

Rediscover Jesus

Part 22: Listen to Do God's Word | Luke 8:16-21

Pastor Eric Yee

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 22 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're studying the Gospel account of Luke from chapters 4-9, which record Jesus' public ministry in the area of Galilee.

So let's get right into today's sermon: "Listen to Do God's Word."

Sermon Introduction

Let me ask you a question: How do you know if you've been listened to?

Bosses, when you tell your employees to file a report, how do you know that they listened to you? They file the report.

Parents, when you tell your kids to clean up their mess, how do you know that they listened to you? They cleaned up their mess.

Wives, when you tell your husband that you want to go to a certain restaurant for your birthday, how do you know that they listened to you? They take you to that restaurant.

Everyone, when you tell your friend that it offends you when they make jokes at your expense, how do you know that they listened to you? They stop making those kinds of jokes.

In every instance, we know we've been listened to if there is some kind of response of *doing*. It's not just nodding their heads, it's not just saying "yes, yes," but there must be some action to affirm that listening has truly taken place.

That's the way that communication usually works. There's some *purpose* that we want to communicate, so we *speak* and if the other person has truly *listened*, there's an expectation that some response of *doing* will take place.

I think we probably all understand that. But now, let's ask ourselves this: Is that how we listen to God's Word? Do we realize that when *God* speaks, there's some *purpose* he wants to communicate, so when he *speaks* and if we have truly *listened*, then there's an expectation that we will respond in some kind of *doing*? And that *doing* is not just nodding our heads and saying "yes, yes," but there must be some *action* to affirm that listening has truly taken place.

That's what we're going to dive deeper into today.

The One Thing

Listen to do God's Word to advance God's purposes in the world.

Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Luke 8:16-21.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today's passage.

So far in Luke chapter 8, when a great crowd was gathering around Jesus, he spoke to them the parable of the seed, where a sower sowed his seed among different soils (so to speak)—the path, the rock, the thorns, and good soil. Jesus then explained to his disciples how the parable describes how the Word of God is heard and received by different hearts.

- First, some hearts are *hardened*, so they reject the Word and the devil takes away the Word from their hearts.
- Second, some hearts are *shallow* without root, so they initially respond to the Word with joy, but they eventually show themselves not to be believers when they fall away when their faith is tested.
- Third, some hearts are *infested* and *choked* with the cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and so they are “half-way Christians,” which are really no Christians at all.
- And lastly, some hearts are *honest* and *good*, meaning that, when they hear God's Word, they receive it, they believe it, they hold fast to it unto salvation, and they bear fruit in their lives.

And that's where we are in today's passage, as Jesus begins to speak another *complementary* parable to the parable of the seed that he just spoke.

Scripture Reading

So let's read Luke 8:16-21.

¹⁶ “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

¹⁹ Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” ²¹ But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

This is God's Word.

Overview

We'll look at this passage in three parts and we'll see three purposes that God has for us.

When we listen to do God's Word, it...

- I. Reveals the gospel to others (vv. 16-17)
- II. Reverberates [or continues to have serious effects] in eternity (v. 18)
- III. Relates believers as Jesus' family (vv. 19-21)

So first, when we listen to do God's Word, it...

I. Reveals the gospel to others (vv. 16-17)

Verse 16 says this:

¹⁶ “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.

This parable is simple enough to understand. In the first century, there was no electricity, so in the deep darkness of night, if you wanted to see, you would light a lamp. This was not a light bulb, but it was essentially an open flame fueled by oil, like a candle.

But after lighting the lamp, no one in their right mind would then put a jar over it, which would extinguish the flame. And no one in their right mind would put the lamp under a bed; not only would that hide the light from the rest of the room, but that would just be straight-up dangerous as the whole bed could catch on fire.¹

No, if you want the lamp to provide maximum light in the room, you will set it high on a lampstand. Of course, everyone would agree with Jesus; that's the only thing that makes sense to do with a lamp. You wouldn't light the lamp for any other purpose except to give light for all to see.

So what does Jesus mean by this parable?

[¹⁶ “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.]

