

Considering the Audience

“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words” Acts 2:14

In the passage quoted above, Peter tells us who he was addressing (the audience) and the preaching that followed was designed for that audience. If you have taken a speech class in school, one of the first principles you were probably taught was to consider the audience whom you would be addressing.

According to the University Writing Center at Texas A&M, “knowing your audience—whether readers or listeners—will help you determine what information to include in a document or presentation, as well as how to convey it most effectively. You should consider your audience when choosing your tone, content, and language—or else your message may seem unfocused or inappropriate.” Not only is this important when writing a speech or preparing a document, it is also important when studying the Bible. Understanding the audience the writer is addressing, helps us to understand what the author is saying. In this lesson, we will examine the subject of Considering the Audience and learn why it is important in our daily bible study.

On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter addressed the “men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem,” he was addressing a group of people (Jews, Proselytes, etc.) that were knowledgeable about prophecy and who were responsible for crucifying the son of God. Therefore, he tailored his words (with the guidance of the Holy Spirit) to impact their minds and to convict them of their sin.

Read Acts 2:14-31. Notice in verses 16-21, Peter references the prophet Joel (who the Jews would have been familiar with) and tells them that what he prophesied is now coming to pass. In verse 22, he mentions Jesus and references the miracles that he performed (which some of the Jews would have witnessed) to confirm he was the promised Messiah. Beginning in verse 23, (to convict them of sin) he said “you have taken (Jesus) by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.” He also clearly explains that this lawless deed was according to the “determined purpose and foreknowledge of God” as part of his plan for salvation. In verses 25 and 29 he quotes David (whom the Jews loved and respected), to once again illustrate that Jesus was the Christ who was unjustly crucified. At this point, Peter had their attention and he made sure that they knew that even though they crucified Jesus, God had raised him up and elevated him to his right hand (a position of authority), “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” We see from verse 37 that the Holy Spirit through Peter had effectively convicted the Jews of their sin and as a result they were “cut to the heart.” Being convicted of their sin, they asked what they should do next. Peter told them in verse 38, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This section of scripture shows us how beneficial it can be to know the audience. It helps us to understand why Peter made references to prophecy and why his accusations about crucifying Jesus impacted the Jews and led them to repentance.

Many times we are not told who the audience is that is being addressed. As a result, we may have to use our study aids to help determine this fact. For instance, in the book of Matthew we are not given details about the audience but when we read the first chapter we see that Matthew starts with a listing of the genealogy of Christ. Who would this information appeal to? If we consult a commentary, we find out that he was writing to the

Jews and this is why he started out by showing the lineage of Christ. Genealogy was important to the Jews and Matthew's goal was to prove that Jesus was the Messiah by tracing his lineage through the Old Law. He knew that the Jews were familiar with prophecy and the genealogy would help to prove that Jesus was the Christ. Throughout the rest of the book, we see Matthew makes several more references that the Jews would have understood and therefore it helped his message to be much more effective.

Taking the time to find out who the audience is will help us to better understand why an author presented a given message the way he did and more importantly it will help us to better learn the truth being taught.

Questions

1. In Acts 10:34-43, who is the audience that Peter is addressing? _____
Why was this particular event so important? Whom did it show that God accepted? _____

2. Read Acts 13:14-41. Who was the audience that was being addressed? Why were these people such an important audience for Paul to address? _____

3. Read Acts 13:42-49. Who was the new audience that Paul and Barnabas began to address? Why were these people such an important audience? _____

4. List at least four different audiences that Jesus addressed during his ministry. _____

5. What are some different audiences that we address today from a spiritual perspective? _____

6. Who was the audience that Peter addressed on the Day of Pentecost? What approach did he use to appeal to them? _____

7. Who was the audience Paul wrote to in 1 and 2 Corinthians? Using a study aid, locate an outline and list at least three issues he addressed with this audience. _____

8. Who was the audience for the serpent in the Garden of Eden? What approach did he take to convince her to eat the fruit of the tree which was in the midst of the garden? _____

9. Who was the audience that Jesus ate with in Matthew 9:10? What was the reason Jesus gave for associating with them? _____

10. Who is the intended audience for the plan of salvation? Give scriptures to support your answer. _____
