

Edification Ministry and Teaching / COB / 05.08.16

Introduction

- † **[slide 1: graph]** In my first sermon here, I shared some of the fun I had as an economics teacher.
- I put comic strips on my tests to calm the students. I hosted a game night each semester, playing Let's Make a Deal, with the result of the attentive students getting all the answers for the upcoming test, some students getting cash money, and one lucky student getting an autographed picture of the professor or an autographed graph of a monopoly's cost curves.
 - Teaching economics at night, I thought, "If they're not laughing, they're sleeping," so I mixed in humor, I used real life illustrations right out of the newspapers, I drew multi-colored graphs, and when I needed a pause to think of how to trick them into learning one more thing, I would tip my Juicy Juice Punch bottle and tell a story about my life as a graduate school dropout.
- † **[slide 2: graphic]** Now I want to bring that sense of fun and humor into the pulpit, but it's not as easy. Here I prepare new material for the same people, whereas in college I was teaching the same material to different students. I have several pressing duties during the week now. And sometimes I don't feel good about being too creative with the passage or topic which God has given me.
- Still, I hope you have found some of my sermons to be a little fun as well as educational. I enjoy having a metaphor that allows me to bring in my Nerf football. It was the NFL draft last weekend; I still don't understand anything the Eagles are doing. But I like to bring in my football and toss it to someone; or to bring in my super-soaker and threaten to super-soak some of you.
 - I like to use graphics and pictures in the slides. I like to move around the stage, especially to emphasize the distinction between following Christ compared to turning your back on him to follow the ways of the flesh and the world. So even when humor is not appropriate, I try to be creative to make learning from God's Word easier and more enjoyable.
- † **[slide 3: C-A-B]** When I got my first adjunct lecturer job, I wrote a one page "philosophy of teaching." It was one of the best things I ever wrote; I'm sorry I have managed to digitally lose it.
- But the essence of teaching for me always has been this: that it is not enough to convey information, because the students can get that from the book; the teacher must convey information, but the real goal is to empower the students for learning and motivate them so they want to learn. So even though I am more of an analytical teacher rather than an excitable exhorter or a folksy storyteller, I do give attention both to showing you how to learn from the Bible and to encouraging and exhorting you to take God's Word seriously.
 - A Bible lesson has three goals, whether you are preaching from the pulpit or teaching in the nursery: you meet a cognitive [or intellectual] need by providing information and helping them process it; you meet an affective [or emotional] need with motivation and encouragement; and you meet a behavioral need by showing what to do with the information, how it can be useful.
- † By now – five minutes in – you should be wondering why I am sharing this. I am sharing this because I believe God wants you to be a teacher of his Word, of his revelation, that he wants to edify or build up other people – to bring about the miracle of spiritual growth, what we call progressive sanctification – through you! Let's pray briefly, and then we'll look at some scripture.

Teaching

- † **[slide 4: Ephesians 4]** We talked two weeks ago about how important it is to learn God's Word and let it guide us. Accordingly, one of the most important functions of a church is teaching God's Word. The question is, who is responsible for teaching in the church? Certainly a lot of the burden falls on the pastors and lay elders.
- **Ephesians 4.11-15 NET: It was he [Christ] who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God— a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature. So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.**
 - **[slide 5: results]** Here we see the real need for good teaching, don't we? Teaching is an important aspect of building up the body of Christ, which is the church. The ultimate goal is that we each end up mature in faith.
 - If we all were mature in faith, we would have unity in purpose and beliefs in this church; we would have Christ's character, attitudes, and priorities; we would live out scripture and abound in love; we would be submitted to Christ; and we would be so sure of the Bible's content and of sound doctrine from the Bible that we would be safe from deception and cultural temptation, so we would never go astray under their influence. I love that goal: that's also my personal goal for this church, for all of you!
 - **[slide 6: saints 4.11-12]** So it is important that we have gifted teachers, including pastor-elders who teach. But note one more expected result: the saints become equipped for the work of the ministry! Who are the saints? Every believer is a saint, according to scripture: the Greek word here is ἅγιος which means "holy" when it is used as an adjective; when it is used as a noun, it means "holy person" or "the person dedicated to God."
 - **[slide 7: 1 Corinthians]** When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said his letter was **[1 Corinthians 1.2 ESV]: To the church of God that is in Corinth, [that is] to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...**
 - When you come to saving faith in Jesus, you are positionally sanctified, which means God takes you out of the world to make you his own, to consecrate [or dedicate] you for his purposes. In that moment, you become a saint! Are you worthy? no. Do you have a holy life? no. But you have been consecrated by the Holy Spirit through the blood of Christ. You are a saint to God.
 - Maria, though you have flaws, are you a saint? Yes! Is Jim a saint even though he is in Florida instead of in church? Yes! [Jim and Linda went down for Lori's graduation; they likely are at Lori's church this morning.] We have several teenage believers here, are any of them less of a saint than I am? No! All believers are saints!
 - And what is the result of teaching with regard to the saints? That they be equipped for the work of the ministry! And that includes teaching! We do need teaching pastor-elders, but my contention today is that God's vision is for all believers to grow into teachers of his Word. It is my contention today that God's vision is for all believers to grow into teachers of his Word.

