

The Gift of Teaching

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith emphasizes the critical role of the gift of teaching in fostering spiritual growth within the church through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Exodus 4:12, Hosea 4:6, John 14:26, Acts 4:8, Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11-15, 2 Timothy 1:11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "The Importance of Teaching"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the vital role of the gift of teaching within the church, as outlined by Paul in various scriptures. He highlights that true teaching is empowered by the Holy Spirit, enabling teachers to convey God's truth effectively. Smith reflects on the importance of spiritual maturity and the necessity of sound biblical teaching to prevent spiritual stagnation, drawing parallels with the early church's challenges. He encourages teachers to rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and to commit to teaching others, fostering a cycle of spiritual growth. Ultimately, he calls for a return to foundational biblical teaching to equip believers for their faith journey.

Transcript

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul says,

Now God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.

We are looking at the gift of teaching. As Paul was writing to the Ephesians concerning the ministry gifts within the church, again he said, "He gave some apostles; and some, prophets..." Here he adds to the list, "evangelists," before he gets to the pastor-teachers in Ephesians 4:11.

In Romans 12, as Paul again is talking about the gifts of the Spirit,

If your gift is serving, then let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching (cf. Romans 12:7).

The gift of teaching is first mentioned in Exodus 4:12 where God, speaking to Moses, said, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." The Lord is saying to Moses, "You go. I will be with you. I will give you your words. I will teach you." Moses was God's representative to the people. He spoke to them the Word of God.

When Paul the Apostle was writing to the Corinthian church, he said, "That which I have received from the Lord, I also deliver unto you" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Whenever I stand before you to minister and to teach God's Word, it is always my prayer that I can preface the remarks that I make with those same words of Paul--"that which I have received from the Lord, I also deliver unto you." I wait upon the Lord in my studies. I seek the Lord. I seek the mind of the Lord. I seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I seek enlightenment from the Holy Spirit on the Word of God. And I do believe that while I am in study, the Spirit of God does minister God's love and God's truth to my heart. And then I come and I share with you that which I have received from the Lord by ministering God's truth unto you.

In Exodus 4:15 (close to the other reference 4:12) says,

And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

Now in the first one, "I will teach you what you should say." And then, "I will teach you what you should do."

In Nehemiah 9:20, we read, "Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them." The help of the Holy Spirit in teaching the Word of God--how essentially necessary that is! I do not believe that a man is qualified to teach the Word of God apart from the empowering and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the most scholarly person in the world, who does not have the Holy Spirit, has less understanding of the Word of God than any of you who possess God's Spirit in your life. It is only through the Spirit of God that we can understand the things of God. The natural man does not understand it, neither can he know them. The Word of God is spiritually discerned and so we see the necessity of the Holy Spirit to know the Word and to teach the Word.

Jesus promised,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

And so even in the Old Testament, Nehemiah speaks of God's good Spirit to instruct them.

Jesus said in Luke 12:12, "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." He said, "They are going to call you before their magistrates (before their councils) but do not take any forethought of how you are going to answer or what you are going to say because the Holy Spirit will give you the word at that time" (Luke 12:11).

Now we see how that was manifested in the Book of Acts. When the lame man was healed as Peter and John were going into the temple, they used the opportunity to witness to the people concerning Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead by the power of God. They were arrested and put into prison. The next day they were brought before the religious council and the chief prosecutor asked a very leading and self-incriminating question: "By what name or by what power did you perform this miracle on this lame man?" (Acts 4:7). Now Peter could have said, "I refuse to answer on the grounds of the Fifth Amendment"--because the answer would be self-incriminating.

You see in the book of the law, it declares that if a person comes and does a sign and a wonder and they lead you to worship any god other than Jehovah God, they are to be stoned to death. So they wanted to trap Peter because out on the porch he had said it was through the name of Jesus Christ (through faith in Him and by the faith of Him) that this man stands here before you whole. Now they wanted him to repeat that. But Peter said, "The God of our fathers has honored His Son Jesus Christ." And it says, "Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8) and through the power of the Holy Spirit he gave an answer. This was a very strong answer to the religious council before whom he stood.

And then later on Stephen stood before the very same council and preached one of the most remarkable sermons that is recorded in the Bible, through the power of the Holy Spirit. They looked upon him and his face was that of an angel, glowing with the power of the Spirit as the Lord gave to Stephen that brilliant defense which was so convicting to those who heard him.

Paul the Apostle said in 2 Timothy 1:11, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." Now you remember that Paul told the Corinthians, "The Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills." There are many who are gifted both as preachers and as evangelists, teachers and evangelists. I look at Greg Laurie, Mike McIntosh, and Raul Ries and these fellows not only have a teaching ministry, but they are evangelists. They have the preaching gifts also and God has blessed both their evangelistic efforts as well as their ministry of teaching their flocks. And I think that with those combined gifts they sort of accent and complement each other. I think that as pastors and as teachers, they have the pastor's heart; and thus, they have a greater knowledge of what evangelism should be doing for the local church.

