

## **Spiritual Exercises 1: Hearing God's Word**

"Blessed [ ] are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Luke 11:28

This is probably the most gentle of all the exercises. Start by finding a church where God's word is preached. Ask God to prepare you for what you are about to hear in the sermon. Enhance your understanding by taking notes. For greater depth, discuss the sermon content afterwards.

Secular psychologists who make a study of how we learn (search for "Edgar Dale") note that the more actively we are involved in our learning, the more we retain of what we hear. Note-taking can be part of that process because it helps us to pay attention, to focus and to elaborate. In note-taking, we have the opportunity to personalise what the speaker is saying, to re-phrase it, to connect it with our own experiences.

The same sources say that the most effective way of retaining information is to teach it to others. Perhaps this is why one of the reasons Deuteronomy 6: 7 tells us to impress [God's words] on our children. Whatever your situation, consider improving your understanding, and that of others, by discussing the sermon, perhaps over Sunday lunch.

There are times when church attendance is not possible. Modern technology has moved on from sermon tapes but we still have Christian radio (UCB UK) and the internet as a source of recorded sermons. Check with others for their recommendations of good programmes/sites.

Next spiritual exercise: Prayer.