- † **[slide 8: Matthew 28; circles]** You all have heard of the Great Commission, right? We've been talking about it a lot lately. Even our visiting missionaries brought it up.
- **Matthew 28.19-20a NET:** [Jesus said to his disciples] **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”**
 - So the original disciples were to bring people to faith in Christ, baptize them in the name of the triune God, and teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded them.
 - Ah ha! One thing Jesus commanded them was to go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything Jesus had commanded. So the new disciples were also to make more disciples. And they would teach their disciples to go make yet more disciples.
 - This is consistent with being God's image bearers: God created people to reflect his character, represent him here, rule [or be his stewards] on the earth, and reproduce his image in others. In the church age, this is the responsibility of everyone in the church.
 - We all are to carry out the great commission of making disciples, thus we all are to be involved in evangelism and edification ministries, that is we are to be involved in sharing God's truth with nonbelievers so as to lead them to Christ and we are to be involved in sharing God's truth with fellow believers so as to grow them in Christ.
- † **[slide 9: Genesis 1 mother]** It should be obvious that this is true for parents. Think of the mother's role: with the help of the father, a mother conceives; she gives birth, then raises up the child to be mature and equipped for life, in turn to reproduce again. That's a lot like the Great Commission!
- From the time of creation, when God made people in his image, God commanded them to reproduce his image by having children and raising them up to rule for God.
 - **Genesis 1.27-28a NET:** **God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it!”**
 - People were to rule for God, and they were to reproduce his image by raising up children who also would rule for God, reflecting God's character and representing God in life.
 - The Great Commission expands this responsibility beyond raising up children, for we can spiritually multiply [or reproduce] into people who are not family, by introducing them to Christ and then growing them up to spiritual maturity.
 - **[slide 10: 2 Timothy]** We see an echo of this concept, an echo of the Great Commission, in something Paul wrote to his disciple, Timothy. **2 Timothy 2.2 NLT:** **You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.**
 - Paul taught Timothy, now Timothy was to teach others, specifically others who were trustworthy enough to then teach still others. This is part of spiritual multiplication, fulfilling the great commission.
- † Why is this important? Suppose a mom and a dad were taught by their parents, but now they do not teach their children: how likely are the children to grow up with the same beliefs, the same

moral code? If they are learning everything from tv and their peers in the street, instead of being taught by their biblically knowledgeable parents, how likely are they to walk with God?

- We have seminaries which have stopped teaching orthodoxy; we have churches that use scripture to support their human views rather than teaching what God revealed; we have groups like the YMCA which no longer has any C-stands-for-Christian in their program or purpose. And we have a country that presently is coming after churches and believers just for believing. This is the result of not effectively passing on our beliefs and values over the generations. This is a failure to teach well.
- I taught economics because I wanted to educate thirty voters at a time. It didn't care whether they were Republican, Democrat, or other, supporting or against welfare, protecting the environment, or stimulating the economy. What I wanted was for them to back up their view with sound economic thinking, to use economic thinking to craft a solution for whatever issue, because much of the time the government chooses the wrong method regardless of the goal.
- Now I teach the Bible because I want to help people learn to think biblically: to know God and his character; to understand what his vision is for us, what he wants from us, and how we can live the way he designed us; to believe in his promises and truths; to learn how to solve our problems his way instead of through destructive worldly coping mechanisms. If I teach you well, you can teach someone else well, and God's church will grow strong to the glory of God himself.

† Even the new believer should be able to teach one thing, right? What can the brand new believer teach to someone else? the gospel! The new believer must know the gospel to be a new believer, s/he responded in faith to the gospel, and now s/he can pass that knowledge on to someone else. As we grow spiritually, we should grow in our capacity as teachers.