Verse 17 says this:

¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

So apparently, the meaning of the parable has something to do with making manifest something hidden, or making known something secret, or to bring something out of the dark and into the light.

But what exactly is that *something* that is hidden that Jesus intends to be brought into the light?

Context will help us answer that question. Jesus is not speaking in a vacuum, so what *has* he said right before this and what *will* he say right after this? That'll help us understand what he's saying right here.

We should note that there is no break between Jesus explaining the parable of the seed to his disciples and now speaking the parable of the lamp. Jesus is telling another parable here, but his *topic* has not changed. He's *still* talking about how we hear the Word of God, which becomes clearer in verse 18.

But the last thing Jesus said was this in...

Luke 8:15 = As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

So Jesus' disciples have just heard his explanation of the parable of the seed; they *know* that it was about hearing the Word of God, believing it, holding fast to it, and bearing fruit in accordance with it.

You could say that Jesus *illuminated* their minds to understand God's Word. What they previously did *not* understand, they *now* understand. What was previously *hidden* to them has now been made *manifest*; what was previously *mysterious* to them has now been made *known*; what was previously covered in *darkness* has now come to *light*.

So what are Jesus' disciples to do with their newfound understanding of God's Word?

In short, they are to apply it to *themselves*. They are to *themselves* hear God's Word, believe it, hold fast to it, and bear fruit in accordance with it. In other words, they are to “be *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving [themselves]” (James 1:22).

¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018).

In the parable of the seed, you could say that the *evidence* of someone who truly hears, believes, and holds fast to God's Word is the fact that they bear fruit. The first three hearts are not fruitful with God's Word, but the last heart who truly believes God's Word is the only one that is fruitful.

And so, Jesus' disciples are to bear *fruit* in accordance with God's Word that they have heard and believed. To bear fruit is to *do* God's Word; it is the *good works* that spring up from our hearts transformed by God's Word.

[¹⁶ "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.]

And this is the imagery of light that Jesus is talking about here in verses 16-17. Jesus uses "fruit" and "light" as synonymous metaphors for *good works* (cf. Luke 3:8-9; 6:43-45; 8:15; Col. 1:10).

This is what Jesus says in...

Matthew 5:14-16 = "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**

Our good works are not only the *evidence* that we have truly believed the Word of God that we have heard, but they are also the "light" that emanates from us as believers of God's Word. Our good works are the *beacon* that draws people in to want to know more about God's Word.

[¹⁶ "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.]

But those good works also include the *proclamation* of God's Word. God's Word is to be *seen* and *heard* (cf. Luke 8:10), and God accomplishes that through *his people*. Others *see* God's Word through the *good works* of God's people. And others *hear* God's Word through the *mouths* of God's people, "for nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light."

Jesus says this in...

Matthew 10:27 = What I tell you in the *dark*, say in the *light*, and what you hear whispered, *proclaim* on the housetops.

Jesus wants his disciples to make God's Word known widely to *all* people (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). But God's Word has a specific *message*—and that's the *gospel* (or good news) of Jesus Christ.

All of God's Word is about *Christ* (Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 5:39, 46). In fact, the *gospel* of Jesus Christ is what was once hidden but has now been made manifest now that Christ has come. And the *gospel* is what we must make known to all people.

The apostle Paul writes this in...

Colossian 1:23, 25-26 (NIV) = ... This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.... I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people.

The ministry of believers now is to proclaim the gospel and to present the word of God in its *fullness*. It's been said that the Old Testament is the New Testament *concealed* and the New Testament is the Old Testament *revealed*. Now that Christ has come, there ought not to be any mystery or hiddenness about what God's Word is about; it should all become crystal clear in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Now what exactly *is* the gospel?

The gospel is that though all of us are created by God, we have sinned and rebelled against him by rejecting his Word and are rightfully deserving of his wrath, but in his great love for us, he came as the person of Jesus Christ to be our substitute—to live in perfect obedience to God’s Word, to die the punishment we deserved for disobeying his Word, and to resurrect three days later. And so, all who repent of our disobedience and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior can now be saved from the wrath of God that our sins deserve, counted righteous in his sight, and adopted as his sons and daughters.

