

Teachers Of The Word Of God

'Behold, God is exalted in His power. Who is a Teacher like Him?' (Job 36:22).

'Not many of you should become teachers my brethren, because we know that we teachers will be judged by a higher standard than other people' (James 3:1).

'Devote yourself to reading (the scriptures), to exhortation and to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was imparted by the Holy Spirit when the elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in your ministry so your progress may be evident. Look well to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who hear you' (1 Timothy 4:13 to 16).

'Be diligent, present yourself to God approved, a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly teaching the Word of Truth' (2 Timothy 2:15).

'Tell them (the people) these things. Exhort and reprove with full authority. Let no one despise you or think little of your teaching' (Titus 2:15).

'The teachers and those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever ... Many will purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked will do wickedly and none of the wicked will understand, but the teachers (of the Word) and those who are wise will understand' (Daniel 12:3 & 10).

'After three days they found Him (Jesus) in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions' (Luke 2:46).

'One of those days as He (Jesus) was teaching ...' (Luke 5:17).

We need to teach the truth of the Gospel by faith with the love of Jesus (1 Timothy 2:7). Although all Christians are called to serve God using their own particular talents, not everybody is called to be a teacher of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 12:28 & 29; Ephesians 4:11). Teachers are important, and even Jesus Himself as a teenage boy, listened to the teachers and asked them questions, then later He became a teacher or Rabbi. If we study the verses above taken from the book of Daniel, we see that there is a special mention of teachers, almost as though they have been allotted a special place. With that allotted place though, comes enormous responsibility to see that our teaching is 100% correct. It is the Holy Spirit Who teaches us (1 Corinthians 2:13), and we can only teach others what we have learned, by sitting under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, by spending much time in the Word of God and in deep intense prayer. We are permitted to ask the Lord questions about His Word. We can ask Him to reveal what He means in an obscure verse. We can ask Him to explain the time frame for a Biblical prophecy. We can ask Him to open our spiritual eyes to certain verses so we can understand them more fully. We can ask Him anything about His written Word, because He is keen for us to know the depths of the Word. Sometimes He shows us immediately, other times He waits a while, but He is always happy for us to humble ourselves and ask the Author of the Word what He is saying to us. The problem is, many people depend on the pastors to teach them, without realising the Lord is our Teacher and we can go to Him directly.

We need to teach people one of the main aspects of God, which is His love for all mankind. 'The purpose of our instruction is love, which springs from a pure heart, a clear conscience and sincere faith' (1 Timothy 1:5). The primary requirement of a teacher of the Word, is to be steadfast in the doctrine taught initially by Jesus then by the apostles. 'They steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer' (Acts 2:42). There are four main points in that verse: fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer and steadfast devotion to the apostle's doctrine. We are strongly commanded not to teach any other doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3), so the name of God and His doctrine not be blasphemed (1 Timothy 6:1). We are to adorn the doctrine of God and of Jesus in all things (Titus 2:10). 'In all things' means what we teach, how we live, our prayer life and other aspects of our lives in God. Whenever a church has moved away from the apostle's doctrine, the church has failed to achieve what God expects. That is what the Lord is talking about when He inferred, God would judge harshly those who stray from His doctrine' (James 3:1).

Jesus said, "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all the world ..." (Matthew 24:14). The apostles were the ones who originally took this Gospel to the entire world. We are warned not to listen to any alternative Gospel or doctrine. 'The Holy Spirit distinctly declares that in latter times some will turn away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach, through hypocrisy and liars, whose consciences are seared as though with a hot iron' (1 Timothy 4:1 & 2). God has His doctrines but so

does the devil. Every major false doctrine could well be a doctrine of a demon. One of the devil's main tactics against the church is to introduce a false doctrine. We are to look to ourselves, or in other words, look after ourselves (1 Timothy 4:16). It is important for a teacher of the Word of God to seek the Bible diligently to keep on the right track and be careful not to teach anything misleading, exaggerated or false. We must keep ourselves in the presence of God (Romans 14:22). The scriptures say something frightening which is largely ignored by many Christians. 'Whoever sins and does not stay within the doctrine of Jesus, does not have God, but they who remain in the doctrine (teaching) of Jesus has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (teaching), do not receive him, do not welcome him into your house or bid him Godspeed or give him any encouragement, for he who wishes him success is a partaker in his evil works' (2 John 1:9 to 11). That is a very radical statement spoken by John. We need to be very careful with whom we fellowship and what we believe. We are not to endorse any doctrine we know is not scripturally correct. For example, much of the end-time teaching cannot be endorsed because many of the events 'prophesied' in the 1970's did not happen and as the world changes, they cannot happen. Those pastors who spoke those prophecies are false prophets and we are not to encourage them. We are not to encourage the doctrinally incorrect teachings of the many cults in the world today.

There are two levels of Bible teachers; those who initiate teaching directly from God and those who reproduce the teaching. Paul was one who initiated teaching. 'The teaching which you have heard from me (Paul) along with many witnesses, entrusted to faithful men who will be competent to teach others also' (2 Timothy 2:2). These men were to teach only what Paul had taught. In essence, they had to remain in the apostle's doctrine, reproducing Paul's teaching. 'He must hold fast to the trustworthy Word of God as he was taught it, so he may be able to teach in sound doctrine, and to convict those who contradict him' (Titus 1:9). They did not initiate the teaching; they heard it, held on to it and taught it or reproduced it. We read about older women teaching younger women. The word 'teach' in that verse does not necessarily mean teaching doctrine, it means discipline, counsel, teaching them right from wrong so that the Word of God would not be blasphemed (Titus 2:3 to 5). All forms of teaching must be tested against the Word of God. Too many teachers say, "I believe" then go on to teach their own thoughts, even when their ideas are contrary to scripture. They like to add their own assumptions and speak as though it is fact, when often it is not written in the Bible. The second a teacher says, "I believe", it is time to switch off. Genuine scripture teachers should say, "The Bible says ..." and if the Bible does not say it, then the teacher should not teach it.

