



## Listen!

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**A** young applicant to a school of higher Truth was given five minutes with one of the teachers. The young man used all of the time to express his enthusiastic interest in spiritual knowledge. He concluded, "I am eager to learn everything possible about cosmic principles."

Gently, the teacher asked, "Would you like to start your learning right now?"

"Yes, please."

“Learn to listen.”

Because he really wanted to know, the young man listened to this kindly counsel and received its benefit.

“Listen and learn!” That advice is both simple and profound. It arouses the valuable question, “How can we learn to listen in order to raise our level of understanding and uplift daily life?”

To listen at all, we must have the correct instrument for doing so. Physically, we have an outer and inner ear for receiving sounds from the exterior. These vibrations are then sent on to the mind for translation, after which we take responsive action. But what is the correct instrument for spiritual listening, the kind which translates exterior impressions into higher understanding and correct daily action? Let us find out by examining two incorrect instruments.

1. *We must not listen with mechanical memory:* When wishing to cook dinner or drive a car, you listen as memory provides instructions for accomplishing these good and necessary tasks. Memory, which is a storehouse of yesterday's schoolings and experiences, serves practical aims in daily life. But memory is mechanical. Like a tape recorder, it always says the same thing unless given a new tape. So listening from memory is correct—but only on its own level.

For example, a man whom we shall call Walter has human-relations problems, both in the family and down at the office. They are more irritating than overwhelming, such as receiving unexpected criticism or feeling unappreciated. Walter knows enough about higher truth to realize that he cannot rely on memorized responses to lift him above his daily distress. He understands one fact quite clearly. Every time he listens with his memory it always comes up with the same old useless command, "When criticized, feel depressed. When ignored, feel anxious."

So Walter rejects mechanical memory as the answer to his problems. He has seen that a memorized reaction is like an airplane with a motor but no wings. It can struggle around on the ground, but can never rise above its present position.

2. *We must not listen with habitual preference:* Our human behavior is sometimes strange. The moment we call an idea or an object "mine" we automatically attribute value to it, worthy or not. Rarely do we isolate and investigate an idea to see whether it possesses value in itself.

But we can profitably understand why we cling so passionately to old personal preferences by examining the psychological and spiritual principle called *identification*. To identify means to value an idea or object because we believe it establishes and maintains our identity, our individuality, our self. So, fearing to lose this self, we cling fondly

to each attitude or object which appears to confirm it. But the fear is groundless, for man is not just a collection of attitudes and ideas about himself. He is his total self—a child of God.

Here we make an astounding—and perhaps even amusing—discovery. When listening with *acquired* preferences we are really listening to ourselves! It is the old and imaginary self, of course, with no originality whatever. It is like a motorist lost on a country road who asks directions from another motorist—who is equally lost.

But we can sense the need for rising above our *habitual* preferences, which is corrective energy in itself.

Our next example is a woman called Helen. Early one evening, while wishing time for herself, she receives a phone call from friends. They want her to join them in shopping and dinner. Habitually, over the years, Helen has preferred to spend many evenings each month with friends and in social activities. Somewhat lonely, and enjoying the company of people who like her, she usually accepts invitations to go out.

But a small yet definite change has taken place within Helen. Higher truths, which were first received as words, have now become glimpses of spiritual light. Having some insight into her conflicts, she senses her ability to end them. She has developed new preferences, her values have

changed. Though unable to see the mountain as yet, she knows she is on the right road toward it.

So this evening she places inner enlightenment before outer activity. She thanks her friends, while explaining her preference for remaining home tonight. The evening is then spent in valuable reading and pondering. More than ever she realizes that this new knowledge is the answer to any lingering loneliness or conflict.

At this point we know what does not work. Now the question can be asked, "How can a person listen in a new way, free of mechanical memory and of habitual preference?"

He can listen with his whole self— with his true nature, his spiritual self, his unconditioned mind.

A physical ear has several parts. When they cooperate with each other, we hear exterior sounds correctly. Likewise, man's spiritual nature has several components, including viewpoints and decisions, energies and feelings. When they are brought together to form a whole, man hears clearly on a spiritual level and translates this higher understanding into everyday right action.

A whole man is not only an expression of the Whole, but a unique and miniature representative of the Whole.

In earlier years we listened to the part, which did

not deliver healing. Now, in higher understanding, we listen to the Whole by the interesting process of *being at one with* the Whole (knowing the God within). Thus, *while listening* we are never concerned with an answer. To our delight, self-unified listening, which brings an awareness of oneness with the Whole, *is* the answer. A nightingale always hears its own song because it is never separate from its song. We are always equally close to our own original Godlike nature.

Wholeness is attained by gaining knowledge of spiritual truths and then permitting them free expression through us.

This is not something remote and mysterious. It is something you *can* do. Since nothing is more practical, start today to listen in this new way.