[¹⁶ “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.]

So how are followers of Christ supposed to *reveal* the gospel to those around them? By letting our light shine before others—by doing good works in accordance with the gospel.

When we listen to *do* God’s Word, it *reveals* the gospel to others.

Now, how do our good works reveal that gospel? In countless ways. Perhaps it’s helpful to think about it in the negative.

- If we recognize that we are sinners deserving of God’s wrath and yet were shown mercy and grace, then how can we not extend mercy and grace to those who have hurt us (Matt. 18:21-35)? An unmerciful Christian doesn’t make sense in light of the gospel.
- If we recognize that Christ loved the church and gave his life up to save and sanctify his church (Eph. 5:25-27), then how can we not also love and be committed to the church he died for? A churchless Christian doesn’t make sense in light of the gospel.
- If we recognize that we were spiritually poor and Christ made himself poor so that we might share in the riches of his eternal, imperishable inheritance (2 Cor. 8:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5), then how can we not be generous with our resources to those in need? A stingy Christian doesn’t make sense in light of the gospel.
- If we recognize that God takes justice so seriously that he would go to the cross to show that he is both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Christ (Rom. 3:26), then how can we not also take his moral law seriously and advocate for those experiencing injustices in our world? A lawless or apathetic Christian doesn’t make sense in light of the gospel.
- If we recognize that our lives are bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28), then how can we not be diligent about the use of our time (Eph. 5:16) and doing all things to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)? A lazy or self-centered Christian doesn’t make sense in light of the gospel.
- If we recognize that Christ has given us the words of eternal life (John 6:68), then how can we not also share the gospel with those who are perishing around us? A silent Christian is doesn’t make sense in light of the gospel.

Now if an unmerciful, churchless, stingy, lawless, apathetic, lazy, self-centered, silent Christian keeps the gospel in the dark, then a merciful, church-loving, generous, moral, passionate, hard-working, God-glorifying, bold Christian brings the gospel to light. A Christian who is marked by such good works—such light—*reveals* the gospel to others.

<pause>

But to be clear, before *we* are the light of the world, *Jesus* is the light of the world and whoever follows him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12). *Jesus* lights us up—he sets us ablaze—to light up the world. Apart from Jesus, we have *no* light and we can do *nothing* (John 15:5).

It is only as we *abide by faith* in Jesus that we can *receive* his light and that we can do good works that *reflect* his light to those around us.

If we don’t understand that as our foundation, we will wrongly try to do good works out of our own strength, and that is *not* the gospel and that does not *reveal* the gospel.

The gospel is *not* that we are able and we ought to try harder. No, the gospel is that we are *unable* but *Christ* alone is able on our behalf and he *makes* us able as we depend on him for everything.

- Christ is merciful to sinners, so we depend on him to help us to be merciful to others.
- Christ loved and gave himself up for his church, so we depend on him to help us to love his church.
- Christ became poor to give generously, so we depend on him to help us to be generous.

But even when we struggle or fail to do the good works that God’s Word calls us to do, we are *not* crushed, but we remember that Christ was crushed in our place on the cross. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). And so, we can repent, receive forgiveness, and ask God for his grace to empower us to obey—not as a means to *earn* our acceptance, which we already have in Christ, but as a means to *please* to the one who loved us and gave his life for us (Gal. 2:20) and as a means to *reveal* the gospel that he’s provided to save us.

<pause>

Our good works “adorn” the gospel (cf. Titus: 2:10). The gospel is a message to be heard, believed, and held fast to unto salvation, but the gospel must also be *seen* in the lives of God’s people. Our lives answer the “so what?” question of the gospel. What difference does the gospel make in our day-to-day lives? How does it affect our lives and the world that we live in? That can only be *seen* through the light of our lives—the fruit of our good works.

Humanly speaking, we could say that “the spread of the light of the gospel in this world is dependent upon Jesus’ hearers doing his Word.”²

<pause>

So a question for us to ask ourselves is: Am I listening to *do* God’s Word? Are my works consistent with the gospel that I believe and hold fast to? Is my life *revealing* the gospel or *undermining* the gospel?

