

How do we learn to interact with people in a way that doesn't make them tools for our purposes, but honors them as individuals who are loved by God? How do we learn to love God for who he is, rather than who we want him to be? How do we learn to hear the voice of God, rather than just the echo of our own desires? We must learn to have hearts that respond to God, that are able to hear, see, and communicate to the God that loves us and rescued us from our sin. This is not easy for us, for our hearts have been trained to seek their own good through the glorification of themselves, rather than the glorification of God. We have been trained through our sinful natures, and through our experiences, that if we do not look out for ourselves, no one else will. This is, of course, a lie, because when we submit ourselves to God, when we seek to worship and glorify Him instead of ourselves, we will be lifted up by him. It is hard to train our hearts to trust in this truth, but we will spend some time this week attempting to do just that.

Day 1

Learn to Hear

Hearing is an interesting topic in scripture, because it is at the heart of existence. When God created the world, he did so by His word, so that being able to hear is necessary for the task of being created by His voice. In scripture, hearing is first an issue for Adam and Eve in understanding the commands given to them by God to work and keep the garden, to multiply and fill the earth, and to subdue it, as well as to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Hearing next becomes an issue in Genesis 3:8-10, when Adam and Eve hear God in the garden and try to hide from him. What is the significance of this act of hearing? How has hearing been hijacked, and what use has it been put to? How does this act of hearing manifest itself in our culture and in our lives? What problems does this kind of hearing create for the right and proper kind of hearing? Next, although the topic of hearing comes up many times in many places, I want to consider the command to hear in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Why was the command to hear given here? What does hearing entail in these verses? Is it more than just detecting the words? What part does the heart play in hearing? When the heart is brought up in the process of hearing, what is at issue since obviously the actual, physical heart plays no part in hearing? How do the things we love keep us from hearing the voice of God? How does having the proper loves help us to hear the voice of God? Can you hear God without having your natural loves altered? Finally, let's look at John 10:27-30. How is hearing connected to obedience? Can you hear God without obeying Him? How is this connected to eternal life if we are saved by grace? Spend some time praying that you would have all the obstacles to hearing God's voice removed from your life.

Verses: Genesis 3:8-10; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; John 10:27-30

Prayer Topics: Hearing the voice of God, having obstacles removed, having the right heart toward God

Day 2

Consider Glory

*Follow this link: <https://travelnotesandbeyond.com/the-crucifixion-hidden-treasures-of-la/>

Please take some time to read the story of this amazing painting of the crucifixion and consider the piece. Why did the artist choose to paint the crucifixion in this manner vs. the more traditional depiction of Jesus dying on the cross? Why is Jesus seen looking up and glorified? What is the artist saying about the nature of glory? What role does obedience play in glory, and what is necessary for obedience to take place? How does the story of the tragedy of the artist compare or contrast to what is depicted in his work? How does the final disposition of the work, in a chapel dedicated to it and its subject, bear on our

evaluation of the story? If the artist knew that losing this work would lead to its glorification, do you think he would have accepted or even celebrated its loss? Would you? Are you in the picture somewhere (is there something you need to lose to gain glory)? How do you feel about that, and what needs to happen to make that real in your life?

*Disclaimer: I have not viewed or vetted the comments on this post or any other page on this website, so explore at your own risk!