Paul the Apostle declared that he was a teacher and we find him exercising that gift in Acts 11:26. After Paul's conversion, he came for a short while to the church in Jerusalem after his sojourn in the Arabian desert. The Jerusalem church found him a little too hot to handle. He was too eager to go after the religious leaders--especially the Pharisees. And so they sent him into a forced retirement to Tarsus. He was not that well received by the church in Jerusalem but he was too good a man to just be sitting in Tarsus.

And so, Barnabas went to Tarsus and found Saul because in Antioch there had developed a strong Gentile church. And realizing that Paul had a Grecian cultural background, as well as the Hebrew culture background, he decided that Paul would be an excellent minister and helper to the Gentile church in Antioch. So Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Paul and in Acts 11:26, it says,

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

And then in the listing of the teachers in Antioch in Acts 13:1, Saul is named with those who were the teachers in Antioch. Acts 15:35 says,

Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

So Paul was not only teaching but preaching with the combined gifts, as we have seen in others.

In Acts 18:11, Paul was in Corinth and he continued there a year and six months teaching the word of God among them. So he was teaching a year in Antioch and teaching eighteen months in Corinth. And then in Acts 20 Paul declares to the elders of Ephesus how that he "kept unto you, having showed you and having taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). And then Acts 20:26-27,

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Paul could say to the Ephesians that in that two to three years he was among them, he had declared to them all the counsel of God. I think that that is a marvelous boast for a minister to be able to declare to his people. "I have declared to you all the counsel of God." And I know of only one way that you can make that declaration and that is to take the people through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. And when you have gone through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation then you can safely say, "I have declared unto you all the counsel of God."

Now Paul declared to the Galatians that the message that he taught, he did not receive from men; for he was not taught it by men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. So Paul declares that the message he taught them was directly from the Lord. His understanding of grace came from Jesus Christ. He was not taught it by the church in Jerusalem. Paul was not taught by men, but through direct revelation of Jesus Christ.

In writing to the Corinthians he said,

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

These are amazing and interesting statements by Paul. Paul was a brilliant man. You cannot read the writings of Paul without recognizing that he was a brilliant man. He declared that he had been schooled at the feet of Gamaliel--one of the leading rabbis of the day. Yet Paul's desire was not to try to persuade them intellectually to a faith in Jesus Christ that would be an intellectual faith, but that his preaching would be the demonstration and the power of the Spirit and that the Spirit of God would reach their hearts. You see, there is a difference between intellectual conversion and a heart conversion. There is a difference between believing in your mind and believing in your heart. And Paul was interested in reaching the heart. It is the Spirit that reaches the heart of man and the conversions that are of the heart are really the true conversions.

Paul wrote to the Galatians and he said, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you would so soon turn from the truth. Having begun in the Spirit are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3).

And one of the greatest concerns that I have as I approach that time when the Lord will be rewarding me for the ministry and my service to Him is that I would obstruct His handiwork. We have had the glorious experience of seeing the Spirit of God do a remarkable work that is (I would think) unparalleled in present-day church history. The work that God has done in and through His church is remarkable!

And this is a work of God's Spirit. There is no other explanation for it. It is not the genius of man and it is not the planning of man. It is a work of God's Spirit. And having begun in the Spirit are we now going to be made perfect in the flesh? (Galatians 3:3). Can we improve upon the Holy Spirit? The minute we get our paws in God's work and start meddling with it, we are taking it down rather than building it up. I like to keep my hands off of God's work. We must let God do His work and just sit back and smile and enjoy it. Oh, may God help us to continue in the Spirit!

So Paul said, "I did not want your faith to be established by the wisdom of man, by the intellectual arguments or the apologetics that I might offer. But I wanted it to be established in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God, so that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among those that are complete, yet not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world that comes to nothing" (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:5).

If you want to know a wisdom that comes to nothing, get into quantum physics. And the quantum physicists say that nothing exists--everything is an illusion.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1Corinthians 2:7-11)

So Paul is saying that without the Spirit you cannot really know the things of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (1 Corinthians 2:12-3:2)

So the tragic thing with the Corinthian church is that Paul, in seeking to teach them the deeper things of the Spirit, found himself restricted because they were not able to bear the truth. Now the disciples were the same with Jesus. Jesus said, "I have many things to say unto you, but you are not able to bear them now" (cf. John 16:12). And Paul is saying much to the church of Corinth. "There are a lot of things I would like to share with you, but you are not able to bear them. I have given you milk and it seems like it is still necessary that you be bottle-fed, because you have not developed or grown."

And of course that is the purpose of the teaching ministry within the church; it is to bring spiritual growth and spiritual development. You see, people make a great mistake in thinking that they can grow spiritually on experience alone. This is not so. It is only the Word of God that feeds the spirit of man and brings real spiritual growth--the Word of God taught through the anointing of the teaching of God.

So this gift of teaching is such a vital and necessary gift in the church. And if there was ever a time when the gift of teaching needed to be exercised in the church, it is today. There is so much carnality that the church is much like Corinth in the state of arrested spiritual development. At the time when they should be mature (having grown and developed) they are still babes in Christ. And that is a tragedy indeed!

