

Part 3 – The Purpose of Teaching

The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy:

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2).

This is the job of the disciple, to be a teacher, whether at a Sunday School level, CYC, inside the ecclesia, or to the world outside of our ecclesial halls. We are all charged with this job albeit in different circumstances.

Now the disciple has to be vigilant in carrying out this duty. All the prophets, from Moses to Christ were charged with the same duty:

“thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (Jeremiah 1:7).

This was not their own message, but God’s, and they were to be faithful messengers.

The goal was to evoke a response in the children of Israel:

“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Habakkuk 2:2).

The message of God is designed to be a call to action to everyone that hears it. The gospel message is a call to action, a call to repentance, and a call to dedicate our lives to God and his purpose.

The messenger had to personally accept the message first, as Ezekiel was instructed:

“Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears” (Ezekiel 3:10).

Once he heard with his ears, and received it into his heart, he then had to pass it on:

“And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (v11).

This isn’t an isolated incident. Ezra is described as someone who had done his homework:

“This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.” (Ezra 7:6)

The word ready means diligent, skilled, prompt, quick or to hasten. This study would help him later on when he took the platform to teach the people as is recorded in Nehemiah:

“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)

Ezra had been diligent in studying the word, but also in living it as we read later on:

“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)

He first “prepared his heart”, meaning to arrange in order, or to direct and determine. He “prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD” – seek is the Hebrew word ‘darash’ meaning to beat a path to, to frequent a place. He was frequently in the book of God, wearing out the pages of his bible. Next comes the action, he PREPARED his heart to SEEK so he could DO. He put into action in his own life what he learned, and then he TAUGHT. This is what James exhorts us:

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (James 1:22)

A messenger who did not receive the word in his heart would be a hypocrite, a play actor. We are exhorted:

“the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Timothy 1:5).

A faithful messenger lives his message. He doesn’t feign it – meaning to play act.

It is clear a prophet’s job was not telling people what they wanted to hear, but being a faithful messenger for God. This is what the prophet told Eli God was looking for:

“I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind” (1 Samuel 2:35).

So, the goal is to align our heart and mind with God’s and then speak his words, so others can do the same.

In the First Century there were those who,

“Desired to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Timothy 1:7).

This is a challenge for all of us. We are susceptible to the pride of life, and we have to check our motives. Ecclesial problems occurred in the First Century because some desired prominence:

“I wrote unto the ecclesia: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.” (3 John 9)

The purpose of teaching cannot be self-glorification, but rather the glorification of the Father and his truth. Proper Bible study and teaching does not glorify messenger, but the one whose message he is carrying:

“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 23:28)

We do not want to be amongst those who

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.” (Jeremiah 23:16)

The challenge is clearly laid out in Timothy:

“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity... devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching... Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:12–16).

So that is the challenge to any would-be teacher. Find out what God wants from you, and then do it! The best teaching example you have is your own conduct. This is followed by the words you say, which will be validated because you live them in your life.

God responds to those who respond to him. Daniel is told this:

“Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.” (Daniel 10:12)

Daniel “set his heart to understand”, so the study came first. Then he “chastened” himself, meaning to “press into the mold” or to be conformed to the word of God. Then, as we know, he spoke to the people. God respected this and sent his angel Gabriel in response to Daniel’s prayer.

So the process is clear. Study, live it, teach it. However, the first step is to ask for God’s wisdom:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” (James 1:5–6)

May God bless you on your study, in living the word, and in teaching it by word and example.