

How To Teach The Truth

by Carl McMurray

In 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Paul's last charge to his son in the faith was to "preach the word." In v. 3, he calls "the word" sound doctrine, and in v. 4 labels it, "the truth." This is the same word/truth that he told Timothy to entrust to faithful men (people) who would be able to teach other, 2 Timothy 2:2. But, how is this to be done? How are we to become teachers of truth, with proper motivations?

One way might be to look at teaching the truth, modeled for us. And the best model must surely be Jesus, the man of truth. In Mark 10 there is an example of Jesus being asked to teach and how the Lord goes about it might be beneficial to those desiring to become better teachers of truth themselves. In Mark 10 Jesus is approached by a rich young ruler seeking to know what to do to inherit eternal life. The response of the Master Teacher to this young man can show us some things about teaching truth. For example, teaching the truth...

...Starts with basics, where the student really is. Jesus sent the young man to the commandments for his answer, facts from God that every Jewish boy would have learned from his youth, to see if he really had an interest in spiritual things. The man's affirmative answer told the Lord that he had understanding of basic principles of truth, he was not rebellious, or stubborn of heart. He was a learner of spiritual things and a doer. Today we might run into people that want to sit and theorize about Daniel or the Revelation, but aren't interested in the obedience of believers described in the book of Acts. Such people may be interested in conversation, attention, finding out "new" things, or they just like a pleasant argument, but they are not interested in doing the will of God. The sincere seeker in the biblical record always comes to the point of asking, "What must I do?"

...Seeks to change hearts. The second command Jesus gave to the young man addressed his heart, after obedience to outright commandments was satisfied. This is seen by the fact that the young ruler turned away from Jesus at the thought of giving up his "much property." He had a love higher than his love for God and the Lord told him to give it up. He spoke to the ruler's heart idol, his mind problem, rather than just commending the man for his obedience to the commandments and sending him on his way. Perhaps this is why repentance is preached in Jesus' name, before baptism and forgiveness. One must have the faith to give up all things, even self, before he can expect God to blot out his sins in remission. When we teach truth to alien sinners we must not be found to be focusing overly much on the act of baptism, and ignoring that one's heart must be prepared, changed, and renewed. And that this renewal is a lifelong process of spiritual growth.

...Doesn't ignore actions. Although Jesus addressed the heart of the young ruler, He did so by directing his actions. Just like the actions of the young man revealed his heart, whether one can accept the command to be baptized or not (Acts 2:36, 22:16) may speak volumes about whether one's heart is open to being obedient to the truth or not. This is not just true of this primary act of obedience, but of

subsequent directions from God as well. We do not live a life of intentions, attitudes, and motives but of works, deeds, and actions. Each one is shaped by the other.

...Is Done Out Of Love. Verse 21 reveals one of the few occasions when we don't have to infer that Jesus loved someone. The scriptures tell us plainly. So everything that he says and does here must be interpreted in that light. Although not possible for Jesus, it is certainly possible for us to approach one to teach from an attitude of superiority, self-righteousness, or a desire to be esteemed as a teacher. Such attitudes and approaches defeat the very meaning of love, i.e., acting out of concern for what is best for *the other person*. We can be sure that sooner or later our motives will be seen for what they are.

...Doesn't back up. Politicians are known for making declarations and promises and voicing intentions that they subsequently walk back, once the votes are counted or the wind changes. Teaching the truth means that one doesn't walk back, he doesn't back up and apologize for the facts presented. We may need to apologize from time to time for our timing, our manners, or our tact, but Jesus never apologized for the truth he taught. He didn't change his teaching in John 6 when many left Him at His hard teaching and followed him no more. Neither Stephen nor the apostles walked back their teaching when it cut/pierced the hearts of listeners and made some of them so mad they ground their teeth. And Jesus didn't apologize or chase down the young ruler when he obviously grieved him, hurt his feelings. We live in an age of emotionalism and protected feelings when folks can reject the truth and feel justified if their feelings were hurt in some way. We always need to be as tactful and gentle as we can be, but we cannot be so gentle that people don't understand the message of truth.

Peter and Paul were effective teachers of truth, but Jesus is THE Teacher that modeled the teaching process perfectly. We can learn much here by the example that He left for us.