

Introduction:

In **John 6:68**, Peter explained the most important aspect of Jesus' work saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." Jesus had said in **John 6:63**, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." He had earlier said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him... 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (**John 6:44-45**). Recently we studied this story and learned that Christianity is not a fought, bought or caught religion. It is a taught religion. As we learned that, we were able to learn some lessons about what that means for us. However, we need to dig a little deeper and make some personal and congregational applications as we learn this lesson. Since Christianity is a taught religion, what must we do?

Discussion:

I. We must learn.

- A. Remember what Jesus said, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (**John 6:44-45**). Also remember the biblical context of the concept of learning from the Father found in passages like **Psalms 119:97-104**. If we desire to come to Jesus, in whose name alone salvation can be found (**Acts 4:12**), we must follow the footsteps of this psalmist.
- B. **Hosea 4:6** sums up the point saying, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." If we wish to be saved we must gain knowledge. **Peter 1:5, 8** says we must grow in our faith and knowledge, which come from studying God's word (**Romans 10:17; Matthew 22:29**). We must study and meditate on God's Word. This was demonstrated in the early days of the church. In **Acts 2:42**, Luke records that the very first Christians devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching. In **Acts 17:11**, he praised the Bereans because they searched the Scriptures daily.
- C. **Psalms 119:11** says, "Your word I have treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You." Paul, in **Acts 20:32** told the Ephesians elders, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." We live in a day of counselors and self-help books. We can go to the local bookstore and learn how to do just about anything. However, if we want to be saved and go to heaven there is one book to which we must turn—the Bible. **Psalms 119:23-24** says, "Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors." The word of God must be our counselor.
- D. Since Christianity is a taught religion, we have to learn the teaching. We have to learn the Word of God. We have to study. The question then is how much time do you invest learning the word of God? Regrettably, too many of us view Bible study as a chore. It is an item we have to check off our to-do list. Read through the **Psalms**, especially **Psalms 119** and see how the psalmist viewed God's word (**Psalms 119:37-40, 49-52, 81-82, 97, 123, 129-131, 148, 162**). Do those verses describe us? Do we long for God's precepts? Do our eyes fail over longing for God's word? Do we pant for God's commandments? Do we rejoice when we learn something from God's word the way we would if we inherited a treasure? Did you notice how often the longing for God's word was connected to longing for salvation? The implication is that when we long for salvation as the Psalmist did, we will long for God's word as the Psalmist did. Christianity is a taught religion, therefore we must learn it and we can only learn it through studying.

II. We must preach.

- A. In **Psalms 119:46**, the psalmist claimed he would speak of God's testimonies before kings and be unashamed. Consider Paul's statement in **Romans 1:16-17**. He was unashamed of the gospel of Christ because it was God's power for salvation. Paul was explaining why he wanted to preach to the Romans (**vs. 15**). Since Christianity is a taught religion, we must teach it.
- B. Read through **Acts**. Every conversion was based on teaching. He did not miraculously convert anyone apart from teaching. Consider the day of Pentecost, though God testified through the miraculous gifts of tongues, the conversion was based on Peter's preaching (**Acts 2:40-41**). The people of Samaria were converted because of the preaching of Philip (**Acts 8:12**). The Ethiopian Eunuch was also taught by Philip (**Acts 8:35-40**). Saul, despite his miraculous vision

of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, did not have his sins removed until he was taught by Ananias (**Acts 9:17-19; 22:16**). Cornelius heard words from Peter by which he would be saved (**Acts 11:13-14**). Christianity is spread by teaching, we must teach.

- C. Paul drove this point home in **Romans 10:13-15**. People are saved when they call upon the Lord, but they will never call upon the Lord if they don't believe in Him. They will never believe in Him if they don't hear about Him. They will never hear about Him if people aren't teaching Him. No one will teach Him unless they are sent. The question for us then becomes, what are we doing to send people out to teach the gospel? This is not about foreign evangelism. This is not a question of finances and how many evangelists we send checks to each month. This is an issue of how many of us in this assembly are equipped to teach and how many of us are teaching?
- D. Based on **Ephesians 4:11-16**, we who fill the roles of evangelist or pastor (elder) have to ask ourselves what we are doing to equip the brethren here to minister the word of God so that the body can grow, in unity, maturity and size. Based on **Hebrews 5:11-14**, every one of us must ask what we are doing to grow and make ourselves able to teach.
- E. Finally, we must remember **I Timothy 3:15**. The purpose of the church is to be the pillar and support of the truth. Our duty as a local body of Christ is to fulfill this mission. The church is a teaching institution. Our duty is not to entertain. Our duty is not to babysit. Our duty is not to promote social reform or provide for social welfare. Our duty is not to water down our actual duty by adding in all of these things. Our duty is to teach God's truth. To hold it up for all to see. Since Christianity is a taught religion, we must teach it.

III. We must practice what we preach.

- A. In **Romans 2:17-23**, Paul rebuked the Jews who rested their hope in the Law of Moses because they had broken it. His summary statement was, "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?" When we study, learn and teach we must apply what we learn to ourselves. His concluding statement is also powerful. "You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?" A similar question should be asked of Christians today. "You who boast in the New Covenant, through your breaking of the New Covenant, do you dishonor God?" We tell others to simply follow the Bible. Are we simply following the Bible?
- B. Since Christianity is a taught religion, we need to practice what is taught based on God's word. **James 1:19-25** claims it is not enough to merely hear the word of God, we actually have to do it. As Paul taught the Philippians in **Philippians 4:4-9**, not only must we know God's word and meditate on it, not only must we pray, not only must we think on the right things, we must actually practice the things we have learned from God's word.
- C. Since Christianity is a taught religion, we must practice what Scriptures teach. We are only practicing properly when we can go to the Bible and find book, chapter and verse to authorize what we are doing. This is a practice that seems to be fading out of existence. Too often churches practice things because nobody can see any harm in it. Our practice should not be based on perceived harm but based on positive scripture. According to **II Timothy 3:16-17**, the Scriptures have been provided to equip us for every good work. If we cannot go to the Scripture to authorize what we are doing as a congregation then we must stop. Recently I heard someone make an interesting suggestion. He suggested that every couple of years we just wipe the slate clean, forget everything we have ever done and just open our Bibles to start figuring out what we believe and what we should practice. Regrettably, that is psychologically impossible. However, it would certainly be helpful. It doesn't matter what we have done in the past or what we have not done. It doesn't matter what we have taught or have not taught. What matters is what the word of God says. Since Christianity is a taught religion, we must practice what the Scriptures teach.

Conclusion:

I become discouraged as I look around at the state of many churches today. It seems that too many are getting further away from being focused on teaching the gospel and doctrine of Jesus Christ. There is a trend that says the most important thing Christians can do is get to know one another. Relationships are important. But knowing the Scriptures is the most important thing we can do. That way, when we know each other we can actually help each other go to heaven using God's word. Since Christianity is a taught religion, we must learn, we must preach and we must practice the Scriptures.