Is my light on a lampstand for all to see and to be drawn in? Or is it extinguished under a jar or hidden away under a bed?

Ask yourself this: If you were charged in a court of law of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?³ Or stated differently, would people in your workplace be surprised to hear that you’re a follower of Jesus?

For many of us, most of our waking hours are probably spent at work, so work is a primary context where our lives can reveal the gospel.

Jordan Raynor, host of “The Word Before Work” podcast, gives five very practical ways to prepare to share the gospel with co-workers.

[Five ways to prepare the share the gospel with co-workers:
1. Be so good they can’t ignore you]

First, be so good they can’t ignore you.⁴

God commands believers to work in ways “that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders” (1 Thess. 4:11-12 NIV). But it’s very difficult to win the respect of outsiders if you’re mediocre at your job. Excellence is what is attractive and winsome to those around us.

[Five ways to prepare the share the gospel with co-workers:
1. Be so good they can’t ignore you]

² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

³ R. C. Sproul, *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), 168.

⁴ Jordan Raynor, “5 Ways to Prepare to Share the Gospel with Co-Workers,” November 1, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/5-ways-to-prepare-to-share-the-gospel-with-co-workers>.

2. Be a friend]

Second, be a friend.⁵

Jesus said that by our love for one another, all people will know that we are his disciples (John 13:35). That begins with spiritual family, but ought to extend to all those around us.

As followers of Christ, we should be known as people in our offices who genuinely love our co-workers—who ask them about their families, who make time to grab coffee or a meal with them, who care about them as people who have lives beyond just what they produce at work.

In my own friendships, years later, when some were going through different difficulties in their lives, they reached out to me and asked me more about my faith in Christ. But they never would've thought to do that if they didn't first think of me as a friend.

[Five ways to prepare the share the gospel with co-workers:

1. Be so good they can't ignore you
2. Be a friend
3. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ]

Third, identify yourself as a follower of Christ.⁶

We shouldn't expect to have opportunities to share the gospel with our co-workers if they never know that we're followers of Christ (John 12:42-43).

So how can you identify yourself as a Christian in a natural and welcoming way?

You could ask co-workers how their weekend was, and when they inevitably ask *you* how your weekend was, you can talk about how you enjoyed the Sunday service at your church.

You could also ask co-workers what they're reading these days, and when they inevitably ask *you* what you're reading, you can talk about a Christian book that you've been reading recently.

You could also add something to your LinkedIn or Instagram profile that makes it explicitly clear that you're a follower of Christ.

[Five ways to prepare the share the gospel with co-workers:

1. Be so good they can't ignore you
2. Be a friend
3. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ
4. Pray that God would open doors to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual]

Fourth, pray that God would open doors to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.⁷

Only God can make a person receptive to the gospel, but we can pray for him to do so and we can look for opportunities to move conversations with unbelievers from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.

Surface conversation would be like "How was your weekend?" But perhaps in the midst of that conversation, your co-worker says, "I had a good weekend, but I was just so exhausted from the week."

Now, moving from the surface to the serious, you might say, "Yeah, I've noticed you've been on Slack and WhatsApp super late the past few weeks. Why is that?" And perhaps your co-worker says, "Well, I love

⁵ Jordan Raynor, "How my co-worker Tim invited me to share the gospel with him," November 8, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/how-my-co-worker-tim-invited-me-to-share-the-gospel-with-him>.

⁶ Jordan Raynor, "3 simple ways to identify yourself as a Christian today," November 15, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/3-simple-ways-to-identify-yourself-as-a-christian-today>.

⁷ Jordan Raynor, "From the Surface, to the Serious, to the Spiritual," November 22, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/from-the-surface-to-the-serious-to-the-spiritual>.

the work, but it's also because I didn't grow up very well off, so I guess I've always seen my work as a way of proving my worth."

