



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

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A Passion for Teaching

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Nothing you can do has more lasting value than teaching. Especially when what you teach is God's Word. The life of Jesus was devoted to teaching. "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am" (John 13:13, NKJV). His commission for us is that we will first "learn from [Him]" (Matt. 11:29, NIV) and then that we will teach others about Him, to "make disciples [learning followers] of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20, NIV). Indeed, if we are His disciples, we cannot avoid this charge, for "a disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40, RSV).

In a stirring sermon on our subject at a recent Bible teachers workshop hosted by the Greater Atlanta Christian School Bookstore, brother Howard Wright, preacher for the Greenbriar church, listed six things for which a teacher must have a passion—for people, for truth, for study and learning, for sharing what has been learned, for applying learning to life, and for God. He correctly observed that, if teaching is vital for salvation (as the example and commission of Jesus show it is), then it is an endeavor which we simply *must* approach with passion.

Sadly, society's norms make it difficult for some to accept this. Pay scales for teachers reflect society's values. The view that "those who can, do; those who can't, teach" fits well with a nation of people too much on the go to be bothered with such mundane things as contemplation and serious thought. The quest for things and the convenience and pleasures they can give are at odds with the kind of diligent perseverance needed to be a good learner, thus a good teacher.

So, teacher recruitment in the church becomes more an exercise in finding a body to fill a slot this quarter than allowing one who is excited about what she has learned to share it. Even then, the task must be made as easy as possible—ready-made, instant "lessons" take the place of diligent study which overflows to grab and excite students needing a word from God. "In for a quarter, out for three" becomes the motto of the modern Christian, tweaked by enough guilt to do his time in the classroom, but not convicted enough to do more than the minimum. And if some other task—e.g., planning a party, or even some work in another ministry—needs doing, some see Bible class time as the perfect time to do it. It seems to have never occurred to them

that the job could wait another hour in favor of something immensely more important, that teaching and learning must take first place some of the time if the most effective ministry is to be carried out over time.

It's not always this way. Thanks be to God for men and women who take a break from teaching under protest. For those who identify more with Jesus' consistency in commitment than with society's selfish love for ease. Thanks too for the examples of men like those we saw at that Bible teachers workshop—elders in their seventies and beyond, listening eagerly for teaching pointers from a man not yet alive when they had already been teaching for years.

They have captured the greatest of passions. And their students will rise up and call them blessed.

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