



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do

Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

Resourcing for Prayer Network

SPIRITUAL GUIDELINES (13)

The Gift of Teaching

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Teaching appears twice in the list of spiritual gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit and noted in the New Testament. It appears as a natural gift in the Romans listing *"If it is teaching let us give all we have to our teaching"* (Romans 12:7J.B. Phillips New Testament) where it encourages Christians to teach whole-heartedly - to give of their best. And it is recognised as one of the ministry roles for building up the church in Ephesians *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ"*. (Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV)

Four Ministries or Five?

Many translations combine the teaching role with that of pastor to make a four-fold ministry rather than a five-fold one and this is often what is expected (and fulfilled) in our churches. But there are distinct differences between pastoring and teaching although both require the same concern for the welfare of the flock. But I have known many with a pastoral heart for their own 'flock' who do not have the gift of teaching. Teachers also need to have students - those who want to learn. In Jesus' day the Rabbis (teachers) attracted students to their 'schools'.

Professional Teaching?

It is interesting that the practice of the rabbis in Testament times was to have a trade to support their own teaching ministries as it was considered wrong to receive money for imparting spiritual truths. The rabbi worked at his trade one-third of the day and studied or taught during the remainder. In our own culture until recently leaders in Brethren Assemblies were lay people who also had a job. Many teaching ministries continue this tradition and accept 'love gifts' rather than make charges.

Preaching or Teaching?

In many churches teaching is often confused with preaching - which is exhortation and often given from a pulpit - 6 feet above contradiction! Whereas it could be said that the message **preached** is the message announced and is primarily for the purpose of conversion; the message **taught** is the message explained, clarified, and applied, with exhortation to live by it which is primarily for the purpose of building faith, Christian conviction and character.

More than Knowledge?

Teaching with a purpose should always have active participation. It is more than just head knowledge although that is important. Teachers should always have the needs of the pupils in mind and should develop a

relationship with them so that they are not constantly being taught things they already know. A good teacher always starts by finding out what is known and then expanding, or correcting, that knowledge.

In our Universities, education has recently moved from primarily head knowledge (and education for education's sake) where theology was regarded as the Queen of the Sciences to having a more practical element. Seminars where students share the knowledge they have learned, and Tutorials with a one-to-one relationship are considered even more important than the less personal Lectures where the Professor introduces the students to new concepts but does not engage in discussion. Many ministerial training colleges are now based on in-service church-based training where education takes place alongside practical experience. Our schools place a greater emphasis upon the 'discovery' method than learning by rote (although this should not be totally neglected). It is often considered a greater value to know 'how' and 'why' and 'where' to find information than to have it to hand or memorised.

Again, as you teach you learn. Knowledge was shared effectively in the Dame Schools during the early days of education in Britain as the older children taught others what they had just learned it not only consolidated this logically in their own minds but also had other benefits. Perhaps a modern outcome of this is should be that older people should be teaching the young - passing on their knowledge (and the baton of the faith) to the next generation.

In the rabbinical schools or 'Yeshivas', teachers usually made the students think issues through for themselves and a question would be answered with another question. This is how Jesus taught too. (Matthew 9.1-7)

Teaching can also be considered good or bad. Discernment is always required and judged by results - even Jesus said '*do not do what the Pharisees do as they do not practise what they preach*'. (Matthew 23.3 NIV)

Teaching should have some sustainable outcomes. There is truth in the Chinese proverb '*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime*'.

Outcomes?

Teaching should have further positive outcomes and action. Jesus had built up such a relationship with his disciples while on earth that he knew his last words to them in the Great Commission would bear fruit: "Then Jesus came to them and said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV). They were commissioned to do more than just making, baptising and teaching new disciples; the emphasis was upon teaching new believers how to obey.

Judaism has survived thousands of years because the Shema requires Jews to teach the faith in the family *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates."* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NIV)

Learning More

The more the wise know, the more they realise there is to learn. Education is a continuous process - it is never finished - there is always something new to learn - so there is more to teach. Hebrews 6 gives a glimpse of growing to maturity beyond that which is considered deep knowledge in many of our churches *"Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."* (Hebrews 6:1 NIV).

Now there is a continuing challenge for those with the gift of teaching!

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