

# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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## PURPOSEFUL HEARING

*By Doy Moyer*

Acts 10 tells about a man named Cornelius. He was a devout man who desired to be in a right relationship with God. God heard his prayers and responded by telling him to call for Peter, who would be able to come to him and tell him what he needed to do. This is a textbook case of one who kept asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7-11). While God does not hear those who are not really seeking Him (Prov. 15:8), this example shows us that God will help truth-seekers find the truth. Notice that God didn't indicate that the prayer saved Cornelius, or that he just needed to be a good person. Rather, God's communication to him was, again, to get him in touch with Peter, who would **“speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household”** (Acts 11:13-14).

Peter was a little perplexed by the idea of going to the Gentiles, and he was still trying to figure out the meaning of the vision God had given him, but he readily obeyed God and went when beckoned. Upon his arrival at the home of Cornelius, he had figured out what God wanted, and he stated, **“You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for.**

**So I ask for what reason you have sent for me”** (Acts 10:29).

We know that preachers and teachers are to be purposeful. That is, they are to be careful in what they say, how they say it, and have some kind of goal in mind for saying it (James 3:1; Col. 4:2-6). Simply rambling to make noise does no one any good and usually is a sign of someone more engrossed in himself than in God, God’s word, and God’s people. All things are to be done for edification purposes and to God’s glory, not for selfish ambition or being the center of attention.

The speaker needs to be purposeful, but what about the listener? While we recognize that a teacher or speaker should try to do his job in a way that maintains interest, we have to ask: is all of the responsibility on the teacher to keep the attention of the audience? Is it the teacher’s job to keep everyone awake or entertained? Is it the sole responsibility of the preacher to make sure everyone is engaged? Doesn’t the hearer have a responsibility, also?

Let’s go back to Acts 10 and consider the question Peter asked: **“For what reason have you sent for me?”** (vs. 29). Peter put the ball right into Cornelius’ court, and Cornelius responded perfectly: **“... we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord”** (Acts 10:33). Cornelius had the goal of hearing God’s word. Period. He wasn’t asking to be entertained. He wasn’t asking for funny stories or nice little self-help lessons. He was asking for God’s message. While there is nothing wrong in itself with something that is funny or self-help oriented, the purpose of hearing should be to know the will of God. In other words, we, as listeners, need

to be purposeful just as much as the preacher or teacher. This is why the Bereans were called noble-minded:

**“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so”** (Acts 17:11).

This is also why the Thessalonians were commended:

**“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe”** (1 Thess. 2:13).

Paul told Timothy to **“preach the word”** because there was coming a time where people would fail to endure sound doctrine, preferring rather to have their ears tickled with what they desire (2 Tim 4:1-5). The hearer is just as responsible to hear the truth as the teacher is to teach the truth. The hearer must be just as purposed as the speaker. What are we wanting to hear? What is the purpose of our listening? Do we tune out when the topic broaches something we don't like? Do we look for entertainment? Are we really listening for God's word? Peter's question is still appropriate for modern audiences: **“For what reason have you sent for me?”**

**“Take care how you listen,”** said Jesus (Luke 8:18). Are we being careful how we hear? *[blog.moyerpress.com]*

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**“HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES” (REV. 2:7)**

## WHO ARE YOU STUDYING WITH?

By Andrew Dow

As Christians, one of our goals must be to “**make disciples of all nations**” (Matt. 28:19). To do this we must constantly be aware of and looking for opportunities to study with people. But it’s intimidating to schedule a Bible study with a stranger: you have to set up a time, pick a topic, and prepare for that study. This can be a daunting task! May I make a suggestion?

Be involved in a regular study of some kind. Get together with one or more fellow Christians and study regularly. Read through a book of the Bible. Take turns leading the discussion. This will be beneficial to you, but it will also provide a ready-made study to which you can invite those you meet. Next time you meet someone, simply say, *I'm getting together with a few people to read the book of Acts, want to come?* “**My Word,**” says the Lord, “**will not return to Me empty**” (Isa. 55:11).

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**AM LESSON:**

Real Repentance

**PM LESSON:**

The Triumphant Warrior  
(Revelation 1-3)

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”**  
**(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**