



ements

The Components of the Weekly Gathering

Community Group Leader's Guide

September 3-10, 2017

Weekly Summary

This week we will be looking at why we preach as a church. More importantly, we need to ask this question: Why is preaching so prominent in our corporate worship services? Almost half the time of a typical morning worship service is taken up with preaching the Word of God. That is a remarkable proportion and demands some explanation.

This really requires two other questions being answered as well. One is: Why is the Word of God so prominent? And the other is: Why is this form of presenting the Word of God so prominent? Someone could simply read the Bible for half an hour rather than listen to preaching, and that would certainly make the Word of God prominent. Or one could lead a discussion of the Bible for a half-hour. Or one could do mainly academic analyses of vocabulary and grammar and historical circumstances in the Bible. So we must ask not only why is the Word so prominent, but why is preaching, as such, so prominent. Let's take a look together.

Getting Started

Icebreaker: *What's the best sermon you've ever heard? What was it that made it so impactful? What response did it elicit in you?*

Going Deeper

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-4:5; Romans 10:14-15; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Timothy 4:6-16; 1 Corinthians 9:16.

1.) What common threads do we find in these texts about why preaching is important? How is it connected to the Word of God?

2.) In John 1:1 God identifies his Son, who himself is God, as the Word. This is tremendously important. "In the beginning was the Word." The Son of God is the Word of God. He is God's communication to the world, God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 said, "All Scripture is inspired by God." So God has also chosen to reveal himself not only as the Word but also by the Word. How does this impact our practices as a church? How does this impact how we view Scripture?

“So the Protestant church has put the Word of God at the most prominent place in corporate worship because worship is a seeing and savoring of God himself, and God reveals himself as the Word, and by the Word. In particular, God does his works in the world by his Word and gives new life by his Word and awakens faith by his Word. Without the Word of God, there would be no life, no faith, no work, no revelation and no worship. The Word of God is to worship as air is to breathing.” – John Piper

3.) If it is The Word that brings change, how then should we view the practice of preaching? How much should our preachers/teachers be using the Word in their communication? What should we do when we hear preaching/teaching lacking a connection to Scripture?

Read James 1:22.

4.) What should be our response to Biblically-saturated preaching? How do we go beyond consumers of The Word in large auditoriums to allowing it to shape and transform our lives?

5.) How should we properly engage with those preaching/teaching The Word?

Application

Let's now get more practical with this. Let's see this play out in the life of someone in the New Testament. Read Acts 8:4-8, 12-13, 26-36.

6.) What do we make of Philip's preaching here in Acts 8? How did people respond to hearing the Word of God?

7.) Verse 26, tells us the Lord sent Philip to preach to the Ethiopian Eunuch. What does that sending attached to preaching tell us? What role does the Holy Spirit play?

8.) What components of Philip's message do we notice throughout this section?

We see that Philip preached Jesus. His message was the “good news” of what Jesus did. In fact, when Philip “preached Jesus” to the traveler, the man inquired: “What hinders me to be immersed?” How would this Ethiopian man have known about “baptism,” if preaching “Jesus” had not included that instruction? Clearly, then, “preaching Christ” involves a proclamation of the divine commands necessary to becoming a Christian.

9.) What should we take away from the Ethiopian man’s response? Like those earlier in the chapter, we see that preaching requires the listener to do some things as well. Do you view preaching this way? Do you see it as something you are participating in? Why or why not?

“People have an idea that the preacher is an actor on a stage and they are the critics, blaming or praising him. What they don’t know is that they are the actors on the stage; he (the preacher) is merely the prompter standing in the wings, reminding them of their lost lines.” – Soren Kierkegaard

10.) How as a Community Group can we go beyond critics to hears and doers of The Word?

11.) The latter part (being a doer), is often the hard part. How do we go beyond just studying concepts to putting them in practice as a group? How can we do a better job of holding each other accountable?