

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

We are attempting to measure ourselves according to the characteristics the apostle Paul listed for mature spiritual men.

- A man **must** be like this in order to be considered for leadership in the church.
- A man **ought** to be like this regardless any position in the church.

Now we come to “able to teach.”

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

Didaktikos. That’s the word translated “able to teach.” In all the hundreds of references to teaching in the New Testament this particular word is only used two times. The other time it is used is in Second Timothy 2:23-25 where we read,

2 Timothy 2:24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,

2 Timothy 2:25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

Some translate the word as “teachable.” It can mean teachable but probably not in the way you immediately think. It’s not you who are “teachable” but the person you are talking with. **It refers to your ability to communicate in a humble, sensitive way the truths of God’s Word in a way that renders it most “teachable” to those listening.**

We are thus definitely *not* talking about the spiritual gift of teaching that a pastor must have. Being “able to teach” is a quality all believing men may develop as they mature in Jesus Christ.

A person may have natural teaching ability. They may be able to study a passage and to organize the information and present it in a clear, coherent manner. That's great - but it should not be confused with the gift of teaching which can only be given by the Holy Spirit.

This is intensely practical and extremely important. If you are a parent you are charged with teaching your kids the Word of God. You don't need to be gifted to do it - just a person who learns how to communicate truth in a coherent manner.

It's also practical in the church. As a rule we like to say that you can have the gift of teaching without being called to be a pastor but you cannot be a pastor without the gift of teaching. In the church, then, there will be pastor-teachers and perhaps others who are gifted to teach.

A huge stumbling block, I believe, in churches is that folks who have a natural ability to teach assume that they have the supernatural gift of teaching. Desire to teach and a natural ability to do so don't translate into God's calling to be a pastor who is charged with feeding the sheep. Nor does it mean you have the gift of teaching. It all calls for humility and submission to the Lord and to the leadership of the church.

Back to our word *didaktikos*. The best way to understand this quality is to see the qualities surrounding it in Second Timothy. When you display these qualities people are most teachable.

- People will be most teachable if you don't quarrel with them
- People will be most teachable if you approach them with gentleness.
- People will be most teachable if you are patient with them.
- If you must correct a person it must be done with a true spiritual humility.

By don't quarrel we mean don't argue. Some people are naturally argumentative. If you are, *then you need to change!* When others come to you seeking to argue you must try to avoid the argument in favor of a more fruitful discussion.

One thing that has helped me is a concept I've borrowed from Pastor Tim Brown of CC Fremont. In discussions Tim will sometimes say, "this isn't a hill I want to die on." He means that there is room to disagree agreeably. If

the other person wants to have a sincere and reasonable dialog, great. But if it's going to be a heated argument... Let it go.

The second quality in the Timothy passage is "gentle." You are "gentle" when you aren't trying to win an argument, when instead you're trying to teach the person. It does no good to win an argument if the other person has learned nothing. Since what you are presenting is God's Word you don't need to win anything; it is already true - no matter a person's acceptance or rejection of it.

"Patience" has to do with explaining and if necessary re-explaining truth over-and-over again. The person might honestly be slow to understand. Or he might be actively against understanding. Either way you are called upon to remain patient. It does them no good for you to decide it's not worth explaining one more time.

"Humility" is a catch-all in that if you have a proper view of yourself as a servant of God you will be more likely to be gentle and patient and avoid quarreling. You'll have the other person's best interests in mind and not your own needs or feelings.

All this presupposes something and it is this: That you have a good working knowledge of the Bible and its major teachings. You don't have to be a scholar - just a student.

You probably know more than you think about God and about His Word. Even if you know very little you might know enough. The man born blind, when quizzed by the smartest scholars of his day, said something to the effect that, "All I know is I was blind but now I see." It was simple and it was enough to communicate a great truth.

Still, you will want to grow in your knowledge of the Bible as a book. Here are a few things I recommend:

- Attend church services regularly. When you can't attend, get a copy of the messages. (In our case you can read the text online). **God speaks to you prophetically through the messages of your church!**
- Read the Bible through.
- In addition to reading it through, read it devotionally by taking portions and re-reading them several times until the Lord shows you something.

- While we are studying through a book, get a good single-volume commentary to read as we are going through the book. Follow along.
- Build a basic Bible study library consisting of a good concordance, a single-volume commentary on the whole Bible, a Bible dictionary, and a dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words.

(If you want to go even deeper I suggest you go through the Inductive Bible Study course offered by Intensive Care Ministries).

Finally I'd say that we should all be willing to slow down and recognize teachable moments. Start at home with your kids (if you still have any at home) or with your spouse. Throughout the day allow God the Holy Spirit to show you others who may be teachable.

Remember we are all scattering seed or watering previously scattered seed. Occasionally there is a harvest - but not without seeding and watering!