate perspective through the word of God.

IV. Listen to Identify Problems

- A. As the word of God teaches us how to think and live, a natural result occurs in our lives by having our eyes opened to where we are in the wrong and off course in life. Our faults and moral flaws are put on display as God teaches us how we ought to be living. We discover that we are thinking falsely and doing wrongly compared to what God says in His word and the proper standards for what is right and wrong. Once we are aware of God's requirements, we will intuitively realize we are not meeting those requirements, and this leads to the second activity accomplished in our life through the word of God.
- B. The second work God accomplishes in our lives through His word is:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, (2 Tim. 3:16)

⁹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 65.

¹⁰ This is also called "sound doctrine" frequently by Paul (1 Tim. 4:6, 6:3, 2 Tim. 4:3, Tit. 1:9, 2:1, 2:7)

- C. The word of God points out to us where we and our lives are broken (“for rebuke”, v. 16).¹¹ A rebuke is an act or expression of criticism or censure.¹² Conviction (rebuke) is proving that charges made against someone are true.¹³ The word of God reveals to us where we are in the wrong (and where others are in the wrong). This activity of the word of God is not merely to find fault but to convince people of the error or their ways so they will see their need for change.¹⁴ The word of God is so effective in this that it can even morally evaluate what is happening inside us, including how we think and the intentions behind our actions (Heb. 4:12-13). Our reaction to our wrongs and mistakes being pointed out to us through the word of God should be acknowledgement and acceptance. While uncomfortable and painful, no one likes having our faults brought to our attention, God has good purposes for doing so.
- D. An interesting example of a rebuke comes in an exchange between Peter and Jesus (Mk. 8:31-33). One rebuke was informed and accurately applied while the other one was misinformed and inaccurately applied. Peter rebuked Jesus according to his personal preferences and desires. Peter did not want Jesus to suffer and be killed. When Jesus said what was going to happen to Him, Peter got hurt and upset to the point that he tried to rebuke Jesus (v. 32). This rebuke was not based on truth or anything wrong. Jesus responded to Peter’s attempted rebuke by rebuking Peter (v. 33)! Jesus’ rebuke of Peter was correctly based on truth and what Peter had done wrong. Unknowingly, Peter’s perspective and action went against the will of God and was therefore immoral. When rebuking others, we must be sure we are doing it correctly like Jesus instead of Peter.
- E. A healthy heart attitude toward the word of God is not only open to being told that we are wrong, but also values the importance of when that happens. God is helping us know where the problem areas of our life are. He is lovingly showing us that which is harming us and our ability to live a healthy life (Pr. 6:23). The conviction of the Holy Spirit that causes us to feel guilty about something we are doing is a lifeline that warns us we are going down a destructive path that will not end well. While this is always painful and uncomfortable, this work of the word of God is good for us. The act of being shown our wrongs, faults, and wayward course is an act of love. Instead of getting mad and offended at those who try to love us in this way, we should be humble enough to hear the issues they are drawing our attention to and use the word of God to determine if those issues are real.

V. Listen to Improve

- A. God doesn’t desire those who belong to Him to live their life in constant guilt and shame. He isn’t trying to beat us down by telling us all the things we are doing wrong. He isn’t trying to get people to have a low opinion of themselves or discourage them from feeling like they can’t ever do the right thing. God doesn’t just point the finger at us. He doesn’t use His word to make us feel bad and move on. God doesn’t criticize and judge on His way by; there is another activity God brings about in our lives, along with conviction and rebuke.

¹¹ 2 Timothy 4:2

¹² Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 2 Timothy 3:16 “rebuke”

¹³ Jay E. Adams, [How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 115.

¹⁴ William Barclay, [The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon](#), 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 225.

- B. The third work God accomplishes in our lives through His word is:
¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- C. The word of God doesn't just tell us where we are wrong, it also helps us fix the problems that are pointed out ("for correction", v. 16). The word of God gives us solutions and directs us toward a better alternative for areas of life that are out of alignment and causing us problems. God offers us effective fixes to faults we have. To correct is the act of offering an improvement (according to the standards of the word of God) to replace a mistake. ¹⁵ There is an objective pattern, model, or example that is being worked from to provide a better way to operate in life. This standard comes from the word of God and is modeled perfectly in Jesus. Instead of continuing to do wrong, the word of God outlines how we can do what is right. God points out where we are wrong, but He also points us toward what is right.
- D. The Bible supplies what is necessary to help a person change any thinking, attitudes, or behaviors that are out of conformity to the will of God. ¹⁶ The general tone God uses to do this, that those who serve Jesus also use, is gentleness (2 Tim. 2:25). Healthy life changes are offered from the word of God by God who is acting in a mild, even-tempered way. ¹⁷ We allow the wisdom of the word of God to help us make changes so that we can improve the way we are living our life. The word of God guides us how to live in ways that are good for us. God's word provides the wisdom we need to live better lives.
- E. As we read the Bible, we should have an open attitude that is willing to accept the life advice and better alternatives offered by God. Keep an eye out for how to do better. God shows us how to improve the quality of our lifestyle. As we are learning from the word of God, if God says we should be operating in a way that is different from how we are currently living, we should work at adjusting our course to live consistently with the word of God. An example of a better alternative might be how we deal with and respond to anger. God tells us it is not good to hold onto and stew in anger (Eph. 4:26-27); we should strive to let go of and move on from our anger as quickly as we can, understanding that our anger does not lead us to the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:20). We can do this by confronting the other person with Scripture (Mt. 18:15), or if the person doesn't listen, we allow God to deal with the wrong (Rm. 12:19). Deal with relational issues in a Biblical way, work toward reconciliation if possible, and don't be consumed with anger. Holding onto a list of wrongs is unloving (1 Cor. 13:4-5). Even if we feel justified in staying mad at another person, God offers us a better way to improve how we relate to others.

