

# Listen

## [A week of devotions reflecting on God's listening and ours](#)

I came from a far off land that was invaded, conquered and settled multiple times, over hundreds of years of its history. I listened to those stories, mostly in lessons at school, and marvelled at the complexity of life for both the victor and the vanquished, and what eventually came through it. From there, I came to this land as a young man in 1963, with the eyes, prejudices and a history of colonialism, assuming we were right, simply because we were, and we were here, and my school atlas had Australia in pink along with all the other 'colonies'. This was a country that, in those days, had a 'White Australia Policy' for immigration. I enjoyed the very good fortune to work in the bush. I learned new skills: look, observe, listen, hear, see, feel, smell the outback, become one with it. Listen, you can hear the wind in the trees, but can you hear the story? Story and country are one, underfoot. Listen. They have no fence lines, no shearing sheds, no windmills, no boundary pegs and God's grace has none of these either.

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Day 1: though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

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Read

Isaiah 6:8-10 and read Matthew 13:13-15

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

**Mat 13:13** This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'"

Reflect

Listening and hearing are very different. We can hear the story multiple times yet never get the message because we do not listen intently. We live in a very 'rushed' society that is overly busy.

Consider/Act

Do you take the time to listen carefully to other perspectives? How good a listener are you really? How do you cope where there appears to be conflicting story in Tasmania's history? What similar cultural prejudices to the ones that I held in the 1960's do you think you may still have that prevent you from really listening? Do you know how to recognise your own 'calloused' heart, and how do you deal with it?

How do you apply grace into this situation?

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## Day 2. If God listens to us...

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Read

Psalm 5:1-3

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing.

Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.

In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.

Reflect

Depending on your translation, the Psalmist cries out for God to 'listen' or 'give ear' or 'hearken' to his cry for help and by verse 3 he is content to lay his requests before God and wait in patient expectation for an answer. If God listens to our pleas for help how much should we listen to the plea of others?

Consider/Act

What is the plea of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people? Do we understand it? Do you believe that God listens to you and do you think God listens to people who don't believe in him? Why? How do you rectify having prayed with a wrong motive or from wrong information? How do you apply grace into this situation?

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## Day 3. Listening to others' Story

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Read

Proverbs 12:1 and 12:15

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.  
The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Reflect

British colonialism was probably more exploitive and more cruel than other nations who also had their own colonies. Whose history do we really listen to? Where do you go to find a balance in the story? Name a belief that you got from your own cultural background that you have now rejected because of God's Word.

Consider/Act

Have you personally gone to Aboriginal descent people to seek advice and what was the outcome for you? Where in Tasmania have you visited in order to see and experience some Aboriginal history and who did you listen to?

How do you apply grace into this situation?

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## Day 4. Unlearn and listen anew

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Read

James 1:19 and 22.

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Reflect

Do we treat Aboriginal people like they are sojourners in our land or we are sojourners in their land? What does the word of God say about our treatment of one another?

Consider/Act

What is the most difficult thing you have had to 'un-learn' because you found out that you were wrong? We who have received God's unmerited grace and mercy now need to extend that listening ear to members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

How do you apply grace into this situation?

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## Day 5. Listening with intent to change

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Read

Jeremiah 29:12 and 2 Chron. 7:14

**Jer 29:12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

**2Ch 7:14** if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Reflect

These verses are quoted frequently, but do we take them seriously and take any action? Do we have a 'them and us' attitude? In what ways have you personally 'humbled yourself'? How about corporately as your Church? How much of your own cultural upbringing has defined who you are, and why?

Consider/Act

Listen carefully to your own thinking. Now, apply that to the issue of listening to the Tasmanian Aboriginal story. Are you a person who would want to pray to God for a resolution to the issue and do nothing yourself to help resolve it and why? As Christians we are guided by God's Word. We need to listen to God and put things right. How do you apply grace into this situation?

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## Day 6. Listening to others' culture

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Read

Amos 5:21-24

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Reflect

We have all enjoyed Church music over the years, and maybe we enjoy some of the better known operas but have not always understood the language. How alien to our ears are the songs of Aboriginal people?

How alien to their ears are the songs we are so accustomed to?

We as people groups are sometimes reluctant to learn from other cultures? And yet in this land we are all sojourners from somewhere else. Do we appreciate each others traditions and songs?

Do you think any one group's song to God is less detestable (despised) than any other cultural group?

Consider/Act

Seek out a song of worship from another culture and listen worshipfully. How does this engage you? Is God able to speak to you from another culture?

How do you apply grace to this situation?

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## Day 7. Listening to a Kangaroo drinking

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Read

John 10: 27

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Reflect

When we travelled to Israel in 2013, we saw several small flocks of sheep being lead by their shepherd. This way of moving sheep is very different to what we do in Australia. Here as you know it is from the rear with dogs, utes, horses and motorbikes – and much shouting and whistling. The sheep in Israel recognised their shepherd's voice and follow him.

Do you listen for the shepherd's voice? What is he telling you?

Do you listen to the cry from our aboriginal people?

Do we listen their story? What are they telling us? Do we listen to their voice? Or are they voiceless to us and the broader church body ?

Have you ever listened to a kangaroo drinking? You have to be very patient, close and stationery.

Do you know the shepherd's voice? Have you listened for the shepherd's voice? Do you listen for Jesus' voice?

Consider/Act

Find someone to listen patiently to today.

How are you going to apply grace to this situation?