

Session 8

Role of Men in the Church

Man as Teacher - Moses

“Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you...Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.” Deuteronomy 1:1, 2

“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.” I Peter 4:4

- I. The challenge to the role of men as teachers in our society.
 - A. To a great extent we accept the adage that “Those who can work do work. Those who can’t work teach.”
 - B. Teaching is not rewarded today, neither through prestige nor financial support.
 1. Teachers are among the poorest paid members of our society given their educational background (both high school and college).
 2. Teachers typically rank fairly low on scales of job prestige.
 3. Usually teachers aspire to graduate beyond teaching (administration, research).
 - C. Teachers also may be among the most poorly trained members of our society given the responsibility we entrust to them.
 1. When you consider the time a physician trains to care for your body (at least 11 years post high school), the time a lawyer trains to care for your legal rights (8-9 years post high school) and the time a computer scientist trains to care for your computer (many specific training experiences and mentoring), the time devoted to training our teachers is woefully inadequate. This is not to suggest that many teachers are not trained excellently and are very devoted to their profession and their own continuing education. Rather, our *societal expectations* for teacher education and training are fairly minimal.
 2. We often believe that anyone can teach almost regardless of background (if you need a part time job, almost whatever your background, you can find work as a substitute teacher). Again, this is not to suggest that many substitute teachers don’t bring excellent backgrounds to the classroom. Rather our *societal expectations* of the background required for substitute teaching are minimal.
 - D. When “women’s work” was considered less important than men’s work, teaching was a profession which was considered appropriate for women and perhaps not appropriate for men. Some of this prejudice persists today.
 - E. Despite our high expectations for teacher results, until only recently has society set any type of standard expectation (and that expectation is far from adequate – success with test scores).

- F. At one time many children viewed becoming a teacher as their career goal. Far fewer aspire to become teachers today than in the past.
- II. The challenge to the role of men as teachers in the church.
- A. Churches of Christ continue to be blessed with many men who are excellent teachers and who search the scriptures in order to prepare for their teaching assignments. Nevertheless, we almost certainly do not find among our men today as many who aspire to teach and who are qualified to do so proportionally as we did in the past. Such a finding is even more disturbing when we consider how much better educated our men are today than they were fifty years ago.
 - B. Even in churches of the Restoration movement, there has been a widening of the gap between the Biblical training of our ministers and the lay men of the congregation.
 - 1. In most congregations of at least 250 members, the minister has a college degree plus some type of training in the ministry (frequently three additional years). Fifty years ago a minister with a master's degree would have been a rarity.
 - 2. Whereas in the past, Bible was taught in our colleges (and even our grade schools), we find very little teaching for persons not preparing to become ministers.
 - 3. Our boys who "grow up in the church" know much less Bible today than they did fifty years ago.
 - C. Men throughout our brotherhood are less likely to be scrutinized for their knowledge of the Bible when being considered for leadership positions than in the past. (This does not mean that many of our men who are leaders are not Bible students. Rather, we frequently don't consider their knowledge of the Bible when we review them for positions of leadership. We select men for their public speaking, interpersonal and administrative skills or perhaps their good attitudes and willingness to work – good qualities for leaders but not necessarily correlated with Bible study and ability to teach.)
 - D. Men do not study the Bible as we once did.
 - 1. Our busy life styles do not lend themselves to periods of Bible study (we do well to find a quiet time for prayer each day).
 - 2. Men don't have the skills for independent Bible study. They typically don't own reference works to assist them in study. They have never participated in a structured Bible study.
 - 3. Men don't participate nearly as often in "outside Sunday morning" Bible studies as do women (Bible Study Fellowship, Beth Moore series, Tuesday morning Bible studies).
 - E. Our expectations for men as teachers are low.
 - 1. If a man is a good speaker, if he can hold our attention during a class (perhaps by telling good stories or good jokes) we generally consider that adequate for a class.

2. Frequently we judge a class on the basis of the degree of discussion. As long as we can express our opinions, whether we learn anything or not, we consider the class a success.
 3. We probably have uncoupled to some extent our expectation that good male teachers are serious students of the Bible from our judgment as to whether men are good teachers or not.
 4. We frequently may ask a man to teach the night before and often consider it the rule rather than the exception that the man has not prepared for the class in such cases. We may even view it a sign of “strength” that a man can stand before a class and keep us awake if he hasn’t studied.
 5. We are much more likely to hear a man say that he has not had time to prepare for a class than that he has worked hard preparing for a class (of course, saying that he has worked hard places him at some risk of not meeting an expectation, so men frequently keep the expectations low to protect themselves).
- F. We don’t have good benchmarks to determine whether a man is a good teacher or not. We have no standardized tests to judge our Biblical knowledge or changes in behavior. Our expectations from our ministers are fairly high but we don’t really know what we expect from our male teachers (except keep us awake and don’t upset us – teach, don’t meddle).
- G. If there is one area within the church today where women clearly outshine men, it probably is in the quality of their teaching and the preparation they put into their teaching.

