

We pray for strength to follow Jesus.

Jesus said: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.' Saviour, we hear your call. Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Unless you change and become humble like little children, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.' Saviour, we hear your call. Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Happy are the humble; they will receive what God has promised.' Saviour, we hear your call. Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Be merciful as your Father is merciful; love your enemies and do good to them.' Saviour, we hear your call. Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Love one another, as I love you; there is no greater love than this, to lay down your life for your friends.' Saviour, we hear your call. Help us to follow.

Jesus said: 'Go to people everywhere and make them my disciples, and I will be with you always, to the end of time.' Saviour, we hear your call. Help us to follow.

God of mercy, you know us and love us.
You are the God who sees me and I need to hear your voice.
Please speak into my life today and help me to grow in confidence that I correctly discern your word to me.
Amen.

Lent Study 2020 "Listening to God"

Nothing is more important for our discipleship than being able to discern the voice of God for our daily lives and for the life of our church. This lent we can work together at developing the skills needed to hear the Lord. We preach on the same topic at each Congregation during lent (starting Feb 23rd) and also encourage people to join parallel small groups. Individuals should have their own questions page available in the group time. Study sheets will be available online or can be e-mailed. It is best to read the passage and attempt the questions ahead of time before the bible study or sermon. But it can work to have the study after the sermon. Robin will try to record his sermons and have them available online. Here are the topics.

Feb 23 rd	Listening to the God who hears (Genesis 16)
Feb 26 th	Ash Wednesday
March 1 st	Listening to the God of covenant (Exodus 33)
March 8 th	Listening as worship (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7)
March 15 th	Listening to understand (Luke 24:13-53)
March 22 nd	Listening as self-discipline (James 1:19-27)
March 29 th	AGM at Ploërmel 10. Listening as ears of the church (Revelation 1:19–3:21)

**Feb 23rd Listening to the God Who Hears
(Genesis 16:1-15; 18:1-33)**

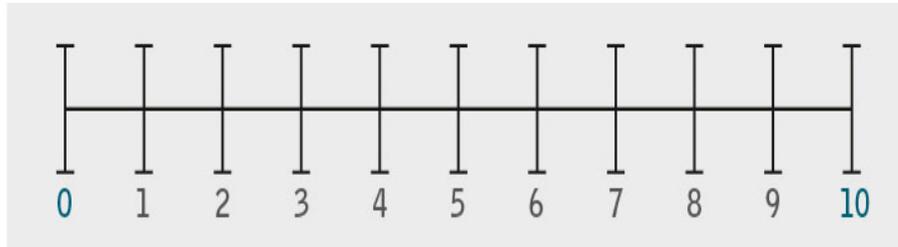
- 1) What details reveal the various motives and emotions of the characters in 16:1-6? Who do you empathise with and why?
- 2) How did the angel of the Lord help Hagar to speak her heart? 16:7-15
- 3) What did the angel reveal to Hagar? If you had been Hagar would you have wanted to know all of this?
- 4) Look again at Hagar's words in v 13, 'You are the God who sees me.' What does this suggest about Hagar's understanding of God's care for her?
- 5) Read Genesis 18. How did Abraham show hospitality to his guests?
- 6) In view of the whole story why do you think Sarah laughed?
- 7) One of the 3 is identified as 'The Lord'. What is Abraham's relationship to Him and how does it grow?
- 8) What can we learn from the character of Abraham? What did he learn about the character of the Lord?
- 9) In what way was Abraham a richer man because of his time with the Lord?
- 10) Of what value to you is it that God hears your prayers even if he does not give you all you ask? This week ask God every day to show you how to listen to his word and his spirit.

**March 29th Listening as ears of the church
(Revelation 1:19–3:21)**

This passage is warning, instruction and encouragement from the Lord Jesus to seven actual congregations in what is now modern day Turkey. The church is threatened from the outside by persecution and from the inside by heresy and spiritual apathy among other things. There is an emphasis on the people hearing what the spirit says to the churches.

1. Pretend you are going 1st century church shopping, which one of the seven would you try first and which last? Why?
2. Gleaning from all seven letters, what does Jesus reveal about himself?
3. What is your impression of Jesus as he defines himself to these churches?
4. What does Jesus value in each of these congregations?
5. What criticisms does Jesus have of the various churches?
6. If you are able, please pair up with someone else in the group and pick one of the seven churches to examine in detail. If you were the leader of that particular congregation what plan of action would you have in response to this prophetic word? If home alone write your answers down and share later with a friend.
7. Read through the seven letters one more time. Which criticisms are most true for the modern church or for our church?
8. What reason for hope do you find in some of the seven churches? What reason for hope for today's church?
9. Pray for a local Church in the UK, one the diocese in Europe and one across the world. Give emphasis on their ability to hear the voice of Christ.

