

# Church as School

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The entire life and being of the church lie in the word of God. However, either Bible teaching is neglected in the contemporary church, or the church is moving towards more polarized teachings, such as prosperity and so on. So, the question remains: What do we preach? The obvious answer is 'word.' And it's Great! Then, the next question will be where and how. To answer the question 'where should the word be preached' is pretty easy as most of us would agree that it should be done in the church and through the different ministries of the church. However, the challenging part is how we should preach the word.

God is always found speaking from the Old to the New Testament. If the word of God is taken away, then almost nothing is left of God's work. Therefore, we must recognize the place of God's word in our life and ministry. Once the word of God is removed, then the work of God ceases immediately. The work of God through the word is effectively the regeneration of our soul, infilling of the Holy Spirit, renewal of our mind and transformation into the image of Christ.

In the Old Testament, God's word was primarily spread by the prophets (Moses, Samuel...); hence we have the ministry of prophets. Later, during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus, God's word became flesh, and thus we have the ministry of Jesus. And in the New Testament church, God's word is propagated by the apostles; therefore, we have the ministry of apostles.

When our Lord Jesus came to earth, the word became flesh (John 1:1 -3). Therefore, Lord Jesus Himself is the word of God. He clothed himself with flesh and became man in flesh. So, everything He did and said was all God's word. Earlier in the Old Testament, God merely used man (prophets) to declare His word. The underlying and core messages of every prophet in the Old Testament point to Jesus (the manifested word). The explicit and classic examples are David and Isaiah. Even the last of the prophets, John the Baptist, was nothing but a voice in the wilderness, directly pointing to Jesus. So, the way the word was spread in the Old Testament is different from New Testament. In the New Testament, the very person Jesus is the word of God. In the Old Testament, Word came upon man and in the New Testament, Word became man.

**Interpretation of the written word to the manifested word (Jesus).**

The Bible is a wonderful living book. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew, and the New Testament is written in Greek. Although it is written by human hands, it is nevertheless recognized as having been written by God's hand, too. 2 Timothy 3:16 says the word is 'God-breathed'. Also, 2 Peter 1:21 says, "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Adam was not a living soul until God breathed into him. God breathed the breath of life into him. In the same way, scriptures are God-breathed; thus, it makes the Bible the living book.

It also means a man needs the help of the Holy Spirit to understand and illuminate the truth of the Scripture since it is the Holy Spirit breathed. That is the reason many scholarly people read the Scripture yet are not moved/transformed by its truth. We need to hear something beyond what we hear physically, and this hearing is not by our physical ears but rather by our hearts. This extra hearing comes from the Holy Spirit, and it transcends the voice of the preacher. Let me give you an example. Let's imagine we are doing street preaching/evangelism. And we logically present the Gospel and its arguments to 100 people. Most of them would agree that we are sinners, and we can't overcome sin in our own strength. And we need a saviour. They might even agree with the doctrines of Christianity. However, probably only a few people would apprehend the word, which is beyond what is presented. That few/one person will bow his head and cry to the Lord, Oh Lord, I'm a sinner and save me. This man heard the Gospel in a real sense. That's the same today in our contemporary church. Also, Psalms 119:130 says, "The unfolding of your words gives light;

It gives understanding to the simple."

The Hebrew word used here for unfolding is *Petach*, which means 'to open the door'. That's what the preacher does every Sunday. He unfolds the word by the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, He opens the door to see the glory of God's word.

### **Our attitude towards the scripture.**

When you open the Scripture and read the word, you will not meet a formula or a technique; instead, you will meet the person Jesus. Please come to the word to meet Jesus; come as an empty vessel. Don't even come to learn some practical tips on how to live. Yes, as you hear the word preached, you will have practical applications. The Bible is filled with practical wisdom to live our lives. But come to meet Jesus, to see His beauty and glory. He is the bread of life. Outside of Jesus, there is neither life nor light, sanctification nor righteousness. Once a man is brought by God into this revelation of Christ, he begins to

realize there is nothing apart from Christ. Christ is everything. He is the son of God as well as the word of God. Christ is the centre as well as the circumference. If you look into the church of Acts, the apostles preached the Christ crucified and resurrected, the whole council of God, which includes the sovereignty, glory, holiness, love, mercy, etc., found in Christ (Acts 6). It's in the teaching of the word we get sanctified. Not by preaching only one aspect but the word in its totality. The word has the cleansing power, the transforming power. As it cleanses you, so does it renew our minds and transform us into the image of Christ.

### **Church as school**

Now let me ask you the same question I asked earlier. Where should the word be preached? And I'm sure you all will agree that it must primarily be done at church. Church is God's family, a place where we all belong. However, the church is also a school where we all learn and grow in God's word. God's word is alive and active, and when we study it with other believers, it strengthens bonds between people as everyone leans in to uncover God's truth. When everyone is looking at the same source of wisdom and truth, each heart is knitted together in a common focus and goal—knowing and obeying God.

Acts 2:42-47,

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Do you know one of the major reasons for the rapid growth of the early church? If you look at the Book of Acts, then you will know its 'unity.' The primary quality of God's people is unity and love. It's not meant to be a solitary endeavour to follow Jesus. It is intended to be a way of life moulded by a group of people committed to obeying and following God. And Studying God's Word with others is one of the best methods to promote unity in the body of Christ, which is very important.

The benefits of listening to a sermon once a week for the members of the body are significant, but it shouldn't be the sole opportunity for biblical connection. A level of application and unity that is richer and more advantageous for the body is brought by smaller groups of people (life groups) studying the Bible.

When we look one another in the eyes and challenge and encourage each other to be faithful in obedience to what is taught and discussed, biblical truth takes on a more personal quality.

The body as a whole is strengthened by the accountability of studying God's Word together. The human body is a conceptual representation of the body of Christ, according to Scripture; when one portion of the body is strengthened, the entire body is also strengthened. According to 1 Corinthians 12, when one portion of the body is weak, the entire body is affected.

We should place a high priority on getting together with other believers to study the Bible. It's a vital part of the Christian life. According to Hebrews 10:23–25, we must never stop gathering as a group and must make every effort to find time for communal study of God's word.

## **Conclusion**

We are living in the last days; we don't know how long we would have this privilege to come together to learn and grow in the word. People are yearning to have the opportunity to come together as body of Christ, yet mostly we don't value or doesn't prioritize it. Be consistent. Growth happens best when we consistently invest in studying the word together. There are far more advantages to regularly gathering with a group and learning the truth than occasionally leading or attending a Bible study. Growing in Christ means growing for the rest of our lives, and that requires a long-term, consistent commitment to His Word and to one another.