Now, moving from the serious to the spiritual, you might say, "I can't I say that I can fully relate, but I know what it's like to use work to prove my worth. I used to live like that for a long time, but a few years ago, I realized that no amount of professional success would ever be enough. I know it might sound strange, but it was my faith in Jesus that pulled me out of that never-ending cycle of needing to prove my worth."

And perhaps your co-worker might be interested in hearing more about the gospel, or perhaps not. But at least they know that your faith in Christ makes a practical difference in your life and that they can go to your anytime if they ever want to hear to hear more.

[Five ways to prepare the share the gospel with co-workers:

1. Be so good they can't ignore you
2. Be a friend
3. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ
4. Pray that God would open doors to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual
5. Be prepared to give an answer for your hope]

Fifth, be prepared to give an answer for your hope.⁸

Let's say that one day a co-worker asks you:

- "You don't seem nearly as anxious as the rest of your team. Why is that?"
- Or "If God is so good, why am I suffering right now?"
- Or "My mom is dying. What do you believe about heaven?"
- Or perhaps something more explicit like, "What does it mean to be a Christian?"

God's Word says that we are to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV).

In all these questions, the underlying question is "What is the *source* of your hope?" And as followers of Christ, we need to be ready to answer that question in the many different ways people may ask us that question. That means we need to grow in our understanding and application of the gospel in our own lives, so that we can be ready to share it personally when others ask us.

[¹⁶ "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.]

In short, there are no secret Christians. Jesus made sure that was the case when he instituted baptism and the Lord's Supper. But he did not intend baptism and the Lord's Supper to be the *only* public recognition of Christians, but our *whole lives* should proclaim and reveal the gospel to those around us.

Jesus' point here is that if we have heard, believed, and held fast to the gospel, then we *will* shine as lamps on a stand that bring light to the whole room—we *will* do good works in accordance with the gospel.

And as we do that, that is the God-ordained means by which God will draw more people to himself, that they might *also* see, understand, enter the kingdom of God, and give glory to God.

<pause>

So when we listen to God's Word, it *reveals* the gospel to others, and second, it...

⁸ Jordan Raynor, "One Final Way to Prepare to Share the Gospel with Your Co-Workers," November 29, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanmaraynor.com/twbw/one-final-way-to-prepare-to-share-the-gospel-with-your-co-workers>.

II. Reverberates [or continues to have serious effects] in eternity (v. 18)

Verse 18 says this:

¹⁸ Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

You could say that this is the central point of *both* the parable of the seed and the parable of the lamp. In light of those two parables that Jesus has just spoken about how we hear God’s Word, his concluding point is: “Take care then how you hear [God’s Word].”

So what does it mean to *take care* how we hear God’s Word?

This is an important question that the church in every age has asked, which has been codified in catechisms throughout history.

The New City Catechism is a series of 52 questions and answers to help believers learn the core doctrines of our faith. This is what Question 42 asks:

New City Catechism 42

- Q: How is the Word of God to be read and heard?
- A: With diligence, preparation, and prayer; so that we may accept it with faith, store it in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

In light of this question and answer, we need to ask ourselves: Is this how *I* approach God’s Word? With diligence, preparation, and prayer? With the purpose of accepting it with faith, storing it in my heart, and practicing in my life?

When we come to God’s Word, our aim is *not* simply *information*. Of course, we need to *understand* God’s Word, so we *need* information, but that’s not enough. There’s nothing more dangerous than a person who *knows* a lot about God’s Word, but whose life doesn’t *resemble* God’s Word.

When we come to God’s Word, our aim is also *not* simply *experience*. Jesus doesn’t say, “If you love me, you will have a tingling sensation in your heart.” No, he says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). If we are serious about loving God, then we must be serious about obeying God’s Word.

When we come to God’s Word, our aim is *transformation, faith, and worship*. In essence, we ought to approach God’s Word with the same attitude that we would approach God himself.⁹

If we understand that the *person* speaking to us is of great importance and the *message* he is speaking to us is also of great importance, we would generally take greater care to listen much better.