- **[slide 11: Hebrews 5]** Look at this from the book of Hebrews: **Hebrews 5.11-14 NET: On this topic [Christ being the high priest in Psalm 110] we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing. For though you should in fact be teachers by this time, you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God's utterances. You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice to discern both good and evil.**
- Nobody knows who wrote Hebrews, but it must have been an apostle or the disciple of an apostle with the apostle's approval, or the early church would not have accepted it as scripture. My bet is on Luke, who worked closely with both Peter and Paul. Anyway, the author was upset with the Jewish believers in Christ to whom he was writing: though time had gone by, they had not matured in faith or biblical understanding, so they were suffering several consequences.
- One was they were not teaching in the church. They should have been teachers by that time, but instead they still were depending on outside teachers to spoon feed them milk. They were infants in faith, not prepared even to learn the higher things of the Bible, let alone to teach them. But what I want you to see here is the author's expectation that they should have grown to become teachers of God's word.

† **[slide 12: Colossians 3]** Paul wrote in **Colossians 3.16 NET: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God.**

- This was to the whole church. We all immerse ourselves in the word of Christ, we let it dwell in us richly, that is we absorb it, reflect upon it, own it as our own, let it renew our minds, transform our characters, change our ways of living; and the result is we sing in worship together, we exhort each other to do the things that bring us closer with God and to abstain from the things that take us away from walking with God.
 - And – yes, my friends – we teach each other. We teach each other, in the nursery, in the children’s class, in the youth programs, in the adult classes and small groups, sometimes one-on-one in the hallway or the foyer or on the phone or in the car or wherever we might be. But we teach each other because we love God, we love his word, and we love each other.
- † **[slide 13: 1 Corinthians 12]** Now, there are two passages of scripture which might cause you to doubt what I am teaching today, so I want to touch on them also. The first is in 1 Corinthians.
- **1 Corinthians 12.28-31a NET: And God has placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, gifts of healing, helps, gifts of leadership, different kinds of tongues. Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform miracles, do they? Not all have gifts of healing, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all interpret, do they? But you should be eager for the greater gifts.**
 - This might seem to imply that not everyone grows to be a teacher of God’s word, but that is a mistaken inference. Paul was talking about spiritual gifts, ways God consistently works supernaturally in and through you in extraordinary ways to bless others and build their faith.
 - It certainly is true that not everyone has the spiritual gift of teaching. But let’s suppose I do not have this gift: is there not still value in me doing the research, preparing the sermon, and then sharing the fruit of my work with you? Will not the Holy Spirit still use that teaching of God’s Word for some profit? Of course. So even if *you* have not the gift, you can do great good by sharing the Word of God with others.
 - Again, it is true that not everyone has the spiritual gift of teaching, but that should not prevent us from our *obligation* to teach God’s Word. Not all have the gift of mercy, do they? Yet all are called to be merciful. Not all have the gift of hospitality, do they? Yet all are called to be hospitable. Not all have the gift of evangelism, do they? Yet all are called to do evangelism. So it is with teaching. Not all have the gift, but we all are called to teach nonetheless.
- † **[slide 14: James 3]** The second passage in question is **James 3.1 NET: Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we [teachers] will be judged more strictly.**
- This is a verse that requires its literary context to make sense. James has just finished arguing that if you are not living out your faith then one might question whether you even have faith, that it makes no sense to say you have faith if your faith results in no good works. Right after this verse, he talks about how what we say can cause great sin and great trouble, so we have to discipline our tongue to represent Christ well.
 - The whole letter has been a somewhat critical exhortation to his scattered church not to let their hardships deter them from true spiritual life and service. Into that context, he chides his fellow believers that maybe they should not try to become teachers of God’s word – particularly teachers in the assembly, what we would call preachers today – because that might bring more shame upon their heads with their unbridled tongues.

- In other words, he is not really saying people should not become teachers, he is saying they better be more intentional about following Christ before they presume to represent Christ to others in a teacher-student relationship. We all struggle with sin, but the one who is willfully sinning has little credibility as a teacher for Christ, and the more we have victory in Christ, the more credibility we will have as teachers for Christ.

