

Public Scripture Reading in the Corporate Worship Service:

Why It Must Find a Place in the Worship Service

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Why should the corporate reading of Scripture consist of an essential element of worship in the service? I would like to suggest at least **six reasons** why the public scripture reading should find a place in the corporate worship gathering.

1. It Upholds the Scriptures' Supremacy (*supremacy*)

God's Words are sweet to the taste of His people (Ps 119:103) and to read God's Word corporately is to uphold its supremacy and sweetness. God has revealed Himself in one book, given to all people, sufficient for all time, containing His complete revelation. To take this Word and read it corporately with the entire flock present is to uphold, proclaim and announce the supremacy of God's Word. The Law of the LORD is perfect and His testimony is sure (Ps 19:7). Churches should read the Word of God corporately so as to hold high the glory of God contained in His written revelation. Reading the Word with the congregation gathered upholds the grandeur and beauty of God's perfect revelation.

2. It Obeys the Biblical Command (*obedience*)

Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture (1 Tim 4:13). This command, given by Paul, to Timothy can apply to every bible-believing church that has read this God-inspired letter. Paul exhorts young Timothy to devote himself to doctrine, to exhortation [preaching] and also to the public reading of Scripture. One wonders how much occurs in churches today that could be quickly eliminated if this verse were really believed and practiced. To give attention to the reading of Scripture means to devote oneself to this practice. It should happen regularly. It must take place when the flock has come together. This speaks of a designated, corporate, verbal, specific Scripture reading (as in the synagogues there would be various portions of the Law read; cf. Acts 15:21). Thus, churches should endeavor to willingly and joyfully obey this biblical command to pay careful attention to the public reading of Scripture.

3. It Instructs the Church Corporately (*instruction*)

The Bible is the very Word of God. It is, in fact, the Word of truth. The divine, supernatural, eternal mind of God is contained in the perfect book given by God, the Bible. Another persuasive reason why every bible-believing church should read the Word of God publicly is because of the instruction that it provides to the entire flock. For example, if a church reads a chapter a week from Ephesians, it will, over the course of short while, understand God's instructions for how the local church should live and function and relate to one another. Great instruction comes when all sit together under the authoritative Word of God. Genuine followers of God heed instruction and, thus, are wise (Prov 8:33). Indeed, whatever is written in earlier times, in the Word, has been written for our instruction (Rom 15:4). Godly and God-honoring is the flock that welcomes divine instruction as the Word is publicly read regularly.

4. It Voices the Divine Truth (*God-speaks*)

All Scripture truly is breathed-out by God (2 Tim 3.16). This means that God has, in fact, directly spoken His Word as His sovereignly appointed individuals penned down His revelation. The writers of Scripture, thus, wrote infallibly, inerrantly, and authoritatively. They wrote as they were carried along by God the Spirit who guided their hands as they wrote every jot and tittle (2 Pet 1:19-21). As a man opens the Bible and reads from it, the entire flock hears the voice of God through the mouth of the reader. Indeed, when the Scripture speaks, God speaks. Jesus based His life living by every word of Scripture (doing His Father's will) and yet he said that man lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Matt 4.4). The Bible voices the truth of God. How blessed is the congregation that hears from God every week! How expectant every Christian should be that when the flock gathers, God will speak from His Word on every occasion.

5. It Edifies the Truly Regenerated (*edification*)

Strong is the church that hears God speak to it every week! The psalmist prayed for God to strengthen him according to His Word (Ps 119.28). Everything a local church does should promote, enhance, and foster the edification of the flock (1 Cor 14.26). True believers hear the voice of God (John 10.27) and find great comfort in it (Ps 119:50). All believers need to hear from God as frequently as a baby needs milk. To serve in a local church that reads the Word of God corporately is to live in a family where the Father speaks to His children with constancy! And the joy that this brings to every child can hardly be explained! Regenerated sinners love hearing from God and are built up, edified, strengthened, and established in the faith as the man of God opens the Word of God and speaks the Word of God to the flock of God. Furthermore, as the Word that is read corporately edifies true believers because it contains divine power, it also has supernatural power to convict the rebellious, humble the arrogant, crush the blasphemous, and save the unconverted. O the profit in reading God's Word publicly!

6. It Demonstrates the Church's Authority (*authority*)

The only binding authority for all Christians is the written word of God, the Bible. No church, no cleric, no council, no tradition, no power, no philosophy contains the authority that mandates how the church should function. The Bible — alone — presides in the highest place since God has magnified His Word above His Name (Ps 138.2). The Bible alone is eternally fixed in the heavens (Ps 119.89). Thus, for a local church to open the Bible and read it consistently, reverently, and with regularity is to incur God's blessing and to demonstrate the church's authority. To silence God and not read from His Word on Sundays shows to everyone present that the authority in that place is not God, but men. But to read the Word by devoting a goodly portion of the worship service to the corporate scripture reading is to gloriously demonstrate to everyone present (including visitors) and remind everyone present (since we quickly forget) where the true authority for the church rests — namely, in God's written revelation, the Scriptures alone.

So then, let us devote a portion of every corporate worship service to the public reading of sacred Scripture with reverence for God, with love for Christ, and with a Spirit-endowed yearning for instruction so that Christians may be edified by the voice of God and unbelievers may be convicted by the Living Word through the piercing effect of inspired Scripture.