



CREATURES of HABIT
The Habit of listening
Shane Philip
August 11, 2019

DISCUSSION NOTES
The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our series called Creatures of Habit. We are all creatures of habit and, over time, our brains imprint those habits so that we do things automatically – without having to think. Wouldn't it be great if we could nurture a great listening habit? God-honoring people do consistently what other people do occasionally and we need to consistently pray then listen for His voice. This week's study is based upon an experience of the Prophet Samuel when he heard from God and that set the scene for a life of service and purpose. Also, the parable of the sower comes forth brilliantly as Jesus explains how important it is that we listen and become receptive to God's voice

SCRIPTURE¹

1 Samuel 3:1-11 The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night, Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. Again, the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." And the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle."

Mark 4:9b, 15-16,18-20 Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. Some people are like the seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like the seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.

Psalms 46:10b Be still and know that I am God.

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

OBSERVATION

Samuel came along when Israel was changing from a theocracy into a monarchy. He heard a voice, but he didn't recognize it as God's voice. When he was able to hear and know God and his relationship with the Almighty was enriched and his life as a prophet was powerful in Israel during dark times of rebellion. He began by saying, "Here I am Lord. Speak. Your servant is listening." We need to do the same if our walk with Jesus is to flourish.

Question: How do you know when God is speaking to you ?

APPLICATION

God isn't interested in what we achieve, He is interested in what we are becoming – more like Jesus. So are we God-honoring people who do consistently what others do occasionally? Are we consistent financially, physically, relationally and spiritually? We become what we repeatedly do.

Question: Who are you becoming?

Question: How are you handling your finances? How are your concerns with them inhibiting your walk with Jesus? How about your physical health; your relationships; your spiritual life?

Question: What are your routines? What can you do to make them more productive?

Bad habits are cumulative in that they add up over time. The same is true for good ones. When we put spiritual habits in our lives, we may not see the benefits all at once, but over time there is a cumulative effect. The habit of listening has many benefits -- if we are in a position to listen to God, He will speak to us. It isn't in an audible voice, but in four very distinct ways: **1) He speaks through the Bible.** His moral imperatives are written clearly there. **2) He speaks through Godly council.** He uses trusted Godly people in our lives to guide us. **3) He speaks through current circumstances** and either opens or closes doors or is quiet for a time. **4) He speaks through His Holy Spirit** as He lives within us. He also says things that have never been in our own minds so we know it isn't our inner voice we are hearing.

Question: How does God speak to you? Tell us about a recent time when you heard His voice clearly.

Question: How did hearing God's voice change your life?

The parable of the sower has much to say along these lines. There are four types of soil. The first is a much trodden path that the sower's seed cannot penetrate. The second is rocky soil where seed springs up quickly and then dies because the soil isn't very deep. The third has thorny plants and the seed gets choked out by them, but the fourth is good soil – loam – which is receptive to the seed and produces a good crop. This huge metaphor is describing our hearts and their ability to receive God's word. They may be hard or sinful or shallow, or distracted, but ours must be receptive to His message.

Question: What are the worries that consume you? What are the distractions that draw you away? With whom are you angry or holding grudges?

Question: What decisions do you need to make today? Have you taken them to Jesus? Have you heard Jesus say, "No. don't do that?" Has He said, "Yes, do that?" Are you receptive enough to follow His answer or are your acoustics bad and you are hearing only static?

Jesus often said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." In Revelation chapters 1 through 3, He repeats this phrase after speaking to each of seven churches. He rebukes some and praises others, but His greatest disappointment was with Laodicia – He called that church lukewarm – apathetic. He is rebuking churches of today that are lukewarm because **they are not on fire and listening for Him.** We are not that church, but we may become that people if we are not diligent in seeking Him, listening for His voice and developing good spiritual habits i.e., praying, reading, and worshipping every day.

Question: How do you know if you have spiritual ears? How about a receptive heart? What fruit is evident in your life?

Question: Who are the people around you who you know have spiritual ears? How can you tell?

PRAYER Heavenly Father, open our ears to hear you again. In Jesus name. Amen