

## "Much Closer Attention"

When people fail to pay close attention, they usually make mistakes and may cause harm. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." We can't afford to drift away from God.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We seek to follow the Lord, nothing more, nothing less. God's written word is true and the authority for our lives. Let's obey what we know that God says, rather than presume we can do as we please. That's wisdom. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

We seek to be authentic Christians who follow the New Testament teaching of Jesus Christ. We focus on the New Testament, because we know it reveals the words of the Lord Jesus and His apostles. The Lord Jesus said that He would send forth prophets, wise men, and scribes to reveal His teaching. And He says this in Matthew 23 verse 34. Now if we wish to be true disciples, we must listen to Him. The Lord Jesus said to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31 to 32). Now true disciples stay in the word, and today that word is found in the New Testament.

Sadly many who claim to be disciples listen to the world or the culture of the times. And they forget God and strive to please people. Paul wrote in Romans 12 verse 2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." We have no right to change God's plan of salvation, God's way for us to worship, or God's way to organize the church, or God's morals. The worldly religions that call themselves Christians think they can change God's ways and still please Him. Well, they're fooling themselves.

We offer this study, Much Closer Attention, free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now for those outside the United States, we also have programs and free materials on our website, [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Hebrews 2:1 to 4, and see the importance of paying much closer attention.

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews chapter 2 verses 1 to 4. And there the writer of the book of Hebrews encourages the people to really pay close attention and warns them not to drift away.

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

God wants us to do what is right and to pay close attention. Let us pray. Father we're thankful that You have revealed Your will to us. And that we can know what You would have us to do and to be so that we may please You and show You our love. Help us to live in such a way that glorifies Your name. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

People don't usually intend to drift away from God, or His teaching, or the church. It usually happens when people forget or neglect their faith. They focus on their daily lives and become distracted from eternal things. They assume that they have all the time in the world to draw close to God in their later years. And they don't realize that when they drift away from God, they can lose the blessing and promises of God.

Hebrews 5:12 to 14 speaks of Christians who had become dull of hearing. They hadn't matured enough to distinguish good from bad. The Hebrew writer said: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

Sadly, many today who call themselves Christians know very little about the Bible, about what to do to be saved, about the worship God desires, about the nature of the church, or about the morals that God desires them to practice. They simply don't know what it means to be righteous in God's eyes. Now being religious is not the same thing as being righteous. A righteous person knows the truth and holds fast to it. A religious person is often more concerned about appearances and pleasing himself than he is knowing and practicing the will of God.

The Pharisees often practiced their righteousness before men to be noticed by them, but they rejected Jesus as the Christ. Their righteousness was keeping the commandments of men. And Paul described them in Romans 10:2 to 3, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." Paul's prayer to God for them was for their salvation. To be saved they needed to truly believe and follow the Lord Jesus Christ and his words.

The Pharisees grew up with an oral, human tradition that came from their fathers not from God and not found in Scripture. The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5 to 7 frequently contrasted such traditions. You can see the contrasts that use the phrases well, "You have heard that it was said" and then, "But I say to you." You see, Jesus was tearing down the human and showing God's real teaching. Authentic Christianity sees the difference between what is of human origin and what comes from God.

People, however, who have grown up hearing and obeying a human tradition have often never realized that their human traditions were not biblical and don't really come from God. For instance, many people teach a "sinner's prayer" leads a lost soul to salvation; but the idea of a sinner's prayer was never taught until well into the twentieth century, yes. The apostle Peter, who spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance, said in the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 verses 38 to 39, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (that is in order to) the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

The human tradition of sprinkling infants came into play centuries after the New Testament was written. It's an innovation not a biblical practice. It has drifted away from what they practiced in the first century. Now, those who are bound to that tradition need to really think about what the Scripture says. Hearing with understanding, faith, love, and repentance always come before one is baptized into Christ. And infants have no need of baptism, for they haven't sinned and cannot inherit other people's sins.

No one has the right to change the gospel found in the New Testament. You remember, Paul said in Galatians 1:8 to 9, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed." Now drifting often leads to leaving the truth and changing it to something that people invented.

