

A businessman who needed several million dollars to clinch an important deal and sensing the need for divine help went to church to pray for money. He knelt next to a man who was praying for \$100 to pay an urgent debt. The businessman took out his wallet and pressed \$100 into the other man's hand and, overjoyed, the man got up and left the church. The businessman then closed his eyes and prayed, "Now, Lord. Now that I have your undivided attention...."

That businessman wanted God's undivided attention. But to be honest with you, it isn't God who has the problem. We are the ones with the problem. We really don't have to work that hard to get God to hear our prayers. He's promised He would listen. Jesus even promised "ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened." We don't have to work at getting HIS attention but too often God has to work to get our attention.

A couple of years ago, some restrictions were placed on new, teen drivers. If I remember correctly, a new teen driver is not allowed to have friends in the vehicle for at least a year. Why? Because they have found that when a teen has friends in the car, then they get distracted and don't pay attention to the things that they need to be doing. And let me be clear that this is not just a teen issue because there are times where every single one of us struggles with paying attention.

Now, as we come to I Samuel; we find that somebody hasn't been paying attention. Somebody has NOT been LISTENING to God. And that someone is the priest of Israel, Eli. To make a long story short, Eli was protecting his sons who were abusing their power against the Israelites instead of listening to and completing God's will. Because of Eli's actions, God had told him that HE was going to raise up a faithful priest to replace Eli and our 1st lesson is that calling.

God wakes Samuel four separate times. Each time God calls: "Samuel, Samuel." And the first 3 time that's all God says. But following Eli's advice on the 4th time, Samuel says 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening', God starts talking to him. It's only after Samuel declares I'm listening that God speaks to him.

A high school music appreciation class was asked what the difference was between listening and hearing. It took a while for anybody to raise their hand, but eventually one of them did and gave this definition: "Listening is WANTING to hear."

Going back to our 1st lesson, God was looking for a man who wanted to hear what He had to say and he found that person in Samuel.

Do you remember the story about Mary and Martha. These women were strong supporters of Jesus' ministry. They gave Jesus and the disciples emotional support, fed them food and maybe even helped financially.

According to Luke, when Jesus first met these sisters they were so impressed by Him they had him come to their house for a meal. We are told that Mar sat at the Lord's feet LISTENING to what he said. But Martha was DISTRACTED by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Notice, Mary was "Listening" to Jesus. Martha was WORKING for Him. There is no doubt Jesus appreciated what Martha was doing for Him but Mary was doing the one thing that matters the most to God. She was listening. Martha was "distracted" by HER preparations. She was following her agenda or what she felt needed done.

Repeatedly throughout the Bible God says "LISTEN TO ME!" Even today, God says to us, "listen to me!" Don't get distracted by anything in this world. Don't get distracted by your job, your troubles, your goals, your agendas, even your family. Listen to God! Listen to God first.