

Eternity Daily Bible Study

(A ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Walking In The Spirit - 64

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Topic: Ministry Of The Word – Part 3
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The spiritual ministry of the Word involves diligent, careful and prayerful study:

2 Timothy 2:15 MKJV *Study earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*

Every good bible teacher I know has a house full of books, commentaries, different bible versions, maps, bible dictionaries and language helps for Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. There is simply no getting away from the requirement to study. Paul's request to Timothy was to '*bring... the books and parchments*' (2 Timothy 4:13) indicating that of all Paul's possessions these were among the most vital. It also indicates that Paul was still studying even in his old age. (2 Timothy was written just before his death).

2 Timothy 4:13 MKJV *When you come, bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.*

We are to be earnest students of God's Word. We are to rightly divide the Word of Truth. There is to be scholarly integrity in the process. We cannot just make it up as we go along in a fanciful way. Inspiration does not excuse carelessness.

False teachers tend to fall into two different camps:

- a) Firstly the liberals who deny the Scriptures in the name of reason and insert their own humanistic philosophies.
- b) Secondly the cult leaders who are fond of their own personal inspiration and who over-ride the plain meaning of the Scriptures with their imaginations and dubious 'revelations'.

As different as the personalities of these people may be they have this in common – they refuse to carefully, prayerfully submit their minds to the task of understanding the Scriptures as the final, inspired, inerrant and authoritative word of God.

Spiritual ministry should not neglect serious bible study. Prophecy, tongues, words of wisdom and knowledge are good. But unless we commit ourselves to serious diligent study of the Word we can quickly go off track and end up preaching 'chaff':

Jeremiah 23:28-29 MKJV *The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream. And he who has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says Jehovah. (29) Is not My Word like a fire? says Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*

We need both the Spirit and the Word, prayer and study, inspiration and perspiration, revelation and application - trembling with a holy carefulness based on the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 MKJV *(10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done through the body, according to that which he has done, whether good or bad. (11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...*

The first duty of the bible teacher is to be accurate and truthful. Solid Christian lives can only be built upon the Truth, spoken in love:

Ephesians 4:15-16 MKJV *But that you, speaking the truth in love, may in all things grow up to Him who is the Head, even Christ; (16) from whom the whole body, fitted together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of each part, producing the growth of the body to the edifying of itself in love.*

1 Timothy 2:7 MKJV *To this I am ordained a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie), a teacher of the nations, in faith and truth.*

In the light of yesterday's devotional about speaking to the 'thoughts and intents of the heart' and the previous devotionals about Christ being the essence and center of all spiritual ministry, we can arrive at the conclusion that the ministry of the Word involves:

Being a diligent earnest workman, who rightly, prayerfully, lovingly and truthfully divides the Word of God, so that Christ is clearly presented to the hearts and minds of the audience, addressing the thoughts and intents of the heart like a two-edged sword.

We need to speak the truth in love. Though rebuke is sometimes necessary, inappropriate harshness does not win souls. While spiritual ministry should be accurate and to the point it should not be burdensome, overly heavy, or humiliating.

Isaiah 42:3 MKJV *A bruised reed He shall not break, and a smoking wick He shall not quench; He shall bring out judgment to truth.*

We need to study not just what we should teach (as in the subject matter), but also how, when and where we should teach these things (timing of the Word, curriculum design, teaching methodology, use of media and the Internet etc) as well as who we should be addressing (teaching for a specific groups such as teenagers, bible students, leaders, non-Christians, etc) and even why we should be teaching these things in the first place (what is our philosophy, vision, mission calling etc.).

For instance you may decide to do a simplified outline and summary of the book of Romans for new believers, that are teenagers and you will do this in print and upload it to the Internet and make it available as an upload on mobile phones because you are a youth pastor and you are called to reach post-modern Western youth with a deeper understanding of the gospel. You will do this prayerfully and carefully and you will not compromise on the truth along the way.

You don't need access to a pulpit in order to teach the Word. You can teach individuals who you disciple, or small groups, or even online. Just start wherever you can start!

The requirement to be a good workman, assiduously seeking the Truth means that

highly speculative areas of the faith should be left well alone:

1 Timothy 1:3-4 MKJV *Even as I begged you to remain at Ephesus, when I was going to Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, (4) nor to give heed to fables and endless genealogies (which provide doubts rather than the nurture of God in faith).*

1 Timothy 4:6-7 MKJV *Having suggested these things to the brothers, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the Words of Faith and by the good doctrine which you have followed. (7) But refuse profane and old-womanish tales, and exercise yourself to godliness.*

2 Timothy 2:14-16 MKJV *Put them in memory of these things, charging them before the Lord not to dispute about words to no profit, to the subverting of the hearers. (15) Study earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. (16) But shun profane, vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.*

Titus 1:13-14 MKJV *This witness is true; for which cause convict them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith, (14) not giving heed to Jewish myths and commandments of men, turning away from the truth.*

We are to avoid myths, fables, legalism, commandments of men, disputes about words, endless genealogies, Internet rumors and wild tales, end time date-setting (see Acts 1:7) and the like.

We should also be sufficiently humble to not teach on areas which we do not yet understand. God does not ask you to be an instant expert on all things! Not many single people are able to teach well on marriage and very few married people are able to teach well on long-term singleness. Some books of the Bible (such as Job) are more difficult to teach on than others and some areas of theology take years to fully grasp. Faithful, careful, prayerful bible teaching involves teaching what we know, not what we do not know!

The ministry of the Word is a heavy responsibility (James 3:1,2) precisely because it is so vital to the growth of the Church. Wrong teaching can be incredibly destructive. We should teach as those who know they will have to give an account to Jesus for our words:

Matthew 12:35-37 MKJV *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings out good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings out evil things. (36) But I say to you that every idle word, whatever men may speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgment. (37) For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.*

If we are diligent, careful and craftsman-like in how we hand the Scriptures then we will be *a workman that does not need to be ashamed*. Diligence will save us from judgment, and from having our work burned up like chaff, straw, wood, hay or stubble. Studying to show ourselves approved may be hard work now, but it will be well worth it on that Day!

Blessings,

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