

“I Didn’t Get Anything Out Of The Sermon!”

by Wayne Goff

My father preached the Gospel for over sixty years and saw many things both in the church and out of it over that time period. One of the things he and most other gospel preachers heard from time to time was the complaint: “Well, I didn’t get anything out of the sermon!” My father’s response was “Well, you probably didn’t bring anything to get it in!” A bucket full of holes doesn’t hold much water for very long. A heart ill-prepared for spiritual things will struggle with a spiritual lesson.

Something To Get It In?

Dear reader, visitor or member, are you prepared to *hear* the sermon, *receive* it, *understand* it and *accept* it? There are many variables involved in hearing the message well and we do not wish to minimize them.

Some are so new to biblical truths that it is indeed difficult for them to comprehend what is being said. The Bible does have its own vocabulary, and one unacquainted with it will get lost easily. Such a one, if he or she desires to learn more, needs to ask someone to study with them. An example of this is the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who was approached by a preacher of the gospel and asked: “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” (v. 30). The man humbly accepted the teaching of Philip and quickly obeyed the gospel. There is no shame in asking for help when you need it.

Some are at the stage of the “first principles.” **Hebrews 6:1** speaks of the “*elementary principles*” of the gospel and **1 Peter 2:2** even calls them the “*milk*” of God’s Word. Once again, there is no shame in this for one who is a new Christian, or newly interested in the Bible. They should begin at the beginning, at the first principles. Once again, such a one should ask an experienced Christian to sit down with them and explain these first principles, and help them grow up to greater maturity.

Unfortunately, some Christians never get past the “first principles” stage. I know this because many sit in the pew and “listen”(?) but do not comprehend what they are hearing. Many of these same people skip Bible class, too. They complain that they just don’t get anything out of the lessons! But if these people have been converted for several years, then they have failed to grow as they should. The Hebrew writer warned these brethren by saying, “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food*” (**Hebrews 5:12**). If you don’t study, and re-study the Bible, then you lose what little understanding you had in the first place! This is a very dangerous condition because it can cost one his eternal soul! Spiritual starvation kills the soul just like physical starvation kills the body! If this is you, dear reader, then wake up and change your ways! It’s not just the preacher’s fault or the teacher’s fault if you don’t get something out of the lesson!

Peter’s Admonition

A wonderful example for all of us is the apostle Peter. When you read about his life first in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John, you see an **eager, brave, uninhibited man!** When asked a question, he would always have an answer – *even if the answer wasn’t always right!* If he was **right**, and he often was, then others learned from his response. If he was **wrong**, as he sometimes was, then others learned from his mistake. When teaching a Bible class, especially in the auditorium, I **beg for someone to be like Peter** – brave, fearless, eager to learn, and willing to ask what might be a foolish question. Because that student will add much to a class situation and others will more readily get involved and actually learn from what is being discussed. Peter’s own last words of inspiration are fitting to reproduce here: “*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen*” (**2 Peter 3:18**). Peter made mistakes and learned from them. We should too!

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