VI. Listen to Live

- A. Once a better path forward is identified and explained, the final work that the word of God does in our life is to empower us move forward down that better path. We are strengthened to implement the improvements that have been offered. The word of God does not merely tell us which direction we should be moving or the improvements we need to make to be healthier,

¹⁵ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 2 Timothy 3:16 "correction"

¹⁶ Jay E. Adams, [How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 140.

¹⁷ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 2 Timothy 2:25 "gentleness"

the Spirit through the word of God helps us develop the ability to live according to the path that is offered. We aren't left to ourselves to make the improvements God teaches us; He walks with us every step of the implementation journey.

B. The fourth work God accomplishes in our lives through His word is:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man *or woman* of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)¹⁸

C. Using the resources of God in the ability provided by the Spirit of God, disciples grow to live according to the healthy improvements communicated by God (“for training in righteousness”, v. 16). We are set on the right path by the word of God.¹⁹ As individuals grow to be like Jesus they develop the discipline and consistency needed to act according to the will of God.²⁰ The word of God cultivates our mind and morals toward right living so that we can act the way God wants in our day-to-day activities.²¹ The fourth and final activity of the word of God in our lives is to equip us to experience the health and benefits given to us by God. Disciples don't just know the right thing to do; they carry out and act on what the right thing is.

D. Disciples develop habits and tendencies to do what God wants them to do through implementing the word of God. The word of God shapes and disciplines the character by which we operate in life.²² The training in view produces conduct that is righteous so that right behavior becomes actualized.²³ In short, the word of God changes us to be the type of person who naturally does what is good and right.

E. This spiritual training happens in the events and activities of everyday life (Dt. 6:6-9). Jesus provides the perfect example of what this looks like with the disciples—even paying taxes was used as spiritual training (Mt. 17:24-27). This training in righteousness teaches us how to obey everything Jesus commanded His people to do (Mt. 28:19). This training is not passing on information, but multiplying a way of life (Phil. 4:9, 2 Tim. 3:10, Heb. 13:7). This training enables individuals to put the word of God into practice in a personal way according to the situations they face. Training in righteousness explains and demonstrates how the word of God impacts the way we respond to what we experience in life. It brings the word of God into our current circumstances.

F. To become disciplined in righteousness is to grow into becoming the person God is transforming us to be so that we live authentically, with integrity, a lifestyle that conforms to the standards of Scripture. Pursuing the righteousness God wants along with His kingdom becomes our highest priority in life (Mt. 6:33).

¹⁸ Preaching should promote the same activities as the word of God (2 Timothy 4:2).

¹⁹ Eugene Minor, *An Exegetical Summary of 2 Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 108.

²⁰ This training can be accomplished by instruction, warning, example, kindness, promises, chastisements, etc. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 428.

²¹ Adapted from Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 2 Timothy 3:16 “training in righteousness”

²² Eugene Minor, *An Exegetical Summary of 2 Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 108.

²³ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 449.

- G. How often do you think about and make sure you are living out what the word of God teaches? Are you training yourself to know how to choose and carry out actions and reactions in life that are pleasing to God (Heb. 5:14)? Learning how to practically navigate the situations of life in a God honoring way is what the word of God trains us to do. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, disciples learn and develop their ability to know and understand how God wants them to think and act in all the situations God places them in. Whether at work or school, out in public or at home in private, hanging out with friends or meeting new people, doing something they must do or enjoying what they choose to do, in all the various circumstances of life, the word of God equips us to navigate it all in a way that is pleasing to God and good for us. Do you read the Bible looking for the wisdom you need to respond to what is going on in your life?

VII. Conclusion

- A. The word of God is intended and designed by God to carry out specific functions in our lives. Since this is the case, disciples need to learn how to interact with the word of God in a way that is consistent with the purposes of God. Listen, read, and study the Bible so that you will be participating in the activities God is desiring to carry out in you through His word.
- B. Disciples should listen, read, and study the word of God to expand their knowledge and understanding, to be shown where their lives out of the bounds of the safety of God’s word, to access opportunities for improvement, and to be shaped to be the type of person who is capable of living in a way that is pleasing to God.
- C. We can be encouraged in this pursuit by the powerful principle offered by Paul about the grace of God. While used in the context of financial generosity, the principle applies much more broadly:

⁸ And God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;
(2 Cor. 9:8)