

Receiving the Word with Eagerness

Acts 17.1-15

Sermon Handout

“Now these Jews (at Berea) were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true.” Acts 17.11

“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed at Berea also, they came there too agitating and stirring up the crowds.” Acts 17.13

At the heart of the mission of Jesus Christ is the call to faithfully proclaim the Word of God and to humbly receive the Word of God.

“Forget unbelief. The bigger challenge today is belief in everything. Your coworker might read the Bible and burn sage. Your neighbor might go to church and believe in karma. Your niece might believe in Jesus—and in astrology, crystals, and the Enneagram. Jesus the sage. Cross and karma. Scripture and star signs. Historical church and horoscopes. Welcome to the age of remixed spirituality.

Today’s new religious outlook isn’t atheism or Islam or even historic Christianity. It’s a highly personalized blend of borrowed beliefs and intuitive practices—a spiritual playlist assembled from self-help, social justice, therapy speak, and sacred tradition. Some call it à la carte spirituality. Tara Isabella Burton calls it 'intuitional religion.' If you’re a Christian trying to stay faithful to Jesus and share his gospel, these conversations are the new front." - Dr. Thomas West

As disciples of Christ, we must be dedicated to both a faithful proclamation of the Word of God and a passionate receptivity of that Word over our lives.

I. A Growing Competence in Handling the Word of God. Acts 17.1-4

"... And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’" Acts 17.2-3

- **We need to be able to reason with people using the Word of God.**

“he *reasoned* with the people from the Scriptures.”

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27

- **We need to be able to explain the Scriptures.**

“And explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to die and to rise from the dead.”

- **We need to prove the gospel from the Scriptures.**

“And explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to die and to rise from the dead.”

“Curiosity honors the complexity of belief today. Identity is now assembled like a playlist, not inherited. Asking good questions—Where did that belief come from? What does it give you? What story are you living by?—opens hearts in ways declarations may not. John Stott calls this 'double listening' - attending to both Word and world.” Dr. Thomas West

- **We need to be able and willing to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ.**

“This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

- Reasoning requires understanding - What does the Bible teach?
- Explaining requires Time - Where did the Bible say that the Christ would suffer, die and rise?
- Proving requires relationship – How does Jesus fulfill those promises and prophecies?
- Proclaiming requires courage - What must you do to be saved and to grow in Christ?

II. An Ongoing Commitment to be Transformed by the Word of God. Acts 17.10-13

“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” Acts 17.11-12

Becoming a disciple, continuing as a disciple, and maturing as a disciple is profoundly shaped by your receptivity to the Word of God.

- **Spiritual Eagerness: They Received The Word of God With Eagerness.**

“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness,” (Acts 17:11)

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.” 1 Peter 2:2

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for thee, O God, for the living God.” (Psalm 42:1-2)

“My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is not water.” (Psalm 63:1)

“A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about him.” J.I. Packer

“To pursue the knowledge of God to further our understanding of Him and deepen our love for Him is to embark on a quest that delights Him.” R.C. Sproul

- **Spiritual Carefulness: They Examined God's Word to see if what Paul taught was true.**

“examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

- **Spiritual Faithfulness – They examined the Word of God daily.**

“examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

How do you foster a deepening hunger and a greater consistency in the Word of God?

Make it all about the joy of seeing and savoring the glory of Jesus.

“Listen to rich expositions of the ‘gospel of the glory of Christ.’ Read your Bible from cover to cover always in search of the revelation of the glory of Christ. Read and ponder the Bible-saturated, Christ-exalting writings of great, spiritual men and women. And form the habit of meditating on the perfections of Christ. And in it all pray, pray, pray that the Holy Spirit will renew your mind, that you may desire and approve the will of God, so that all of life will become worship to the glory of Christ.” John Piper

Study Questions: Receiving the Word with Eagerness — Acts 17:1–15

1. In Acts 17:2–3, Paul “reasoned... explained... and proved” from the Scriptures. Which of these three comes most naturally to you, and which is most challenging? Why?
 2. Why do you think Paul’s pattern of reasoning from Scripture was so effective in a culture with mixed and competing spiritual beliefs? How does this inform our witness in today’s “remixed spirituality”?
 3. How would you summarize the core of Paul’s message in Thessalonica? What elements of this message are essential in any faithful gospel proclamation today?
 4. What does it practically look like for Christians to grow in *competence* with the Word of God? Which habits, tools, or practices help you better “handle the Word of truth”?
 5. Dr. Thomas West highlights the need for “double listening”—to both the Word and the world. How can you grow in listening well to people’s stories and beliefs without compromising biblical truth?
 6. Why does proclaiming that “Jesus is the Christ” require courage today? In what specific relationships or settings is God calling you to speak with humble boldness?
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Receiving the Word with Eagerness — The Berean Spirit

7. The Bereans are called “more noble” because of how they received and examined Scripture. What made their attitude different from the Thessalonians’? What attitudes do you see in your own heart?
 8. The text says they received the Word “with all eagerness.” What grows or diminishes your spiritual eagerness? What practices help you cultivate longing for God (Ps 42, Ps 63, 1 Peter 2)?
 9. The Bereans examined the Scriptures *daily*. What is the difference between reading the Bible and examining it? How might your approach to Scripture change if you embraced Berean-like carefulness?
 10. Many Bereans believed *because* they examined the Scriptures. How does this connect the authority of Scripture with the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing faith?
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Living a Life Shaped by God’s Word

11. How does the prevalence of “à la carte spirituality” challenge Christians to be more discerning and rooted in Scripture? How might you lovingly help someone influenced by intuitive or blended spirituality?

12. John Piper calls us to pursue the “joy of seeing and savoring the glory of Jesus” in Scripture. What is one concrete step you can take this week to deepen your joy in Christ through the Word?