

Open Bible, Open Minds (7)

October 1996

Counting normal Sundays and special occasions, there are about 115 sermons preached per year at Hueytown. At 40 minutes per sermon, this provides about 75 hours of instruction from the pulpit. How can we make the most of this opportunity?

It is helpful to realize that the average human has a very low retention rate for things heard. No matter how interesting or stimulating a sermon might be, 95% of it fades from memory after an hour or two. Combine this with the fact that no one ever hears 100% of any sermon due to distractions, a wandering mind or sleepy eyes and we wind up with very little of the morning sermon as we're eating dessert after lunch. So, things are working against us from the start.

First, try to sit where your attention will be focused upon the preacher rather than possible distractions around you. This is made more difficult by our long auditorium, but there is usually some room available toward the front.

Secondly, *writing* what is heard drastically increases one's retention rate. Take notes on the lessons. This not only aids long-term memory but provides a basis for later study.

Third, make a family tradition out of discussing the sermon on the way home or over lunch. This forces us to review the points made and increases the impression made upon us. It also gives us the context for Biblical discussion with our children and gives them a reason to listen. (Did we ever learn anything at school simply by listening to the teacher and never giving the material another thought? Doesn't this happen often with sermons?)

Fourth, use our tape-recording capabilities to enhance your study. Tape-recording is one of the greatest inventions to promote Bible learning. How many great sermons have been preached in years gone by which were lost forever when the words passed the speaker's lips?

Fifth, listen carefully to the sermon *all the way through*. I sometimes hear the strangest reports of things I supposedly have said in sermons. Some let their minds go off on a tangent and fail to hear all of a point made or a clarifying application. Others *think* they hear something amiss and spend the rest of the lesson working on their rebuttal. Miscommunication thus occurs.

Sixth, the Hueytown preacher's door is always open to further discussion and study. Don't ask someone else what *they think* the preacher meant; *ask the preacher!*