Verses: John 1:14, John 17:22, 2 Corinthians 3:18

Prayer Topics: Glory of God vs Glory of man, Spiritual Riches, Sacrifice

Day 3

Think Humble Thoughts

The Rich Young Ruler came to see Jesus and wanted to ask a question about salvation, so he complimented Jesus by calling him a good teacher. Jesus' response was probably not what the rich young ruler was expecting, as Jesus asked why the young man called him good, since only God is good. It is important to understand what it means for only God to be good. We generally think of this in a moral way, and that is true of course. But it also has other aspects, especially in light of its use of Jesus as a teacher. What makes a good teacher? They show up to class on time, grade papers in a timely manner, and take an interest in the education of their students? Is there anything else? Of course, they must know what they are talking about. That is the whole point of coming to a teacher, that they know something that you don't. Is Jesus a good teacher? Since he is God as a member of the trinity, then he is truly a good teacher, and the only good teacher. When Jesus responds to the young man, he is confident about what this young man needs to do to have eternal life, because he knows what is missing in this young man. Eternal life is life to the full, being the full measure of what we were meant to be when we were created, corresponding in every way to God's intention when he created mankind. While this man may have kept the law under certain definitions of it, he does not have the heart towards others that God intended, and Jesus points this out to him, causing him to be sad because he has great wealth and will not practice the teaching of Jesus. Many times, we fail to put into practice the teaching of Jesus, because we fail to hear the wisdom and love behind the teaching, and many times this is because we think we know better. We won't come out and say it, but we think the demands are too tough, that something less would be just as good, maybe even better. God is not being reasonable. The way to hear these demands is to first have a heart that is humble enough to know that it doesn't know, and Jesus does. This young man, at the very least, thinks that having the money is better than having eternal life. If Jesus was a good teacher, shouldn't this man be humbler about how he thinks about what has real value?

Verses: Mark 10:17-31, Colossians 3:12-13, Proverbs 22:4

Prayer Topics: Perspective, Submission, Truth

Day 4

Have a Humble Heart

"Well, at least my intentions were good!" I have thought or said that many times in my life, and you probably have as well. We often find that the good we intended is not what actually results from our decisions or actions. I once watched a documentary about charity work in Haiti that showed how many well-meaning programs end up creating true harm in the island nation. Many times, people fail to think

through all the aspects of a problem, and what the likely outcome of a course of action will be, resulting in great difficulties and burdens that were not intended. When this happens, the people responsible often are defensive, and when the outcome becomes undeniable, they say that their intentions were good, alleviating the moral stain of having done harm. The bible says that our righteousness is like filthy rags, because really all of the things we do are stained by sin, for even our intentions, in comparison to the Father, are polluted by evil and selfish desires. Many times, we don't just desire to help, but to be seen and known as the helper. These mixed motives, where even just a little sin is found, end up spoiling the whole endeavor. It is not as simple as not knowing how to do good, because good is often more complicated than we think, it is that we are not sufficiently motivated to find the good before we set about trying to help. We are in need of humble hearts as well as humble minds, rather than supposing that we just want what's best for everyone. This assumption of the goodness of our intentions often keeps us from hearing God's voice, because we then assume that when we find ourselves in disagreement with God, that his intentions are bad. I hear this all the time in our culture, as people encounter the word, disagree with it, and then assume the worst about God. Why does God hate this person, or that person, when I love that person? I actually heard a guy in a video say that he loves people more than God and that is why he is no longer a Christian, because he accepts them and God judges them. He can no longer hear God's voice, but only the voice of the deceiver. He never stops to think that maybe God loves the person he judges enough to endure their hatred in order to bring them salvation, while this former Christian cares more about being great in the eyes of the sinner than he cares about their eternal future. Make sure your heart is humble, so you don't become deaf to God's voice.

Verses: Isaiah 64, Ezekiel 36:26, 1 Samuel 16:7

Prayer Topics: Motivation, Sincerity, Wisdom

Day 5

Change Agendas

To continue to hear God's voice, we must change our agenda. We all have something we are after, and that agenda differs from God's agenda. The Rich Young Ruler we read about a couple of days ago had a different agenda from God, so he was unable to hear the call to sell everything as the glorious message of love and salvation that it was. When we have an agenda that is different from God's, we re-interpret everything we hear in light of that agenda. We hear the command as a way of fulfilling the agenda, rather than a way of setting a new agenda. For example, there have been a number of high-profile people leaving Christianity lately. Many of these people have been leaders in the faith, and when they renounced the faith, tried to become leaders in the world. The agenda that they had was to be a leader, and Christianity became a way of being a leader, rather than a way of being a follower of Christ. When they found that they could lead (or thought they could lead) more people by dropping Christ, they did. No matter what your agenda is, if it is not following Christ no matter what, it will end up being the reason you leave him. C.S. Lewis once warned that being a "Christian And" was dangerous. He meant that having an agenda that was important enough to be mentioned alongside being a Christian was a step away from having an agenda that was more important than following Christ, and when they came into conflict, you would be likely to drop Jesus. Our one and only agenda should be Christ, for when it is, we can hear him much better.

Verses: Jeremiah 29:11, Proverbs 19:21, Matthew 6:33

Prayer Topics: Unity, Purpose, Intentions