

“He is Worthy” or “What is Appropriate?” Discussion 3

1. The simple question, “Is it appropriate?” appears on the surface as a fairly non-threatening, straight-forward, and tame query free from any ethical overtones. But when we look at the appeal from a Biblical context it can take on a much weightier perspective. Consider the question we introduced in our first session, “Is He worthy?” The question in its setting of Revelation, chapter 5, takes us to the coronation of the most powerful, august, excellent Being resident in the cosmos. It directs our focus to Lord Jesus Christ Who sovereignly and exclusively has the authority to execute all the divine decrees of human history. He alone possesses an infinite degree of honor that is beyond our mind’s imagination. So what is the relationship between the question, “Is it appropriate?” and the declaration, “He is worthy.” That answer depends upon our understanding of the definition of: **“Axios”**

2. By extension of the root meaning, **axios** is used to express that which is “befitting”; congruous, to rightly correspond to something else; to be harmonious; to be appropriate. We are asking, “Do the two things fit together?” “It is *meet*” (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20; 2 Thess. 1:3; Luke 7:4). It is suitable. It is in accord with. To a mathematician what is an “axiom”? What does it mean for a statement to be “axiomatic”? In the UCMJ there is a charge that can be made for “Conduct Unbecoming an Officer.”

3. At times the word refers to someone who has merited something (hence ‘deserving’) - either good or bad. “He has done nothing *worthy* of death.” Consider: “But those who are *counted worthy* (this is the passive voice, kata-axios) to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36; Acts 5:41).

4. **An example to consider: Is it appropriate?** (Arturo Azurdia, Spirit Empowered Preaching, page 80, 81) referring to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

- 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
- 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,
- 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.
(1 Cor. 2:1-5)

His question/observation: “Is it true, as is often stipulated, that **ministry methods** are of no significance to God insofar as **the message** of the gospel is clearly communicated? Is it accurate to conclude that **style** by itself is neither good nor bad, but always neutral?”

Recently, I came across a brochure that was being displayed at a local coffee shop. It had been placed there for the purpose of inviting people to a nearby church. On the cover of this brochure was a man, the pastor of the church, dressed in a bunny suit, wearing a pair of designer sun glasses. Dejectedly, he sits on a marching-band bass drum. The caption under this picture made an obvious connection to a series of television commercials which advertise a well-known brand of batteries. It read as follows:

‘When the Power Bunny runs out of energy to keep going, going, going...

(open to the inside of this brochure)...

the Easter message can give you the power for living, living, living!

Beneath this caption is a second picture of the pastor in a bunny suit, but now in an altogether different light. He is smiling from ear to ear, bass drum strapped to his shoulders, now marching with vigor and enthusiasm as a consequence of his newly-discovered energy.

A quote then follows:

'I came so that you can have real and eternal life,
more and better life than you ever dreamed of' Jesus (John 10:10).

"Of all that I have ever seen in the name of Christian marketing, this was clearly the most distasteful. 'But why?' I wondered. For several days I posed to myself the question, 'What is it about that brochure that disturbs me so deeply?' Stated simply, from the perspective of the Apostle Paul, style is not neutral. ***When the gospel is the message, the methodology of its presentation is not irrelevant or neutral.*** Paul's concern in 1 Corinthians 2 is to make evident that the cross of Jesus Christ not only *establishes the substance* of our preaching and worship, it *determines the style* in which we communicate it. In other words, message and method must be ***harmonious*** (read *axios*, fitting, appropriate). When they are not, it is the integrity of the message that is distorted.

5. Is our diagram of "Person" and "Position" a fitting grid by which to evaluate this example? Is it transferable to "Message" compared with "Method?"
6. In your opinion when an unbelieving visitor attends a church 'worship' service, does he bring with him (if even unconsciously) a sense of this question, "Do I see a correspondence between the message I hear and the method by which it is being given?"
7. How does this question relate to the subject of Biblical 'discernment?'

With that concept of definition let's go to Matthew chapter 10. The word we are investigating is discovered in verses 10, 11, 13, 37, 38 - seven times.

Some questions:

1. Do these instructions for gospel carriers apply to us today? If so, in what ways?
2. What does it mean that the worker is worthy of his food?
3. When choosing a place to reside how would you determine who is worthy to stay with? Luke 7:4 "When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, 'He is worthy for You to grant this to him, for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.'" (Shimleau, Romania)
4. What does it mean for "your peace to rest upon a household" or to "return to you"?
5. In verses 37 and 38 decrees, not suggestions, are declared. How would you summarize in your own words Jesus' requirements about the cost of discipleship?