

Selective Hearing

Embrace the Whole Counsel of God

When was the last time someone caught you listening but not *really* listening? It happens to me all the time, especially when I've got a lot on my mind or I'm distracted by something. My wife will be chatting away, thinking I'm processing what she's saying, and suddenly realize I'm in "la-la land." But when she mentions something I'm interested in, I'm suddenly laser-focused with my attention. "Did you just say something about ice cream?" Selective hearing may be a problem in a marriage, but it's an even bigger problem when it comes to God's word.

We're moving on from discussing mercy in our [Cross Training](#) journey to another Christlike quality — integrity. Integrity comes when we receive the whole truth, live with purity, develop our character, and speak courageously. So why do we need to hear all God has to say if we want to walk with integrity?

What You Need to Know

How does God define integrity? God told Solomon to walk *"with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you"* (1 Kings 9:4). Integrity is about wholeness, honoring *all* God's commands. Jesus wants his disciples *"to observe all that I have commanded"* (Matt. 28:20). Only then can we *"do everything in the name of the Lord"* (Col. 3:17).

"The sum of your word is truth," says the psalmist, *"and every one of your righteous rules endures forever"* (Psalm 119:160). What does it mean that the *"sum"* of God's word is truth? In Numbers, this word translated *"sum"* describes the total number of Israelites, all accounted for (Num. 1:2,49). Likewise, in Psalm 119, it means the totality of God's word — every part of it all taken together. We can't grab onto the pieces of the truth that fit our views and justify our actions. We don't pick and choose.

When you take the stand in a court, you might be asked: "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" Does this mean saying every true thing? No, it means not holding back any relevant truth. We need this same kind of teaching of the gospel — not holding back any relevant truth. Paul considered himself free of guilt — no matter what anyone chose to do — because he *"did not shrink from declaring ... the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:26-27). A few verses earlier, he explained it like this: *"I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable"* (Acts 20:20). Bring all his counsel to every aspect of your life. Walk with God in integrity by doing *"all that is written"* (Josh. 23:6) *"with all your heart"* (Deut. 26:16).

What You Need to Do

Study through all the different sections of Scripture and diverse subjects. Is there a kind of Bible literature you've avoided? Is there a subject you've dodged? Take it on. Find a partner, if you need it, to think it through with you, but seek out God's counsel from all of his word for all of your life.

Decide to do God's will, no matter what it requires, and you will recognize the truth (John 7:17). *"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you are unable to accept My message"* (John 8:43). When we're willing to accept even the hard sayings of the Lord, then we'll understand all that he wants us to know.

Then, apply *everything* you learn from Christ, paying particular attention to commands you find challenging or might tend to dismiss as "less important." Without application, Bible study is just an academic exercise. So once you've changed your mind to accept all of Christ's commands, let them change your actions to become more and more like your Master (James 1:22-25; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Through the Week

- **Read** — Matt. 28:16-20; Josh. 1:7-9; Psalm 119:1-24; John 6:60-69; Titus 2:1-10
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, *"Is there any part of God's will I haven't taken seriously?"*
- **Request** — Pray, *"Lord, may I understand and embrace your whole counsel for my life"* (cf. Acts 20:27).
- **Respond** — Make a plan to study something you've avoided or neglected.
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, *"What command has been a challenging hurdle for you?"*