Chapter Twelve

The Ministry of the Teacher

The Lord Jesus himself is the first example I will discuss of one who was called to the teaching ministry. The teaching ministry is vividly seen in his life and ministry. His teaching and preaching are tactfully blended together. This is seen clearly in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 when he is described as:

“teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.”

Jesus’ words are described as teaching with authority and life in Matthew 7:29 and John 6:63. His words were not only delivered with authority but they were and still are infused with life giving power. The Word is quick (living) and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). How much more would we accomplish in the teaching ministry if it were the Word of God we would give forth instead of our own words or opinions?

I will endeavor to examine several New Testament teaching concerning the teaching ministry. It is clear that there is a definite and distinct ministry of teaching presented in the New Testament. However, it is necessary to proclaim emphatically that teachers are to be called and equipped by the Spirit of God. This is just as true of the teaching ministry as it is with any of the five-fold ministry. The ministry of teachers is to be duly recognized and approved by the other Elders within the Local Assembly.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The teaching ministry is to be a continuing ministry within the local assembly. It is a ministry that is to be passed on so that each succeeding generation will have the benefit of this much needed source of spiritual strength and growth. God never intended the teaching ministry to domineer in the five-fold ministry. He also never intended for it to be neglected:

“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” (Galatians 6:6)

In Timothy 2:2, Paul exhorted young Timothy to see that others would be properly equipped to carry on the work of the ministry:

“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.”

If this were the only verse in the New Testament referring to this subject it would stand alone to emphasize the necessity of the continuing ministry of the teacher since it shows a sequence of four generations of Christian teachers (Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others) all dependent on the teachings of their predecessors.

James also instructs his readers in the teaching ministry. In chapter three, verse one of his Epistle, he warns his brethren that they should: “not be many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” I believe this exhortation cautions us to walk very carefully and to be completely assured of our calling into a ministry---whether it be that of the teacher or any of the other of the five-fold ministries. James places an awesome responsibility on all those within the teaching ministry because teaching has a greater impact on the lives and character of those being taught.

James 3:1 offers a sharp warning against thrusting ourselves forward in the teaching ministry. We must not only completely sure that we have bee called by God, but that God has also equipped us to fulfill this call. Eve then it is necessary for us to step into the ministry in all humility and be sure that our example is teaching the same message as our words.

**The Importance Of The Teaching Ministry**

The teaching ministry can be likened to the foundation of a building. Without it, the local Body would be very unstable, never able to come to maturity. The lack of a sound teaching ministry leaves the flock an unstable, emotional entity who live solely for an emotional “fix” from service to service. A Body that is solely emotional has no concrete material with which to build a sound spiritual structure. Every church must have a balance of all of the five-fold ministries.

Matthew 28:19,20 instructs those who are called into the teaching ministry to:

“Go ye therefore and TEACH all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: TEACHING them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen.”

The word “teach” refers to the winning of the lost, it literally means to “MAKE DISCIPLES”. The word “teaching” refers to the training of those disciples once they have been won to Christ.

God has given us the authority to speak his word in his name to bring about the desired results of growth and maturity within the Body of Christ. He has invested in us the ability and the authority to speak a “thus saith the Lord”.

Teaching, as Christ’s example demonstrates, was and is his method of extending his kingdom. however, just how does teaching fit into the overall ministry of the Church? Just how does it relate to the ministry of the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Pastor? There is truth in the statement that we cannot qualify nor effectively function within any one of these ministries unless we are a teacher. One of the major differences in the qualifications of the Elders and Deacons, listed in Titus 1:9, is that the Elder must be one who has been taught the faithful Word. Paul also writes to Timothy that an Elder or Bishop must be able to teach (I Timothy 3:2). Whatever your calling into the fivefold ministry, you must be able to teach.

