

Any Thoughts?

Judging by the amount of time, energy and money spent on sermons – their production, delivery and absorption – and judging by the priority evangelical churches give to the sermon, most evangelicals must think that listening to sermons is the prime way for them to grow in knowledge of Scripture and spiritual experience.

Judging by the number of sermons delivered by past and present preachers which are freely available on the internet, and which can be heard at all hours, night and day,¹ and judging by the number of downloads and likes that these sermons are awarded, this generation of evangelical believers certainly must be the most sermon-saturated ever.

Putting all this together, contemporary evangelicals must be the most informed, the best taught, the most scripturally literate believers ever.

Are they?

I don't think so. Take doctrine. Doctrinal understanding is at a very low ebb, and declining. Doctrinal curiosity is becoming virtually non-existent. Doctrinal distinctives, thought to be divisive, are played down, withering on the vine. Doctrinal principles and practices are no longer key when choosing a church. Or so it seems to me.

Maybe I am wrong, wrong on all counts.

But if there is any substance in what I say, how can this be? Is it the fault of the preachers? Is it the fault of the hearers? Or is the basic idea wrong; that is, sermons are not the best way, the

¹ It might be pointed out that I am shooting myself in the foot. Let me reply by saying that while I want my discourses to be informative, dispensing information is not my prime purpose in preaching; no, not by a long way! I aim to reach the heart through the mind, move the will and so change the experience on the basis of Scripture.

scriptural way, for believers to grow in knowledge and spirituality? Or is it some combination of all three? Or is there something else we should be looking at?

What do you think?²

² For my views, see my *Preaching Today: Food for Action as well as Thought; Sowed Much, Reaped Little: Why?: The Sermon: The Gap between the Claim and the Result*.