

Teachers of Righteousness

by Brian Bailey

The teaching profession is the oldest and the largest of all vocations. Without teachers it would be impossible for one generation to pass down to the following generation their knowledge, as one generation builds upon the knowledge and experience of another.

While only some people become professional teachers, we can also say that every one of us should learn how to teach. In a very real sense, everybody teaches during their lifetime. We are told in Deuteronomy 6:7 that one of the duties of parents is to teach the word of God to their children, so obviously every parent is intended to be a teacher. Everyone teaches during their lifetime, whether it be a Sunday school class, in their own family, or among their friends or peers. Therefore everyone should learn how to teach.

The Need for Teachers of Righteousness

We teach to pass along our knowledge, yet education by itself is not the answer. It helps a person, but it is no guarantee that they will bring forth good fruit. Education is knowledge, it is the gaining of facts; yet it is what you *do* with those facts that can develop wisdom which will put you on the right path for life.

I have just been reading about a person who has an IQ of 190, which is much higher than the IQ that Einstein had. Yet because of mistakes in his life and not walking on the right path, he works on a farm and cuts hay.

In a study done in California, schools were asked to identify their brightest young students, who were then given special treatment. But as they grew up and were still very gifted, many of them did not become successful in life. The reason was that they had not developed wisdom and were not put on the right pathway of life. That is something that a teacher of righteousness must do. They must help their students to go on the right path so that they might become *"trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,"* as Isaiah 61:3 declares. Then they will develop their lives correctly.

The phrase "teachers of righteousness" can be taken from Daniel 12:3, which reads, *"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."* The part that says *"Those who are wise"* can also be translated as *"Those who are teachers."* Those who are teachers and turn many to righteousness can be called teachers of righteousness.

In these Last Days the Lord will raise up teachers of righteousness who will help guide the Church into maturity and perfection. Ephesians 4:11-13 declares, *"And He Himself gave some to be... teachers... for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come... to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* The end purpose of all Bible teaching is to present a people who have been perfected by the workings of God. As Ephesians 5:26-27 tells us, *"that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."*

Their Preparations

Study is, of course, the first step in a teacher's preparation. The Apostle Paul, when writing to his beloved son in the faith, told him: "*Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,*" 2 Tim.2:15. John Cotton Dana said, "Who dares to teach must never cease to learn."

We have a key to becoming a teacher of righteousness in Matthew 13:52 where Jesus said, "*Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.*" A scribe, speaking of a teacher of God's word, must bring forth the old, foundational truths, while also constantly be seeking the Lord for fresh, greater truths. There is so much more of God to be known. We can never exhaust the knowledge of God in our few short years upon the earth.

That a teacher must seek out truth is further explained in Proverbs 25:2, "*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.*" This is referred to as the hidden manna of God's Word that is reserved for the overcomer, Rev.2:17. As we learn to search out truth we are becoming kings and will qualify to reign in Christ's coming millennial kingdom.

Daniel 12:4 says, "*...even to the time of the end, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*" We have seen a vast increase of knowledge in the natural world. Scientists and medical researchers are constantly having breakthroughs as mankind's circle of knowledge gets bigger and bigger. That is the way it should also be in the revelation of God's Word. Our circle of knowledge of His Word, including the end-time events, should be getting larger and larger.

As we seek to study God's Word, our next question will be, who do we study under? It is very important under which mantle you are taught. Whether you are studying in a church Bible class, in a school, or reading a book, different impartations can be given you which will affect the direction of your life and future teachings.

Once when I was young I had considered studying at the divinity schools of Oxford or Cambridge. I was contemplating this one night when an angel appeared to me, with a path behind him which began with golden light. I saw that the path went through the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and when I looked at the buildings of these universities, I saw many demons there. I understood that if I went on that path and studied in these universities I would be taught by demons. Then I saw that path, which had started in shining light, change and disappear into darkness. By this vision I understood that God was telling me that I was not to go through these schools or the end of my path would be darkness.

Once Harvard University declared, "We have born-again professors in every department except the Divinity School (the religious department)." It is extremely important that we study at the correct schools and under teachers of righteousness. We have someone in one of our churches who has a doctorate in theology, yet his pastor will not allow him to even teach in the Sunday school because he does not understand the gospel.