Deacons are not required to teach but it would be a plus in his favor for further ministry. This has been portrayed in the lives of at least two of the original seven deacons chosen in Acts 6:5. Goth Stephen and Philip went into ministry, beyond the call of duty, as able Preachers and Teachers of the Word.**[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Some men active in these ministries will function to a greater degree in the teaching aspect of their ministry than others will. This is not because of their particaular calling as an Apostle, or Prophet, or Evangelist, or Pastor but depends on the gift of the Holy Ghost which equips the individual to minister to the needs of the flock he is minding. God equips the servant to meet the need.

In order to teach, we must not only have the knowledge but also the ability to present the knowledge effectively--so that others may learn and retain it. TEACHING has not begun unless LEARNING has taken place.

Although all of the fivefold ministries require some teaching, there is a ministry that is solely devoted to teaching. This ministry may be seen int the “Traveling Teacher” who will also function as an Apostle, Prophet or Evangelist. There is a necessity, however, for Elders who are called to the teaching ministry within the Local Assembly (Galatians 6:6).

There may be novices on the local level who may not yet qualify as Elders yet who show promise in the Teaching Ministry. They may be deacons or they may not have progressed to that level yet. Although these men may be used to a degree in teaching, they must always function under the supervision of established leaders within the local Body. Their God-given ministries may be used in such areas as youth or children’s ministries, ladies ministries or, possibly, in home meetings. As they grow and develop, their ministry may well develop to the capacity of local leadership as Deacon or Elder. While any individual is functioning as a teacher, they must continue in submission to those over them, seek to develop their ministry through intensive study and prayer, and earnestly strive to qualify scripturally for the office of Elder (as seen in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1).

Next, I will discuss how spiritual teaching operates. There must be a balance between the practical and the theoretical at all times. A man’s doctrine and his experience must balance one another. Our knowledge of the “written Word” must equal our relationship with the “living Word”. We should teach first by example and then by word.

Our everyday life must always speak of a life that is hid with Christ in God. This same lesson was taught by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount.

“But whosoever shall “do” and “teach” them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

Demonstration and example have always been the best teaching methods. It is not the only way to teach but it is the best way to produce a Body Ministry within the Local Assembly.

Christ, as always, is our supreme example as the greatest teacher. He demonstrated the Sermon on the Mount by his personality and his practical dealings with people in the every day affairs of life. He demonstrated that the Gospel of the Kingdom had come by his healing of the sick. He demonstrated his power over creation by calming the waves. Isn’t this “DOING” and “TEACHING”? One who is not doing should not be teaching. It is imperative that a teacher do and then teach. If you desire to bring the flock to spiritual maturity, you must both instruct them and demonstrate what you teach. The Body must see it done to truly learn the lesson.

Doing is only one aspect of an effective teaching ministry. It is also essential that the Holy Ghost be able to “ILLUMINATE” our minds as to Divine Truths if we are to be able to effectively teach these truths. Even an unregenerate mind can have an academic knowledge of the Bible. Some of the most reprobate individuals have what is sometimes called a working knowledge of the Bible--often just enough to create a stumbling block to finding eternal life. For the Word of God to bring life, either to the teacher or the student, it must be coupled with the activity and ministry of the Holy Ghost as seen in I Corinthians 2:14. Verses 6-14 could be titled “the Principle of Spiritual Revelation”.

There is no way possible that we can know God by MIND alone. Spiritual knowledge does not come by human deduction or reason. God is clearly portrayed as a reasonable being in Isaiah 1:18 when he says: “Come now, and let us reason together.” There is room for reason in the work of God as is shown in the Apostle’s decision to choose the fist Deacons in Acts 6:2, “It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables.”

A teacher in the Body of Christ is not only a reasonable and well-informed individual with a vast knowledge, he must also be open to the move of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing wrong with being endued with vast knowledge as long as the principle of revelation is active as well. One aspect of the work of the Spirit is to teach us that which the Lord would have us to know.

