

## **Examine The Scriptures Daily**

### **Acts 17:10-15**

*Bryn MacPhail / Oct. 10, 2010*

We are influenced by information on a daily basis.

From the internet, from the television, from the radio, from listening to the opinions of friends and family at the lunch table—we receive and process countless messages each day from a wide variety of sources.

Needless to say, *the reliability* of the information we receive varies.

As we allow our minds to filter this information, by taking in what we want and dismissing what we don't want, what we are doing is establishing our worldview—also known as our belief system.

Every person has a worldview (although admittedly some are more conscious of it than others). Every person I've ever met holds to a set of beliefs that governs their behaviour. And, certainly, we are entitled to believe whatever we choose.

What concerns me, however, is the origin of some of our beliefs. Since we are free to believe whatever we like, I fear that we sometimes neglect to do the hard work of determining whether the thing we are subscribing to is sensible and accurate.

Thankfully, we can counter this by asking ourselves a very simple question: “Why do I believe this?”

I’ve met individuals that hold to some very unusual viewpoints, but what is more alarming is when they cannot point to anything beyond themselves to validate their beliefs.

This should not be the case for the follower of Jesus. Now, I’m not suggesting that Christians will believe rightly all of the time—or even most of the time for that matter. But what I do need to point out is that *we have a reliable authority beyond ourselves to turn to.*

When the follower of Jesus uses the words, “I believe”, my hope is that the origin of those beliefs is found in the Bible.

Time does not permit me to outline for you the myriad of reasons why we can trust the reliability of Scripture—our very first “Faith Essentials” seminar spent an hour and a half on this subject!

What I can say, however, is that it has been the pattern of the Christian Church for 2,000 years to regard the Scriptures as entirely accurate and authoritative. We see this pattern emerge in the early church as the people attempted to process and make sense of the teaching of the apostles.

In the Book of Acts, chapter 17, the apostle Paul and his friend, Silas, visit the city of Berea. As was their habit, Paul and Silas visited the synagogue and preached about Jesus Christ.

And what is evident from the response of the Bereans is that Paul did not preach Christ from an authority that he derived from himself. It is clear that when Paul preached Christ, he appealed to something beyond himself to substantiate his claims. When Paul preached Christ, he would always appeal to the Holy Scriptures.

And how did the Bereans respond? Luke describes the Bereans as "**noble-minded**" because "**they received the Word with great eagerness**"(Acts 17:11).

As a preacher, I very much appreciate that verse.

I think it is fair to say that there are various ways in which to approach instruction from the Word of God.

Some people are indifferent and have very low expectations for what they will hear. Others are unduly critical, and come ready to resist and debate what they will hear.

But thankfully some do come with great eagerness—some do come with high expectations, recognizing that the Word of God can contribute to profound transformation in our lives.

I want to commend the latter approach to you this morning. And not simply when you come to service on Sunday morning, but also when you read the Scriptures in private I want to encourage you to *come with a spirit of eagerness and expectation*.

This is modelled for us by the Christians in Berea. And I want us to note that there are actually *two prongs* to how they engaged the Scriptures.

We have already noted that they *received the instruction with great eagerness*, but we should also note the degree to which *they followed up on what they learned*.

Luke explains that part of what made the Bereans noble-minded is that they "**examined the Scriptures daily, to see if what Paul said was true**"(Acts 17:11).

From this we can safely infer that the Bereans did not immediately dismiss Paul's preaching as false. While many communities were unwilling to tolerate this new teaching of the apostles, the Bereans gave them a hearing and were willing to test the apostles' teachings in the light of Scripture.

We also learn from this passage that the Bereans did not immediately accept Paul's preaching as true.

If Paul had concluded his sermon with an altar call, I'm guessing the Bereans would have stayed in their pews. The Bereans were unwilling to embrace Jesus as the Christ until they had an opportunity to review the evidence.

The Bereans are called "**noble-minded**" for good reason. Rather than immediately rejecting or accepting the apostles' teaching, they engaged in the hard work of examining the Scriptures DAILY in light of what was being preached. As a result, we are told that "**many**" believed in the message Paul was delivering.

Now I realize that, unlike the Bereans, this community is not being introduced to Jesus for the first time. Nevertheless, the principles contained in this passage no less apply to us. Sunday morning is your opportunity to receive biblical instruction from another person. This can be done with eagerness, reluctance, or indifference.

And having heard a biblical message delivered, we too have an opportunity *each day* to review the Scriptures for ourselves. And this daily review of the Scriptures will not only help you to deal with the information you receive on Sunday morning, but it will help you deal with the information you are getting from the television, the radio, the internet, and the lunch table with your friends.

So we have two helpful principles for interacting with the Word of God from this passage:

- 1) Receive biblical instruction with great eagerness, and
- 2) Examine the Scriptures daily to test and evaluate the information being passed on to you by others

I would like to leave you with *a third principle* this morning, which I think will bode well for us as followers of Jesus and as a congregation.

In addition to *receiving the Word with eagerness*, and *examining the Word with daily diligence*, we should also *make every effort to do what the Word of God says*.

Here is what James writes in chapter 1 of his letter:

**“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”**

When James talks about a man who **“looks”** at himself in a mirror, he uses a particular Greek word. The word does not mean **"glance"**.

It often happens that I quickly glance at my watch, and then someone asks me what time it is and I have to look at my watch again because it never registered what the time was.

This is not what is meant by James' analogy.

James is talking about a man who EXAMINES himself in the mirror and then forgets what he looks like. Isn't that absurd?! To look closely at something and then immediately forget what you see? That is James' point exactly.

In the same way, is it not absurd for a person to listen intently to the words of Scripture and then NOT DO THEM?

Imagine with me or a moment...

Imagine that I own a business and that you are one of my executives. The business is growing rapidly and I'm interested in expanding to Europe and so I move my family there and leave you in charge of the business here. I leave you with detailed instructions for running the business, and I email you weekly to update my expectations.

A few months later, I return to Nassau to see how you are doing with the business. I am shocked by what I see! The grass hasn't been cut. The front gate is broken.

I walk into the receptionist's area and she is too busy using facebook to notice my presence. I look around and see garbage bins that haven't been emptied and carpets that look like they haven't been cleaned for weeks.

Disturbed, I march into your office, but you're not there. An employee directs me down the hall to a colleague's office where I find you playing backgammon.

"What in the world is going on?"

"What do you mean?", you ask.

"Look at this place! Did you not read my instructions or my emails?"

"I sure did! I even made sure that I printed out the emails and distributed them around the office. Interest in them was so great that *we began an email study* every Tuesday evening since you left. We have even divided into small groups and we discuss the things you wrote about in your emails. You will be pleased to know that some of us have actually committed to memory some of your sentences and paragraphs."

"Okay, so you got my emails, you studied them, and even memorized portions of them....But what did you DO about them?"

I long for us to be a biblical congregation. I long for us to be a group of people the eagerly studies the Word of God. I long for us to be a group of people that is committed to studying the Scriptures daily. I want us to grow in our ability to think biblically through complex situations.



Biblical knowledge is very, very, important. But *biblical knowledge should always overflow into biblical action*. These two things ought never to be separated.

I long for it to be the case that what happens in here, massively impacts what happens out there. I long for it to be the case that your personal study of the Scriptures fundamentally changes who you are.

We need to be examining the Scriptures daily with a view to applying what we are reading.

The world needs this. The world needs the influence of Christians who not only *know* their Bible, but *live* their Bible.

Do what the Word of God says and I assure you...you will be blessed!