

021 Equip the saints Part 7 The Teacher

Our next study brings us to the ministry of the Teacher

Remember our base scripture.

Eph 4:11

*11 It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and **teachers**...*

We must also always remember that all these five ministries are the gift of the Lord of Himself to the church. He is the supreme of all these ministries summed up in himself, so when He gives these ministries to others He is giving His own personal self and ministry.

So it is not a case of I have this ministry or that ministry, rather it is a case of “I have received responsibility and the Grace of the Lord to express who He is through this ministry”.

It is with that in mind we have to look at the following verse.

James 3:1

*3:1 Not many of you should presume to be **teachers**, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will **be judged more strictly**.*

The KJV uses the word ‘masters’, but that in fact does not convey the full meaning of the word. The Greek word for ‘teacher’ is “didaskolos” which means ‘Instructor’.

So if you are called to be an ‘Instructor’ or ‘Teacher’ of the Word, then there is a much higher judgment standard you will be judged by. So James writes above, ‘don’t be in too much of a hurry to be classed as a teacher – there are consequences” (My paraphrase).

Another interesting note is that this standard is not mentioned or imposed on any of the other four ministries. The Lord has set a very high standard for those who are ‘Teachers’ of the Word.

Paul, writing to Timothy gives a strong double-edged instruction.

2 Tim 2:15

15 Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive His approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

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There are four things to take serious note of in this verse.

- 1 Be a good hard worker at what you are doing.
- 2 Present yourself to obtain God's approval with what you are doing.
- 3 Even if others don't agree, don't ever be ashamed of the truth.
- 4 Make sure as a good worker you teach the Word correctly.

That is a major challenge for the 'teacher' in today's 21st century church as there are so many different teachings and persuasions, interpretations and traditions. The question for the 'every person' is who is right?

Again this is why I keep repeating over and over in these studies, you don't have to agree with all I teach, BUT you must search the Scriptures for yourself and then know from the Word of God, why you believe what you believe and can explain that from Genesis to Revelation. Far too many people simply take what they are told and without any personal understanding or Biblical conviction, say 'yes' to whatever they hear.

Little wonder Paul the apostle called people like that 'foolish'. Sadly our world is full of 'foolish' people who follow all manner of false teaching and religion – yes even in our so-called Christian churches.

That is why such a high standard and judgment is set for so-called 'teachers'. God himself will severely judge those who by false or wrong teaching lead His people down the wrong road.

The Lord himself had some scathing words to say about the teachers of His day so did Paul and Peter.

Mark 12:38-40

*38 As He taught, Jesus said, "**Watch out for the teachers of the law.** They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces,
39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.
40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. **Such men will be punished most severely.**"*

2 Tim 4:3-4

*3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.
They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

2 Peter 2:1-3

2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.

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2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

I believe you can begin to see how seriously the Lord takes the ministry of a teacher of the Word.

When it comes to the gift ministry of a teacher, we should note that not all called teachers teach the Bible. Many people who have the calling of a teacher end up as teachers or instructors in other areas and this we must recognise. They too have great influence upon our lives and our children, and I personally believe they too will be held accountable for the lives entrusted into their hands. However, our focus is on teachers of the Word of God and their calling and commission.

God has always wanted to communicate His Word to people, and a major way He does that is through teachers. Teachers were necessary in the Old Testament and in the early Church, and they are still necessary today.

Although every Christian can teach, there is a significant difference between the teachings of a Christian with the gift ministry of a teacher and one who does not have that ministry. A person with the ministry of a teacher will teach in a way that differs in quality, quantity, and scope from others who teach in the Body of Christ.

It is like the commission to Elders or Overseers given by Paul.

1 Tim 3:1-2

3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

*2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**...*

We will look at Elders Etc in another study, but sufficient to point out here that the ONLY ministry requirement for such men is to be able to teach. All other requirements are character requirements.

Now it does not say he has to be a 'Teacher', it say's he has to have an ability to teach. If you continue to study 1st and 2nd Timothy you will find Paul's call is that ALL should be able to teach: Older women teaching the younger women how to live Godly lives, Old men doing the same with younger men, and so on.

Just as there is a distinction between a 'Prophet' and one able to prophesy as we dealt with in the subject of the Prophet, so here, there is a distinction from the 'Teacher' and one having an ability to teach.

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Since anyone can take what they have learned and to some extent communicate that to others, it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between someone with the ministry of a teacher and someone who simply has a command of his subject.

One way we can tell if someone has the gift ministry of a teacher is the same way we can identify other ministries: see what comes forth from them over time. The other way is to ask if they are a part of an Ephesians 4:11 ministry team, recognized and supported by the other ministries.