III. Moses, lawgiver and teacher.

- A. Moses was Israel’s greatest teacher. He gave them the law and the explanation of the law (Deuteronomy).
- B. Moses gave us the great commandments regarding teaching and learning the law.
1. “Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them...Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it...” Deuteronomy 4:1, 2
 2. “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 doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:6-9
- C. Moses demonstrates many of the characteristics of the great teacher.
1. Moses was not just a teacher, he was a doer (he lead Israel out of the land of Egypt). The best teachers are often those who have been there before, who have gone through the experience. Moses knew about teaching the law because God had taught him about the law. Moses knew the importance of obedience to the law because he had been tested by God in his obedience.

2. Moses went through a very long period of training to be a teacher.
 - a. Moses was well educated in the ways of the world. (Acts 7:22)
 - b. Moses went through a long period of initiation (a period of humble work) before he became a great teacher and leader. (Acts 7:22-28)
 - c. He hesitated to become a leader and teacher. (Exodus 3) He knew he was called by God to be a leader of the people. Teaching was not self serving.
 - d. Moses was not a great speaker initially. Exodus 4:10
 - e. Only during the latter third of his life did Moses become the greatest teacher in Israel.
 - f. Moses became a teacher (lawgiver) following his role as leader of Israel out of Egypt.
 - g. Moses had struggled just as Israel had struggled even during the time he was the great teacher and lawgiver to Israel. He disobeyed God and knew the consequences. (Numbers 20:6-13)
 3. Moses stood between God and the people he taught on Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17) The teacher of God's people must experience a close walk with God individually.
 4. Moses reputation as a great teacher rests on the fact that he brought the word of God to the people and he interpreted that word clearly.
 - a. "Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew...I will proclaim the name of the Lord." Deuteronomy 32:1-3
 - b. "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day...They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." Deuteronomy 33:46, 47
- D. Moses is a great example to us of the man as teacher.

IV. Steps for men to take in order to become excellent teachers of God's word.

- A. Look upon yourselves as called to teach your children. Every man with children should strive to be a worthy teacher.
 1. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." I Peter 3:15
 2. Just as we have an answer for questions asked by our children regarding everyday life (e.g. How does the TV work?), men should have an answer to spiritual questions (e.g. How do we know there is a God?). Every man should view himself as a teacher of his children.
- B. Prepare to teach, whether at home or in the church, by study and prayer.
 1. "Get wisdom, get understanding, do not forget my words or swerve from them." Proverbs 4:5
 2. Jesus assumed his listeners studied the scripture. Yet study must be accompanied by an open and receptive mind. "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." John 5:39

3. Just as the surgeon studies the body in detail such that his study can be applied before he performs an operation, the Christian man must study the scripture in detail such that God's word can be applied to the operations of life.
 4. Recognize that, like Moses, a man in his family, as teacher, stands between God and his children. No more responsible position can be imagined.
- C. Look upon teaching in the church as a calling (it is not for everyone, it is not necessarily fun). Ephesians 4:11. Men should take seriously whether they have been called to teach in the church or not.
 - D. Men who accept the call to teach in the church must accept that responsibility seriously.
 1. Teach for a purpose (the student should be changed after the lesson).
 2. Prepare in prayer and study such that no apologies are needed. (Spend no less time or effort in preparing to teach a Bible class than preparing to present a plan to your manager at work.)
 3. If questions arise during lessons, the teacher should search for answers if the answers are not clear. The teacher must be honest about what he knows and what he does not know. He should not answer any question flippantly.
 4. Evaluate your teaching to determine ways you can become a more effective teacher.
 - E. Devote yourself to regular study of scripture, even when no teaching assignment is before you.
 - F. Accumulate resources for teaching (concordances, study aids, commentaries). Use the church library.
- V. Steps for the church to take in supporting men as teachers.
- A. The church should highlight the importance of cultivating excellent teachers and the need for such teachers.
 1. Teachers should be among those most highly praised in our congregations.
 2. Teachers should be known for their knowledge and wisdom, not only for their speaking skills or theatrical abilities.
 3. The ability to teach should be a key characteristic of our church leaders.
 - B. The church should take the responsibility to train its teachers, both in teaching our children and teaching adults. The church should recognize that very few men have ever received training in either Bible study or teaching.
 - C. Just as a medical school (or other professional school) designs a specific four year curriculum to insure that students have acquired the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to be a doctor (or other profession), the church should design a curriculum to insure that students are prepared for the Christian walk. This curriculum should span both lessons from the pulpit and lessons in our classes.

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