Cultivating A Discerning Ear

(by Jamey Hinds)

***“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed …”***

 **Acts 17:11-12**

It matters much *what* we listen to (**Mk 4:24**), *that* we listen (**Heb 2:1**) and *how* we listen (**Lk 8:18**). The brief point we want to make is that we listen with a discerning ear—not just for what sounds right, but what is right!

Discernment comes by practice—***“But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”*** (**Heb 5:14**).

We sometimes say, *“If you don’t use it, you’ll lose it.”* This is true even with our ability to discern the difference between what’s right and wrong.

***“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. … Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is”*** (**Eph 5:8-11, 17**). God wants us to diligently seek Him (**Heb 11:6**) and be found (**Isa 55:6-7**). God is not playing a game of “hide and seek.”

***“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. … Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God”*** (**1 Co 2:10, 12**).

***“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”*** (**Jas 1:21-22**).

From experience, I have learned that the best way to know more about God’s word is to actually read it. This requires, of course, time to do so; and maybe this is the real issue: we lack time, or rather, choose not to make time for this extremely important avenue of our spiritual education.

Listening to sermons being preached isn’t going to help as much if we have no clue what’s being talked about. How many of us have been Christians for years, maybe decades, and still don’t know much more about the word of God than when we first believed? ***“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light”*** (**Rom 13:11-12**).

There really are so many available options to pursue when it comes to reading more from God’s word. It may be we feel uncomfortable carrying a Bible with us: our eyesight may not be what it once was, and so we can’t bring along with us a small Bible because of the small print; and bringing along a larger Bible may simply not be practical.

There are electronic Bibles! Many people have smartphones and these smartphones access free Bible apps—and all the most popular translations are available. Whether you use an iPhone or an Android device … and even if you don’t have a smartphone, but have a Kindle, iPad, or whatever else, there are Bible apps that we can download and read God’s word.

Typically, we make the time for what we deem important— people, or tasks. The word of God feeds our souls! King David thought so— ***“More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb”*** (**Psa 19:10**; **119:103**; **63:5**). ***“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good”*** (**1 Pe 2:2-3**).

As with most things in life, it’s a matter of our wanting to. We all tend to do what we want to do. And so, we should admonish ourselves to want to read God’s word so that we can grow in grace and knowledge (**2 Pe 3:18**). ***“May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence”*** (**2 Pe 1:2-3**).