

Distinctive Qualities of Genuine Faith

Philippians 3:1-3

Pastor Ron Provisie
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Shepherd's Community Church

Joy (1a)

(John 5:39; Matthew 7:23; 1 John 1:6; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 6:10; Isaiah 12:3; Romans 14:17; 5:3; 1 Peter 1:8)

Discernment (1b-2)

(1 Corinthians 13:6; 1 John 2:20; Philippians 1:9; Psalm 119:66, 98; 1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Righteousness (3a)

(Genesis 17:10; Deuteronomy 30:6; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 2:17)

Worship (3b)

(Matthew 6:1-18; 7:21-23; John 4:23; Psalm 43:4)

Humility (3c)

(Romans 7:18; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Ephesians 2:8-9; James 4:10)

What is the Most Important Priority of the Church?

It is a function of the church that the Word of God be preached. In fact... there's really only one primary reason to choose a church, and that is the character of its preaching.

Now when people evaluate churches they might evaluate them on the basis of many things. But there's only one that really sets the tone. The single most important reason to choose a church is the nature and character of its preaching and teaching. Where you have strong biblical preaching and teaching, everything else tends toward strength. Where you do not have strong biblical teaching and preaching, everything else is weak and tends toward shallowness. Preaching sets the tone in the church, proclaiming biblical truth is essential. Why? "Because man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" [Matthew 4:4].

Preaching the Word of God, teaching the Word of God is a critical function in the life of the church. We live in a time when preaching is being depreciated and it is being set aside in favor of other forms of communication. But the essential reality for the church, that which basically dictates its strength or weakness, is the character of its preaching and teaching. You show me a church where there is strong biblical preaching and teaching, and I will show you strong people and strong ministry. You show me a church where there is weak biblical preaching and I will show you a church with weak people and weak ministry. That's just how it goes because the Word of God is the food that makes believers mature and strong.

And the reality is that people in churches all across our country and all around the world are frankly starving. I hear it all the time, everywhere I go. It comes through the mailbags every day. People saying, "I can't find any place where I can be fed. Where do I find some food for my soul? Isn't anybody going to teach me the Word of God? People are starving.

Some of them know they're starving for the knowledge of God which comes through His Word. And some of them don't know it. They really don't know that what they really need is the clear, penetrating Word of God proclaimed and taught. People are starving for the knowledge of God, whether they know it or not. They're starving to know their God deeply, to know Him broadly, to understand the world through His view. They're starving for a sound theology that they can live on, build their life on, be anchored by. They're starving for divine wisdom which comes through the knowledge of God in His revelation. People are starving for the knowledge of God. People live out their beliefs. And where they're strong, you tend to have a strong life. Where they're weak, you tend to have a weak life. The Word is the foundation for everything and God has ordained that it be preached in His church. And that's what makes His church strong.

John MacArthur, *The Responsibilities of the Church: Preaching*, preached February 2, 1997