

**“SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR DAILY QUIET TIME”**  
**An Ideal Model For Approaching God**

In my Quiet Time one morning this week, I was introduced by Exchange With the Holy Spirit to several “master mottoes” for approaching God. Let me share them with you in this vignette.

**Motto # 1: “Lord, I am *all ears*.”**

Motto Number One: “Lord, I am *all ears*.” “I am *here to hear* from You.”

On one occasion after another, Jesus addressed the master theme of “hearing.” He said such things as, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” He who *has ears*—that reveals the *capacity* of each person to hear. “He who has ears *to hear*”—that reveals the *possibility* of each person to hear. “He who has ears to hear, *let him hear*”—that reveals the *responsibility* of each person to hear. Then He said, “Let every man *be careful that he hear*”—that is, each person must give maximum regular attention to the crucial matter of hearing from God. And, “Let every man take heed *what he hears*”—that is, the Christian must listen discriminately, deliberately filtering out undesirable messages that arrive from anti-Christian sources. And, “Let every man take heed *how he hears*”—that is, every believer is responsible to culture and develop his listening, in order to maximize the Word that God sends on a regular basis to challenge and change him. Jesus talked *a great dealing* about hearing; it seems to have been very important to Him that we learn how to listen. This must not be taken for granted. Why is this so very important?

A Manhattan couple sat at the breakfast table reading parts of the daily newspaper. He suddenly exclaimed, “It says here that a man is run over in New York every half hour.” Absorbed in her part of the paper, the wife half-heartedly answered, “Goodness! You’d think by this time he’d learn to look when he’s crossing the road!” Dear Christian, learn this principle: *Communication is not what the speaker is saying. Rather, it is what the listener is hearing.* And this is true even when the Speaker is God!

You see, *without a miracle, we hear only what we are prepared to hear, or only what is comfortable to hear.* In fact, without a miracle, we won’t hear from God on His frequency *at all*. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (*rhema*, the heart-penetrating, spirit-quickenning word) of God.” Without that miracle of heart penetration and spirit quickening, we may read reams of print on the page of the Bible—*and never hear from God.*

American songwriter Frank Loesser was asked how he got the ideas for his songs. He answered, “My head is arranged to receive songs.” Christian, how is your head arranged with regard to God? And more importantly, *your heart?*

A young Christian visited a veteran Spirit-walking Christian who was renowned in the Christian community for his wisdom. The young Christian boldly said, “I have heard of your wisdom as a Christian, and I want to ask what is the secret of it?” The wise

Christian said, “Listen”—*and that’s all he said*. True wisdom lies in listening to God. The Christian must learn to listen to God *deliberately*, a matter of the *head*. He must listen *deeply*, a matter of the *heart*. And he must listen *dynamically, devotedly and directionally*, a matter of the *habit*.

Two men were talking. One asked, “Does your wife ever talk to herself?” The other answered cleverly, “Yes, but she doesn’t *know* it; *she thinks I’m listening*.” Loosen the definition a bit and we can easily see that God must do a lot of talking to Himself!

One day sometime ago, my wife gently said to me, “Honey, why is it that you can remember what you read in a book thirty-five years ago, and even whether it was on the right hand page or left hand page and which paragraph down the page—*and you can’t remember what I said to you five minutes ago?*” I took advantage of her gentleness and answered unwisely, “Motivation, my dear, motivation! Or I guess you could call it ‘selective intake.’” Honestly, we both laughed because of the spirit of the moment, but that exchange kept lingering in my mind. How many times have I practiced ‘selective intake,’ either wittingly or unwittingly, with God? *May God have mercy upon me! I wonder how much I have missed His merciful revelation because of my botched listening?*

The New Testament discloses vast frontiers that are obviously closed to most Christians because we listen only to the limit of our preconceptions and previous conditioning. *And this is also true of Christian leaders (all of them), unless they keep themselves consciously and miraculously open to God’s full disclosure. I know that in my own experience God has had to smash my early limited understanding (though it was set in stone) in order to disclose what He was really saying. The truth is that the quality of my listening may effectually reduce what He is saying, and the tenure of my listening has little to do with it. In fact, my presumption as a long-time listener may be deadly to my understanding of His full revelation. So called “conviction” may preclude further communication.* We are responsible to listen, but *do* we? How well do we listen when the air is full of the waves of His speech, and His Manual, the Bible, is handy as the full specification and clarification of what He wants to say? Motto Number One reminds me that I, the potential hearer, must make plenty of room for the Speaker and Everything He Says. *“Lord, I am all ears.”*

### **Motto # 2: Lord, I am willing to be ears and mouth**

I will just briefly mention Motto Number Two, though it deserves better treatment than that. Motto Number Two is: “Lord, I am willing to be ears *and mouth*.” However, I want to attach a proviso because of my weakness in the flesh—“if only You would so determine my listening that my speech is essentially a repetition of what You are saying.”

