

to be understood, but short enough that their writing does not impair one from listening to the sermon. There are times when one may want to note a specific phrase, paraphrase, or tangential thought or application that comes to mind during the preaching. Notes should be written in an orderly and easy manner for the note-taker to recall. Parents can help teach their children this valuable skill by example, as well as by practice and instruction.

What Happens If I Have Questions?

It is normal and healthy for congregants to have questions arise in their minds and hearts during preaching: whether regarding the exegesis, the doctrines, or the application. When these questions come up, it is good to write them down, and then follow-up with the elders after the service or during the week. This helps to eliminate the distraction of mulling the question at the expense of listening to the sermon. Covenant children should be encouraged to write down words they do not yet know or questions about the sermon for their parents, and particularly their fathers, to answer and explain.

What Happens If My Mind Begins to Wander?

A natural consequence of the curse of sin and our human limitations is that our minds may wander during the sermon. When this is recognized, it is wise to confess one's negligence of God's Word to the LORD, and seek His blessing for you to focus.

III

How Do I Make the Most of the Sermon throughout the Week?

'But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' - Psalm 1:2

Seeking to Make Immediate Use

One of the best ways to make use of the sermon throughout the week is to try and make immediate use of the sermon. The following may be helpful and practical ways of doing just that:

- After the sermon, the minister prays for the Spirit

to apply the Word of God to our lives: in our head, our heart, and our hands. May that be your prayer as well, as you confess the 'Amen.'

- After the benediction is pronounced, take a moment to reflect on the time of worship.

- As you are leaving the congregation's meeting house and fellowshiping, discuss the sermon with other brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as the minister.

- Discuss the sermon (the text, its doctrines, and particular applications) on your way home or over lunch and dinner in your homes after the services.

- Be diligent to include covenant children in these conversations, that they would not only make use of that particular sermon, but also all sermons as they grow in the fear and admonition of the LORD.

Meditating on the Sermon Privately

Throughout the Lord's Day and the following week, look over your notes from the sermon and prayerfully seek to apply the text in the various areas of your day.

Considering the Sermon in Family Worship

Throughout the week in family worship, it is beneficial for the husband and father to remind his household of some of the points of the sermon as they appear in the text or the Psalms each evening.

Epilogue: Preaching & the Blessed Hope

'Now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build further, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified' - Acts 20:32

In the preaching of God's Word, the Church casts their view to the majesty of Christ - of His glorious attributes, His gracious work of redemption, and His great work of advancing His Kingdom. Christians are instructed in the Law and the Gospel, strengthened in their confidence in God's promises, and commissioned to live for the display of His glory. May the Lord bless believers and their covenant children as they grow in listening well to faithful sermons. And may the Lord bless His Church, as we seek to make diligent use of this ordinary means of grace.



Listening to Sermons: On Making Diligent Use of the Preached Word

A Pamphlet to Encourage
Believers & Covenant Families
in the Ordinary Means of Grace

*'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the
wonders of thy Law.'*

Introduction: Why Is Preaching Important?

'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe' - 1 Corinthians 1:21b

I. The Importance of God's Word

- We value preaching because we value the Word of God (Psa 119:97).
- The Word of God is inspired, authoritative, sufficient, inerrant, perspicuous, and superior in all matters of faith and life (Isa 8:20).
- In faithful preaching, the minister, as he rightly divides the Word of God, feeds the flock on the green pastures of Holy Scripture and by the still waters of God's promises (Psa 19:7-8).

II. Preaching as an Ordinary Means of Grace

- Hearing the Gospel preached is the ordinary means in which the Holy Spirit regenerates and unites the sinner to Christ through faith (Rom 10:17).
- The proclamation of God's Word is the ordinary means by which the Holy Spirit nourishes and confirms the Christian's faith, to grow in their trust that God's promises are true; and deepens their love for, understanding of, and obedience to the Beloved Saviour and King (1 Jn 5:13).

III. Preaching as a Means of Maturing

- The faithful exposition of Scripture matures the Christian's understanding of right doctrine (Neh 8:8).
- The heralding of the Gospel directs the Church's affections toward Christ (Song of Songs 2:10).
- The Word of God faithfully applied trains and equips believers for righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17).

I

How Do I Prepare Myself for the Preaching of God's Word?

'This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that today which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth, lay it up to be kept till the morning for you.' - Exodus 16:23

Preparing for the Lord's Day can be divided into two headings: spiritual and physical preparation. Both can then be subdivided into two elements: preparation for the individual and preparation for the family, particularly covenant children.

I. The Work of Spiritual Preparation

A. Individual believers may prepare spiritually for the Lord's Day by praying throughout the week for the minister; meditating on the texts for worship if available; preparing well for worship Saturday evening and Sabbath morning; and by coming to the service, anticipating to worship the LORD with the saints and to hear from His Word.

B. In addition to these individual disciplines which should take place also within the context of family worship, it is a great benefit for fathers to extend family worship Saturday evening, and then again Sabbath morning before the service; also, be sure to continuously instruct children on the joy, act, and purpose of congregational worship and of the ordinary means of grace.

II. The Work of Physical Preparation

A. Believers may prepare even physically and pragmatically for worship in the simplest ways. One obvious way to prepare well for the Lord's Day is by getting a good night's rest, so that one may be better attentive in worship. Eating a good meal, if possible, in the morning or a snack before the service may help take away the distraction of hunger. Furthermore, if one takes notes during the sermon, ensure that you have your Bible, notebook, and pen at the ready. Likewise, prepare yourself mentally - knowing that for an hour and half or so during corporate worship, we are to be mindful as we offer prayer and praise to the LORD and feast on His Word.

B. Parents prepare their children in similar fashion: getting a good night's rest and eating a healthy meal can go a long way. Covenant children should be encouraged to take notes and be attentive as they continue to grow, and it is helpful for parents

to remind their children each Lord's Day before the services of their expectations for behaviour and participation in worshipping the holy, triune God with the saints.

II

How Do I Make the Most of the Sermon As It Is Preached?

'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy Law.' - Psalm 119:18

Cultivating an Ability to Listen

In a culture that primarily 'listens' in order to reply rather than to learn, Christians must be on guard and grow our ability to listen attentively. Just as each word of Scripture is important, we should consider each thought of faithful preaching valuable. Before the minister begins to preach, he prays for the Holy Spirit to bless and illuminate His Word. May that be your prayer as well, as you confess with him and the congregation the 'Amen.' Consider each sentence as it comes forth - its context, content, and meaning - and heed each moment of the sermon, applying it to memory if possible. Though a difficult discipline at first, by God's grace, you will cultivate the ability of listening with both comprehension and retention.

Learning to Follow the Argument of Exposition

Faithful preaching presents a text of Scripture, rightly explains the passage, expounds its doctrines, and then applies it to the lives of the Church and her members - considering both the Law and the Gospel. As one point leads to the next, congregants should strive to follow along thoughtfully and carefully, seeking to process each point and confessing the sermon according to its congruence with Scripture. Learning to listen well to sermons is much like learning to see both the forest and all of its individual trees.

Learning to Take Helpful Notes

Taking notes can be a great way to make diligent use of the preached Word for both in the moment and throughout the week. Notes should be long enough