If you were in a life-or-death situation, where you were on a ship that was sinking fast, and the captain of the ship said to you, “Listen to me very carefully. What I’m about to tell you will save your life. Do *exactly* as I say, and you will live,” my guess is that most of us would put our phones down and do whatever it takes to make sure we understand exactly what he says and exactly what we need to do to live.

And in a greater sense, that’s what Jesus is saying here when he says, “for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.” This is language of the *final judgment*.

At the end of another parable that Jesus tells, he says this in...

⁹ Kevin DeYoung, “How is the Word of God to be Read and Heard?” The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/new-city-catechism/how-is-the-word-of-god-to-be-read-and-heard>.

Matthew 25:29-30 = For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. **And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**¹⁰

In other words, how you hear God's Word is an *eternal* life-or-death situation. How we respond to God's Word, particularly the gospel of Jesus Christ, in *this life* will become *fixed* in *eternity*.

[¹⁸ Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.]

To those who hear, believe, hold fast to the gospel in this life will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life (Matt. 19:29). But to those who hear but do *not* persevere in holding fast to the gospel, then even what they *think* that they have will be taken away and they will experience eternal death—eternal punishment for their rejection of God and his Word.

In essence, *how* we hear and respond to God's Word in *this life* reverberates (or continues to have serious effects) in *eternity*.

It's not enough to be *exposed* to God's Word week-in and week-out. It's not enough to even *understand* and *agree* with God's Word. We must *apply* God's Word. We must *do* God's Word.

Please don't mistake what I'm saying. We are *not* saved by our works, but our works *evidence* that we truly *believe* God's Word. In the words of James, "*Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works*" (James 2:18). But you see, faith cannot be *shown apart* from works; that's impossible. Faith is always *shown by* our works.

For example, let's examine one passage of Scripture, but the same point could be made from any passage.

1 John 4:19-21 = We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Now, if you're a Christian, I'm sure you understand and agree with this passage. Because Christ first loved us, we are called to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, in another passage, Christ says that's how the world will know that we are his disciples—by our love for one another (John 13:35).

But when you hear this passage, are you listening to *do* this passage? Are you examining your relationships with fellow brothers and sisters in this church? Is there anyone in this spiritual family that you are apathetic, unmerciful, passive-aggressive, or even hostile towards? Is there anyone that you're intentionally avoiding or hurting?

And if so, are you ok with that? Are you ok with doing *nothing* about that? If the answer is yes, you're ok with that and you have no intention to do anything about it, then it doesn't matter how much you *say* you believe this passage, God here calls you a "liar."

But if you're listening to *do* this passage, then as you see that there *are* brothers and sisters in this church that you're apathetic, unmerciful, passive-aggressive, or hostile towards—that there are members in this spiritual family that you're intentionally avoiding or hurting—then you will *not* be ok with that and you will do everything you can reasonably do to restore those relationships.

You'll pray for that person, you'll pray for yourself, you'll seek godly counsel, you'll reach out to that person, you'll own up to your own contributions to the tension, you'll apologize, you'll think about how you could've handled the situation differently if you were secure in Christ.

¹⁰ See also Luke 19:26-27.

Again, to be clear, none of us are saved by our good works. But if we're not seeking to *live out* what we say we believe about God's Word, if we're not listening to *do* God's Word, then God's Word is very clear that we should have little assurance we *really* believe God's Word at all, and thus we should have little assurance that we are *really* saved from our sin at all.

<pause>

So when we listen to God's Word, it *reveals* the gospel to others, it *reverberates* in eternity, and third, it...

III. Relates believers as Jesus' family (vv. 19-21)

Verses 19-21 say this:

¹⁹ Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." ²¹ But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

So Jesus is told that his *biological* mother and brothers are standing outside the crowd trying to reach him,¹¹ and his response is very interesting. *Both* biological family and spiritual family are important, but here, Jesus gives a priority to *spiritual* family.¹²

Notice how Jesus *describes* his spiritual family; it is made up of "those who hear the word of God and do it."

