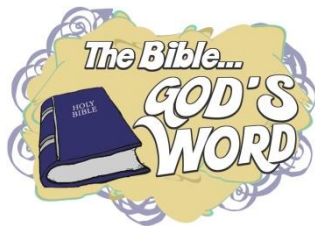


May 31, 2020

## Worship?

***"Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is our reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."***  
Romans 12:1-2

***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."***  
II Timothy 3:16-17



Luke tells us they that the earliest gatherings of believers ***"...devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*** (Acts 2:42) Certainly then, the preaching of God's word should play a major roll in our gatherings just as it did back then. Of course in our time we no longer have direct access to the Apostles' teaching, but through the Word we can absolutely still hear their message.

Preaching, then, needs to be an important part of our time together. But it also needs to be something that we use carefully. James warns us, ***"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."*** (James 3:1) Scripture is perfect. We who seek to teach and preach it are not. So, there is a great deal of personal responsibility laid on anyone who would preach.

There is also, I think, a measure of responsibility laid on those who listen to preaching and teaching. Luke tells us that the Berean believers, ***"...were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*** (Acts 17:11) So, as one who preaches I am responsible for teaching God's truth as accurately as I can. And, as those who listen, all of us are charged with the responsibility for fact checking what any preacher teaches.

There are many styles of preaching and teaching and during this Pandemic we have certainly discovered even more. Ultimately most preaching falls into two categories. Some preaching is topical which means we pick a subject and then go find all of the Scriptures that address that issue or topic and learn from them. These lessons on the things we are commanded to do during our gatherings are, for the most part, topical.

The other common form of preaching is more textual which is sometimes called expository preaching. In this kind of preaching we study a specific letter or book and learn from the message in its contextual setting. So, we might look at verses in several books and letters which address singing so we can better understand what God's purpose in our doing so might be. Or, we might study, as I more often do, Paul's letter to the church at Philippi to see what he wanted them to understand.

As in all things that man does, there are some strengths with each of these approaches and there are some challenges. While topical preaching allows us to seek all of the available direction from several authors, it also, I think, lends itself to taking those directions out of context and possibly misapplying them.

Textual or expository preaching, on the other hand, tends to lend itself to more accurate applications of Scripture, but it can also limit our ability to fully understand God's direction on

certain issues. It is important, I think, to remember that the Bible, as we now have it, did not exist in the first several centuries of Christian development. When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi he could not compare his teachings to his letters to Rome or Ephesus. It would be years and years before those comparisons would be available.

As those who receive preaching I think we bear some major responsibilities. We need to learn to weigh what we hear against the truth of God's Word and that requires us to have a knowledge of that Word. We also need to receive preaching with a mind open to God's equipping. Too many of us, I think, know what we know and believe what we believe, and so we casually reject a lot of the preaching we receive. Preaching is ultimately about equipping us to live and do the good that God has created us to do. Accepting correction and instruction are central to that function. Those who preach and teach must present God's truth. Those who receive preaching and teaching must be ready and willing to receive God's truth.

Be Still  
AND KNOW  
THAT I AM GOD  
-PSALM 46:10