Edification Ministries

- † **[slide 15: empower]** My contention is that God's vision is for all believers to grow into teachers of his Word. What if you don't feel ready? What if you are shaking with fear at the thought? It's ok!
 - If you are not ready to teach, that means you need help getting ready to teach! So come talk to me about what you think is lacking in you, so we can start to pray and help you. If you are a new believer, still sipping milk, you might be surprised to find we can use you in our nursery! But we also can provide you with some devotions that will bring you up to speed on the essentials of our faith. If you feel intimidated, lack skills, have a busy schedule, we can help with all that too. And I will tell you, one of the ways God grows us the fastest is to let us teach his word to others!
 - When you are ready to teach, we want to empower you and equip you to teach effectively. We are building a ministry and a ministry team, we are developing our ability to minister effectively for Christ, by improving our training, procedures, knowledge, communication, and coordination with each other. Teaching in the church requires coming to periodic ongoing training, working with the other teachers so the whole team becomes more effective, and accepting guidance from the ministry leaders. What's more effective on the football field, eleven guys doing whatever they want or eleven guys doing what they've been trained to do and are being coached to do, coordinated with each other to carry out a specific play?
 - The week you are teaching, you need to prepare. The more you prepare, the less likely your students will eat you alive. Preparing starts with praying about your students, about the scripture passage and lesson, and about your role as teacher. Then you have to put in some hours of studying, thinking and creating, writing, and practicing. And then you have to share God's truth with God's love. I asked LeeAnn how long it takes her to prepare for teaching the children, and she said three hours. With roughly two hours of class time, that is a five hour commitment. But that is only once per month, and that is not too much to ask if that is what it takes to teach well for Christ and to bless the students.
- † **[slide 16: whom?]** We currently have several teaching ministries at the church. Most likely you will find one more comfortable than others, so think about to whom you most like to minister: is it little children, teenagers, young adults, older adults; or it could be a subgroup, like recovering addicts or elderly shut-ins. Pray about that and then come let me know. If we don't have a ministry that lines up with your passion, we will create a new ministry with you!
 - **[slide 17: kids]** For our children, we need curriculum researchers to help us find good material [this is not class time; it involves reading through sample lessons to find curriculum that is both accurate and fun; it requires people mature in Bible knowledge and willing to carefully research]; in the children's class, we have four rotations of two teachers each, so everyone teaches once per month, but we could use more teams and some willing substitutes; our GEMS program for girls had ample leadership this past year, but we might have more children in the autumn! If we had men who were willing to work with boys, there is some demand for starting Stockade, which is the Christian Service Brigade program for boys in third through fifth grades.

- **[slide 18: teens]** For teenagers, we need several curriculum developers to help us research and write material for Sunday school [last year, several of us sketched out a rotation of concepts we think every teenager should think through before heading out to college or the workplace as an adult; I can provide that list and some key verses for each, but we need mature believers who can create lessons that will engage our teenagers in discussion]; Matt seems willing to teach Sunday School most weeks, but we would like to pair him with a young woman teacher; we need event coordinators for our monthly fun large group events [sometimes we stay here and play outdoor games, sometimes we go off to Cherrycrest or rock climbing, but we need people to plan activities that will be fun, edifying, and good invitational opportunities]; again in GEMS we had sufficient leadership this year, but if teenage girls are your ministry passion, we might use you in GEMS or to provide the girls with mentors; the same is true for Christian Service Brigade leaders regarding teenage boys, and we also could really use several men who were willing to teach a particular skill or activity for one month.
 - **[slide 19: adults]** For adults: we need people willing to apprentice in our small groups, with an eye on leading a small group in the future; we need mentors for new believers and new members, to help them get up to speed with the essentials of faith and a walk with God; we need Sunday school teachers; we need people to visit shut-ins and those in the hospital or rehab facilities to bring them encouragement and prayer [you don't have to prepare a big teaching for this, but you might find an encouraging verse and elaborate on it briefly]; I think we would greatly benefit from someone willing to develop an outreach oriented young adult ministry; and there are many more ways we could be doing ministry.
 - **[slide 20: list]** If you have questions about any of these ministries, we can talk about them at the start of Sunday School or afterward. Or anytime, really. We have a good rate of volunteerism here, but we still have holes to fill in our teaching ministries.
- † **[slide 21: 3E]** Scripture guides us to prioritize three key relationships: with God, with each other, and with those outside the church. We call this the 3E approach: we exalt or worship God, we edify or build up each other, and we evangelize or reach out to those outside the church.
- Building up each other involves both people and task ministry, both teaching or mentoring in some way and serving in support ministries [like the worship team or the lawn team].
 - I hope you will pray about this and then choose for yourself one people ministry and one task ministry in the church. That's all we are asking of each person in this regard. If everyone takes one of each, then everything God wants us to get done will get done. So for example, Jim has been leading a small group and taking care of the accounting, one people ministry and one task ministry. So I don't ask him to do anything else. As it happens, he is willing to do more, to visit shut-ins and to mow the lawn, for example, but we do not require that from him or anyone else.
 - At some churches, if you try a ministry and don't like it, they say "too bad! You signed up for the year so keep your commitment" or they try to make you feel guilty so you can't quit ever and you are stuck for life. That's not our approach: we want to have you serving in the ways that God is calling you to serve. We understand that God moves people around from time to time, and we understand that when you really hate what you are doing, if you continue you will burn out. So don't think you will be stuck if you try something.
 - Our goal for your involvement is as much about blessing you by helping you grow and walk with God as it is having you help us bless someone else. So please pray about this and then take the step of faith to be involved in one people and one task ministry. Let's pray together. . .