Small Group Guide: "Are We Listening?"

Based on 1 Samuel 3, Isaiah 50, and John 10

Overview

This sermon challenges us to examine how well we truly listen -- to God, to His Word, and to the people He places in our lives. In a world full of distractions, busyness, and noise, we are called to cultivate the kind of attentive, open heart that says, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Key Takeaways

- We live in one of the most distracted periods in human history, and that distraction has spiritual consequences.
- God speaks through His Word, through prayer, and through the people around us -- but we have to be paying attention.
- Samuel had to be taught how to recognize God's voice. Listening is a skill we develop, not one we automatically possess.
- Isaiah described waking each morning "like one being instructed" -- open, ready, and receptive to what God has for the day.
- Jesus said His sheep know His voice. The ability to recognize and respond to the voice of Christ is a mark of belonging to Him.
- Hard messages are one reason we stop listening. Comfort and distraction can become ways we avoid what God is trying to say to us.
- Face-to-face, attentive communication reflects the way God designed us to relate to one another.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. On a scale of one to ten, how would you honestly rate yourself as a listener -- whether in conversations with other people or in your relationship with God? What makes you give

yourself that number?

2. Think about a time when someone said exactly what you needed to hear, and you later realized there was no way they could have known you needed to hear it. What was that experience like? Did it feel like more than coincidence?

From 1 Samuel 3

3. Samuel heard God's voice three times before he understood what was happening. What does that tell us about how God works, and what does it tell us about how we sometimes respond?

4. Eli had failed in many ways as a spiritual leader, and yet he was still the one who instructed Samuel on how to respond to God. What does that teach us about how God can work even through imperfect people and imperfect circumstances?

5. When Samuel finally received God's message, it was a hard one -- and he had to deliver it to someone he deeply respected. Have you ever been in a situation where listening to God required you to do something difficult or uncomfortable? What happened?

From Isaiah 50:4-7

6. Isaiah described waking each morning with his ear open, ready to be instructed. What would it look like practically for you to begin your day in that posture? What would have to change in your morning routine?

7. Isaiah connected open ears with a willingness not to be rebellious or to turn away. In what areas of your life do you find it hardest to stay open to instruction? Why do you think that is?

From John 10:1-10

8. Jesus said His sheep know His voice and will not follow a stranger. How do you personally grow in your ability to recognize the voice of Christ -- to distinguish it from other voices competing for your attention?

9. The Pharisees heard Jesus speak and still did not understand, which was itself evidence that they were not listening. Is it possible to be physically present for spiritual instruction and still not truly be listening? What does that look like in real life?

Broader Reflection

10. The sermon suggested that we sometimes use distraction as an excuse to avoid hard conversations or convicting truths. Do you agree? In what ways might busyness or screen time be functioning as a shield in your own life?

11. The sermon raised this question: does spiritually focused time ever feel like an interruption to your life rather than a central part of it? If so, what does that reveal about where your priorities actually are?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group before your next meeting.

The Morning Posture Challenge Each morning this week, before checking your phone, spend five minutes in silence and prayer. Ask God to open your ears and help you receive whatever He has for you that day. Keep a simple journal of anything that stands out.

The One-Hour Practice Try going one hour each day without your phone -- ideally during a time you would normally spend in conversation, prayer, or Scripture reading. Notice what comes up when the distraction is removed.

Face-to-Face Investment Identify one person in your life you have been communicating with primarily through texts or brief exchanges. Reach out and arrange a time to sit down together, face to face, without phones present. Come ready to listen more than you speak.

Bump Inventory Reflect on a recurring struggle or pattern in your life -- a "bump" you keep running into. Ask honestly: have I truly listened to what God and others have been saying about this? Write down what you have heard but perhaps not yet acted on.

Scripture Meditation Spend time this week with the three passages from the sermon -- 1 Samuel 3, Isaiah 50:4-7, and John 10:1-10. Read each one slowly and ask: what is God saying to me personally through this text?

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together for the following:

- Ears that are open and hearts that are willing to be instructed
- The courage to listen even when the message is hard
- Freedom from the distractions that keep us from hearing God clearly
- Gratitude for the people God has placed in our lives who speak truth to us
- A deeper ability to recognize the voice of Christ above all other voices

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"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." -- 1 Samuel 3:9