

# Eager Hearts Open Minds

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[ 0 : 00 ] In the Old Testament, when they were preparing for the temple, one of the things that they did was they had auditions for skilled musicians that would sing and play.

I think we have been blessed with skilled musicians, and it was a beautiful, beautiful ending to our music worship time this morning.

I much preferred being down there with everyone, but I had some comment that they couldn't see behind some of you tall people. And so I'm up here today. So we are going to be looking into the book of Acts again this morning.

In our digital world, we are overwhelmed with information from all sources. We live in an information-rich society.

A hundred years ago, we might have heard something through the grapevine. Something might have been put on paper, and you might have received something that might have been maybe weeks, sometimes months old.

[ 1 : 17 ] We have so much information today, including social media, news, blogs, podcasts, even our friends and our family.

And here's just one caveat. Don't believe everything you hear on the news. I have been involved in so many different situations where the news media covered it, and I was there.

And it's almost like, what are they talking about? That's not really what happened. They got the numbers wrong. They had information wrong, even though they were given information.

And if you don't give them enough information, sometimes they assume that they make it up, or they talk to someone who has no clue, and they give their input. But I remember seeing a viral post a while back, and it sounded plausible, and I believed it, and I even talked about it, until I found out that it was totally baseless.

Sometimes you'll read something that, or somebody will say, well, you know who died this week? Some famous person. And you find that, no, it wasn't true. It's taught me that we need to check everything that we hear.

[ 2 : 37 ] We need to make sure that what we hear is the truth. We need to make sure that what we're told is true. Now, this experience isn't unique.

There are people today that sometimes will share information inadvertently, and sometimes they will simply share false information because they want to mislead people.

So we need to be careful to be able to tell what's true, to be able to divide truth from falsehood. And this is where some people from a place called Berea come in.

We're going to read about them this morning. And in the book of Acts, we see a group of people that the apostle Paul was talking, Paul and Silas were talking to, and they were, the Bible says they were noble-minded.

They were fair-minded in the sense that they said, you know, this is new, but let's check to see if it is true.

[ 3 : 43 ] And so they checked for themselves, and they read the Bible. They read the scriptures that they had available to them every single day. They weren't skeptical. They weren't cynical.

And instead, they eagerly explored the message of the gospel that Paul was presenting to them. They said, we'd never heard this before. And so let's look and see if this is really true, rather than just either accepting it naively, or rejecting it without testing, without checking to see if it was true. And isn't that just like society today? Today, some people will believe anything, and some people will believe nothing. And so that, I think, is an old issue, but I think it's still in play today in our society.

This morning, I invite us to look at the Bereans as a model for how we should approach God's Word, how we should approach truth, especially in God's Word, rather than just accepting what we hear, but to examine the Bible, examine the Scripture to make sure that these teachings that we hear, whether it's on the radio or whether it's that TV preacher that you might hear before you come on Sunday mornings and while you're getting dressed, just to say, you know, that sounds good, that sounds right.

But let me check to see, really, if this is true. So we can learn a great deal from their examples in searching the Scripture. So let's consider how we can be like the Bereans this morning, actively seeking, actively examining, and then growing in our faith as a result.

[ 5 : 37 ] So here's the big idea. Sometimes we ask, well, what's the big idea? All right, before we get into it, let me give you the big idea. I believe we should actively engage with God's Word to deepen our faith.

That we should be actively engaging in what God has used the writers of Scripture, both Old and New Testament, so that we can deepen our faith through engaging in God's Word.

Let's look at Acts 17, starting with verse number 10. Acts 17, beginning with verse number 10.

Verse 10, Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. So this goes right on the heels of what happened in Thessalonica.

The magistrates came to Jason's house and said, where are they? And he had obviously hidden them. And they made Jason pay a peace bond to say and to promise that he would make sure that Paul and Silas got out of town.

[ 6 : 47 ] So here is what happens. As they've left Thessalonica, they immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to a place called Berea. And when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

And verse 11, So their eagerness was part of their noble-mindedness, or that word carrying with it the idea that they didn't automatically accept or reject.

And in fairness of mind and in wanting to understand and accept something that was actually true, they gave what they heard a fair shot.

And they didn't just accept it, or they didn't simply accept it. Now, in our spiritual journey, sometimes we let past troubles, or we allow past letdowns to prevent us from hearing God's Word.

We may have heard something in church when we were younger, and then maybe got hurt by that church, or got hurt by those people. And I know people, even today, who have pretty well thrown out, if you will, the baby with the bathwater.

