

The Walk: Five Essential Practices for the Christian Life
Adam Hamilton

Session 2: Study: The Importance of Listening and Paying Attention

General Revelation and Special Revelation

Table discussion following the video...

- What are some other voices that compete with God's voice in our lives today?
- What have you learned about God by God's general revelation, that is, from observing nature and art and the lives of other people?

Psalm 19:1-4

¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world. (New Revised Standard Version, NRSV)

¹⁻² God's glory is on tour in the skies,
God-craft on exhibit across the horizon.
Madame Day holds classes every morning,
Professor Night lectures each evening.
³⁻⁴ Their words aren't heard,
their voices aren't recorded,
But their silence fills the earth:
unspoken truth is spoken everywhere. (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)

Heaven is declaring God's glory;
the sky is proclaiming his handiwork.
² One day gushes the news to the next,
and one night informs another what needs to be known.
³ Of course, there's no speech, no words—
their voices can't be heard—
⁴ but their sound extends throughout the world;
their words reach the ends of the earth. (Common English Bible, CEB)

Table discussion...

- What differences do you see in these different translations of Psalm 19?
- What emotions do you experience in reading these verses?

Group Discussion

- Can you think of a time when you experienced God's presence or when you learned something about God's nature from the arts: visual arts, music, poetry dance, a movie, a theater production, or something else?

Some of Adam's Remarks on Scripture

- The Holy Spirit speaks to us through Scripture
- The Spirit is our guide to interpretation of Scripture
- Generally speaking, Americans are not consistent readers of Scripture
- Jesus studied, memorized, prayed, and lived Scripture (our Hebrew Scriptures)
- Scripture is complex and requires care in interpretation
- A commended Essential Practice (spiritual discipline): daily reading of Scripture (perhaps beginning with one of the gospels)
- Consider owning and using a study bible (with notes, historical introductions, maps, etc.)

Five Ways to Read Scripture

- Reading for Understanding
- Reading for Formation (Spiritual Growth)
- Praying Scripture
- *Lectio Divina* (four movements)
- Group Study

An Exercise: Reading for Formation (spiritual growth)

Take a few minutes to read and think about Mark 10:35-40. Then, in your table groups, discuss the three questions that Adam recommends when reading for formation (p. 55):

- What does the passage tell me about God?
- What does the passage tell me about people?
- What does the passage tell me about myself and God's will for me?

Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)

A brief passage, only a verse or two

- First reading
- Second reading: slowly, with meditation on the text
- Contemplation: how does the text speak to me, apply to me?
- Prayer: speak to God and listen for God with respect to the passage

Why Study in Groups?

- Learn from others; hear different voices
- The value of small groups: support, accountability

The Word: Jesus (John 1:1)

- Jesus is the living Word (Greek: *logos*, God's wisdom, reason, purpose)
- Read through at least one Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) each year

Prayer

Lord, teach me to listen. Help me to pay attention to the ways you are revealed in the world around me, in my everyday life. But also, dear Lord, help me to read and study the Scriptures, finding in them the words of life. In Jesus' name. Amen.