The human tradition of using instruments of music in worship started many centuries after the New Testament was written. There's nothing in the New Testament that commands, implies, or gives an example of early churches using instruments of music in worship to God. Instrumental music was a Jewish practice a pagan practices, but not Christian one. The New Testament teaches Christians to sing from our hearts and with our lips (Ephesians 5:19; and Hebrews 13:15).

Authentic, true Christianity is devoted to the Lord Jesus, not to some human hierarchy or council. It doesn't look to some culture-bound authority but to the one Lord of all, and that's Jesus. Jesus is the head and the Lord of His church. And He hasn't abdicated His throne to a human substitute. The Lord rules His church from heaven through His words found in the New Testament not through some church law decided by men. Today's councils cannot change what the New Testament says and then think that they still please God.

Drifting from the word of God isn't a new problem. Before his death, you remember, Moses warned Israel not to forget the Lord but to keep His commandments. He said in Deuteronomy 8:11 to 14: "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

He adds in Deuteronomy 8 verses 18 to 20, "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God."

A generation later Joshua also warns Israel to remain faithful to God and to keep what is written. Joshua 23:6 to 8 says: "Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, (no he doesn't want that) so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day." Now, Joshua didn't want the people he loved to drift away from God.

Joshua adds in Joshua 23:12 to 13: "For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you."

God always remembers His people and seeks to bless them, but He expects His people to remain faithful and obey Him. God always takes note of what His people do or fail to do.

Judges 2:1 through 4 says: Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' (and then he says) But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.' " Now when the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.

We too should weep when we realize that we could lose our relationship with the Lord if we forget Him, neglect Him, or drift into error or human traditions. I pray that you're obeying the Lord and doing His will. I pray you'll pay much closer attention to what the Bible says and not fall prey to the traditions of men that fail to obey the Lord.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians at a time when the pagan culture was surrounding them on every side. And he wrote in 2 Corinthians 6 verses 14 to 18: "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

We must separate from the false religion outside of Christ and the false traditions of men who call themselves Christians. Paul concluded in 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." We must respect what God says.

One must avoid the distractions that lead us to stop listening. We cannot give in to the things of this world, we must listen to the Lord, we must read the Bible, and we must put God first. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6 and verse 46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? On the mount of transfiguration we hear God speaking from a cloud in Matthew 17:5, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

Peter spoke of the prophecy about the Lord Jesus in Acts 3:22 to 23, "Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' Friends, let's have ears that hear what God says.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us Your word through Jesus Christ. And You have taught us about how You treat those who fall away from You, in the Old Testament. Help us Heavenly Father to always give ourselves clearly to You, to serve You and to love You. In Jesus name, Amen.

Ezra was a priest and a scribe. And Ezra 7 verse 10 says, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." Where is your heart? Is it listening to the Lord? Is it in reading the Scriptures? Ezra knew how important knowing the Word of God was to his own soul and to the souls of the people of Israel. How well do you know the Scriptures? Do you know the basic principles of the oracles of God? Have you studied for yourself or have you otherwise become dull of hearing? Are you skilled enough in Scripture, not culture, to distinguish good from evil?

We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard from Scripture, lest we drift away from it. The teaching of Jesus and the apostles recorded in Scripture has proven to be reliable. God bore witness to it with signs and wonders and miracles and He confirmed its truth in the first century. And that's why we must go to the teaching of the New Testament for what we believe and practice.

I can read of the necessity of faith, love, repentance, confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins in the New Testament. And shouldn't I pay close attention to what I can read in Scripture rather than assume I can drift away into human traditions for salvation? Shouldn't I listen to what God says rather than depend upon religious leaders who teach other things? I can put my trust in the written word, but I cannot trust human traditions that came centuries later, because they drifted away from the truth. Stand firm in the faith once for all time delivered to the saints.

We hope our study, Much Closer Attention, has caused you to want to love God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now for all our viewers outside the United States, we have free programs and biblical materials on our website, [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). SEARCH is also on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and then like the programs you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

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