

## What Makes A Good Audience?

"So, I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." (Acts 10:33)

Most public speakers can tell you a good audience makes for a good presentation and a good presentation can make a good audience. There have been certain Gospel Meetings where I was preaching and could tell by the singing and prayers that the group was there to worship God. They were enthused and excited to be there each night as they arrived early and stayed late. Sometimes the speaker would not do a good job of presenting material and the audience's attention waned. Such is the fault of the speaker. External things can distract the audience. One Sunday morning I was preaching and heard a loud noise outside. It turned out to be a helicopter landing across the street from the church building at a medical clinic. A deer hunter was shot that morning and they brought her to the clinic. After a few moments the helicopter shut down because the woman passed away. Needless to say, our crowd was distracted. But barring such external things, which no one can do anything about, I want to discuss the title of this article, "What makes a good audience? Especially in relation to our upcoming Gospel Meeting with J.R. Bronger. Hopefully our own members will show up to support our own Gospel Meeting!

To have a "good audience" one must have an audience! In other words, people must show up whether a small group or large audience. Jesus could not teach those who stopped following Him in John 6. Unfortunately, people, even members of the church, view attendance as optional when it comes to Sunday and Wednesday nights. They also see Gospel Meetings as unnecessary and too time consuming. Overall

attendance at Gospel Meetings are down as local members may not come, visitors from other congregations may not show up, and those from the community often are too busy or apathetic to come. As we will study in this morning's sermon, Peter came to Cornelius' house and taught those who were present. Let me add that being present, meaning being ready to think and participate as much as one can, is fundamental to being a "good audience."

A "good audience" understands the importance of the occasion. In my years of preaching I have seen people fall asleep during the lesson, close their Bible and fold their hands as they stopped listening, people passing notes, having a personal conversation, balancing their check book, and doing all kinds of other things. They were "there" but they weren't really "there." A good audience will either read the scriptures on the overhead or turn their Bibles to those passages. A good audience understands they are there to worship God, edify one another, and learn more about God's word.

Which gets me to my next point, a good audience, wants to hear God's word. How much do we hunger and thirst after God's word? I have never preached to the clock in order to have long lessons or short lessons. I have tried to cover my subject in a way that gets the point across. I even dare to say my sermons tend to be shorter than most. I strived to make my sermons God centered, stressing God's word. A good audience wants to hear and appreciates plain Bible preaching. Sometimes that preaching may be stepping on our toes but if it is the word of God then we need to hear it. Paul did not just preach part of God's word but all of it. "How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house." (Acts 20:20)

A good audience wants to hear all of God's word and then obey it. Many bad things happen when people "stop their ears" as said in Acts 7.57. The Bible is God's way of speaking to us, a Bible centered lesson deserves our attention, consideration, and obedience.

While I have spoken of the "good audience" in the aggregate it is made up of individuals. In order to have a good audience, you and I must do those things. I must show up on time ready to worship God. You and I must clear our minds as much as possible of outside distractions and focus on our worship. We must look up the scriptures with an open heart and submit to God's word. If you and I do those things we will be a good audience. - - Dennis Tucker