

18. Developing Structure to Equip Each Christian to Teach the Word of God

In Ephesians 4:15-16, we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” In verse 15, we see that every Christian is to learn to speak the truth. That verse also tells us that all Christians are to learn to speak in love as they speak the truth. Verse 16 says that every Christian is to learn to work effectively, and every Christian is to learn to do his or her share.

Since Ephesians 4 says we are to speak the truth, we need to know what truth is. Pilate asked Christ a question, in John 19:38. That question was, “What is truth?” In John 14:6, Christ said that He is the truth. In John 17:17, Christ further defined the truth. That verse says, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” Since every Christian is to speak the truth in love, that means that every Christian must be taught how to teach the Word of God.

In John 8, Christ defined what happens when we learn the truth, and apply it to our own lives. John 8:32 says, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Then, John 8:36 adds, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Christians have been set free from sin and its consequences. However, they must know and understand the Word of God to understand what that freedom means. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Then, Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

The first place people need to learn to teach the Word of God is in their own homes. In Deuteronomy, God taught some very important principles to the nation of Israel. As Christians, we need to learn those principles. Several key principles are given in Deuteronomy 6:5-8, where we read: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ‘And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.’”

First, we see that the basis for effective teaching is to love the Lord with our whole heart, soul, and strength. As we have seen, we need to grow both in our love for the Lord and in our understanding of His love for us. The New Testament gives four things in which people take root. Two are negative. Hebrew 12:14-16 warns of the danger of having a root of bitterness. 1 Timothy 6:10 says that the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. However, the other two roots are very positive. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Here, we see that we are to take root in Christ. Then, Ephesians 3:17-19 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and

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height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We are to take root in Christ, and then, let His love take root in our own lives.

Second, Deuteronomy 6:6 says that to teach the Word of God effectively, we must have the Word in our hearts. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!” We help new Christians, struggling Christians, and growing Christians learn to hide the Word of God in their hearts by helping them begin to memorize the Word, and then, meditate on that Word. God told Joshua, in Joshua 1:7-8, “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” People must know the Word of God in order to be able to teach the Word of God.

Third, we see that effective teaching begins in the home, as we learn to teach our children. 2 Timothy 1:5 illustrates the ministry of Lois and Eunice with Timothy, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” For those who do not have physical children, they still can use their home to teach spiritual children. That is illustrated so well by Aquila and Priscilla as they taught Apollos. Acts 18:26 says, “So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

Fourth, we see that we are to teach our children throughout the day. Deuteronomy 6:7 says to teach them when we are sitting in the house, when we are walking or traveling together, when they go to bed in the evening, and when they get up in the morning. As we, as parents, learn to share the Word of God with our children, in love, we are learning to speak the truth in love. The interesting thing is that the parents who are doing the teaching usually learn as much or more than the children they are teaching. As a result, both we as the parents, and the children we are teaching, are growing in our understanding and obedience to the Word of God.

Fifth, we see that as we teach the Word of God, the Word is to be the distinguishing characteristic of both our actions and our thoughts. When the Word of God is in our thoughts, it is much easier for the Word to guide our actions. We might call that learning to think and act Biblically, instead of thinking the way the world thinks. That has a tremendous impact in our lives. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” That is why it is so important to develop a structure that will help every Christian learn to teach their physical or spiritual children.

Once we have helped people learn to teach their children, we want to help them learn to teach the Word of God to a small group. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul told Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to

teach others also.” In these verses, we see four spiritual generations – Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others also. Paul had taught his spiritual son, Timothy, both by his word and his example. That is why Paul was able to tell the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 4:17, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul knew that Timothy would remind the Corinthians of his example, as well as teaching them the Word of God.

Then, in 2 Timothy 2:2, we see that Paul reminded Timothy that he was to keep on teaching faithful men and equipping them to teach others also. Christ had given an example by devoting a large part of the second twenty-one months of His ministry training eleven faithful men (and one betrayer) so they would be able to teach others also. Paul nearly always had with him a small group of men he was teaching, so they could teach others also. Acts 20:4 says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” Paul was teaching these men and showing them how to teach others, as they traveled with him.

One key passage that must be mentioned is Ephesians 4:11-13. Those verses say, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In these verses, we see that the primary ministry of evangelists, pastors, and teachers is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Evangelists are to equip the saints, by example, to explain the Gospel clearly to those who are not Christians. Pastors are to equip the saints, by example, to minister to one another as Christians. Teachers are to equip the saints, by example, to teach and apply the Word of God. This will result in every Christian becoming mature and equipped to do the work of the Lord.

As we saw at the beginning of this topic, Ephesians 4:15-16, show that every Christian is to learn to speak the truth in love, so that every Christian is equipped to do his or her part. That will only happen as we develop a church structure that focuses on equipping the saints for the work of the ministry rather than entertaining the lost. Christ says that, as every Christian learns to do his or her part, the body of Christ will build up itself in love. May the Lord richly bless you, and multiply your ministry, as you teach Christians to teach the Word of God to their children, and then, a small group of others.