

“We Can Teach Others”

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-19). None other than the Master Teacher Himself, Jesus Christ, gave these marching orders!

It is noteworthy that the King James Version (KJV) uses our English word “teach” to translate two different Greek verbs in the above reading: matheeteusate (v. 19) and didaskontes (v. 20). The American Standard Version (ASV), instead of translating both of these words as “teach,” renders matheeteusate as “make disciples” and translates only didaskontes as “teach” in this context. The A.S.V. helps the English reader to see that we are working with two different words in the original.

It is also interesting that the apostles are here called disciples (v. 16), hence the Lord’s “disciples” are told to go and “make disciples” of other people. Though they are called apostles earlier than this, the fact that the eleven are here styled “disciples” and then three verses later are told to “make disciples” is significant. That’s what we are to do; disciples make disciples!

Who Can Teach Others?

We can, you and I. If you are now using the excuse that you are incapable, such an excuse is valid only for a short period of time! At one time in life, the skater, skier and swimmer were not capable to ski, skate or swim. But they learned to do so by training themselves in these areas. If a person has the determination, he can also develop the skill of teaching the gospel as well. God requires no one to do that which he is not able. We are not to view evangelizing as a “job” that only “professionals” can do,

therefore we are exempt from the obligation.

The word evangelize comes to us from the Greek euaggelizomai meaning “to announce good news.” Our English word evangelist comes from this original word. Years ago I took a friend with me to do some evangelizing. My friend taught me something during this effort of teaching a young man the truth and baptizing him into Christ. The helper mentioned that we were going to “Bible study” the prospect, thus using a noun as a verb. This is the basic idea behind the word evangelize as well, with the thrust of the term signifying the “good newsing” of a person. Numerous times since then, the thought crossed my mind that we “good newsed” the prospect.

Evangelizing is not something that only a few in the church can do. The lazy will attempt to excuse themselves from this obligation. Many years ago, one lady told her son that he could teach others if he desired, but that this task was just “not her thing,” i.e., this was an optional matter, and she had chosen to opt out!

Too often if a planned visitation program is not organized and pushed, some feel no obligation to teach the lost, or the erring child of God either. Sometimes organization of programs is accomplished, but carrying through with the actual visiting is often neglected. “We ought to plan our work, then work our plan.” But the lack of an organized program does not excuse the individual Christian from the obligation of teaching others.

The chance that non-Christians are going to ask you to study with them is quite remote. Hence we see the need to take the initiative ourselves. As it was in the days of our Lord, so it is today: the fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few (Luke 10:2; John 4:35). We can train others to teach. I have taken others with me on home Bible studies, including my own son, in order to

train them in this worthy endeavor. One of the greatest hindrances to evangelism today is the squabbling and infighting among those who ought to spend more time teaching non-Christians and less time fighting with the brethren.

Sometimes, when contemplating evangelism, we erroneously think only in terms of door-knocking. We certainly do not want to minimize the importance of this method of work, but it is less effective than working with those with whom we have already forged a good relationship. Spending time visiting with neighbors, taking a pie or cake over to new move-ins or to those who are ill, can also be a part of the task of teaching others (Matthew 5:16). Rapport must be established before in-depth teaching can occur (see Matthew 25:36ff.).

This preparing the soil is vitally important. Call it “friendship evangelism” if you like, but removing barriers is necessary at times before people are willing to be taught. In Acts 10, Cornelius must have realized the power of personal influence. He called his relatives and friends together, and when Peter arrived he found a group of people already assembled and ready to be taught. Cornelius had done his job well. In fact, he told Peter “...we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (v. 33). We can do the same thing today, obviously minus the miraculous element involved in this particular case (Acts 10:3, 10-20, 22). If we feel inadequate to teach others, we can always arrange for a faithful brother to do the teaching for us.

Handing out tracts, correspondence course advertisements, et al. are also effective ways to reach non-Christians. Using the postal service can also help prepare hearts to be more receptive when teaching actually begins. “One lady told how she watched the paper and sent cards to those with new babies, those just married, those of the community who had lost loved ones or those

in the hospital. All of the cards were sent in the name of the congregation" (*The Evangelistic Church*, p. 58).

In the first century church, this practice of "opting out" of teaching others evidently was a common practice. The writer of Hebrews pointed out that his readers "...by reason of time **ought** to be teachers..." (Hebrews 5:12ff.). This strongly suggests they were falling down in this job of "gospelizing." Their task, as is ours as well, was to do more than merely occupy a seat! We shall all be judged by the "things done in the body, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Why Teach?

Because judgment is surely coming. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Knowing this, and knowing that so many of our friends are lost, ought to spur us into action! A time is coming in our future when the unsaved will be "cast into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42). Even before that judgment day, the dead who are lost will be suffering as the rich man in Hades, crying for just a drop of water to cool his tongue (Luke 16:24).

An old hymn words it this way:

"When in the better land before the bar we stand,
How deeply grieved our souls may be;
If any lost one there should cry in deep despair,
'You never mentioned Him to me.'

O let us spread the word where'er it may be heard
Help groping souls the light to see,
That yonder none may say, 'you showed me not the way,'
'You never mentioned Him to me.'

'You never mentioned Him to me,

You helped me not the light to see.
You met me day by day and knew I was astray,
Yet never mentioned Him to me."

Why teach? Because this is God's plan for saving men. He has no back-up plan in case this one doesn't work! The Apostle Paul reminded his child in the faith, Timothy, "...the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). That's how we received it, and that's how we should deliver it to others.

The Jews of the first century, though zealous, were still lost! You see, they were ignorant of God's plan for making men righteous, and had established their own plan instead of accepting His (Romans 10:2). Now is the only time people have for making sure they are prepared for the Judgment Day. The fact is, many think they are saved, when they are actually among the lost (Matthew 7:13-14; 21-23). The rich man in Luke 16 knew what a terrible thing it is to be lost, and that is why he decided to become evangelistic, even to the point of requesting that his five brothers, still back on earth, be warned not to come to this place of torment in which he now found himself (see v. 28). Alas, he waited too late!

How do we get their attention?

Confrontation is a must. Ultimately we must bring up the subject of whether or not they are prepared to meet their Maker! The time has come to stop just talking about evangelism and start doing it!

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the 27th Annual Mid-West Lectures, "God's Precious Promises." To hear or view the complete lesson go to www.kc-cofc.org/2009Lectures.htm or contact the 39th Street Church of Christ 15331 East 39th Street Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA

God's Precious Promises... We Can Teach Others!

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