Sometime ago, I heard Dave Feherty, commentator on the Professional Golf Association’s tournament telecasts, say something clever about Scottish golfer Colin Montgomery: “Sometimes Colin sends his brain on vacation and leaves his mouth in

control at home.” Ouch! How many times have I done this in conversation, in domestic situations, in casual speech, in “clever” speech, in teaching and preaching, and even in my Quiet Time!

Sometime ago, I was blessed beyond description by a quick reading of Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the New Testament called, The Message. I couldn’t put it down until I had read it through. I marked the “keeper passages” and went back and recorded them in my illustration file. I was “stopped in my tracks” by this paraphrase of a great passage in the book of James: “Post this at all the intersections: Lead with your ear, follow up with your tongue, and let anger struggle along in the rear.” Dismiss the last sentence for the moment—it is usually better to unhitch the anger trailer altogether! “Lead with your ear, and follow up with your tongue.” Why should not a Christian simply be a conduit for the Speech of God? But we must sadly admit that this is usually not true of us because we typically put our tongues in motion before our hearts are in gear! If I am to be a channel for the speech of God, I must take extreme care to “lead with my ear.”

### **Motto # 3: “Lord, I am *all ears*”**

So the third Motto is the same as the first. It enables me to bracket my speech (my one mouth) with my listening to God (symbolized by my *two* ears). “**Lord, I am all ears,**” and I want to (as an illustration) use one ear on one side of my speaking and the other ear on the other, using one ear before my speech and one ear after my speech. In this way, I can be more certain that my speech is a reflection of what I am hearing from God.

Sadly, the typical “hearing pattern” of most Christians in church creates a “glut” of truth. It has been said, “The congregation in church is just as responsible to *master the sermon and leave with it* as the pastor is to *master it before he arrives with it.*” Weigh these words carefully, and confess that the typical Christian has not the slightest awareness of this “hearing vocation.” Instead, multitudes of church members listen casually to God’s attempt to communicate truth to them and seek only (at best) to extract a “blessing” or an “inspiration” or an “enjoyment” from it. They do not linger over the truth of what they have heard to translate it from *ears* to *heart* to *knees* to *feet*. Hardly realizing that they are actually compounding their guilt by irresponsible listening in church, they go their ways, perhaps to come back on Sunday evening and *enlarge the glut* (and the *guilt*).. No wonder the Christian movement in the western world limps along at such a pitiful pace when it could be regularly riding a giant tide of spiritual power—and its limp begins in the Prayer Closet in the way it hears (perhaps more accurately, *doesn’t hear*) from God! As usual, *the prayer closet will determine the public course*. No use of the prayer closet, no power in the public course. Little private prayer, little public power.

Christian, may we pledge ourselves together today to urgently ask God for sanitized (clean) and sensitized (committed) listening as we touch the handle of our Prayer Closets? A young boy approached the metal detector at the airport. He started

around it. The guard was under the table at the moment, attaching a sign to the edge of the inspection table. From his knees, the guard called out abruptly, “No, son, you’ll have to come through this way.” The little boy dropped to his knees and crawled through under the table! Oh, if we could just be that teachable, that simple, that resilient, that trusting, that responsible *before God!*

The primary Greek word for obedience (*hupokoia*; *akoia* is the word from which we get our word “acoustics”) is a compound word which means “to listen underneath.” What a picture: obedience begins with submitted, humble listening, listening that is exercised *underneath* the total Lordship of Christ. Jesus set the mode when He said, “I do only and exactly what I hear my Father say.” Perhaps this is the first step to take in our aspirations to be Christ-like. “I listen to my Father and live to do what He says.” Let’s approach the Prayer Closet in the morning with new motivation!