As a teacher you must be on the right path yourself, or you can turn your students off of their proper path even without saying anything, because of the impact that your life can have on them. There was a

certain evangelical Bible school in the USA, and every year they would graduate one or two atheists. So the school leaders carefully examined what the faculty were teaching. They found that they were not teaching any atheistic doctrines, but that they had faculty that were atheists in their heart, and they reproduced what they were in the students. It is not sufficient that you *teach* the truth, but that you *are* the truth. You reproduce who you are. You can say to someone, “Don’t do that,” but if that wrong desire is in your own heart, your words will have no effect. To become a teacher of righteousness we must first *become* righteous.

The Goal of a Teacher of Righteousness

The goal of a teacher of righteousness is to help bring his pupils to perfection and spiritual maturity, Eph.4:11-13. Surely this should be recognized by all. Think of a farmer- he sows his seed and then carefully nurtures the young plants until they grow to maturity and bring forth fruit that are mature and perfect. Our Heavenly Gardener desires to do the same in bringing many sons to glory, Heb.2:10.

How to Accomplish Your Goal

To help accomplish this goal, you must first identify with your students and bond with them. When I went to Egypt the first time, I said to the Lord, “What am I going to say to these people? How can I identify with them?” Then the Lord gave me a scripture in Isaiah 19:25 that says, “*Blessed is Egypt, My people.*” After I started with that, I had everyone happy and identifying with me.

Then as you teach the Scriptures, you must find the level of the people that you are teaching. Seek to lift them all one step higher up the ladder of Christian development than they have been. Something will be accomplished!

This can be illustrated by the technique of an American ophthalmologist I met while in Indonesia. He explained that his technique was to watch eye operations that the local doctors performed, and then he would ask for patients who required a slightly higher level of surgery. Afterwards, he would gather the doctors around him as he performed several of these operations and then watch while they in turn performed similar operations which were one grade above those that they had previously been capable of performing.

Our doctor friend said that when he had left the hospital, all those surgeons had climbed one step higher in their surgical expertise. On the other hand, other international surgeons would come in with equipment that was still unavailable to the Indonesians and with it would perform outstanding operations, those at the very top of the ladder. When they left, however, the resident Indonesian surgeons were still standing on the same step where they had stood before the teams had come.

When teaching God’s Word, we want to make sure we are always leading people to a higher level, a higher step in their Christian walk. The teacher is not there to *show* his abilities, but to *impart* his abilities.

As the goal of a teacher of righteousness is to teach the way to perfection, let us examine some aspects of perfection taught us in the Bible.

Biblical Aspects of Perfection

1. Perfection as the completing of our God-appointed task. The all-consuming desire of the Apostle Paul was to hit the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He expressed this when he wrote, *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfect: but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, do not I count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,”* Phil. 3:12-14. The meaning of “perfect” here is to fulfill God’s goal for your life. We must realize that God has a very specific plan for each of our lives. The Lord has a blueprint for our lives, and when we die we are held accountable as to whether or not we finished our course.

The Lord made this so clear to me many years ago when I asked Him to end my life and take me to heaven because of the terrible opposition I was facing at that time as a young pastor. The Lord granted my request, and I physically died. When I got to heaven, the Lord showed me the whole of my life from my birth until the time I died. Yet I saw that there was much more God had purposed for my life, but I had not finished it. Yes, I was a Christian, I was a righteous pastor and I made it to heaven, but I had not completed God’s plans for my life!

I hope none of you ever experiences the terrible agony I felt in my spirit. I knew I had died before my appointed time. After I pleaded with the Lord to send me back to earth and give me another chance to finish my course, He graciously revived me and my spirit came back into my body. Since that time, the burden upon my heart is that every believer finishes his course, as Christ did. As the Lord was preparing to go to the cross, He said to His Father in John 17:4, *“I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which You have given me to do.”* We also want to be able to say with Paul at the end of our lives: *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* 2 Tim.4:6-7. We want to be runners that win the race and gain the prize.

God has ordained specific purposes for each of us from before the foundation of the world, and we are to seek to attain those goals. Thus, the teacher is to encourage each student to press toward the particular goal that God has ordained for his life. This includes seeking God for the particular giftings that He wishes us to receive and develop.

2. Perfection as showing goodness and love to all. Christ said in Matthew 5:48, *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”* This almost seems like an impossible commandment. Yet, when we study the Word of God, we find that love and Christian perfection are equivalent, for Paul tells us that *“love is the bond of perfection,”* Col. 3:14. Christian perfection is to show forth agape love to all, as we can further see in the context of when Christ taught that we are to be perfect, *“That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust,”* Mt.5:45. Thus we see the goodness and love of God manifested as He even feeds and cares for the wicked.