[ 8 : 21 ] So we shouldn't allow our past, either bad experiences, or what we've been taught, to dictate what we believe today. Because we always need to search the Scriptures.

And what I like to say, and I encourage people, whether they have been a follower of Jesus for a day, or a follower of Jesus for 50 years, every time you read God's Word, read it as if it's the first time you've ever read it, and only read it with wanting to understand what it means, not what you already believe.

Why? Because sometimes we pick up little tidbits throughout our lifetime. We heard something, but we didn't check it out for ourself.

We didn't make sure that that's exactly what Scripture said. And so we need to understand that it's important that we search God's Word, and not have our minds already made up, and closing our minds.

We have something that's called confirmation bias. And we think we know something, and we read things, and we say, see, that's what it says, and that's what I believe.

[ 9 : 42 ] Well, we already came in with that bias, and instead of searching what this verse said, that verse said, other verses said, and put them all together to make sure we understand, we come to Scripture sometimes with our preconceived notions, and it can affect what we are willing to understand.

But the example of the Bereans encourages us to be open-minded and open-hearted to receive from God's Word, because what's the Holy Spirit's job when we read and when we hear someone teach?

What's the Holy Spirit's job in this? He'll teach us, He'll teach us, and He will guide us. And that's exactly what the Bereans were doing.

And they were enthusiastic about it. This enthusiasm isn't about accepting everything without question. It's about being ready to engage with the message, and then allowing it to inform us, and then to transform us.

Because isn't that the purpose of God's Word? The purpose of God's Word is to transform us. It's not just information. There are a lot of people who come on Sunday mornings, who come to Sunday school, who come to a small group, or go to a conference, and they soak up a lot of information.

[11:02] But it's not internalized, and then it does not transform their lives like God wants us to do. So the question is, how can we cultivate this kind of eagerness in our own lives?

I believe it begins with a conscious decision to approach our worship gatherings, to approach Sunday school, to approach everything that comes with God's Word with an open and a ready mind to hear from the Holy Spirit, to hear from God's Word.

So when we come to a sermon, or when we come to a teaching, let's do it ready to learn, and just like we would approach a new opportunity with excitement. You know, this means setting aside preconceived notions, or being willing to hear what God has to say, even if it challenges our current understanding of Scripture.

Even if it challenges what we've always been taught. And we say, well, that just doesn't sound right. Okay. Search the Scripture. Open your mind and say, yeah, I know this is what I've been taught. I know this is what I believe. Here's what I recommend that you do. Pray. Ask God. God, I want to know the truth.

[12:28] I want to believe what you want me to believe. I want to believe what your Word teaches, and I want to ask that the Holy Spirit teach me and help me to know the truth of this.

And I think that's where you won't go wrong, because allowing God to inform and allowing God to transform. So by doing so, I believe we position ourselves, just like the Bereans did, to question, not just simply accept, to question, and then research, and find out exactly what it says.

Now this eagerness wasn't just a passing feeling, because what did they do? We saw that they searched the Scriptures how often?

Every day. Every day they were searching the Scriptures. They were figuring out, trying to figure out, what God was trying to say to them. So this passion strengthened their dedication to actively seek the truth.

So for those of you who are following along in your notes, receive the message with eagerness. Receive the message from God's Word with eagerness.

[13:38] And I apologize, I forgot to put that line in there. For some of you who are concerned with not being a line, just add the Word in there. So let's begin to receive God's Word with eagerness.

Approach God's Word with enthusiasm, with an open heart, and be ready to engage with God's message. Isn't it amazing that God's Word is living and it's powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword?

You might have read a verse a hundred times before, but when you read it today or when you read it tomorrow morning, it's going to be like, God, were you watching over my shoulder?

Did you see what I said? Did you hear what I said yesterday? Did you see what I did? And it's amazing how God's Word is perfectly timed to the moment that we need to hear what God's Word says.

Just like was mentioned this morning, memorizing God's Word. The Holy Spirit can use something we memorized 30 years ago and He can bring it back to our minds in order to correct us, in order to change the trajectory of our lives.

[14:48] So receive the message with eagerness. And then let's look at the latter portion of verse 11, just like we said a moment ago. They searched the Scriptures daily to find whether these things were so.

So a question for you as we go back just a little bit. What are some barriers that might prevent us from approaching the Scriptures with an open mind?

I want you to talk to me this morning. What might be some barriers that would keep us from approaching God's Word with an open heart and an open mind?

Yes, Cassidy? Okay. Okay. Approaching Scripture from what we have been taught.

There's a way that our brains work and it's like a filter. Have you ever said something to somebody and they heard your words but the meaning they heard was totally different?

