

An Appreciation for Teachers

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In American culture, teaching is likely one of the most under-appreciated professions. Teachers who work hard to reach their pupils and help them to grow in knowledge and character are often not looked upon with much respect or gratitude. The truth is that they have a very important job. However, if teaching general subjects such as mathematics and science is important, how much more so is teaching God's Word, which can make people "wise unto salvation"? (2 Timothy 3:15-17). If any teachers in this world should be appreciated, it is those who diligently teach others the Truth of God's Word. Let us notice some reasons why faithful Bible teachers are a great blessing.

TEACHERS EXPOSE

The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit to remember everything Christ had said to them (John 14:26). We, however, do not have the miraculous ability to remember every Word of Scripture. In order for us to remember, we must repeatedly expose our minds to God's Word. This is one of the duties of a teacher – to expose minds to God's Word.

Timothy's mind was exposed to the Word of God from his youth (2 Timothy 3:15). Apparently his mother and grandmother had a key role in this (2 Timothy 1:5). Parents are not just providers of physical needs; they must also provide spiritual food for their children. The general principles of the following passage would still apply today:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; cf. 4:9; Genesis 18:19; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).

Parents are to be teachers who constantly expose their children's minds to God's Word. This will help their children fight the temptations of Satan (Psalm 119:11). This duty does not simply belong to Bible class teachers or preachers. Parents who are constantly teaching their children the Truth of God's Word are invaluable blessings to their children.

TEACHERS EXPLAIN

Teaching and preaching involves taking the wisdom of God expressed in the Scriptures and explaining it to others. When the Law of Moses was read to the people of Ezra's day, there was also an explanation given: *"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading"* (Nehemiah 8:8). There is nothing wrong with using some uninspired words to help explain inspired words. If the words of uninspired men were totally useless and forbidden, then a so-called "Bible class" or "sermon" would simply consist of reading Scripture, with no discussion, illustrations, or applications.

Although a preacher must *"preach the Word"* (2 Tim. 4:2), he does so by using some of his own words to cause the hearers to better understand. He can also show how a particular Scripture harmonizes with other Scriptures, thereby giving the listeners a better understanding of the entire Bible—not just the particular passage being read. Of course, all of this must be done in total harmony with all the Scriptures, and teachers will be held accountable for what they have taught (James 3:1; 1 Peter 4:11).

TEACHERS EXPEDITE

Teachers expedite, or speed up, the learning process (Acts 18:24-26). We all have a responsibility study God's Word on our own (1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11), but teachers can actually help us to grow beyond what we could attain through personal study alone. The Bible class environment itself, with input from others who have studied, can be a great force for quickly increasing knowledge. This does not mean that the individual could not have learned such things in his own private study, but it likely would have taken much longer on his own. Like the power of multiple computers being combined to perform a great task, multiple brains combining their collective reasoning power, wisdom, and knowledge toward understanding the Scriptures can help speed up the process of understanding.

TEACHERS ENCOURAGE

Teachers can bring things to mind which we had not considered, and they can challenge us to grow beyond our current level of growth (Ephesians 4:14-15; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). Teachers are also leaders. Whether a teacher sees himself or herself in this light does not change this fact. Words are powerful, and a good teacher can use those words to motivate others to action. The most powerful words are God's Words, of course (Psalm 33:6-9; James 1:21; Hebrews 4:12), and a Bible teacher has the privilege of wielding the most powerful Words to the eternal benefit of others. Every teacher should use God's Word to motivate

students to serve God faithfully.

TEACHERS EXEMPLIFY

Before Ezra could teach others God's Law, he had to first seek it and do it: *"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments"* (Ezra 7:10). Jesus was the greatest teacher of all, and He taught by example as well as words: *"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach"* (Acts 1:1). Paul left an example that others could follow (1 Corinthians 11:1). Elders are teachers (*"apt to teach,"* 1 Timothy 3:2), but they also must live examples we can follow: *"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation"* (Hebrews 13:7). The congregation with whom I work has a doctrinal questionnaire that teachers must fill out before teaching, and one of the final questions is this: "Do you set a good example by putting into practice to the best of your ability all of the above principles in your own life?" We believe this is important, and God said it is important (Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:21-22).

CONCLUSION

Every Christian must be a teacher, in one capacity or another. When we are first converted we are "babies" in Christ (1 Peter 2:2), but all Christian babies must grow up to be teachers!

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Not every Christian can teach from the pulpit or in every classroom (1 Timothy 2:12), but we all have ways we can teach others. Teaching one person can affect multiple generations, and when teaching someone, there is no telling how far-reaching the results will be. One person taught may go on to teach hundreds or thousands of others, who also go on to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:19-20). For those who take this task seriously and carry it out faithfully, please know that you are rare, valuable, and tremendously appreciated.