

## Opening Words

Is it possible that every man in a church can learn to teach and should learn to teach? I thought that was a spiritual gift? Listen today and learn how this can become a reality in your life and a vital area of character growth.

## 10 Living Above Reproach – Able to Teach, Not Pugnacious

How can we men be above reproach in the public arena of life? We have looked at our home life, we have covered many areas related to our private life, now we are going to look at areas that deal with our relationships.

There are eight public areas in the letters that Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus. Let me list them for you:

- Able to teach
- Not pugnacious
- Gentle
- Uncontentious
- Not self-willed
- Not quick tempered
- Just
- A good reputation with those outside the church

Let's look at the first area. Paul says a man of character is a man who can teach. This is the only quality among the 20 qualities listed that has anything to do with skill or ability. As you know, I have been sharing with you that these qualities in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are for all men and some will look at this and say, "see, I knew this wasn't for all men – I am not a good teacher. This is only for leaders." But I say, "not so fast." Titus 1 elaborates on this quality by saying that a man must hold fast to the faithful word, and he must be able to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict the truth of the Gospel. Should not every man in the church be equipped for that?

I want to point out an overlooked verse about teaching found in 2 Timothy 2:24-25. Listen to Paul's words: "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition." Did you hear the phrase "able to teach" in this passage? I'm sure you did. But did you also notice that the phrase is sandwiched in the middle of four other phrases and words that pertain to a man's character? A man must not be quarrelsome. He must be kind. He must be patient when he is wronged, and he must correct with gentleness. These are four qualities that go into making a good teacher.

You see, when we think of someone being able to teach we normally think of a great orator, of someone who is in front of a lot of people and who has a dynamic delivery and able to hold the attention of people for a great period of time. But Paul doesn't explain "able to teach" in this way.

Paul explains it by listing skills in handling people who are encountering problems and disagreements. To qualify as someone *able to teach* you must first not have a love for arguing. Paul said the bond-servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome. The goal of teaching is not to win an argument but to win a heart. We never win hearts by stacking up debating points.

Paul says we must be kind and when other people wrong us we must not retaliate but be patient with them. This doesn't mean that we don't speak the truth because Paul talks about correcting others, but he says we do this with gentleness. Again, the reason is that our goal is to win hearts. Listen to Paul's words in Colossians 1:28: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."

Do you see the goal? Our goal is not to win an argument. Our goal is not to score theological points. Our goal is to bring every man to maturity through our teaching. Yes, we may have some points of debate. Yes, we must consistently teach the truth about Christ. And Paul says we must at times admonish, or, as it says in some translations, *we must warn*, but we must always keep the goal in mind – to bring men to a place of maturity before God.

Now let me share one more point about being able to teach. Men, all of you should grow and learn to teach at least one other man or perhaps a small group because teaching is not so much a function of imparting information but a function of imparting a way of life. Those of you who are married with children should teach your family. This does not mean that you sit them in a row, and that you set up a podium in the living room and preach to your family, but it means that you talk to them, that you are kind to them, that you are patient with them, that you are gentle with them and that you carefully instruct them and help them come to see the truth of God's word which you are living in your life.

While there is a great need in the church for preachers and teachers of God's word, an equally great need is for men who will live out their faith at home and who will teach their families God's word by example and by patient instruction. The church also needs men to step up within church and lead Sunday schools and small groups. Men, you can do this because you can learn the basics of the faith and you can learn to speak to others with patience, kindness, gentleness, and avoid quarreling. All of you can help others learn the basics of the faith – you can be able to teach. I challenge you to ask God to give you grace to be able to teach. Let me finish this area by giving you four questions to think about:

1. Am I growing in my understanding of the totality of Scripture? I must say at this point that this is one of the great burdens of my heart. I want God's people to learn his word and by this, I mean more than a bunch of verses and more than a bunch of doctrines. That's important but I want them to learn how all Scripture works together into one consistent message that others can understand and that can be passed on to others. This is one of our great goals at WGS Ministries. I have shared with you before the ABCs of it all. We want to advance life change, build a biblical worldview, and connect everyone to the story of Scripture.

2. Am I obeying what the Lord has shown me so that I am an example to others? You see, teaching in the first century was not just passing on information. It was passing on a way of life which required that the teacher live what he was learning.
3. Am I committed to God's goals for teachers and teaching? Remember that great goal Paul mentioned in Colossians 1? It was to bring every man to a place of spiritual maturity.
4. Am I gentle and patient with people, and do I seek to be a friend as well as a teacher? I'm sure you have heard the famous saying, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

Let's move to the next area of public life. Paul said a man who is above reproach cannot be a pugnacious man. A pugnacious man is one who is inclined to lash out at another verbally or physically to cause emotional or physical injury. This was present in first century churches. Paul had to warn the Corinthians about going to court against each other. In Galatians 5:15 Paul told the believers to stop biting and devouring each other. Instead, we should have the attitude he describes in Romans 12:14, 17 – "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men." Don't have a warlike, belligerent spirit where you are always ready to fight. Don't walk around with a chip on your shoulder.

You know, people who are this way reveal themselves to be people with deep emotional needs. If you find yourself with a temper, with a short fuse, and that you easily explode in verbal tirades and even get physical with it, you must confess this and go for help to find the root causes of it. You must ask God for grace to help you overcome being pugnacious.

And what does that look like – a man who has overcome in this area? It looks like a man who has learned to build awareness that his verbal and physical abuse injures others. That's a start. It looks like a man who is developing self-control. It looks like a man who learns how to handle offenses. When others offend him, rather than attacking, he learns how to handle conflict in a biblical way by going to the offending person with the goal of finding reconciliation.

Let's ask some penetrating questions now about this area:

1. Am I able to listen to and share in differences of opinion graciously or do I tend to debate?
2. Do I tend to quarrel and defend my point of view or do I quickly admit when I am wrong?
3. When someone offends me, is my first response to get even or to forgive, pray for the person, and seek restoration in a biblical way?

Can we pray about these things together? "Heavenly Father, we live in a time where so many of your people do not know your word. They may have a verse or a doctrine but they don't really know your word. I ask you to use this ministry to help us teach your word across the nation. We ask that all your people learn it but in this series, we especially ask that men become men of your word. I pray that men would gain a vision of teaching their families, of teaching other men, of leading small groups and helping your people to become spiritually mature. Father, we pray also that you would deliver us from belligerent, warlike, pugnacious spirits. Keep us from being men who lash out in anger and turn us into men who reach out with love, concern, and wisdom. We ask you to make us like your Son, Jesus Christ and we pray it in his name. Amen."