Somehow preaching has become the major focus of the ministers today and the church has almost been preached to death. Preaching is really the proclaiming of the Gospel; and thus, preaching is more to the unconverted. Paul went and he preached Christ unto them and he stayed and taught them. Once a person has come to the faith in Jesus Christ, then the great need is being taught the Scriptures.

The purpose of the pastor-teacher is:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-15)

The goal is that we might have that spiritual maturity. So God has appointed in the church the pastor-teachers for this purpose of perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry and building up the body of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews 6 said,

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

He is saying, "let us leave these first principles. Let us go on into maturity. Let us not go back and keep laying the foundations over." Foundations are important, but you are to build on the foundation. You are not to just keep working on the foundation. Having first established the foundation, then you begin to develop the building; and thus, the perfection or the maturing of the saints. Without the solid teaching of the Word of God, the believers remain in this state of arrested spiritual development and Paul grieved over the Corinthians for that very reason.

Through the prophet Hosea, the Lord cried,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I also will reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. (Hosea 4:6)

So this is God's lament over the people. They are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.

Now as he was instructing Titus in the teaching, Paul said, "For the grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (cf. Titus 2:11-12). We are living in a world that is given over to sin--a world that is under Satan's control. However, we are to deny ungodliness and those worldly lusts and we are to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.

In 2 Timothy he said,

And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

So the teaching ministry goes on. You see, you commit the truths of God to faithful men who then are able to go out and to teach others. And they in turn teach others that they might teach others and it goes out and out and out. And how important this is! A wonderful thing about the teaching ministry is that as you teach the Word of God and people receive it, then they become capable and able to teaching it to others, who then, in turn, can teach it to others and you have that glorious kind of exponential growth.

Now the method of teaching the Word of God is given to us in Nehemiah 8, and for context, let us start reading with verse 1:

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake to Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate, from the morning until midday before the men and the women and those that could understand, and the ears of all of the people were attentive. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood which they had made for the purpose and Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, amen," with lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. (Nehemiah 8:1-6)

So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading. There is your secret. They read it distinctly. Then they gave the sense and caused them to understand the meaning which is expositional teaching of the Word of God.

Now the result of good teaching is found in Isaiah 54:13-14, where the Lord declared,

And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

The result of the teaching is great peace to your children. The fear and terror will be gone. Through the teaching of the Word you will come to understand the greatness of God, the love of God, and the concern of God for you. And when you understand how much God does love you and how much He is concerned with you, you do not have to fear the uncertainty of the future. You are not terrorized by the events that are going on in your life, but you have great peace and great confidence. God loves me. God is on the throne. God is watching over me. God is going to see me through.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul tells us that:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

So the Word of God and the teaching of the Word of God will thoroughly furnish you for all good works. It will bring you into maturity and into spiritual growth in your walk with the Lord. So this is the teaching gift of the Holy Spirit. What a blessing it is to a church. How important it is for the church!

For you who are teaching in the Sunday School, what a vital and important ministry God has given to you! You have the opportunity of bringing into those pliable little minds some of their primary and first impressions of God. You have the opportunity of encouraging them to memorize the Scriptures and letting them know how much God loves them. You are teaching them and planting in their hearts the foundational truths of the God that we worship and serve.

And if you are teaching, then Paul said, "He that teacheth on his teaching"--that is, wait upon your teaching. Seek the help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make you a better teacher (an able teacher) that through the Spirit of God you can plant into their minds and into their hearts lasting truths of the eternal God. Many of us can think back to the Sunday School days and remember some of the lessons that we were taught concerning God. You can remember some of those beautiful, childish illustrations that are necessary so a child's mind can perhaps grasp it. These illustrations can last through their lifetime.

We have many opportunities to study and learn the Word of God here. We have our Tuesday night School of the Bible. Those who are teaching in the School of the Bible, again seek the help and the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the gifting of the Holy Spirit.

When I was in seminary, the most brilliant professor in the seminary did not have the gift of teaching. And his class was the most boring class I had because he did not have the gift of teaching. I had other professors who had the gift of teaching and they could make you want to learn. They made it exciting. Now I hate to say this, but I cannot remember a thing I learned in that one professor's class. But with the other professors (those who had the gift of teaching) the truths that they shared are a part of my life and my understanding of God today. So it is not really how brilliant you are that counts. It is the gift of teaching that is so necessary and if God has given you the gift of teaching then use it. Exercise it. Invite the children from the neighborhood into the house and teach them about God. Use the gifts that God has given you. Do as Paul said to Timothy, "Stir up the gift that is in you that was given unto you" (2 Timothy 1:6).

Father, we thank You for the anointing of Your Holy Spirit and the power of Your Holy Spirit; for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the enablings of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we pray that You will bless many with the gift of teaching, that they might be able to go out and teach others, who in turn will be able to go out and teach others. We rely, Lord, not upon our worldly wisdom or knowledge, but as we rely upon the Holy Spirit to make clear and to make plain the things of God to the hearts of the people. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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