The Holy Ghost has taken the place of Christ as the Divine Teacher during this dispensations of the Church Age (John 14:26). It is the job of the Spirit to teach us and to bring all things to our remembrance. This facet of his ministry is nowhere more crucial than in the ministry of the teacher who must often recall truths on the spur of the moment (Luke21:12-15).

It is common knowledge that much that was revealed to the Apostle Paul was received by direct revelation from the Lord via the Holy Ghost. Paul was also an avid student and reader. This was revealed as he speaks of having sat at the feet of Gameliel and when he mentions the books and parchments he wanted brought to him.

What I am trying to impress upon you is that we must give ourselves to serious and in-depth study while we remain open to the revelation which comes only from the Spirit of God. However, extended periods of study during times of spiritual dryness are very dangerous because, without the Spirits unction, we may easily regress to pursuing truth purely on a mental basis. As we plunge into a period of study,we must pray and seek the Spirit’s quickening on our Body, Soul and Spirit, that our study will be enriched and anointed. Such topics as Hermeneutics, Bible Study Methods, are important, yet they may be religiously used and you might still dry up spiritually. A good practice to employ during your extended periods of study is to take time to worship, praise, and pray and, I could add, to physically relax.

If you try to treat the Bible as you would any other written book, you will operate solely on the human level. You will never be fit or qualified to step into the ministry of a Bible teacher. We need a sound balance between biblical doctrine and spiritual life to be suited for the task and ministry of a mature, anointed, Bible teacher. An individual who has sound doctrine but is lacking in spiritual life or experience, produces in his Bible teaching a dead, powerless religion.

On the other end of the spectrum, one who has a powerful experience and a rich spiritual life, yet lacks good sound doctrine produces nothing but emotionalism in his ministry. We need a healthy blend of spiritual life and sounds doctrine and Bible study to produce a truly healthy , mature group of believers.

Most of us have a tendency to lean either toward excessive study or spiritual life in any particular stage of growth in our Christian walk. It is a good sign of maturity when we begin to find a balance. It is the Spirit dwelling within us who is able to bring this balance and give us the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). It is the in-working of the Holy Ghost that enables us to discern and know spiritual truths far above and beyond the sensual and natural level.

Paul’s primary concern was that new converts would enter into the spiritual life. It wasn’t the theologians he was encouraging, but rather the common, run-of-the-mill, Christian. He not only offers understanding and knowledge of the things of Christ as seen in Ephesians 1:15-18. He also expresses his desire to see them strengthened, rooted and grounded in Christ, and to be endowed with a comprehension of the deep things of God (Ephesians 3:16-19).

We can see from these portions of Scripture, as well as from I Corinthians 1:26-31, that spiritual insight and usefulness in the ministry is not dependent upon intellectual ability. In order for a man to fulfill the Biblical Ministry of Teacher, he must be one who is so in-dwelt by the Holy Ghost that he is capable of receiving spiritual truth and is able to impart this firsthand truth to others. He will only be effective in as much as he knows the truth, that he has an experiential knowledge. As the Scripture puts it, the husbandman must be the first partaker of the fruit. Even then, however, he must be able to organize this knowledge in a logical, intelligible manner as God infers:

Precept upon precept, Precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. (Isaiah 28:10,13) He must be able to think, talk and write with logic and clarity. A good teacher is able to speak in a way that is easily understood and at the same time interesting to listen to.

I would like to close this chapter by saying that if you feel a definite call into the teaching ministry and have difficulty in presenting good teaching or building good messages, a study in Homiletics could be of help, but above all else don’t eliminate the necessity of depending on the Holy Ghost to teach and empower you.

1. This principle is clearly supported in Ephesians 4:11; I Corinthians 12:28; Acts 13:1 and Romans 12:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The following verses give examples of those who were active in the fivefold ministry who were able to teach: Acts 13:1; I Timothy 3:2; II Timothy 1:11; 2:2; 4:2-5; Titus 1:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)