

## What's in a word?

I was preaching at a church in Sierra Leone where my translator was translating into the local dialect of Creole. I said "Jesus has never promised you happiness". He said, "Jesus no promise you gladdy gladdy down in heart" (or something like that!) I continued, "But He has promised you joy". He said, "But He do promise you gladdy gladdy down in heart". We looked at each other and laughed for there was no difference between happiness and joy in that language. I later told this story at a missionary retreat for a Bible Translating mission. I found that they used "Good News for Modern Man" as their source!!! – and one of the missionaries asked me what the difference was. *Happiness goes up and down with circumstances and may be known by the natural man; Joy (fruit of the Holy Spirit) abides even in the most difficult circumstances and can only be known by the spiritual man.*

Recently, a brother quoted John 10:27 to me saying "My sheep listen to my voice ...." I *corrected* him saying that the sheep **hear** His voice. It was not till later that I found he was correctly quoting the NIV version but, I ask, is this a correct understanding of what Jesus said? To me, there is a great difference between **hearing** His voice and **listening** to His voice. If we use the wrong word it can affect our understanding, sometimes of deep spiritual truths.

To me, Jesus says that ALL His sheep **hear** His voice (in the inner recesses of the spirit) but it is evident that few **listen** to what He is saying and walk in obedience to that. I have twice had the privilege of hearing Him speak to me in an audible voice, but know that so often in my life I have moved in response to an inner witness when my spirit, not my mind, heard, listened and obeyed. This is evident in the many decisions I have made which **later** were seen to be a direct leading of the Lord.

My gripe is this: There are many verses of the Scriptures which have been taken at a very superficial level, robbing believers of some very great truths. O how we need teachers to take us deeper than the superficial.

*Open our ears, Lord, that we might hear what you are saying to us. Give us a longing to listen and the power to obey.*