Many Christians might think that the way to grow in your relationship with Christ is to read the Bible and pray, and yes, I want to affirm that those are indeed ordained means for us to commune with Christ. But the believer that reads the Bible and prays for 10 minutes but is committed to live out God's Word is more likely to have an intimate relationship with Jesus than the one who spends hours reading the Bible and praying but is *not* committed to living it out.¹³

To be clear, hearing and doing God's Word does not *cause* you to be in Christ's family, but it *evidences* that you really *are* in Christ's family. We become children of God by *faith* in Christ (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26), which is *evidenced* in our hearing and doing his Word.

But we are *not* just a bunch of *isolated individuals* listening to do God's Word, but God has graciously given us *one another* as a spiritual family to *help* us to listen to God's Word *together*. In other words, we're committed to sanctifying one another as a spiritual family.

And among other areas of life, that should have profound influence on how we relate with our *biological* family.

I can tell you that I am a *much better* husband, father, brother, and son because of my commitment to the local church than I ever would be otherwise.

- Who rebuked me when they heard me yell at my parents on the phone in university? A brother in Christ.
- Who encouraged me when I was so broken by how broken my family was? Brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Who taught and modeled to me what a healthy spiritual family could look like? Brothers and sisters in Christ.

¹¹ From the other Gospel accounts, we know that Jesus had four brothers—James, Joseph (or Joses), Simon, and Judas (or Jude)—and multiple unnamed sisters (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), who were all children born of Mary by Joseph after the birth of Jesus. And since Jesus was born of Mary when she was a virgin by the Holy Spirit, these were all biological half-siblings of Jesus.

¹² Leon L. Morris (*Luke*, TNTC [Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008]) writes: "The other Synoptists place this little incident before the parable of the sower (though neither says explicitly that it preceded it in time). It is not unlikely that Luke has placed it here because of the way it illustrates the parables."

¹³ Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, EBC 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 910.

There's still so much work to be done in my relationship with my *biological* family, but by God's grace and the blessing of *spiritual* family, I'm resolved to keep working on those relationships.

<pause>

Now we should note a couple important *implications* of being part of Jesus' family.

First, if we are part of Jesus' family, then we have *God* as our Father.

As surely as Jesus Christ is the Son of God and we are united to him, our Father will never disown us. No matter what we do or don't do, no matter how much we've messed up, he is forever our Father in heaven and we have intimate access to him anytime, anywhere, to repent and ask for his help. God has not left us to fend for ourselves as orphans, but as a loving Father, we have full assurance of his love, protection, provisions, and guidance. And such love and security from our Father does not *hinder* our desire to live for him, but it *heightens* our desire and ability to live to please him.

Second, if we are part of Jesus' family, then how we relate with *one another* as brothers and sisters *reveals* the gospel.

If we're believers in Jesus Christ, then God has given us a new family name and identity that we share with fellow brothers and sisters—Christian.

What Jesus says here is that being a *Christian*—being in his *spiritual* family—is more fundamental to our identity than even our own *biological* family. We typically find our identity in our family, our ethnicity, our socio-economic class, our profession, our nationality, our sexuality, our personality, or something else.

In the world, like is attracted to like, and different stays away from different. But *through the cross*, Christ joins together Jews and Gentiles, Pharisees and tax collectors, rich and poor, and every kind of person under the sun—and we don't just *tolerate* each other, but we *love* one another, we're *committed* to one another, we're *bonded* together as *family*.

The world does *not* operate like that (Matt. 5:46-47). But *that's* what makes this community *supernatural*; it does *not* operate like the world, but it reaches and includes people who are *so* different and far apart and even were hostile towards one another, who, apart from the supernatural power of the Gospel, would never unite together.

The walls that typically divide people in the world are now demolished by the gospel. Christ has made us all one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility (Eph. 2:14).

So now, even though everything else about us might be different, by our common *faith* in Christ, we are now brothers and sisters. And that new identity that we share with every Christian now *supersedes* every other bond we have in this world.

When we truly *understand* and *apply* what it means to be a *spiritual* family, when that *shared identity* as a Christian is more fundamental to us than any other identity we may have, we will *reveal* the gospel more *brightly* as a church because *only* the gospel can create this kind of depth of care for each other when we have little in common except Christ.¹⁴

Now if it's only the *gospel* that creates this kind of community, then the primary way that we cultivate depth and breadth of community is by growing in our *understanding* of the gospel.

