



The Importance of the Bible in Church

Why do we value the right teaching of the word of God?

Our Relationship with Him depends upon it.

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Isaiah. 66:2

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Matthew 4:4

A right understanding of what God has said is essential to our relationship with God. He desires that we tremble at His word, which is to say He desires that we believe what He says and act accordingly out of reverence for Him. If I tremble before the authority of the police officer who tickets me for speeding, how much more so before the God of all the earth, who judges my heart and soul, and before whom I must give an account of my every thought and deed? And not only out of reverential fear for his majestic authority, but also because of the great love that he bears for me, and the love that I bear for Him. Jesus died for me, should I not therefore live for Him? His commands are good, and are given for my good. In obeying them I shall both please him who loves me, and find the greatest fulfillment in life. We do not find our life in the food we eat, as we read in Matthew 4 where Jesus quoted from Deut 8, but in the Words of God. The commands of God do not limit our pleasure, rather, the commands of God enable us to experience the greatest and fullest joys this life has to offer, both because they are joyous in themselves, and because they protect us from the dangers of sin. In them I find myself delighting, because they also enable me to enjoy my relationship with my Father who loves me. When found in the situation of breaking His commands, the sanctified heart will find itself pained by the breaking of its fellowship with Him, and will sincerely desire to repent and see the relationship restored. Thus, desiring to maintain my sweet fellowship with my God, I shall diligently seek to know what he has said regarding me, to rightly understand those words, and put them into practice.

Since the foundation of understanding that the Bible as the Word of God is a topic of epic proportions, and too involved to delve into in this article, we will suffice to state that we are certain it is so, and refer you to another article which seeks to address that topic in full measure. The Bible is God's Word to us, infallible, inerrant, inspired, and authoritative. Therefore we must stridently search its depths for understanding, and once having found that understanding, decidedly seek God's grace on effecting it in our lives day by day.

Continued on the next page...

Our Discipleship to Jesus Depends Upon It

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and the son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19

This passage, generally called the great commission, is often used in support of foreign missions, because the first word, 'go.' However, grammatically, there is only one command in this verse, with three attendant participles that give explanation to how we are to fulfill the command. The command itself is 'make disciples'. So Jesus final command before ascending to heaven was not necessarily a call to world missions, though that is part of it. Rather, it was a call to be reproducing what had happened over the past few years. Jesus had turned the fishermen and tax collector and revolutionary of Galilee into disciples, or people who followed his teachings. Now they are commanded to do the same with others. The three attendant participles answer the question of 'how.' How are we to make disciples of the nations? By going. This does imply some intentionality in the process, but also denotes that the going was expected. We are all constantly going. We go to work, to the store, to friend's and families' houses, and vacation, etc. Where ever we are going, then we are to be involved in this process of making disciples. What is involved in making disciples? Firstly, 'baptizing them'. In this command must be seen both the act of baptizing someone into the church, but also the antecedent presentation and faithful reception of the gospel message. Surely Jesus would not be commanding us to simply dunk anyone and everyone and count that as disciple-making! All the New Testament emphasis upon receiving the gospel by faith must also be seen here. So then, as we present the gospel, and a person believes it, that person's first step as a disciple is to be baptized and publicly commit themselves to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Then, this being accomplished, Jesus instructs us to follow through by 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' This is the life-long pursuit of the disciple, and what most pertains to our current discussion, that the disciple of Christ must be learning to *observe*, or understand and obey all the teachings of Jesus. So we focus on right understanding and application of the Word of God because that is precisely what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. A person who claims to be a follower of Jesus, who is not concerned with searching and doing the teachings of Jesus, is no disciple.

Our Faithfulness as Stewards depends upon it.

Study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

The command to study means to show great diligence in pursuit of that right understanding. Understanding the Bible is an activity of exhausting proportions. Many have frivolously misquoted it in support of their erroneous teachings and then claimed its authority for their error. Such will answer to the Lord. We apply great diligence in quoting other literary works to ensure that they are accurately quoted within their proper context. Should we give less to the words of God Almighty? Certainly not! Rather, because it is God's Word, we should exercise even greater caution in our searches of its truths, for not only will we be held accountable ourselves for our obedience to it, but we will answer for how we taught others to obey it as well.

That Paul warns Timothy to apply great diligence to rightly divide God's Word also shows that it is possible to wrongly divide it. Just as a diamond can be rendered worthless if not cut and

Continued on the next page...

polished properly, so the misteaching and misapplication of God's word can render it useless in the lives of those who hear such false teaching.

The Success of our Ministry Depends Upon It

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*¹⁴ *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*¹⁵ *Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*¹⁶ *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

1 Timothy 4:13-16

As Paul closed his letter to the young pastor Timothy, he gave him these several commands. He was to devote himself to the public reading of scripture. Contrast this with many churches who no longer even encourage people to bring Bibles to the worship service. It should rather be the central focus of the worship service, and the gathered church should be hearing it read together. In the Old Testament, God commanded that once every seven years all Israel should gather and hear the Law read out loud (Deuteronomy 31:9-13). Imagine sitting and listening to the Five books of Moses being read from start to finish in a corporate gathering, with whole families gathered to hear! Paul also instructed Timothy to be devoted to exhortation and teaching, these denoting the right understanding of God's word and the right application of the same.

Paul also instructs this young pastor to keep a close watch on the teaching, that is to guard it carefully, as you would a valuable treasure. Paul warns Timothy that only by guarding the content and truthfulness of his teaching and application can he save himself and his hearers. This does not mean that Timothy or his church were saved eternally by any work of the ministry, for salvation is by grace alone, through faith, apart from any works which we perform. Rather, it means that the success of Timothy's ministry would be measured in the diligence of his teaching, rather than any other measure. A pastor who faithfully teaches God's word to ten disciples will be counted more successful in God's estimation than a man who preaches false teachings to ten thousand itching ears.

Summing Up...

The importance of right understanding, teaching, and application of God's word in church worship services is seen in Jesus' statement to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:23, where he says, *"the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth..."* Worship of God must be accomplished through the truth. So when we gather together to worship as a group, as well as individuals, our worship of God must conform to the truth.

These are just a few of the passages in the Bible that tells us how important it is for the church as a whole and for the individual to be careful, zealous, and adamant in the study and obedience to God's Word. This is why we so highly value the right teaching and right application of the Bible at Mendota Bible Church.