

Question: Why should one trust what influential preachers and teachers have said about the Bible and Christianity?

We should honor and respect those men and women who have faithfully taught us about the life and teachings of Jesus as revealed in the word of the Lord. The writer to the Hebrew Christians called upon them to “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7). But no matter how prominent or influential one of these teachers may have been, he was only human. Therefore, we have a responsibility to go to the Bible to see that what they taught us is truly the “word of God.” We should also examine our teachers to see if their lives are consistent with our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in God’s word. When the life is not faithful to the word of God, the message is most likely flawed.

Throughout the New Testament, the emphasis is always placed upon the words of God in contrast to the words of men. To the Thessalonian Christians, the apostle wrote: “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Of the words of the prophets, Peter stated: “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus and his apostles warned his followers of false prophets who would be able to deceive people into believing things that do not come from God (Matthew 7:15; 2 Peter 2:1). In fact, the people of Berea were commended because they “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).

I am convinced that many of the religious divisions among Christians of today have come about because of loyalties to human traditions and prominent preachers and those who are considered to be biblical experts and researchers. But the best way to honor those who have faithfully taught us is to examine everything they say and do in light of scripture. We need to study for ourselves and become more knowledgeable about biblical teachings. We need to weigh carefully and critically what we have been taught and what we are being taught.

This is why I always try to give biblical references for what I write in this weekly column. I pray that my readers will not follow me or any other human teacher but will examine the word of God so they can follow Jesus. The prophet Isaiah said: “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever” (Isaiah 40:6-8 as quoted in 1 Peter 1:24-25).

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