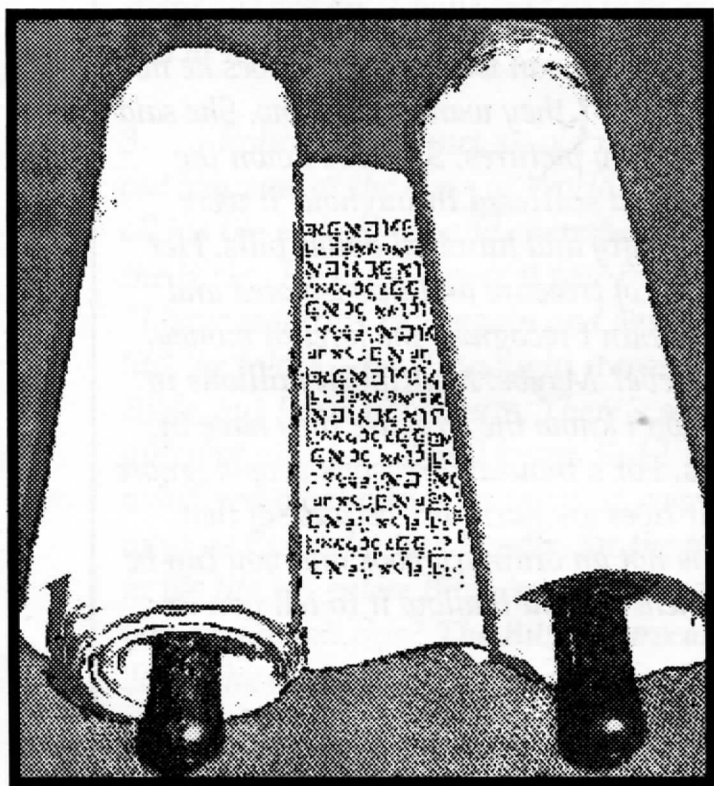


LISTENING TO GOD



AN APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

Part One In A Series Of Seven

1. The Hidden Treasure

AND THEIR LIVES ARE NARROWER
BECAUSE OF THAT

THE NEGLECTED TREASURE

1. *She lived in poverty out in the Scottish highlands, the story goes. Her son had gone to America and gotten very rich, so they said. Neighbours wondered why she was so impoverished if her son was so rich. "Does he not send you money"? they wanted to know. She said he sent her pretty pictures. She took down the family Bible and scattered throughout it were scores of ten, fifty and hundred dollar bills. Her Bible was full of treasure and this isolated and elderly lady didn't recognise the foreign money. Hard to believe? Maybe. Multiplied millions in the world don't know the treasure they have in their Bibles. For a thousand reasons people ignore it and their lives are narrower because of that. The Bible is not an ordinary book and you can be infinitely richer if you'll allow it to tell you its message.*

CAN THERE REALLY BE TREASURE?

2. *How's it possible that an ancient book can matter that much to modern men? What does it have that makes it the most influential book in the world? (Even the Islamic world reveres large portions of the Bible!) How do you*

"I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT
CAME ON THE NEXT PAGE."

explain the fact that down through the ages those who sought to enslave others have burned Bibles and outlawed the reading of it? Why did these governments go to the trouble to suppress the Scriptures? Why do uncounted thousands in every age ask for it to be read at their marriages and at their funerals?

3. *Robert Evans met an old man in bombed-out Warsaw at the close of World War II, who, all his life had owned and cherished one page of the Bible. He wasn't sure it was from the Bible. "I have read this page again and again all my life," he told Evans. "I thought it was from the Bible, but I was never sure. There's something different about it—this I know. But I've always wondered what comes on the next page." And he wept as Evans let him handle, for the first time in his life, an entire Bible, page by page. How do you explain all this? The Bible is precious and down the centuries has gained a wonderful and an ennobling power over wistful hearts.*

4. *Of course the Bible has its occasional critics. (Can you remember any of their names?) But when you easily dismiss something as acclaimed as Shakespeare's plays, you're saying more about yourself than Shakespeare. Those who tell us they regard Beethoven or Mozart as rubbish don't impress us as qualified critics.*

THE BIBLE IS AN ANVIL AND ITS CRITICS ARE HAMMERS

5. *But maybe the Bible gets more criticism because of its 'friends' than its critics. They say they think it's precious but aren't as thrilled about it as students of Shakespeare, Homer or Dostoievski are about those authors. They say they revere it but live as though it means nothing to them. They say it is deeply satisfying but spend no time delving into it. Thoughtful unbelievers note all this and wonder.*
6. *None of this is the fault of the Bible. It can't be right to dismiss Dvorak or Bach as trivial because some musician we know butchers their work. We can't be doing right to dismiss the work of Shakespeare or Goethe because some actor makes an awful mess of their material. And it can't be right to dismiss the Bible because its friends represent it pathetically.*
7. *It's to the Bible's everlasting credit that despite its critics **and** its 'friends' it remains the foremost book in all the world, generation after generation. Others feel the need to protect their holy book from criticism so they forbid even the translation of it . Enlightened bible-believers have no such fears. The Bible, someone said, is like an anvil and its critics are like hammers. The hammers wear out while the anvil remains. As long as there are people in darkness who need light, people in suffering who need comfort, people*

IT ISN'T SHAKESPEARE PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR WHEN DYING

in despair who need hope, people who are lost and need to be found, people in bondage who need to be freed—as long as such people exist the Bible will be around and in demand!

