

# Hearing Aids for Believers

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Let's face it—sometimes it is hard to get much out of the sermon or teaching you receive in your church. While some of the blame often lies at the feet of the presenter, it is still the obligation of the *listener* to scratch for something nourishing for the soul.

Here are some hearing aids:



1. Sleep more. Not during the meeting, of course, but the night before. This takes some planning. It is especially difficult with youth, who use Saturday night as an opportunity to stay up as late as possible.

2. Take notes. Buy a small notebook with a sturdy back, and don't forget to bring a pen or pencil. Your notes may be imperfect, but they do help a sluggish mind. Don't let your note taking make the session purely academic. Sermons are to be "experienced." I like to put the subject in a circle in the middle of the page and draw lines out from the circle to other points, etc. But everyone has their own style.

3. Bring your Bible. It is difficult to follow the preacher's line of thought when you don't have the whole text of his message, including the surrounding context, in front of you. Pew Bibles are sometimes useful, but using your own Bible means that you can underline as you need to, and write notes in the margin.

4. Sit closer. Almost without exception, the best listeners are in the front. There are some valid reasons to be in the back, needless to say, but it is usually true that sitting in the back impedes our listening.

5. Minimize distractions. If you are sitting where there is a lot of movement around you, find a better place. If your kids are noisy and seek your attention, then "divide and conquer" by asking a relative or friend to sit with you. Prepare a way for the little ones to "draw" what

they are learning from the sermon. And make sure they go to the bathroom prior to the meeting. Nothing breaks concentration, for listeners as well as the preacher, like the Sunday shuffle to the restroom.

6. Ask questions. In a typical session, this will likely have to be done following the meeting. For instance, you might ask: "Pastor, I did not understand what you meant by the phrase 'sanctification is by faith.' Would you please explain that again to me?"

7. Discuss the problem. Express to a pastor or leader that you are having trouble listening and would like to improve. Ask for suggestions. Perhaps this will cause the leader to be alert to your need and to improve communication, or you might discover some better way to connect to his style of speaking.

Some people sleep each and every time the Word is preached. The preacher opens his Bible; the member closes his eyes—every time! Others don't sleep, but they have nomadic minds and never concentrate. Years of this will leave you spiritually destitute. There has never been a truly spiritual person who could not somehow lock his or her mind on the truth.

Jesus said, "Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him" (Luke 8:18).

In other words, if you do not "take heed how you listen" even what you seem to have in terms of understanding will be taken away from you, revealing that you never truly understood or knew God at all.

One person hears all he can and, though it might not be all he would like, it still makes him stronger. The other person sleeps or mentally escapes and experiences spiritual atrophy or even eternal loss.

Nobody likes to be told, "Get a hearing aid." But I say, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mt. 13:9).

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