However, the Lord Jesus anoints those he has called to a particular ministry by working in them and empowering them in a special way to express His own ministry as The Teacher and to bless the Body. For that reason, a person's particular ministry will make itself known over time if that person first strives to walk a Godly walk and then presses forward as the Lord leads him.

It is important to realize that no ministry shines forth from a believer unless he or she prepares himself or herself. Whatever one's ministry is, it will function only as well as a person works to perfect what God has put inside of him or her. The first step in bringing forth any ministry is to walk in godliness and do the basics that every Christian is supposed to do, such as pray, give, read the Word, fellowship with others, etc. It is in doing the basics that the Lord Jesus can work in us to reveal His ministry through us.

By focusing on the Hope, a teacher gets strength and energy to get up early, stay up late, memorize verses, read book after book, but mainly 'eat drink and sleep' the Word of God and teach to whomever will listen. Yes, there is a stricter judgment for those who teach, but there is also great reward for those who are willing to do what it takes to accurately and powerfully make known truth from the wonderful Word of God.

Whatever our calling, gifting, ministry or service, the following Scripture in Romans has to be the very bed rock on which it all stands, because this is the very reflection of the Lord Himself.

Rom 12:1-8

2:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

5 So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

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*6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.
7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;
8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

In our 21st Century church culture of “go along to get along,” the importance of truth, and even the fact that there is such a thing as truth, is often lost. However, Christians can be assured that the value of “right” and “truth” is never lost to God. Truth sets people free, but error enslaves. There is a truth, there is that which is “right,” and God wants all men everywhere to know it

*1 Tim 2:4
who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Why does God want all men come to the knowledge of the truth? Well the answer is -

*John 8:31-32
31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to **my teaching**, you are really my disciples.
32 **Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**"*

In opposition to what people normally think about living a Godly Holy life, it is the only way of freedom, and that is what the Lord wants for His people - to be totally free.

*Luke 4:18-19
18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim **freedom** for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*2 Cor 3:17
17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **freedom***

*Gal 5:1
5:1 It is for **freedom** that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

The Lord Jesus has set teachers in His Body with the assigned task of setting forth from God's Word and from the wisdom that is found in it's pages, what is true and right in order to bless and **free** all people.

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Of course, the Adversary has worked hard to keep truth out of the world and to distort it in the church.

Gal 2:4

*4[This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the **freedom we have in Christ Jesus** and to make us slaves.*

It was already happening in Paul's day just as it still happens in to-days 21st century church. Now, just as then, anyone trying to boldly bring forth truth will pay a price.

I'm sure you have heard of C.H.Spurgeon. He was the famous Evangelist and Bible Teacher of the 1800's in London. It is said that he is the founder of that which is called Evangelical.

This is what he was able to do and I quote from "The Forgotten Spurgeon" by Ian Murray.

"Spurgeon took common place truths and subjects that had come to be regarded as somewhat dull and heavy, and presented them in clear and forceful language that men could hardly prevent themselves from being gripped and stirred to their depths. What a wealth of language, doctrine and illustration there is..."

That is the evidence of an anointed Bible Teacher – gifted and given by the Lord to the church. Today he is still one of the most quoted Bible teachers even after his death nearly 150 years ago. Yet he paid a great price for being true to his Lord.

Again I quote what was written about him by his own Baptist denomination. – Definitely not by the Spirit of Jesus.

"... Mr. Spurgeon preaches *himself*. He is nothing unless he is an actor – unless exhibiting that matchless impudence which is his great characteristic, indulging in course familiarity with holy things, declaiming in a ranting and colloquial style, strutting up and down the platform as though he were at the Surry Theatre, boasting of his own intimacy with heaven with nauseating frequency..."

Teachers are supposed to so honor God and His Word that they are willing to pay that price and be the ones through whom God can bring right doctrine to the world. Woe to the teacher that could press into the heart of God and get great revelations of truth for the Body, but for fear of ridicule or rejection teaches something he knows is less than the best God has for His people as Paul puts it,

1 Cor 9:16

16 Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

To make full proof of their ministry, teachers must have a relentless desire to have and hold truth. Teachers cannot afford to have that desire quenched, or be swayed from the truth by people's opinions or public pressure. There is something within them that echo's the sentiments of Paul:

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1 Cor 4:3

3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

That is not to say that teachers cannot be wrong or have no need to be meek in instructing others. On the contrary, teachers must be the meekest of all people. They must be ready, willing, and even excited about learning more truth than they already know. That knowledge must come through study and revelation. If it comes through reproof and correction, so be it.

Truth is the goal.

Why?

Because truth originates in God, and it is He who decrees that it would set people free. We honor God by recognizing that fact, declaring that there is truth, and then diligently working to find it and teach it to others. The true teacher feels genuine pain at the thought of having communicated some form of error, and thus leading God's precious people astray in some way.

