

LOVING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST: What is a Healthy Church Member?

Mark #1 – An Expository Listener

I. Review: Building Our Lives on the Word of God

A. The Diagnosis Today

“For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. ¹⁴ They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.” (Jer 6:13-14)

“The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is not inadequate technique, insufficient organization, or antiquated music, and those who want to squander the church’s resources bandaging these scratches will do nothing to stanch the flow of blood that is spilling from its true wounds. The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that *God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common.*” (my emphasis)

– David Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*, 30

B. The Life-Giving Power of the Word

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, ‘‘Son of man, can these bones live?’’ And I answered, ‘‘O Lord GOD, you know.’’ ⁴ Then he said to me, ‘‘Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’’” (Ezek 37:1-6)

1. What similarities might exist between Ezekiel’s vision and a church on its last legs? What about the vision and times where you felt spiritual hopelessness?
2. According to the vision, how does God put His Spirit in Israel so that they will live?

“So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, ‘‘Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’’ ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.” (Ezek 37:7-10)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:1, 3-4)

II. Our Response: EXPOSITIONAL LISTENING

“Expositional preaching is that preaching which takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture. That’s it. The preacher opens the Word and unfolds it for the people of God.” –Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 40.

“In a sermon the theme or the doctrine is something that arises out of the text and its context, it is something which is illustrated by the text and context.” – Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 72.

A. Benefits of Expository Listening

- (1) Cultivates a hunger for all of God's Word - *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable..."* (2 Tim 3:16)
- (2) Encourages faithful pastors

"Faithful men flourish at the fertile reception of the preached word. They're made all the more bold when their people give ear to the Lord's voice and give evidence of being shaped by it." - Thabiti Anyabwile, *What is a Healthy Church Member?*, 21.

- (3) Unites the gathered congregation

C. How Should We Listen?

- (1) Read and meditate on the upcoming sermon text
- (2) Find someone worth listening to

"Live under the clearest, distinct, convincing teaching that possibly you can procure. There is an unspeakable difference as to the edification of the hearers, between a judicious, clear, distinct and useful preacher, and one that is ignorant, confused, general, dry, and only scrapeth together a cento or mingle-mangle of some undigested sayings to fill up the hour with."

–Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, Chapter XIX ("Directions for profitable Hearing the Word Preached")

- (3) Possibly invest in a good set of commentaries

NT only - William Hendriksen/Simon Kistemaker; 12 vols; www.christianbook.com (\$100)

OT/NT - Tyndale Commentaries; Calvin's Commentaries- <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/commentaries.i.html>

- (4) Talk (and pray) with friends about the sermon after church
- (5) Listen to and act on the sermon during the week

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves..." (James 1:22)

- (6) Develop the habit of addressing any questions about the text itself

- (7) Cultivate humility *"People will be...always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth."* (2 Tim 3:1,7)

III. How to Listen to a Bad Sermon

- A. Remember to take stock of your attitude when listening
- B. Remember Who is speaking to you
- C. Come expecting the practicality of the Word of God
- D. Remember who you are

"Above all set your hearts to the deepest contemplations of the wonderful love of God in Christ, and the sweetness and excellency of a holy life, and the certain incomprehensible glory which it tendeth to, that your souls may be in love with your dear Redeemer, and all that is holy, and love and obedience may be as natural to you. And then the practice of holy doctrine, will be easy to you, when it is your delight."

–Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, Ch. XIX.