4. What exactly is a Berean?

In Kentucky and Ohio there are cities which share the name Berea. The people who live in those cities are called Bereans. At its most basic level, a Berean is simply someone from a city named Berea. The Bereans in question were obviously from another Berea. Their Berea was in southwestern Macedonia which is present-day Greece. The Apostle Paul ministered in Berea on his second and third Apostolic journeys (Acts 15:36 – Acts 21:17).

In Acts 17, during his second journey, the Apostle Paul is preaching the gospel and seeing souls saved in Thessalonica, 43 miles northeast of Berea, when he is abruptly forced from the city by a mob instigated by unbelieving Jews and backed by the political powers that be. Because of the uproar, Paul is forced to depart by night and make the two-day trip on foot to the city of Berea.

Upon arrival in Berea, Paul began his ministry the same way he started on his many other stops. He immediately enters the synagogue so the unsaved Hell bound souls might hear the good news. In Acts 17:11 Luke speaks highly of the Bereans.

*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

There are several key words in this verse that we need to study if we are to understand what a Berean is today. First, these Bereans are referred to as noble. The Greek word has the idea of generous. These Bereans were more generous than the unruly mob of Thessalonica. The Bereans were willing at the very least to hear what was taught. Next, it says they received the word with all readiness of mind. Their minds were not made up against what Paul spoke like the mob of Thessalonica, nor were they easily swayed to believe. They were simply ready to listen to what was he had to say. After generously hearing and listening to the spoken message, the Bereans, with the utmost responsibility, take one final and absolutely important step. They took what they have heard and went to the Word of God to see if what had been spoken lined up with Scripture. The Greek word translated searched has a prefix and a root word which means intense questioning. It is a term used of a judge in a court case as he scrutinizes, investigates, and sifts the evidence which has been presented to determine the truth. The Bereans consulted **the** authority on the matters that had been presented to them.

If only more Christians were like the noble Bereans. So often, Christians today want entertained at church. They want a ministry that meets there felt needs at church. They look for a group of peers with whom they can relate in their own personal struggles at church. God’s Word is very clear, the local church is a gathering of the Church the Body of Christ. The local church does not exist to serve the Body of Christ but for the Body of Christ to serve, honor, and glorify Him! (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:5 – 7; Romans 6) Over and over we are referring to as saints, servants, and ambassadors. Don’t get me wrong. I completely understand the role of the local church in equipping the saints through the preaching and teaching of the Word, but once again, ultimately the goal is for the saints/servants/ambassadors to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11 – 15). It is also important to point out that preaching does not fall under the category of entertainment, although it has devolved into that very thing in many churches today. We can certainly find preaching enjoyable, but if we are like the Bereans, we will work hard to hear, listen, and Search the Scriptures to test if what we are hearing is true.

In II Timothy 2:15 we are given an imperative. We are commanded to study the Word of Truth rightly divided. When you hear someone today say Christians need to be Bereans they are not asking us to relocate. They are simply encouraging us to be like the Bereans in following this command. Christians need to be willing to follow the Bereans three step process of hearing, listening, and search the Scriptures in all matters.

If the church were filled with Bereans, the church would not be filled with bad theology. These two things cannot coexist. I encourage you to be a Berean.