



{INVITATIONS}

LISTEN.

LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

Psalm 147:12-20; Jeremiah 31:7-14; John 1:1-18; Ephesians 1:3-14

GETTING STARTED

What would make YOU more happy this new year?

In your opinion, what is the key to happiness in life in the year 2014?

READ AND REFLECT

Read each of the lectionary passages. What does each say about God's Word?

- Psalm 147:12-20
- Jeremiah 31:7-14
- John 1:1-18
- Ephesians 1:3-14

What is the significance of the *Word* in John 1:1-18?

How is the *Word* in John tied to Ephesians 1:3-14?

Why is hearing and listening so important when it comes to God's Word?

ENGAGE AND DISCUSS

“What’s the key to happiness?” asks Bernice Kanner, the late great journalist for *Bloomberg News* and *New York* magazine. The answer may surprise you. “According to a recent survey,” she writes, the answer is “leading a moral life, attending church and reading the Bible.”

Why do people (maybe yourself) drift away from remembering truths like this?

List all the benefits you can think of when it comes to regular reading and reflection of God’s Word—the Bible:

Have you had times when Scripture became alive to you and had significant impact in your life? Share some of this experience with the group.

How would you describe your current season of Listening to God’s Word:

Active/Engaged-----Sporadic/Waning-----Stagnant/Dry

How is your state of *listening* related to your faith/life journey right now?

As you begin this new year, is it time to make an intentional effort to read and reflect on Scripture, trusting God to speak into your life as you listen to His Word? Ask God in prayer to invigorate your heart and soul to listen to His Word.

NEXT STEPS

- Having training practices for your soul is a key ingredient for spiritual growth. Read the attached handout and training practice: Listening to God’s Word. For the remainder of this sermon series: *Listen*, choose one practice below, or perhaps experiment prayerfully with several ways to read the Bible, and share with a friend or group how this training practice was impactful for you.
- Read the coming week’s lectionary passages (found in the bulletin or www.cc-ob.org) several times this week and find the themes and threads between these passages.

Listening to God's Word

A Christ Church Soul-Training Resource

Why Study the Bible?

1. Because Jesus did.

Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). Not surprisingly, then, Christ expressed the love of God's Word in every area of his life. He used Scripture to: answer those who tested him, resist temptation, find guidance, encourage his heart, comfort others, explain his actions, and, ultimately, face his own death.

Jesus also made it clear that we were to do likewise – to make his Word foundational to our lives (Matthew 7:7).

2. Because it is so useful.

The Apostle Paul wrote that: *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)*

The Bible is Divine Revelation. It reveals who God is, what his character is like, and what his desires are for human life and other aspects of his creation. Through Bible study we also gain insights into who we are and why we are here. We learn how to live in a manner that deepens our friendship with God and others and enhances life in many additional ways.

For these reasons, both Old and New Testaments encourage regular study of, meditation on, and memorization of God's Word.

How to Study the Bible?

There are many different ways to mine insights from the Scriptures. Try each of these methods over time and see how God uses them in your life.

1. The Artist Method:

Read a passage of Scripture, considering the following three questions as you read...

- a. *What speaks to my heart here?*
Draw a heart beside the word(s) that stir you.
- b. *What new thought or idea comes to me?*
Draw a light bulb beside the new thought or idea.
- c. *What does Scripture move me to do?*
Draw a hand beside the action you want to take.

How can you live into one of your insights today? Share your insights with a friend.

2. **The Detective Method:**

Read a short narrative passage from one of the gospels. Let the story take shape in your mind's eye...

- a. Imagine the scene and observe all the facts.
Ask the *who, when, where, what* questions.
- b. Once you have the facts, interpret the facts.
Ask the *why* questions. What meaning did the actions or pronouncements have for the characters?
- c. Then, apply your study to your own life.
Ask *how* might all this apply to me? What is the personal "take-away"?

3. **The Treasure Seeker Method:**

When reading Scripture consider the following application questions...

- a. Is there an *example* here for me to follow?
- b. Is there a *promise* or *attribute of God* to claim?
- c. Is there an *instruction* to obey?
- d. Is there a *truth* to be applied?
- e. Is there a *prayer* here for me to pray?
- f. Is there a *sin* to be confessed?
- g. Is there a *question* God is asking me?

4. **The Jesus Student Method:**

If you are unfamiliar with Scripture, read the gospel according to Mark or Luke and study to discover all you can about Jesus. Ask yourself the following questions...

- a. What seems important to Jesus?
- b. What sort of questions does Jesus ask people?
- c. What sort of questions do people ask Jesus?
- d. How is Jesus different from other leaders?

What Other Ideas Are Worth Exploring?

1. Experiment with different ways of listening to Scripture.
 - Read the Bible out loud or ask someone else to read a passage to you so you can savor the words.
 - Listen to an audio Bible while driving or exercising.
 - Put a verse on your computer screen saver or post it on a card where you will see it throughout the day.
2. Enhance your understanding of the original context of a particular passage by referencing a Bible commentary or a Bible dictionary. Or go online and type in places, cultures, and people you come across in your Bible study.
3. Visit a Christian bookstore and look through the array of Bible study guides available.
4. Join a Bible study at the church or in your community or begin your own. Greater insight and encouragement often comes from having partners for the journey.