THE NATURE OF THE BIBLE'S TREASURE

8. *The Bible is glorious literature. It's right to say the Bible is glorious literature! It's right to remind people that all the noted writers from the earliest ages until now confess their debt to the Bible. Shakespeare, Hugo, Tolstoy, Dickens, Cervantes, Tennyson, Browning, Goethe and a host of others openly confessed their debt to the Bible. The themes with which they dealt, the themes which made their works live on and on, they had in common with the Bible. That's all true and it's right to say it—but it isn't enough to say that! The Bible is more than inspiring and glorious literature. It isn't Shakespeare or Sienkiewicz people want to hear as they lie on death beds or face some loss that leaves them speechless with grief. In their multiplied millions they ask for the Holy Bible. Why is that?*
9. *The Bible promotes and defends all that mankind in its better moments cherishes and calls for. Imagine how the world would be*

**SUPPOSE THE WORLD
AWAKENED ONE MORNING...**

*transformed if it wakened one morning with the Bible supreme in everyone's life! Imagine how the world would be if everyone joyously believed **Psalm 23** or **John 3:16-17** or took **Matt 7:12** and **22:36-40** to heart!*

10. *Imagine the opposite to be true! Suppose the world awakened one morning to the sure and certain knowledge that the Bible was a tissue of lies and errors! Worship would die—immediately! Prayer would be universally abandoned; it would be heard never again on the lips of children or in the hush of great sorrows. Hope would be snuffed out of life and the witness of multiplied millions of God-fearing people against oppression and evil would be silenced. Their restraining power against vice would crumble into ruins and the bereaved would weep tears without comfort. When the last Bible was thrown out with the rubbish, the last hymn would be sung, the last missionary would be recalled and the last sermon of comfort and challenge would be preached. The world would have died and the church buildings would have become tombstones marking out God's grave! The glory and power of the Bible could only be fully appreciated if we saw the horror of a world convinced it was lies and fallacies. But the Bible's treasure is richer even than this!*

**THE BIBLE CONFRONTS OUR SAD
AND NARROW LITTLE LIVES**

11. *The Bible brings us the true word from God that he wants to live in loving fellowship with all mankind! There's the crowning message of the Bible! That's what makes the heart surge!*

12. *The Bible confronts our sad and narrow little lives with the picture of our startling possibilities! For our own eternal benefit it exposes our awful sinfulness and our profound need of God who will save us and bless us with life! It tells the amazing story of a God who bears his own judgement against Sin that he might offer eternal friendship to Man. It speaks of a God who shares our suffering until that day when suffering will end. It gives meaning to our living and glorious hope when we are dying!*

13. *It calls us to join with Jesus Christ in the most fantastic of all adventures, the rescue of the world. It shows us how to live with our weaknesses without being proud of them, how to fail without being crushed beyond repair, how to trust in spite of appearances. It brings us God's approval when we act nobly and God's forgiveness when we try and fail. It won't allow us to fritter away our lives with trivia. It calls us from a thousand scattered little loyalties to one grand "I must!". **Getting to know it will profoundly change our lives!***

EVALUATION SHEET

Name: _____

Listening To God LESSON 1

Tick The Box When You Have Read The Entire Lesson

Complete This Statement: (As found in the booklet.)

1. Her Bible was full of treasure _____

2. It calls us to join with Jesus Christ in _____

3. It can't be right to dismiss Dvorak or Bach _____

4. But I've always wondered _____

5. Imagine how the world would be transformed _____

6. But when you easily dismiss something _____

7. It isn't Shakespeare or Sienkiewicz _____

8. The Bible promotes and defends _____

9. Why did these governments go to the trouble _____

10. Even the Islamic world _____

Tick The Box When You've Read These Scriptures

1. Psalm 23

2. Matthew 22:36-40

3. Matthew 7:12

4. Philippians 4:4-9

In Your Own Words Respond To These Questions

1. Why is it wrong to despise Beethoven's music because some pianist can't play it very well? _____

2. The Bible's friends sometimes encourage people to criticise the Bible—how do they sometimes do that?

True Or False? (If the statement is true write T, if false write F.)

- ___ 1. If the Bible were shown to be lies the world would be a better place to live in!
- ___ 2. Many great authors confess a debt to the Bible!
- ___ 3. The world would be better if **Matthew 7:12** were taken seriously!