

# Town Criers: Listening, Hearing, and Doing

Bible Study • Study Guide

## Town Criers

It's a bygone image: a town crier standing in the middle of a dusty road and ringing a bell or banging a drum. "Hear Ye! Hear Ye!" Maybe this was an announcement of a birth or a death or a tax increase. Maybe it was alarming news of a fire or the threat of invaders. Most often, the crier shared news to which the people in that little town needed to listen and respond. "Stop! Listen to this! Now, go do something with what I've told you! Bring a meal to the new mother. Comfort the grieving family. Grab your buckets and line up to put out that fire! Pay your taxes!"

Today, we have town criers everywhere, every day. We just don't call them that. Tap that icon on your phone. Turn on your tablet. Say, "Alexa, what's the news today?" Click on your cable news station. "Fire! Taxes! Accidents!" We may hear. We may weep. We may turn it off. Often, we don't respond at all. We go about our day as if we didn't hear.

Share with your group or reflect: What town criers do you listen to each day? Which town criers do you turn off? Why? Which town criers do you listen to and then respond? Why?

## God: The First Town Crier

Read Genesis 1:1–5.

Who is the first to speak in the universe? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are His first words? \_\_\_\_\_

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God is obviously much more than a typical town crier. His Word is not like any words a human being might speak. When God speaks, things happen. Wait a minute. Let's rephrase that. When God speaks, atoms, protons, cells, rainbows, chipmunks, peaches, and aspen trees are created out of absolutely nothing. Language specialists call this "performative." God's Word isn't simply a pronouncement, a town cry. It's action.

**What two words are repeated over and over in the creation of the universe?**  
**(Genesis 1:3–31)** \_\_\_\_\_

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Now let's jump ahead a couple of chapters to where God first talks to Adam. Read Genesis 2:16.

**What two commands did He give?** \_\_\_\_\_

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God's commands are clear, and unlike a typical town crier, they are given with perfect love. God wants what is best for His creation! Read Genesis 2:7–24.

**What three gifts does God give to Adam which reveal His love?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Satan: The Evil Town Crier**

Read Genesis 3:1–5.

**What message is this town crier sharing with Eve?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Yes, Eve listened to and obeyed the wrong voice which was tempting her to doubt God. This town crier was essentially saying, "There's no fire. Take what you deserve. Take whatever you want. It's yours." Eve ate the fruit and shared it with Adam. They sank their teeth into the fruit, and sin entered the perfect creation. The lie this evil town crier had proclaimed was uncovered in the blink of an eye. Read Genesis 3:7. Stay tuned. The loving Town Crier is soon to share His salvation plan.

## **Prophets: Town Criers**

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–5, 14–15.

**Who was the town crier David heard and obeyed? What were the consequences of this disobedience?** \_\_\_\_\_

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What a mess. For more than nine months, David continued life as a king, doing kingly things and perhaps thinking he was getting away with murder. He married Bathsheba, who bore him a son (who would later die). David had plenty of time to confess his sins to the Lord, but this didn't happen right away.

**Read Hebrews 1:1. Who did God send as His town criers?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read 2 Samuel 12:1–15. How is Nathan like a town crier?** \_\_\_\_\_

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This was David's big "aha" moment.

**Recognizing that he had been listening to the wrong town crier, namely his own sinful self, and realizing that he had not been hearing and obeying the Lord God, what does David do?**

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## More Misleading Town Criers

Like Eve, we've all listened to a misguided town crier. They are not always clearly marked by snakeskin. Maybe it is an acquaintance who wants to gossip. "Did you hear ...?" Or maybe it is the newest home-remodeling show or your Instagram feed or Pinterest pictures. Aren't you longing for that new couch? Or sometimes it is our own thoughts that cry loudly, "I'll never be good enough. I'm too fat. I am lost. I'm a failure." Fill in the blank. Too often, like Eve, we listen to people or messages or words that we should ignore. Sin and Satan disguise themselves as the town crier we should listen to and obey.

The Bible points us to many town criers we will hear. Read Matthew 7:15, Mark 7:21–22, and 1 Peter 5:8.

**Who are these town criers?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## God Defeated Satan from the Start

All this prowling, thieving, and deceit! It sounds like we don't stand a chance against the adversary. But wait. God has already cursed the serpent. He has already defeated Satan. Good News! Let's return to one beautiful and very important verse.

Read Genesis 3:15. According to *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009, pages 18 and 20), this verse is often called the "protovangelium," meaning the first promise of the Gospel because it "points to Christ and His defeat of Satan on the cross" (page 20). Dr. Luther and others have indicated that Adam and Eve heard this promise, and although it was mysterious, they heard the hope and the victory that would one day come through their offspring, through the Messiah. But did Adam and Eve really hear?

Read Deuteronomy 6:4. The Hebrew word that begins this verse is "shema" which means "listen" or "hear." According to *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009, page 287), many Jews today still say this verse, known as the Shema, during their daily prayers. What is important to note is that hearing and listening go hand-in-hand with obeying.

Go back one more verse and read Deuteronomy 6:3.

**What are the two things God is commanding?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**If the people hear and do what the Lord commands, what will be the result?**

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## Do We Hear and Obey?

Some well-meaning people may say, "I wish God would just talk to me clearly, like He did with Moses or Abraham or Adam!" If you are honest, maybe you have said that, too. "Why doesn't God just tell me what to do?" Guess what? God does talk to us clearly. We have His Word, the Holy Scriptures, and many of us are blessed to live in places where we can have at least one Bible. We are blessed to live in places where we can go to church and hear God's Word preached often, but how well do we hear? Sadly, sometimes the reason we do not hear well is because we hear it so often.

**Spend a moment to reflect honestly on how you might hear but not really pay attention. Share with your group or journal your thoughts.**\_\_\_\_\_

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Aren't we often like Eve or King David? We make a mess and then go on living in our little garden of earthly delights, our little kingdoms. The Town Crier cries, and we cover our ears.

Read Hebrews 1:2.

**Who is the Town Crier in “these last days?” His Son. How does knowing this Town Crier give us hope?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read the following passages and discuss the results of hearing this Town Crier: John 10:27, Luke 8:4–18, Matthew 4:19, and John 5:24.** \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Helper

Now read John 14:26.

**Who is the Helper?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Trust the Town Crier who loves you.

As you close your study, meditate on the following passages to give thanks for the Triune God, the three-in-one Town Crier who has given us eternal life. Read Psalm 51, 1 John 1:1–9, and Ephesians 2:8.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, I confess I don't always hear and follow Your Word. Forgive me, renew me, and give me the strength to be the town crier who rings the bell and proclaims Christ. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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