



LifeSpot ... The Word and the church

The greatest influence

When church leaders get together to look at improving a congregation's effectiveness, they might discuss worship services, small group ministry, community presence, and leadership. In these discussions, it's easy to overlook the single most powerful catalyst for church health and growth. This catalyst is overlooked because it's quiet and personal. It cannot be organised, budgeted or programmed. It can only be conveyed by God's Spirit, and taught by God's church. What is it? *The Bible*. God's self-revelation. Research proves its power. But we shouldn't need the research. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

The highest priority

There are many components of worship services that people appreciate. Music. Prayer. Stories and other creative elements. But there's compelling research that shows there's something that supersedes all of these—the Word of God and its challenge to personal life. People come to church with a craving to hear God himself. You'd think they'd find him, every week! But indications are that more than 50 per cent go away with only modest satisfaction or no satisfaction at all. People come to hear God speak, and they hear humans prattling. They come to be provoked by God's Word, and instead they're made comfortable by the word of man. Let's give top place to the Word of the Lord!

A craving for the Word

A church with relevant teaching on everyday topics will be an excellent church, right? A church with programmes and activities for all will be healthy and growing, right? Actually, No. It's fascinating to see some outstanding Christian leaders returning to a simple foundation—the Bible and its power. Spiritual activities are needed, but they don't produce a deep connection with God. Topical sermons might be helpful, but they don't translate into steady spiritual growth. People crave in-depth Bible teaching. The church grows through solid Bible preaching. Jesus expressed it something like this—*People who receive the Word as seed on good soil are the ones who hear the Word and understand it. Then follows a good crop.*

Effective in the Word

Think about the most effective preachers in modern times. Such as Peter Marshall, G Campbell Morgan, Dwight L Moody, John Stott, John Piper, Charles Swindoll, Corrie ten Boom, H M S Richards, Billy Graham. It doesn't matter which list you look at—there's one thing in common. What's in common is not the style or approach—these are as varied as the personalities. What's in common is *the Word of God*. Like the apostle Paul, effective preachers preach not themselves, but Christ crucified. It's not the men and women who have power. The power is in God and his Word. Preachers and Bible teachers today—Let's be baptized in the Word, love the Word, proclaim the Word. Nothing else.