

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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Are You Teachable?

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When I first became a Christian I thought that the key to bringing others to obedience to Christ was to have clearly reasoned evidence based on the word of God. I thought "if others could just hear the truth taught simply and plainly then they too would want to follow our Lord." My thoughts were correct as to how one is always to teach. Paul wrote "But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Cor 4:2) Teach as you would have others teach you! A man with a good conscience simply wants the truth.

I was naïve, however, concerning the hearts of men. I had incorrectly assumed that everyone wanted to know clearly what God has revealed in His word and then if convinced they would obey it. Jesus plainly taught us about the condition of men's hearts and how that condition affects the receiving of God's word. In the parable of the sower Jesus showed four kinds of soil that reacted to the seed of God's word. These soils represented hearts and of those hearts only one kind produced the fruits that God's word intended. ¹⁵"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance." (Luke 8:15-NASB)

Over the years I came to realize that there are many on the rolls of local churches who are not teachable! Just

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like my experience with the world, I had naively believed that all my brethren needed was a clear "thus says the Lord" to bring them to repentance and to live in harmony with God's will. But just as men rejected the gospel because of their hearts, Christians, too, can find themselves on the outside of God's will because of a hardened heart.

Where is your heart? We need to know if we truly are receiving the word of God or if we are as the Pharisees of Jesus' day, confident and boastful, but having a heart that even Jesus, the master teacher, could not reach. Remember our Lord's description of them "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8)

Consider these questions to test your heart.

Are you willing to hear?

In the explanation of the parable of the sower Jesus said "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matt 13:9). Later our Lord made this observation about men: "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; ¹⁵ for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' (Matt 13:14-15)

When one is serious about hearing the Bible as God's word, he is committing himself to a life of radical change. Jesus knew that few would have a heart for this: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:19-21) Which of these groups describe you?

Are you living a principled life?

When one's heart is feeding on God's word there gradually becomes an order within his life. No longer will he

be swayed by emotions or a relationship as to how he should act and speak but instead his life is guided by the consistent principles of God's word. This was Paul's goal for every Christian. He wrote: "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (**Eph 4:14-15**)

Are you approachable?

Most people do not want their hearts opened and examined. When God's word is preached they will say: "It's none of your business" or "that's just your opinion." When one is truly committed to learning they will engage the one whom they disagree with. One of the most able, capable men in the New Testament, Apollos, was taught by a humble Christian couple. This simple account is given by Luke: "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." (**Acts 18:26**)

What is really first in your life?

Jesus commonly dealt with religious leaders who, while having a great knowledge of the scriptures, in fact had very little concern with actually following them. Why was it not possible that they understand that Jesus was the Son of God? Jesus confronted these men by saying: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." (**John 5:39-40**)

These men were un-teachable! Jesus knew the reason why: "I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God?" (**John 5:41-44**) Most men care what others think rather than what God thinks. Where do you stand?

The men whom God can help

Our Savior wants to help and to heal all men. He will not help anyone, however, who is not willing to learn. Are you weak, burdened and struggling? If so, then there is something you need to learn: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light." (**Matt 11:29-30**)

Are you ready to learn?