



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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LORD'S DAY 9 NOVEMBER 2008

ARE YOU LISTENING TO THE SERMON?

A sermon is a message from God to you which comes through a human messenger. It is food for your soul. If you have a good attitude towards listening to sermons, you will not find them boring at all. Unfortunately some find it hard to endure a long sermon. After returning from church one Sunday a little boy said, *"You know what, Mummy? I'm going to be a preacher when I grow up."* *"That's fine,"* said his mother. *"But what made you decide that you want to be a preacher?"* *"Well,"* said the boy pensively, *"I'll have to go to church on Sunday anyway. And I think it would be more fun to stand up and yell than to sit still and listen."*

The longest sermon on record was preached in 1976 by Rev Robert Marshall, a minister of a church in Michigan. He preached for 60 hours and 31 minutes! The shortest sermon was preached by a chaplain at Paine College, Georgia. His topic at one college chapel hour was, *"What does Christ answer when we ask, Lord, what's in religion for me?"* The complete content of his sermon was just one word: "Nothing." He explained later that the one-word sermon was meant for people 'brought up on the gimme-gimme' gospel. When he was asked how long it took him to prepare the sermon he said, *"Twenty years."*

A good sermon takes hours of work to prepare. The preacher studies the Scripture text carefully, meditates on it and prays for God to show him what He wants to say to the congregation. He may put in 10 hours or more of work just to compose a single sermon. And when he goes up to the pulpit he yields his mind and heart to the Holy Spirit to deliver the sermon. When we know the amount of effort put into a 40-minute sermon, the least we should do is to pay full attention to what is preached.

Some have a habit of falling asleep during sermons. If you have such a habit, please try to do something about it, e.g. retire to bed early on Saturday night. And remember this: The preacher's preaching can only be a valid excuse for falling asleep if it puts others to sleep as well.

Some suffer from amnesia after listening to a sermon. A few hours later, they can't remember what was preached at all – not even the sermon topic or the Scripture text. What they hear does not register in the brain or reach the heart – nothing is retained. (But listening to gossip is a different matter – everything is retained, even to the tiniest detail!)

If you have been attending church regularly for 2 years, you would already have heard over 100 sermons by now. Can you remember the sermons you heard? What benefits have you received from them? If you cannot remember what you have heard or have not gained anything from them, why is this so?

Sermon-listening will not benefit anyone who is unwilling to put in the necessary effort. Jesus...

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sometimes preached in parables – both to reveal as well as to conceal (Matthew 13:10-13; 34-35). Those who were diligent would eventually understand the meaning of the parable or they would take the trouble to seek for it. Those who were not diligent would not bother to find out the meaning and just prefer to forget what they have heard.

Listening to a sermon is not the same as listening to a lecture or a lesson. Unlike lectures, sermons are not meant just to provide you with new information. They are meant to move the will and the heart rather than to inform the mind. They are designed to call God's people to obey Him, and to train their conscience to recognize sin in their lives. Because of this the same truths are often presented in different sermons, but in different ways and using different approaches of appeal or challenge.

In sermon after sermon we are instructed to love God and our fellow man; we are warned against sin and its consequences; we are presented with the person and teachings of Christ – how He died on the cross to take away our sin and how He resurrected from the grave. Why do we need to have such information repeated to us so many times? Because while all these things may be known very well in our minds, our wills and our hearts cannot grasp them permanently. Thus we need constant reminders and appeals to apply them.

When you listen to a sermon please don't say, *"I already know all this, and I have heard it so many times before. Why should I listen to the same thing again?"* This will only switch your mind off to the rest of the sermon. Instead, say to yourself, *"Even though I already know what I am about to listen, I believe that there is a personal message from God for me in this sermon. Perhaps it will reinforce and confirm what I have heard before. I must therefore give it full attention."*

If your attitude and effort in listening to sermons improve, your soul will be greatly enriched and blessed by them. But if you have a negative attitude whatever benefits you could have gained will be lost forever. Satan seeks to deprive people of the benefits of the sermons they hear. We know this from the parable of the Sower – *"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up...When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side."* (Matthew 13:4,19) Don't let the devil succeed in doing this to you. Let the seed of God's Word sink deeply into your heart so that it will not be snatched away. Your effort in listening to sermons can be categorized into three parts:

What to do before the sermon is preached

1. Heart preparation – Pray that God will give you a teachable heart: "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:9). Pray also for the preacher – that God may use him to speak to you, and that he may be able to make the message plain and easy for all to understand.
2. Mind preparation – "Gird up the loins of your mind." (1 Peter 1:12) Look first at the sermon topic and text before it is preached. Read the Scripture text in your Bible beforehand. Remain alert throughout the sermon and do not doze off.
3. Will preparation – Convince yourself that there is something in every sermon you hear that is meant personally for you. Prepare to surrender yourself to God's will – whatever it may be – and do not allow your will to stand in the way of doing His will. Some try to evade what God is saying to them by thinking of people for whom the sermon they hear would be most appropriate, and they make plans to get recordings or transcripts of the sermon for them. When listening to sermons think first about how it applies to yourself before thinking about how it applies to others.

