
Words of Truth

So The Cows Can Get It And The Calves Can Too

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Sixteen years ago an older man heard me teach a lesson. In that lesson I had spent some time explaining Greek terms and making applications to those meanings. It was a complicated class. The class did not need to be complicated though. I made it complicated by trying to make meat out of milk. Afterward, this man told me something that I have not forgotten. He told me this: "When you teach, you need to teach in a way that the cows can get it and the calves can too." At first, I did not fully grasp what this man told me. I did not understand that he just told me I was failing as a teacher by not simplifying the things I was teaching. There is simplicity in Christ (II Corinthians 11:3), but I was making it harder than that for others and myself. I had to confess and repent of that (Proverbs 28:13 and Acts 26:20).

This came to my mind recently while I was listening to a sermon online. The "preacher" was using some wording that caused me to have to stop the sermon and look up what he was saying in a dictionary. As I did that, I wondered how many people in his audience were lost to what he said. I was under the impression that this man was trying hard to sound intelligent. However, his lesson had several mistakes and errors that showed his preparation was lacking. I then reflected upon myself as a teacher (Psalms 119:59-60, Lamentations 3:40, Haggai 1:5, Haggai 1:7, Galatians 6:4-5, and I John 3:20-21).

The word of God is not always simple (II Peter 3:15-16). There is milk and meat contained within the pages of God's word (Hebrews 5:12-6:2 and I Peter 2:1-2). The work of a teacher is to teach that word in a way that others can understand it without altering it in any way (Galatians 1:6-9). Here is where we shall begin our study.

Causing Them To Understand

Notice this wonderful Scripture that shows what a teacher should be doing: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8). A teacher must understand his audience. A teacher must understand if his audience is ready to learn what he is going to teach (Luke 8:4-15). A teacher must know if those whom he is teaching are able to hear what he is teaching (Mark 4:30-34). A teacher must know if his audience is able to bear what he is teaching (John 16:1-12). A very simple principle needs to always be at place with teachers. That principle is to consider what you are going to say before you say it (Proverbs 15:28).

Some who prepare to teach or discuss God's word are so focused on content and delivery that they forget the audience. Doesn't the way one teaches change based upon whom you are teaching? If you read the words of Acts 2:14-41 and those of Acts 19:1-7 you find different approaches and different content. Someone that is already on the road of discovery needs a different lesson than someone who has not even started the journey. Every

change in an audience represents a potential change in content and delivery of that message. Is a lesson to an apostate Christian the same as to an atheist? Of course not! With an apostate Christian I am focusing on the cause of their departure (i.e. Acts 8:13-24) whereas with a polytheist [someone who believes in multiple gods] I am seeking to prove the existence of the true and living God (Acts 17:15-33).

Jesus had reasons for how he taught (Matthew 13:10-11). Of course it is right to focus on what is being taught (Titus 2:1). However, how to teach is also learned through the Scriptures. Remember, God shows us all we need to know through His word (II Peter 1:3-4). This includes how to teach. A teacher must focus on this just as much as he focuses on what to teach. If a lesson is presented and nothing is learned, the lesson is pointless. Thus, those of us that teach need to examine ourselves and be sure we are focusing on the Scriptural way to teach. We have to know God's way of teaching to help others understand His word. If the word is not understood it is not beneficial (Matthew 13:19). In this, I have to examine myself! However, you must too.

Examine Me

When I teach, you are supposed to be verifying that what I am teaching is right (Acts 17:10-11). You shouldn't stop there though. I have proven that the word of God needs to be taught in an understandable way. You should examine me in this. You should be making sure I am not teaching over the heads of those whom need to learn. I understand that God holds me to a higher standard (James 3:1). I expect you to do the same when it comes to what and how I teach. I accept that and welcome your reproof if such is necessary. Just make sure it is from God's word and not human opinions (Proverbs 3:5-7, Proverbs 14:12, I Corinthians 4:6, and II Corinthians 10:12-18). Along with examining me, turn that same light of examination upon yourselves.

Examine You

Part of examining and helping others includes looking at ourselves lest we become hypocrites (Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 2:1-29, and Galatians 6:1-5). Think of discussions, even in brief, that you may have with others concerning the Gospel of Christ. Are you discussing these things with a consideration of whom you are talking to? Are you discussing these things and considering whether or not those people you are talking to are ready to hear, able to hear, etc.? If you are talking to people who are carnal in thinking, are you trying to change their way of thinking before you try to share with them spiritual things (Isaiah 55:6-9 and I Corinthians 2:9-3:3)? Let's all take the appropriate time to consider how we are sharing God's truth with those whom we discuss it.

Conclusion

Teaching so that the cows can get it and the calves can too means that you are teaching in a way that the spiritually older and younger alike can learn. It takes time to reason with people from the Scriptures (Acts 17:1-3). The purpose of teaching the Gospel is not to put our knowledge on display, but rather to help someone really learn the truth and be saved (Romans 1:16). Without changing God's word in any way (Deuteronomy 12:32), we have to present it so it can be understood (Acts 8:25-39 and Ephesians 3:1-4).