3. Perfection as seen in the control of our tongue. Let us consider the words in James 3:2, *“If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”* James is making the point that a perfect man or woman is able to control their tongue and not sin with their words. Our words

flow out of our mouth at times without consideration of the damage that they might do to others. Because the tongue is the most difficult member of our body to control and bring into subjection, if a person is able to control his tongue, he is able to control every other aspect of his life. What we speak is a gauge of our spiritual maturity and perfection. Our speech reveals how much of the nature of Christ we have.

4. Perfection of Heart. Concerning King Asa we read in 1 Kings 15:14, “*Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all of his days.*” The word “perfect” and other similar phrases are repeatedly used to describe the lives of the kings of Judah, 1 Ki.11:4, 15:3 & 14, 2 Ki.20:3. It is almost a report card upon their reigns and could be an example of what will appear in the heavenly books in which our deeds on earth are recorded, Rev.20:12. The word “perfect” does not imply that we are infallible, but that we walk in all the ways of God. We may define a perfect heart as the heart of one who has a willing mind and desire to please the Lord in all aspects of life.

We read concerning King Solomon in 1 Kings 11:4, “*For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.*” May we continually warn our students that our report cards might not just depict a good beginning, as did Solomon’s, but that we might also have a good finish without blot or blemish. After all, how we finish the race of life is the most important comment that will be made about our life here upon earth.

5. Perfection as Maturity. In Hebrews 6:1 we read, “*Therefore leaving the elementary teachings of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection.*” Perfection in its fullest meaning is maturity.

We are called to become mature like Christ. However, maturity is relative to one’s age. A man matures during his lifetime in several different stages—as a baby, as a boy, as a young man, and finally as an adult. In much the same way, in our Christian development we must grow and progress from a spiritual babe in Christ (a new believer) to a mature saint and spiritual father in the Lord, 1 Jn.2:12-14.

In the Philippines I saw a woman whose boy was 9 years old, yet he was still a baby, unable to feed himself or do any of the basic things. When the boy was born, it was the mother’s delight to feed and dress him. But that joy turned to sorrow. God looks at His Church in the same way, He wants us to grow.

Our attitude of heart must be a quest to move past the foundational principles and go on to perfection. Therefore, we constantly need to cry out to God for His grace and mercy so that we pass our tests by His enabling grace and go on. The call is to perfection, or Christian maturity.

The Rewards of a Good Teacher

Good teachers of righteousness will impart their teachings and life to make an impact upon many of their students. Through our expositions of the Scriptures we can mold many young lives in the ways of God.

You don’t know who your students may go on to become. Once I went to Malaysia to speak at a large church. I had no idea who the pastor was, but when we met, he said that he was a student of mine some

years before when my wife and I had taught in Singapore. The pastor said, “You do not know me, because I sat at the back of the class and said nothing,” but years later he was the pastor of a church of 5,000 members. Then we had another student who I had taught in Switzerland, who has gone on to start 150 churches in Africa. And again, one of the students I taught in the USA went on to build a church of 6,000. When you are teaching, you don’t know what your students will go on to become.

Teachers have mighty influence when they boldly proclaim the truth. Their pupils remember their words long after the teacher has gone to his eternal reward. Their words live on in their hearers’ lives and sometimes produce fruit for many generations to come. If we are faithful to study, pray, and live our teachings, God will ensure that, like Jesus, we shall see our seed and be satisfied, Isa. 53:10-11.

Teachers of righteousness will have honor not only here upon earth, but also in heaven above. How we teach on earth is going to determine our heavenly position. Let us consider the words of our Lord on this matter. In Matthew 5:19 He states, *“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* It is clear that the rewards are given to the ones who faithfully practice the commandments of God and teach others to do so. These shall be termed *“great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

What a high and holy calling it is to be a teacher of righteousness. It demands our complete dedication. This calling requires time spent in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the Teacher of teachers, to sharpen our skills and grow in the knowledge of Him Who is the Word made flesh. His mantle must cover us so that, with humility and honesty, we can manifest His image.

These are the days when sin will abound and the love of many shall grow cold. Yet the Spirit of God will be poured out in revival power and multitudes will come to the Lord. Teachers of righteousness will be raised up by God to nourish the newborns and bring the mature to perfection and glory. May we also be inspired to become included among these teachers of righteousness, by His grace.