

14. Building Relationships and the Gift of Teaching

In our last two topics, we looked at ways to use the spiritual gifts of prophecy and serving to build relationships for the purpose of evangelism. Today, we will be looking at the gift of teaching and some effective ways to build relationships with non-Christians if we have this gift. Those of you who have this gift will see some ways that God can use your gift to share the Gospel effectively. Those of you who do not have this gift will have a better understanding of why people with this gift build relationships in a different way than you do.

We might use the following definition for the gift of teaching (doctrine): “To spend much time in study so that there will be purity of doctrine in all teaching. This teaching will include both teaching those who want to learn and refuting those who contradict” - 1 Timothy 4:16; Titus 2:7-8, 1:9. The person with the gift of teaching (doctrine) will tend to emphasize purity of doctrine and will emphasize the importance of much study in order to make certain that there is purity of doctrine. The concern of one who has this gift is for sound doctrine in all teaching and the application of that teaching so that it produces obedience and godly living. With this gift we must make certain that we do not substitute study for building relationships with people.

We will look at several ways the person with the gift of teaching will often build relationships and show love to non-Christians. A person who has the gift of teaching focuses on purity of doctrine in his ministry to other Christians. When we understand that this will be his concern in every situation, it will help us to see how and why the person who has the gift of teaching will do the things that he does to build relationships with those who are not yet Christians. The following are some of the common ways that the person with this gift will build relationships with non-Christians:

1. In 1 Timothy 4:12-16, we see that the person with the gift of teaching will often use his own example to build relationships and share the Gospel with others. In verse 12, we see six ways that all Christians are to be examples:

- in word
- in conduct
- in love
- in spirit
- in faith
- in purity

The person with the gift of teaching will find it easy to focus on the first - in word - because he enjoys discussing doctrine. However, he needs to keep in mind that he is to be an example in each of the other areas as well. Verses 13-15 focus on the fact that in addition to being an example, a person needs to read, encourage and teach doctrine, not neglect his spiritual gift and meditate on these things so that his progress may be clearly see by all including both Christians and non-Christians. Verse 16 points out two things that are especially important for the person who has the gift of doctrine. He is to pay attention to himself and to the doctrine by continuing in his personal growth and in his study of the doctrine. This is important both for his own development and so that he will be able to share the doctrine clearly and accurately both with Christians and with non-

Christians.

2. In John 3:1-21, we see that Christ gives us an example of how the one with the gift of teaching will minister effectively to non-Christians. That includes taking time with a non-Christian to discuss his or her questions. Most people who are not Christians have a lot of questions about Christianity that they need to get answered before they will believe. Many of these questions are about various words that are in the Bible and their meanings. The one with the gift of teaching (doctrine) is often one of the most qualified to explain the meaning of doctrinal words because he enjoys spending much time studying the meaning of those words.

3. Spending time working together as Paul did with Aquila and Priscilla in Acts 18:1-3 is a way that those with the gift of teaching often find a very helpful way to share the Gospel with non-Christians because it provides plenty of time to discuss questions that a person has about Christianity. This provides an ideal way to build relationships while sharing the Gospel. The one thing that the person with the gift of teaching needs to be careful about is that he does not give so much detail about the meaning of a word that he loses the interest of the non-Christian. Remember that you will be able to explain the meaning of those words more fully after the person becomes a Christian.

4. Teaching the truth is a key concern of the person with the gift of teaching. As a result, Titus 2:7-8 gives some very helpful instruction. In teaching doctrine, these verses give us four key things that we are to show by example as we teach doctrine:

- * integrity
- * reverence
- * incorruptibility
- * sound speech that cannot be condemned

Those qualities of character are especially important when sharing the Gospel because the verse concludes by telling us that even an opponent will be ashamed and have nothing evil to say of us.

5. Explaining the truth is also a key part of our ministry if we have this gift. Acts 18:26 shows us that the Lord used Aquila and Priscilla to explain the truth more clearly to Apollos which was necessary for him to come to a clear understanding of salvation since he knew nothing of the death and resurrection of Christ. In Acts 19:8-10, Paul spent two years discussing and explaining the things concerning the kingdom of God. In Titus 1:9, we see that there is a need both to explain sound doctrine and to refute those who oppose. This also explains why the person with the gift of teaching enjoys spending much time in study so that he can explain various doctrines clearly and accurately.

6. In Acts 20:20-21, Paul explained to the leaders at Ephesus that there is a great need to show and teach publicly and from house to house. Paul said that the message that is to be shared publicly and from house to house is the message of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, we see that the one who has the gift of teaching will enjoy explaining the doctrines related to salvation to people both publicly and in their homes.

As we can see, the person with the gift of teaching is likely to build relationships with those who are not yet Christians primarily by answering questions about various doctrines the person without Christ is trying to understand. If this gift is a spiritual gift that you have, may the Lord richly bless you as you build relationships with non-Christians by explaining to them the meaning of doctrinal words that they do not understand. For those of you who do not have this gift, you may find it very helpful to work as a part of an evangelistic team with someone who has this gift in situations where people ask you questions about doctrinal words that you have a hard time explaining. In the process of hearing them explained, you will also become equipped to explain them to others.