We need to please God and obey the Gospel rather than please the people, or even our own pastors. Moses pleased God while Aaron pleased the people. Whom we will please is a decision all teachers need to make. Our business is not to water down or correct scripture – our business is to teach scripture. 'All scripture is God-breathed, given by His inspiration and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction of doctrinal error, instruction in righteousness (we add, for conviction of sin, discipline in obedience, for training in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose and action), so that the man (or woman) of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17).

A teacher of the Word must have a comprehensive grasp of the whole Bible. It is not enough just to know the books of Peter, we need to know the epistle written by Jude. It is not enough just to know the books of Kings, we need to be able to balance it with Chronicles. Chronicles explains things that are not mentioned in Kings. We also need to be very familiar with the 'minor' prophets. In truth, they are not minor at all. Their books are just smaller than the 'major' prophets. They all have a message that is uniquely appropriate for our culture today. We need to analyse and teach the scriptures correctly (2 Timothy 2:15).

Bible teachers need to be uncompromising, pure, blameless and prayerful, devoting our time to studying the Word of God. Most of the truth of the Bible has been obscured by compromise in this modern world. To be uncompromising is a challenge to our character and can make us quite unpopular with some people who consider us 'radical' or too extreme. We can even be persecuted by weaker or younger-in-the-Lord Christians, who sometimes become offended by the depth of the Word of God we teachers expound. Young Christians do not usually like to be told that God has a lot of rules for us to follow, but they need to learn that we cannot be holy if there is sin in our lives. The Bible has a few but not many 'grey' areas. Sin is sin in the eyes of the Lord. We cannot be 'saved by the skin of our teeth'. We are either saved or we are not saved. The same principle applies to pregnancy. Either a woman is pregnant or she is not pregnant. There is no 'grey' area there. If we compromise the Word of God to please people, we have failed to fulfil our God-given obligation.

Teachers of the Word have to be completely free from personal prejudices; racial, social, denominational and especially national. We must not put any prejudice before the Word of God. Our loyalty must lie with the Lord first and our nation and any other bias last. A teacher of scripture must be orderly and systematic – self-disciplined and self-controlled. The scriptures give us six steps from repentance to judgement. 'Let us get past the first principles in the teaching and doctrine of Jesus, advancing toward the perfection that belongs to

spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God, with teachings about baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead and eternal punishment (for unbelievers). If God permits, we will proceed to advanced teaching' (Hebrews 6:1 to 3).

A teacher of the Word of God must set an example of Godly life for others to follow. We must be above reproach and live entirely without compromise, seeking God and relying on Him for everything. It is His Word we are teaching so our sermons, teaching and Bible studies have to be taught by inspiration from Him, even when we feel the teaching may not be well received by more compromising Christians. Jeremiah the Prophet was not popular because he told the truth, but as much as he disliked his unpopularity, he said he could not stop speaking the truth from God. He was mocked, derided and was weary, but the Word of God was like a burning fire within him and he could not contain it. People called for revenge because Jeremiah continued to speak out and convict the sinners, no matter how much he was persecuted by both friend and foe (Jeremiah 20:7 to 10). We also need to be like Jeremiah and please God no matter what people say. We need to prayerfully seek out the subjects God wants us to teach. We are to literally pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Indeed, some of us have found ourselves praying in our sleep!

Teaching the Word is a full time job. We need to be close to the Lord. We need to develop a good understanding and comprehension of the nuances within the Bible. We need to seek the Lord for inspiration. We need to take the time to put together what He says we must speak about. We need to pray to make very certain we are accurate in our analysis of the Word. That is why He said we are to give ourselves to our gift of teaching. Being a teacher is not a ministry we ask for – it is a God given talent imparted to us by the Holy Spirit and He chooses whom He wants. We have to obey and take His God-breathed Word He entrusts to us, and give it out to whom He wants taught. Teachers are merely His vessels; His mouthpieces; His heralds and His servants, so when we teach, we should never include ourselves in any Bible studies or use our own lives as examples or props. What we teach is not about us, it is about the Lord of Glory and our Saviour. The Lord Himself has given us authority to teach His Word (Titus 2:15). The Holy Spirit teaches us and the Lord has put His trust in us to teach what we have learned from Him. Teachers are set apart for this purpose and we are not to do anything else. 'He whose gift is serving, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, let him give himself to his teaching' (Romans 12:7).

For children, teenagers and adults to receive an education, craft or trade, we need teachers, lecturers and professors. They are the most important people from whom we have to learn our education. Without primary school teachers, children would have great difficulty learning to read and write. Without university lecturers, who could attend university? Without medical scientists, how could doctors be taught? As former students go out to practice their acquired skills, so Bible students should go out and teach what they have learned. Just as secular educators are vitally important for our learning, so are Bible teachers important for us to learn the ways of God. As a teacher of the Word, one of the greatest blessings we can receive, is when we see the expressions of joy on the faces of new Christians when we show them scriptures that are new to them. For example, many people do not know the Lord's Prayer is in the Bible (Matthew 6:9 to 13; Luke 11:2 to 4). When they find it they are overjoyed. Many people do not realise the principle of 'what you sow, is what you reap' was written in the Bible thousands of years ago (Proverbs 11:18; Galatians 6:7). Being a committed teacher of the Word of God can bring wonderful blessings and eternal results.

Amen and God bless you.

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