[16:11] It happens. It happens to parents. You ever told your child something and they literally took it literally and it's not what you meant?

Well, that happens to us sometimes. We look at everything through that filter and if we have been taught something sometimes nothing else will be able to get through that filter.

So good. Thank you. What else? What might be some other barriers that keep us from approaching God's Word just with an open heart and open mind and letting God teach us? It's hard for us.

You know, there'll be some times where a person might trust Christ as their Savior and let's say their parents say, well, we've taught you right all the whole time you were growing up.

Well, that's not what God's Word says. You know, God's Word said Jesus died on the cross for our sins and it's not by works of righteousness which we have done. But according to his mercy he saved us. For by grace are you saved through faith.

[17:23] So good. What else? keep those things in mind as we approach the Word of God. And then the second big thing is they examined the Scriptures daily.

They examined the Scriptures daily. this practice of daily examination I believe was a powerful testament to what they were their willingness to learn, their noble mindedness, their fair mindedness.

I don't think this was an occasional activity for them. I think every time they heard God's Word they searched the Scriptures. It said they were more open minded than the Thessalonians. There were many in Thessalonica that believed, that trusted, but there were also the reason why Paul and Silas had to leave town.

It was a regular practice that they engaged in. Now it was Jews and it was Gentiles in the synagogue that were searching. See, not everyone in the Jewish, they were not part of a false religion.

They were part of the teachings that God had set forth. But what happened was these rabbis and these teachers of the law had written commentaries, if you will, and in these commentaries they tried to explain the law, but in doing so they took those commentaries and made them, they brought them to the level of Scripture.

[19:05] So I'm not saying don't read commentaries today, because there are many good commentators who have spent years studying the Word of God. But I will say this, don't read something in a commentary and say this is the gospel truth, because you still have to test it with Scripture.

Because just about every commentator comes from their own perspective, comes from their own preconceived ideas about Scripture. That's why you look at just about any confusing portion of Scripture, read five commentaries, you'll probably have five different viewpoints.

So we have to be careful. Take it just like you would with anything else, take this, take this, take this, and then read and see what lines up with Scripture.

So in our own lives today, it's easy to rely solely on what we hear from others. Solely what you hear from your pastor, solely from what you hear from your Sunday school teacher, solely from what you hear from that favorite TV preacher.

Just be like the Bereans and make sure that you test it out. The Bereans remind us of the importance of diving into the Bible ourselves, because it's important that what we know becomes our faith, becomes our personal faith.

[20:37] So there's a reason why young people who grew up in Christian homes, many who go off to college, and yes, in many of the universities there are going to be some professors who try to deconstruct the faith of those in their classroom.

They will call it silly, they will call religion the opiate of the masses, they will call believing in the miracles of the Bible as something that simple people accept, no, we're people of science, and what happens if we don't allow our children as they're growing up to question God's word.

word. I've heard families, I've heard people literally tell their children, don't say that, because this is what we believe. That's the worst thing you can do for your child.

Matter of fact, if they begin questioning God, questioning scripture, it's the best thing they could ever do. Why? Because then you have the opportunity to say, well, let's look at the Bible.

Let's look at what God says. And then when they can come to that point, like the Bereans, where they search the scripture, and they realize, ah, this is true.

[ 22 : 01 ] And from their own experience, from what they've hopefully seen in your lives, as good models of being like Jesus, it becomes their faith.

It's not a second-hand faith. It's not mom and dad's faith. It's not my grandparents' faith. It's my faith. And so when they get into the world, this evil world system, and when people try to tear down what they've learned, they say, no, they're going to be the ones that stand up and say, no, God's word says, because I know, I've seen it work in people's lives.

That's when it becomes their faith, when they're willing to wrestle with the word of God and read it and understand it and ask God, what is? I don't care who we are.

There have been times in your life, there have been times in my life where sometimes I question, God, is that really so? I mean, really? It doesn't feel like it. So there are things we have to accept by faith.

So let's build that into our daily lives. Set aside time every day. For you, it might be the morning, it might be during your lunch hour, it might be in the evening. On the back table, we have, again, this week, we have the five-day family devotion guide.

[ 23 : 15 ] Let that be kind of a springboard that you can use in family devotions. If you've come to the point where you've exhausted everything that you've done and you want something fresh, let's continue with what God teaches us on Sunday mornings and let's wrestle with it throughout the week.

We also have in your bulletins, we have the five-day devotions. So let's continue to work on what God is teaching us on Sunday mornings. So let's examine the scriptures daily.

