

Into the Word:

Jeremy challenged us this week concerning the things that we let into our lives through our ears. While it may be tempting to limit this to, say, maybe music or what we listen to through headphones, have you given any thought to what you listen to when you are with others? We are naturally social creatures and we love being part of a crowd. It could be a sporting event, a political rally, a concert, any form of large crowd. Here's the tough question to ask: When am I most tempted to let a crowd—perhaps even the church crowd—have undue influence on my behavior? Do I go along with the things I hear being said just because I am part of that crowd?

- Say you're sitting with a group of enthusiastic strangers in a large stadium, watching your favorite team play in an important game. It appears to you that a referee made a bad call against your team, and the crowd goes wild. You:

- a) stand up and boo with the crowd;*
- b) stay silent; or*
- c) tell your fellow sports fans they're being disrespectful to the ref.*

-What about other group settings? What kinds of "booing" do you hear at a conference, a work meeting, or a church service? Is it always audible? What about those "roast-the-preacher" sessions? Those post-meeting gripes? Does your behavior shift in response to what you are hearing?

Author Stephen L. Carter has written this "It is an interesting truism of psychology that mobs often behave worse than their individual members would if off somewhere alone, or if in better company."

We live in the most connected age ever. We are connected to each other 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. This allows for the instant formation of large groups of people that can share information instantly. In other words, we can hear and share more stuff than ever before and we can do so with a lot of people.

Christ calls us to live fully for Him in any situation, despite what those around us are saying and doing. When we are in a crowd, we easily can be swayed by what we hear if we don't consider that others may not be living with God's commands foremost on their minds.

Search through the following passages and make a list of the typical actions you would expect from Christians and from non-Christians.

- *Exodus 23:2*
- *1 Corinthians 15:33*
- *Ephesians 4:29*

- List behaviors both Christians and non-Christians may act out while hearing things in a crowd. This can be sporting events, political rallies, meetings, Facebook groups etc. Support or challenge these actions.
- Many times what is being said and heard in large crowds can turn those crowds into “lynch mobs” that can gang up on others. Does the church gang up against some sins more than others? (For example, is it worse to gossip, covet, or commit a homosexual act?) Why or why not?

Taking Action:

Many times we have no control over what comes into our ears simply because of the environment we find ourselves in. We are at a sporting event, political rally, dinner party, etc. and the spoken words may start turning ugly. How can we find the strength to go against the grain when we need to? And when can crowd behavior be a positive thing?

What do these verses tell you is the answer?

- *1 Timothy 4:12*
- *Galatians 5:13*
- *1 Corinthians 13:4–8a*