"Our love is proportional to our understanding of forgiveness,"¹⁵ for whoever is forgiven little, loves little, but whoever is forgiven much, loves much (Luke 8:47). The more we *understand* how much we have been *supernaturally* forgiven and loved by God, the more we will be able to *apply* his *supernatural* forgiveness and love to others.

¹⁴ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 22-23.

¹⁵ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 44.

That also means that no matter how much we *want* to experience this kind of depth and breadth of community as a spiritual family, we will *naturally* undermine it.

- We don't *want* to forgive those who hurt us.
- We don't *want* to love those who are different than us.
- We don't *want* to sacrifice our preferences for the sake of others.
- We don't *want* to inconvenience ourselves or go outside our comfort zones to reach out to someone outside our normal social circles.

That's why we need to constantly *hear* the word of God and *do* it. We need to constantly draw from the *supernatural* resources of the gospel. We need to constantly be *reminded* that we *are* a spiritual family in Christ, and *that* is an identity more fundamental to any other identity we have in this world, for our spiritual family grows and carries over into eternity.

Spiritual family cannot just be an idea that we *understand* in theological and conceptual ways, but it is wonderful gospel truth that we must be resolved to *apply* in personal and tangible ways.

And when we do, by the grace of God at work in us, we will experience the *love* of Christ through the *body* of Christ, and we will *reveal* the gospel more *brightly* to those around us.

When *one* person listens to *do* God's Word, it is a small light in the darkness. But when *all* the members of Christ's family listen to *do* God's Word, it is a whole city within a city whose light cannot be ignored.

What would it be like if we lived out God's purposes *together* as a spiritual family? What would it be like if *all* the churches in our city listened to *do* God's Word together?

Imagine how that would reveal the gospel to others, how that would reverberate in eternity, and how that would relate believers as Jesus' family. Like the book of Acts...

- There would be clear and bold proclamation of the gospel throughout the city.
- There would be good works that shine forth from all of God's people in their various callings.
- There would be more lost people being transformed into Christ's disciples and being saved for all eternity.
- There would be more collaboration among churches, Christians, and different ministries as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who long to see many in our city transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What a powerful gospel witness it would be in our city if *every* member in Christ's family listened to *do* God's Word.

When we, as members of Christ's family, listen to *do* God's Word, we will find that throughout our city, nation, and world, that the word of God will grow as this salvation of God in Jesus Christ is sent out in word and deed, and that "they will listen" (Acts 28:28; cf. Acts 6:7; 8:25; 11:1; 12:24; 13:49; 18:11; 19:10, 20).

May we long for that and may it show in the next steps we take as we respond to God's Word.

So here's the...

Life Application

1. What area of your life do you have trouble listening to do God's Word? Repent and hold fast to the gospel.

If we believe in the gospel, then seeing where we fall short will not crush us, for Christ was already crushed on our behalf on the cross, so now, we can examine our disobedience, repent of them, and know that we are forgiven our sins and empowered by God's grace to obey his Word. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation for any repentance and resolve to live a life that is pleasing to God according to his Word.

2. What next steps do you need to take to obey God's Word in that area? Ask a brother or sister in Christ who knows you well for their input and accountability.

Don't be complacent with forgiveness only when the gospel of Jesus Christ empowers us to be transformed from the inside out. But think about what needs to change and how you can begin to move in that direction of obedience. And I encourage you to invite trusted brothers or sisters in Christ for their input and accountability as well—perhaps your spouse, your roommate, or any other close friend.

3. Who are you intentionally helping to understand and apply God's Word? Reach out to them to have more intentional conversations about living out God's Word in all aspects of life.

Ask any of our leaders for a handout on Life Change Group (or LCG) to have some helpful frameworks and questions that you can ask one another to help you to be more intentional about helping one another to follow Christ as a spiritual family.

The One Thing

Listen to do God's Word to advance God's purposes in the world.

Conclusion

Can we all stand as we respond to God's Word together?