Develop a habit, a personal Bible study. You'll use tools like study guides, commentaries. There are Bible apps for those of you who do have access to that. You can have literally hundreds of Bible aids on your phone.

So examine the scriptures daily. So let's look at what impact did this have. Let's look at verse number 12. Therefore, many of them did what?

Many of them believed. And also, not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. So this belief wasn't merely superficial.

[ 24 : 30 ] It was a deep and it was a genuine faith that was developed through careful study of the scriptures. So the third thing that I believe we see is we can grow in faith through personal investigation.

We can grow in faith through personally investigating scripture, the word of God, to make sure that our faith is not a second-hand faith. It's not inherited, but instead, it's a deeply personal and it's a deeply life-changing faith that we hear from God's word.

So in our spiritual journey, you know, discovering for ourselves is super important. If you just tell your children something, that's important. But how about if you have them do it as well?

Those of you who are teachers, those of you who have been in school, lecture is one thing. We need lecture, but we also need, okay, let's practice it. Let's write it.

Let's do these math problems. Why is that? Why don't you just teach a math problem on the board and say, okay, you learned it. Why not? Because you haven't worked it out.

[ 25 : 47 ] And that's why I still use paper. Because I know the way my brain works. I read something, but I typically always read with a notepad beside me.

because the object of writing it, reading it, seeing it, writing it, helps to ingrain it in my brain.

So that's why we learn and do, we hear, and we investigate it for ourselves. So don't just listen to me.

don't just hear what I say, and then wait, I wonder what pastor's going to preach on next week.

Engage with it. Get into God's word during the week and wrestle with it, work on it, ask God, Lord, help me to understand it.

Go deeper. If something raises a question in your mind, go research it. Go study it. Do it for yourself because that's where the growth really, really happens is when we research it, we investigate God's word for ourself.

[ 27 : 02 ] That way, the truth of God's word becomes more than just a set of beliefs that we have. It becomes a living, breathing relationship with God when we search his word like that.

You see, it's this kind of faith that can withstand challenges. It can withstand the pain and the health challenges, the financial problems, the relationship problems that we come to in our lives.

The Bereans example shows us that when we engage with scripture personally, we allow God to speak directly to our hearts, and then hopefully it will lead to transformation and hopefully it will lead to growth.

So to foster this kind of faith, we need to be intentional. Take God's word, read God's word, word, and so we grow in faith through personal investigation.

In what ways can investigating God's word personally influence your actions and your decisions? Instead of just hearing it, you researched it, and it became real to you.

[ 28 : 09 ] How could that influence our actions? it teaches you how to act. God created us with a mind, he created us with emotions, and he created us with a will.

Sometimes information alone is not enough to make us act. We've got to engage with it. Good. Anyone else? How could learning it for yourself maybe be that thing that just puts you over the edge to say, okay, I need to start doing this?

Okay. Okay. Okay. Yep.

Alright, so in conclusion, as we are landing this aircraft, as we are saying, okay, so what do the Bereans example really, really teach us.

Spend time in God's Word every day. Don't just believe what you hear, search it in Scripture. In our world, filled with distractions, in our world, filled with news that may or may not be completely accurate, this might come as a newsflash, but do you know that every news station, every network has some kind of bias?

[ 29 : 43 ] Every single one. And it's all across the spectrum. So that's why we need to take the news that we hear with a grain of salt, and then research it.

Don't just go and, hey, you know what I heard on the news? Or, well, I saw it on the internet, it's got to be true. So, let's take what we hear and research it, spend time in God's Word.

So, today I challenge you, as we leave, adopt a daily practice of spending time in God's Word, and I encourage you to keep a notepad with your Bible, or wherever you read God's Word, and take notes.

It's amazing that I've sometimes gone back ten years later and read my notes, and see what God taught me way back when that I might have forgotten.

So, it's a good thing to do. Let me close with this. Imagine a community where every believer is diligent as the Bereans, where faith is not just inherited, but actively pursued.

[ 30 : 58 ] What impact can such people have in our community? Think about it. You were engaged with Scripture, it became a part of your life, and it permeated every conversation that you had.

That would be an awesome, that would be a community that could impact the world around us. So, final thought, just like the Bereans, let's not settle for second-hand faith. let's actively seek truth, examine it for ourselves, and then allow it to transform our lives.

Father, this morning as we've come to your word, we've seen an example of people who studied your word. They didn't take for granted what they were told, but yet they searched scriptures, they searched your word every day to know whether it was true, whether they should believe it or not.

So, Father, I pray that we would become a people who search your word every day, and that we will allow your truth to transform our lives.

I thank you today. I thank you for our faith community. May we honor you and glorify you with our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.