

How to Get the Most Out of Your Pastor's Preaching

Revive Our Hearts

Do you ever find yourself . . .

- *waking up on Sunday morning and wishing you didn't have to go to church?*
- *having a hard time staying awake in church?*
- *daydreaming during the message, or making a mental "to-do" list while the pastor is preaching?*
- *picking apart the message or the preacher in your mind or not getting anything out of the sermon?*
- *wishing your pastor would be more _____?*
- *forgetting what the message was about before you get home from church?*

If we're not benefitting from the ministry of the Word as it is publicly proclaimed in our local churches, the fault may not lie in the one proclaiming the Word. It may lie in our readiness to hear, receive, and respond to the Word.

How can we prepare our hearts to get the most out of our pastor's preaching?

Before the Service

1. Pray for your pastor as he prepares for Sunday. Pray that his schedule would be free from unnecessary distractions. Pray that God will give him understanding into the meaning of the Word. Pray that God will speak to him personally through the Word and that he will respond in humility and obedience. Pray that God will help him to communicate the truth with clarity, freedom, passion, and power.
2. If your pastor is preaching a series, take time to read ahead and meditate on the text. Ask God to speak to your heart before you even hear the message.
3. Prepare for public worship the night before. Turn off the TV, limit social activities, and instead do things that will cultivate your appetite for God's Word.

4. Ask God to prepare your heart for the preaching of the Word. Repent of any sin God reveals to you, and get rid of the things that are standing in the way of the Word of God in your life.

5. Ask God to give you a sense of anticipation. Come to church asking God to meet with you. Expect to hear from Him and to be different when you leave.

During the Service

1. Attend

You need to be there. You're not going to get a lot out of church if you don't go.

2. Prepare

Get to church early enough to spend a few minutes before the service quietly preparing your heart for worship. Pray for God to move—in the pastor, in your heart, in others' hearts—and surrender your heart to whatever God will say.

3. Participate

Don't be a spectator. Participate fully in every part of the service. That means when it's time to sing—sing. When it's time to pray—pray. When it's time to give—give.

While the sermon is being preached, open your Bible and follow along. If your pastor refers to other references, look them up.

4. Listen

Listen attentively to the reading and the preaching of the Word. Try to make eye contact with the pastor. Not only does that help the pastor know that people are listening, it helps you stay alert and focused.

Listen humbly to the preaching of the Word. Ask the Lord to make it fresh. If your heart is humble, you won't evaluate the message or how it's delivered; you will let the message evaluate you.

Take notes . Jot down things the Lord speaks to you about; highlight points the Spirit applies to your heart and life. Take those notes home, and work through them later.

5. Be Realistic

Don't make your pastor a prisoner of unrealistic expectations. Your pastor doesn't have to be mesmerizing, entertaining, dramatic, or tell a lot of stories to be effective. He should just be a man of God who is humble, who loves the Word, who will open the Word, and will make its meaning plain. The power is in the truth, not the messenger.

After the Service

1. Ask

Ask God to give you at least one takeaway from the message—a key concept, phrase, or verse that you can review throughout the week. Jot it down so you don't forget.

2. Discuss

While it's still fresh on your mind (before you leave church, on the way home from church, over the meal following the service, etc.), discuss the message with others. Share how God spoke to you.

3. Do

Be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer (James 1:22). Apply what you heard Sunday morning to real-life, everyday circumstances and situations throughout the week.

Making It Personal

- Do you highly esteem, respect, and reverence the Word of God (Neh. 8:5; Ps. 138:2)?
- Do you prepare your heart to hear the Word of God (Ps. 119:18)?
- Do you find delight in hearing the Word proclaimed?
- Do you listen attentively when the Word is being read or preached (Neh. 8:3; Ps. 85:8)?
- Do you expect God to speak to you every time you hear His Word proclaimed?
- Do you have a teachable spirit (Ps. 25:9)?
- Do you tremble at the Word of the Lord (Isa. 66:2; Ezra 9:4)?
- Do you pray for those who proclaim the Word to you, that they might be pure, anointed vessels of God (1 Thess. 5:25)?
- When the Word is preached, are you conscious that you are not listening to the words of men but to the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)?
- Do you have a commitment to obey anything God shows you from His Word (Matt. 7:24; James 1:22–25)?
- Do you respond in faith, that is, acting on the Word you have heard (Heb. 4:2)?
- Is your heart good soil that receives the Word and produces fruit (Luke 8:15)?
- Are you willing to let the message sit in judgment of you rather than you sitting in judgment of the message?
- Do you take the message personally (James 1:22)? Or do you tend to think about how it applies to the people sitting near you?
- Do you pass on to others what you've learned from the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:2)?
- Do you express appreciation and gratitude for those who minister the Word of God to you (Gal. 6:6; 1 Thess. 5:12-13)?

© *Revive Our Hearts*. Adapted from the series "How to Listen to a Sermon" by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth. Used with permission. Listen to the series "How to Listen to a Sermon." ReviveOurHearts.com