



This year we dove deep into the topic of listening. We talked about how **God listens to us** by looking at the story of Hagar who encountered 'the God of seeing' (Genesis 16:13) and named her son Ishmael - 'God hears' (Genesis 16:11).

We talked about **listening to God** by approaching Him with the right posture - one of stillness, humility, openness, expectation, and delight. And how we can recognize God's voice by learning the tone of his voice which makes us feel peaceful when He gives direction and convicted (but not ashamed) when He brings correction.

We looked at how **listening to others** can affirm them, strengthen them and help them make sense of their own reality. We also looked at how we can listen well to both praise and criticism so that they lead to growth instead of discouragement or pride.

Finally, we talked about the painful reality of when God seems silent and how we can remain faithful in those desert times.

As we reach the end of this year's focus, we want to give a final charge to **listen well**. There are MANY reasons not to. Many of us have tried to listen well to others -to sit with them in their pain or understand their lives - and it's been uncomfortable or poorly received. We have seen others declare a word from God that seems very different from our own understanding of God. Or we thought we heard a clear message from God, only to take steps that don't seem to turn out for our good.

But despite these pitfalls, we want to be people who step out and listen.

Be Bold and Listen to God

And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it'. Isaiah 30:21

Others have gotten it wrong and maybe you have too, but we can rest in the truth that **God is speaking to us**. If our hearts are truly surrendered (and we will feel convicted if they're not) then we will hear from God. And if we get it wrong, God is active. He will keep speaking and will get us back on track. This is the job of the Holy Spirit who was sent to teach, help us remember the words of Jesus, guide, and declare what is to come (John 14:26, 16:13)

We have no reason to fear but can confidently follow the voice of our Good Shepherd (John 10:27).

Be Bold and Listen to Others

Maybe it's been awkward at times, maybe people have criticised, but God didn't promise us a comfortable life. He called us to love our neighbours. So get out of your comfort zone and proactively seek ways to listen to others. See it as your greatest ministry. And also proactively invite others to speak the hard truths into your life.

3. Hand in hand with listening is obedience. James calls us to 'be doers of the word, and not hearers only' (1:22).

Read Matthew 21:28-32. What mattered most in this story was not the son's initial response to their father's instructions, but their full obedience.

What is something that God has spoken to you this year that you have not yet taken action on? What steps would you like to take to respond to God's words?

Reflections on Listening to Others

1. What is one thing that stands out from you from the devotionals on listening to others (listening to others in grief, listening to praise, listening to critique, what are we listening to)

2. Proverbs 15:31 says 'if you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise'. What person has challenged you in the past six months and how have you changed your behaviour as a result? Who can you invite to speak into your life?

3. How do you want to change your interactions with people to be a better listener? List specific actions you can take in the coming weeks with your:

Family:

Friends:

Colleagues:

Neighbours: