

**THE URGENT NEED
FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE TEACHER
IN THE BODY OF CHRIST
Updated Version**

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I will give you shepherds after my own heart. They will be shepherds who feed you with knowledge and insight. In those days you will be fertile, and your population will increase in the land," declares the LORD. "People will no longer talk about the ark of the LORD's promise. It will no longer come to mind. They won't remember it, miss it, or make another one. At that time, they will call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD. All nations will gather in Jerusalem because the name of the LORD will be found there. They will no longer follow their own stubborn, evil ways.

Jeremiah 3:15-17

Among the many titles attributed to Jesus Christ in the Bible and throughout history, that of Rabbi, meaning Teacher, stands out as one of the most significant. The ministry of teaching is perhaps the most pronounced of Christ's various roles, encapsulating the essence of what He came to restore. This is clearly illustrated through His teachings, most famously known as the Sermon on the Mount. The importance of Christ's role as a Teacher is evident for several reasons. Firstly, the ministry of teaching serves as the spearhead that launches the Church into the field of human redemption and restoration, aligning with the Father's desired pattern for living. Secondly, it realigns the Church directly with God's apostolic blueprint for correct spiritual building. Lastly, the spiritual foundation of the Church and the framework that keeps it within the checks and balances of truth are primarily established through the ministry of sound doctrinal teaching of God's word.

Our Lord Jesus Christ designates the ministry of the Teacher as the instructor for the Church of the living God. Teachers are appointed to build, maintain and promote a framework that nourishes the body of Christ with truth at all stages of spiritual development and maturity. Additionally, they are tasked with correcting errors and balancing the functions of the other ascension gifts, including those of the Shepherd, Prophet and Apostle.

The scripture in Jeremiah 3:15-17 clearly states heaven's intention in relating to how God intended the nation of Israel to be built and established in terms of sound knowledge. It is clear that God wanted the nation of Israel to be well established as a people who have true insight and understanding of His ways, counsel, will and intentions.

For a nation or kingdom community to be built effectively, it needs the ministry of the Teacher who truly understands the heart and desire of the Father as relating to how to live within a toxic, humanist culture like we see today. Teachers by design are those who are custodians of revealing and communicating divine knowledge in a manner that brings clarity.

Of course, the priority of knowledge we are referring to is that of God and His intention. When a people derail from the knowledge of God, it is bound to go into apostasy which often leads to

captivity. This is what we saw with the nation of Israel. Hence, what God was saying through the mouth of His prophet Jeremiah is an important subject.

Here are 12 Points That Characterize the Ministry and Function of the Teacher

1. Clarifying and Expositing Truths Within God's Word:

The grace to clarify and expound upon God's word is indeed a hallmark of an effective Teacher. This aligns with Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." The phrase "correctly handles" in Greek literally means "cutting straight," implying the ability to accurately divide and explain the scriptures. A gifted Teacher possesses this ability to "rightly divide" or correctly interpret and explain God's word.

Furthermore, in Nehemiah 8:8, we see an example of this gift in action. "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read." This verse demonstrates how Teachers in biblical times would not only read the scriptures but also explain them clearly, ensuring comprehension among the listeners.

2. Simplifying and Amplifying Hard-to-Understand Scriptures

This aspect of a Teacher's gift is exemplified in the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:30-31, 35: "Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked. 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."

Here, we see Philip operating in a teaching capacity, helping the eunuch understand a complex passage from Isaiah by explaining it and relating it to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Keen Insight into God's Truth and its Application

The comparison to prophetic insight is apt, as both gifts involve deep understanding of God's ways. This aligns with 1 Corinthians 2:12-13: "What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words." This passage highlights the spiritual discernment that comes with the teaching gift, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of God's truth and its application in believers' lives.

The teacher's role in restoration and transformation is reflected in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Teachers play a crucial role in this mind renewal process, helping believers understand and apply God's truth for personal transformation.

4. Understanding the Dangers of Manipulating God's Word

This point resonates strongly with the warnings in Scripture against false teaching. For instance, as 2 Peter 3:16 cautions: "He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." This verse acknowledges that some scriptures are difficult to understand and warns against distorting them. A gifted Teacher recognizes this danger and strives for accurate interpretation and application.

Similarly, Paul warns in 2 Corinthians 4:2: "Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." This verse emphasizes the importance of handling God's word with integrity, a key characteristic of a true Teacher in the body of Christ.

5. Balancing the Fivefold Ministry Through Sound Teaching

The Teacher's role in balancing the fivefold ministry through sound teaching is indeed crucial. This point is well-supported by 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." This passage outlines the comprehensive nature of biblical teaching, which includes not just imparting knowledge but also rebuking (exposing sin), correcting (setting right what is wrong) and training in righteousness (guiding believers in right living).

The balance provided by sound teaching is further emphasized in Titus 2:1, 7-8: "You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us." This passage highlights the importance of sound doctrine and integrity in teaching, which serves to balance and strengthen the entire body of Christ.

6. Equipping Believers for Kingdom Driven Ministry

The Teacher's role in equipping believers for effective ministry aligns closely with Ephesians 4:11-12: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." This verse explicitly states that the purpose of the teaching gift, along with the other fivefold ministry gifts is to equip believers for service. The goal of producing kingdom-driven personalities ready to fulfill the Great Commission is reflected in Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." Here, teaching is directly linked to the fulfillment of the Great Commission, emphasizing its crucial role in preparing believers for this task.

7. Maintaining Focus and Spiritual Direction

The Teacher's ability to maintain focus and spiritual direction, even amidst audience excitement, is a crucial aspect of this ministry. This aligns with Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2-5: "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." This passage warns against the danger of catering to the audience's desires rather than maintaining the integrity of the message. It calls for steadfastness in teaching truth, even when it's not popular.

The importance of spiritual discernment in teaching is also emphasized in 1 John 4:1: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." This verse underscores the need for Teachers to discern and maintain the right spiritual atmosphere in their ministry.

8. Identifying and Addressing False Doctrines

The Teacher's role in identifying and addressing false doctrines is crucial for maintaining the purity of the faith. This aligns with Paul's instruction to Titus in Titus 1:9: "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." This verse highlights the dual responsibility of a Teacher: to encourage with sound doctrine and to refute false teachings.

Similarly, in Acts 20:28-30, Paul warns the Ephesian elders: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them." This passage emphasizes the vigilance required to protect the church from false teachings, a key responsibility of the teaching ministry. A gifted Teacher not only imparts knowledge but also provides balance, equips believers for service, maintains spiritual focus and guards against false doctrines. This comprehensive understanding of the teaching ministry underscores its vital importance in nurturing a mature, discerning and effective Church.

9. Preparing the Ecclesia to Handle Societal Issues

The role of a Teacher in equipping the Church to engage with societal issues is indeed crucial. This aligns with the biblical principle of being salt and light in the world, as stated in Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden... In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds

and glorify your Father in heaven." This passage implies that believers should have a positive influence on society, which requires the wisdom and discernment that a gifted Teacher can impart.

The concept of interfacing with societal governance while maintaining biblical values is exemplified in Daniel's life. Daniel 6:3 states: "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." Daniel's ability to excel in a secular government while maintaining his faith is a model that Teachers can use to instruct believers on engaging with society without compromising their values.

10. Teaching Doctrine Through Lifestyle

The emphasis on lifestyle as the ultimate expression of sound teaching resonates with James 1:22: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." This verse underscores the importance of putting doctrine into practice, not just understanding it intellectually.

The goal of hastening Christ's return through teaching aligns with 2 Peter 3:11-12: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming..." This passage suggests that right living, which stems from right teaching, can indeed hasten the Lord's return.

11. Functioning as a Spiritual Elder

The concept of a Teacher functioning as a spiritual elder seated at the "city gate of wisdom" is reminiscent of the role of elders in biblical times. Proverbs 31:23 alludes to this: "Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land." In the New Testament context, 1 Timothy 5:17 highlights the teaching role of elders: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." This verse underscores the importance of the teaching ministry within the eldership of the church.

12. Building With Old and New Covenant Truths

The idea of a Teacher as a "wise master builder" who uses both Old and New Covenant truths aligns with Jesus' words in Matthew 13:52: "He said to them, 'Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.'" This verse beautifully captures the role of a Teacher in bringing together truths from both the Old and New Testaments to advance God's kingdom.

The concept of building on a solid foundation of truth is further emphasized in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11: "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." This passage highlights the responsibility of Teachers to build carefully on the foundation of Christ, using both Old and New Covenant truths. A gifted

Bible Teacher not only imparts doctrinal knowledge but also equips believers to engage effectively with society, demonstrates truth through lifestyle, functions as a spiritual elder and skillfully combines Old and New Covenant truths to advance God's kingdom.

Conclusion

This holistic understanding of the teaching ministry underscores its critical role in maturing and empowering the body of Christ to fulfill its apostolic mandate across the globe. As we witness increasing levels of deception within the body of Christ and the world at large, it becomes imperative to critically discern these qualities in our places of fellowship.

The absence of these characteristics in our gatherings may indeed be the Lord's way of prompting us to reconsider our affiliations. As Jesus warned in Matthew 24:24, "For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." This caution emphasizes the need for discernment in identifying true, God-ordained teaching ministries.

The overarching framework and purpose of the Teacher's ministry is to reveal Christ and His kingdom in a spirit of humility and understanding, always pointing to the authority and government of God's kingdom. This aligns with John the Baptist's humble declaration in John 3:30: "He must become greater; I must become less." Where we observe self-elevation or mere promotion of gifts, it should raise a red flag for believers.

We must remember Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 4:7: "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" This verse reminds us that all our gifts and knowledge should be used to glorify Christ, not ourselves.

Ultimately, the work of a teaching ministry is not to elevate human knowledge or the teacher's persona, but to exalt the kingdom and Lordship of Christ. As Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

In these challenging times, may we seek out and support teaching ministries that embody these qualities, fostering a church that is grounded in truth, empowered for service and fully aligned with its divine calling to be salt and light in the world. Let us be vigilant in discerning true, Christ-centered teaching that equips us to stand firm in faith and effectively advance God's kingdom in every sphere of life.