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What to do *when* the sermon is preached.

1. Keep your Bible open so that when the preacher makes any reference to a verse in the passage, you can see it immediately in front of you.
2. Listen not only with your ears, but with your eyes as well. The preacher communicates both with his voice and body. Observe his facial expressions and movements. Keep your eyes on him at all times, but don't be distracted either by the peculiarities of the preacher (e.g. his big nose, or the unique design on his tie) or his strange accent.
3. Record down the main points and verse references he mentions in a notebook. This will help you to stay focused. The notes can also be useful for future reference. Don't daydream or allow your thoughts to wander astray.
4. Let God speak to you through the sermon. According to Dr Philip Ryken, *"Through the inward ministry of the Holy Spirit, He uses His Word to calm your fear, comfort your sorrow, disturb your conscience, expose your sin, proclaim God's grace, and reassure you. But all these are matters of the heart rather than of the mind, so listening to a sermon can never be merely an intellectual exercise."*

What to do *after* the sermon is preached.

1. Thank God for what you have heard (cf. Luke 17:12-19).
2. Reflect on it. This is what the time of quiet meditation at the end of the worship service is for. Whatever God impresses upon your heart, settle it immediately. Tell the Lord – *"I hear what You have just said loud and clear, and I now fully resolve to obey it, with Your help."* If the sermon has brought conviction of sin, confess it immediately. If it has highlighted a virtue that you lack, decide to cultivate it. If it has shown you a command that you need to obey, act upon it right away. If it has highlighted a promise of God to trust in, put your faith in it fully and act on God's promise. James 1:22 tells us – *"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."*
3. Clear up any doubts or things that you did not understand in the sermon. Ask the preacher or a mature Christian who heard the sermon to explain them to you. The preacher will be very happy to answer such enquiries because he knows that people are paying attention and are interested in the sermon they have heard.

Finally, the way to know if you are really listening to sermons is by the way you live. Your life should reflect the sermons you have heard. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians who had heard his preaching, *"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."* (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)

*Rev Charles Seet, Singapore
(adapted from Life B-P Church bulletin dated 2 November 2008)*

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

CHURCH THEME: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING. (Philippians 2:12)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	Today: 09/11/2008	Next Week: 16/11/2008	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	Joey Seow	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	
<i>Message:</i>	Christ Crucified	Wisdom Not Of This World	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Text:</i>	1 Corinthians 2:1-5	1 Corinthians 2:6-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembrance Sunday: Please take note that we will be observing a 2-minute silence at 11am this morning. • Calling of Resident Minister: Continue to pray for the Lord's calling for a resident minister. The church leaders are praying about calling Rev Timothy Ki. • Updated Duty Rota for Nov and Dec '08: The updated rota can be found on the notice board in the Fellowship Hall. • Pray for those who are sick: Douglas (knee pain), Maria (ankle and joint pain), Constance (left heel pain), Maureen (knee pain), Anthony (operation – Tuesday), Joy (cough) • Pray for those who are seeking employment: John (interview next week), Constance (waiting for feedback from interview) • Pray for Journey Mercies: Douglas (Ghana), Hubert (S'pore), Jiak Eng (S'pore) • Those serving on the Lord's Day: Please gather behind the pulpit area at 10.30am for prayer.
<i>Organist:</i>	Mark	Mark	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Joshua Flinn	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	
<i>Message:</i>	The Characteristics of False Teachers – Part 1	The Characteristics of False Teachers – Part 2	
<i>Text:</i>	2 Peter 2:10-19	2 Peter 2:10-19	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Sophia	Grace	
Other Duties			
	Today: 09/11/2008	Next Week: 16/11/2008	
<i>Ushers</i>	Daniel / Yetta	Jonathan / Evelyn	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Hui Min	Hui Min	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Constance	Volunteers	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	John	Josh	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 14 Nov	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Led by Mark Chen	
Sat 15 Nov	4.00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Rev Yeo Seow Phong	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering: £490.48		Lunch: £38.90	
<u>Memory Verse</u>			
<p><i>Last Week (November 08 Wk 1): 1 Corinthians 13:3</i> And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.</p> <p><i>This Week (November 08 Wk 2): 1 Corinthians 13:4</i> Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,</p>			