One of the major failings among people in the ministry and this includes teachers along with the other 4 ministries in the Church is that they have knuckled under to the pressure of being accepted and/or keeping their jobs. Many preachers and teachers teach things that they do not themselves really believe simply because they do not want to risk losing their friends, their position, or their salary.

Having walked in my calling for more than 45 years now, I firmly believe the Lord energizes teachers to "sniff out" truth. How could he ask them to teach truth to others if they cannot recognize it themselves? However, just as revelation is a still "small" voice, the sniffing process usually begins with small scent.

Maybe a verse does not fit into accepted theology, maybe a teaching does not sit right— Just like C.H. Spurgeon, the teacher is called to press into those areas and make sense of the Word of God but it might get him into trouble with the traditional and the concreted establishment. – Funny, that's exactly what happened to Jesus!

The teacher is not satisfied unless he feels that his audience has "gotten" the message. To the teacher, teaching is not about presentation, it is about learning. Because of that, true teachers are tuned into their audience. Are they receiving? Are they bored? Have they had enough?

If the people have not learned, then the teacher has not taught, and it makes no difference if the presentation was "perfect," had music, illustrations, charts, PowerPoint, or whatever. If the student has not learned, the teacher is, and should be, left with a sad and empty feeling.

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Ezra was “a teacher in the Old Testament, well versed in the Law of Moses”

Ezra 7:6

6 this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given.

In the book of Nehemiah we find he and other Levites taught the people.

Neh 8:8

8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Ezra knew that if the people did not understand what the Law said, than all his teaching was pointless.

Interestingly, Ezra’s work involved translation, just as the teacher’s work does today. The Law was written in Hebrew, but some of the people in Ezra’s audience, having just come back from 70 years in Babylon, spoke only Aramaic, so getting the people to understand involved translating the Hebrew into Aramaic.

Today in the English-speaking world, teachers bring the essence of the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament into English, and enable people to understand.

A true New Testament Christ anointed teacher will be skilful at his craft. In other words, he will be constantly reading, studying, learning, finding better ways to communicate the true message clearly. The true teacher does not want to show his ability, or his great knowledge of Hebrew or Greek, all he desires is to communicate the divine principle in God’s Word so his hearers can live a Godly and Holy life and be acceptable and pleasing in the site of the Lord.

The teacher desires to present a good product – you and me – to the Lord. He like any other ministry wants to see the fruit of his labors in the lives of his hearers. So he will study to show himself approved unto God

2 Tim 2:15

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

So the teacher’s life and character, like the other ministries, must demonstrate what they preach, else who will put any value on what is being taught.

There are so many distractions, things that need to be done that the time to really study is limited. Again this is the problem with the traditional 21st century way of church. Because of the “one man band” ministry concept, those who are called and anointed in the ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, cannot focus on what the Lord himself has

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called them to do because the church board won't pay them if they don't do the 1,000 other things expected of them.

A teacher by nature of his ministry must spend hours in reading and searching, and exploring the Word and the writings of Godly men of like ministry. Now because at the end of this he hasn't produced a 'widget' that can be seen, then the earthy and worldly minded think he has done nothing and he is again called before the church board. "O God, please save us from such boards".

Again we as earthly, unspiritual, carnally minded people do to our ministries exactly the same as they did nearly 150 years ago to Spurgeon and 2,000 years ago to Christ Himself.

Yet all these ministries of Christ Himself are there to bring us into maturity – away from that kind of rubbishy thinking. But as long as church runs the way it has been run for these hundreds of years, and for as long as the 21s century church refuses to become again the New Testament church, then we are going to go round this mountain again and again, just like the rebellious children of Israel.

Remember, if anyone pursues the truth, then you will have visits from the devil in some form or other (usually via people) to hinder you from finding and then sharing the truth, but we must press on, our reward and calling is too high to miss out on.

Remember teachers along with all other ministries are only human.
All struggle with the tensions and responsibilities of that humanity.

In that vein, something that every teacher of the Word wrestles with to one degree or another is the conflict created between what he clearly sees in the Word of God and his inability to perfectly model it before people. As teachers, the text of Scripture can be very clear, but the practice of it is as difficult for all of us. How can I teach important truths such as having great faith in God when I sometimes wrestle with my own trust?

The Lord recognizes the battle, and does not ask that teachers master the practice of a subject before they teach it. Rather he asks that we teach it in a way that sets forth his heart about the subject while revealing our personal struggles, thus empowering others in their own struggles.

That is not weakness, it is identifying with all of us in our weakness so we can share and bear each other up in prayer and be a support and not a critic.