March 22nd Listening as self-discipline (James 1:19-27)



- 1) On a scale of 1 – 10 evaluate yourself as a listener. Ten means that you regularly listen to someone else with your whole being, asking appropriate questions and thinking carefully of the feelings, motives and implications behind what you hear. One means that when someone else is talking, you are thinking mostly of yourself with some similar experience or of what you might say next.
- 2) According to James what is the difference between hearing and listening?
- 3) Read v 19-21, List the important prerequisites to becoming a good listener. How is v 21 a good summary verse?
- 4) Read v 22-25, How could listening to Gods word be a form of self deception?
- 5) Mentally walk yourself through your most recent time of preparation for a worship service. What could you improve to place yourself in a good place to hear God?
- 6) Read v 26-27, A strong theme throughout the letter of James is that true religion should always be practical. How does guarding the tongue, caring for the needy and separating from the moral corruption of the world work together to produce true practical faith?
- 7) Either pray now or at a time later at home. Begin with a long period of silence. Then ask God to show you some people in your life who need you to become a better listener. Think of folks both inside and outside of the Christian community. Pray for God's blessing on those people and for Him to quicken your heart as a good listener.

March 1st Listening to the God of Covenant (Exodus 33:7–34:14)

- 1) What do you see here suggesting that the meeting in the tent was no ordinary conversation?
- 2) “The Lord spoke to Moses ‘face to face’ as a man might speak to his friend’ v 33.11. What does this suggest about the relationship between the Lord and Moses?
- 3) Get 3 people to read this passage 33:12-23 aloud as a dialogue, God, Moses & narrator. What is the emotional temperament of this passage?
- 4) What did God promise to do 33:14 and 34:10 and be for his chosen people and what did Moses ask of God v13 34:8?
- 5) What does it mean to know someone by name 33:17 and 34:6? See John 10:3
- 6) Along with the replacement tablets of the Ten Commandments there is a self-description of God's character. Does knowing the Lord's character 33:19 and 34:6-8 help you keep the Lord's covenant?
- 7) But, speaking of character, how can a good God be Jealous? 34:14
- 8) In your prayers petition God, as Moses did, asking for face-to-face intimacy. Or as St. Paul would say, that you have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16

March 8th Listening as Worship (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7)

"Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of will to his purpose—all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable."

Archbishop William Temple:

- 1) What are some of the dos and don'ts of this passage?
- 2) What do these cautions about worship hint about the character of God?
- 3) Do you 'guard your steps' as you approach the house of God? Is the priority of your heart to be ready to listen?
- 4) Listening does not always have to be in silence. How many ways can you believe that God might speak to you?
- 5) Do we take our vows to God seriously? What does a vow have to do with the quality of my worship? Discuss Temple's definition of worship.
- 6) Verse 6 says, Do not let your mouth lead you to sin? Can you share an example from your own experience of failing at this point?
- 7) Verse 7 Do we fear God enough today?
- 8) Take time this week to jot down the areas of your life that need guidance from God. In your prayers ask God for a word or picture to help you understand his guidance. Talk it over with a friend. Keep practicing; you will get better at this.

March 15th Listening to understand (Luke 24:13-53)

Today we get to take a 7-mile walk with Jesus from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. We listen in on the conversation between Jesus and two disciples.

- 1) What is the context of this story and why is it such a good opportunity to discover more about listening to God?
- 2) Read v 12-24, Explain the confusion and mystery, which confounds the 2 disciples? How long would it take you to walk 7 miles? If you walked the famous Compostello, or part of it, what would you hope to gain spiritually?
- 3) Read v 25-27, Clearly Jesus expected them to have picked up on the clues throughout the scriptures, which they would have known well. Was it a head problem or a heart problem? v25?
- 4) What are the qualities of a good listener? What practices have you found most helpful as you listen to God today?
- 5) Read v 28-32, 'Their eyes were opened' and 'their hearts were burning within them'. Does our understanding come from our own efforts of heart and mind as good listeners or is it totally dependent upon God's revelation to us? Depending on your answer, how should we pray before during and after a time of listening?
- 6) Read v 36-49 The two return the 7 miles in the dark to Jerusalem. How does sharing experience with other believers (v 34-35) help to sharpen our listening skills?
- 7) Jesus again 'opened their minds' (V45). Are we born spiritually deaf and need an intervention? What frame of mind (and heart) do I need to be in to hear God effectively in my life? Pray this week that God would sharpen your mind and soften your heart to hear. Find worship music which ministers to you and play it often throughout the day.