

BEING PROPER TEACHERS

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In 2 Timothy 2:24, we learn that it is God's will for all of His servants (i.e. every Christian) to be able to teach His word: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, *apt to teach*, patient." Both Ezra 7:10 and 1 Timothy 1:3-8 teach similar principles for us to follow in preparing ourselves to be able to teach others God's word. In these passages, we find two things that we must do *before* we teach God's word and two things we must do *as* we teach God's word.

Before we teach

Before we try to teach others God's word, we must first study and understand the word. This is essential for us to "*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*" (1 Pet 3:15). Before Ezra did anything else, he had "*prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord.*" We see the necessity of this again as Paul warned Timothy about those who were "desiring to be teachers of the law" but, unlike Ezra, these would-be teachers were "understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm" (1 Tim 1:7). We cannot possibly teach God's word properly without first knowing it and understanding it properly. "We know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim 1:8). There are many who corrupt God's word (2 Cor 2:17) or handle it deceitfully (2 Cor 4:2). But we must use knowledge aright (Prov 15:2), rightly dividing the word of truth, or we will be ashamed before God (2 Tim 2:15). Next, before we begin teaching others, we must *do* what God's word says. Ezra had prepared his heart to seek God's law "and to do it." This point is also emphasized in 1 Timothy 1:5 as we are told that the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned. This reminds us to do what God says before trying to teach others. We are warned about those who have "swerved" and "turned aside" from obeying the word (1 Tim 1:6), yet these same ones "desire to be teachers of the law" (1 Tim 1:7). This is blatant hypocrisy. Romans 2:21-22 asks, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou

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commit sacrilege?” We need to be like the Apostle Paul, who said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: *lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*”

As we teach

When we are teaching God’s word, we must teach sound doctrine. Ezra taught in Israel “statutes and judgments.” He taught the pure word of God. Everything we believe and teach in the realm of life and godliness must be taught in God’s word (Rom 10:17). If God did not say it, we had better not use our own tongues and claim God said it (Jer 23:31; Ezek 13:1-8). Timothy was also charged to teach the commandments of God (1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1-2) and the law of God (1 Tim 1:8ff). We must teach only God’s word (Jer 23:14-31; 1 Cor 2:4-13; 1 Tim 6:3-5; 1 Pet 4:11), and all of God’s word (Acts 20:20,26-27; John 16:13). Finally, when we are teaching God’s word, we also must oppose false doctrine. The prophet Jeremiah was instructed by God to “*root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant*” (Jer 1:10). Like Jeremiah, we must build and plant, but also tear down and root out (see also Eccl 3:3). While we teach the whole counsel of God, which is sound doctrine, we cannot allow any other doctrine to corrupt it. Timothy was left in Ephesus to “charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies” (1 Tim 1:3). Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus: “*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31). One of the qualifications that all elders in God’s church must meet is to hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers, to stop the mouths of the “unruly and vain talkers” (Titus 1:9-11). As part of God’s church, each and every one of us has the responsibility to be “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).