

ATTENTIVENESS

A teenager died after being run over by a train. The train conductor had frantically blown his whistle as he noticed the girl walking up ahead on the tracks. However, his warning went unheeded as she was distracted by the loud music on her headphones. This tragedy could have been avoided if only she had been **paying attention** and not been distracted.

The vast majority of misfortunes in life are brought on by the lack of attention to wisdom in various areas of our lives. Our educational systems would be greatly enhanced if the book of Proverbs was required reading and study. I make this observation based on the many bad decisions I have made in my own life because I was either ignorant or disobedient to the truths contained in its 31 chapters. I was not being attentive to God's wisdom.

.....those who **listen** to me will be secure. - Proverbs 1:33

.....making your ear **attentive** to wisdom. - Proverbs 2:2

Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and **be attentive**, that you may gain insight. - Prov.4:1

My child, **be attentive** to my words; **incline your ear** to my sayings. Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them and healing to all their flesh. - Proverbs 4:20-22 NRSV (as all the above verses are too)

Attentive = **To prick up the ears** (Hebrew meaning) When the ears of a horse strain forward, it is sign that something has caught its attention. One can sometimes see when a person is really listening to a speaker as they are 'leaning forward'.

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.
- Matthew 7:6a

Those words of Jesus remind his disciples to spend their time with those who are hungry for truth and are teachable. Dogs and pigs don't recognize things for their beauty and value. It is much the same with many people, for they do not appreciate the intrinsic worth of God and his kingdom - Matthew 13:44-45.

How attentive are we to God's Word? First of all, do we spend time in it and what is the quality of our reception to it? Do we listen carefully when we are listening to a sermon or message from God?

Jesus spent most of his time sharing important truths with those who were hungry and attentive. He knew that doing otherwise was a waste of time. While in England and Belgium I did a great deal of door to door evangelism. We tried not to get sidetracked by spending too much time with those who were argumentative and were not sincerely interested.

Solomon wrote many of the Proverbs in the Bible and was considered the wisest man of his day - 1 Kings 4:29-34. However, he ended up as one of the most foolish. He had 700 wives and they turned his

heart after false pagan gods so God raised up adversaries against him for his disobedience. - 1 Kings 11. Solomon also had 12,000 horses and tons of gold and silver.

Solomon was not attentive to God's Word!!! God gave the following instructions to Israel for when they entered the promised land and appointed a king.

The king must **not acquire great numbers of horses** for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again". He must **not take many wives**, or his heart will be led astray. He must **not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold**. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll **a copy of this law**, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. **It is to be with him**, and **he is to read it all the days of his life** so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law. - Deuteronomy 17:14-19

If you were secretary of a group our organization, it would be normal for you to take a pen and paper or a computer on which to record the highlights of the meeting. How much more important is it that we take notes when we hear messages from God in the Bible. The largest Methodist, Presbyterian and Assembly of God churches in the world are in Seoul, Korea. They not only are a praying people, but they are avid students of the Bible. When they come to church they are ready to take notes and listen attentively. Much of the church could learn from them. Teachers spend hours preparing messages and yet the listeners often let it go in one ear and out the other. Jesus wants us to listen carefully to his Word and then apply it to our lives.

CLASS REUNION

Here in America it is common for high school classes to have a reunion every 5 years. Recently our class of 1968 had its 50th one and nearly half of the 54 classmates were in attendance. When I opened in prayer, I recalled some of the things that have changed in the past 50 years, but that God had not changed, for He is perfect. As I thanked God for providing the meal before us, I also thanked him that none of us had starved over the past 50 years (it was obvious in some there:) I also thanked God for showing us that **what we have done or acquired is not as important as who we have become** and that he would give each of us a new or renewed desire to know God better. As the microphone was later passed around from table to table, each of us had an opportunity to share some things about ourselves. I shared how at age 28 this phrase kept going through my mind.....**If your life was a book, would it make interesting reading?** Jesus said that if you leave home, family and job for his sake, that he will give you much more back.... (which he has in my life). I also shared with them that in 2014 I had met a few young people in their 20's that were on fire for God and through them I had been 'youthanized!' :)

The next day I regretted not taking some notes when each person shared, as it would have been nice to send everyone (including those not in attendance) an interesting summary of all that was shared and took place. It was our best reunion and the most well attended. I felt there was a special bond at this one, especially since I had not seen some of them for 30 or even 50 years. Over the next day or so God gave me a special compassion for all of them and a desire to pray for them and be an encouragement to them.

It was a great class reunion, but there is a greater reunion and banquet in store for those who follow Jesus and I pray that all of my classmates will be there to join me.

Learning to be more attentive to God and to that which is most important.

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