

Who Teaches the Believer?

Confusion. Division. Departure. Who teaches believers? The family?

Current Issues: Age-integration. Gender diffusion. Proliferation of teachers. Minimization of the pastoral role.

1. **Pastors Teach Believers (“the saints”)** (Eph 4:11-12; Acts 20:27; Matt 28:20; John 21:15-17; Col 1:28; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 2:1-6 cf Eph 5, etc.) – given to equip the saints, not just the men or adults. This would include teaching men, women, and children (not exclusively, but inclusively – pastors are part of the training of these, but not all). Pastors are appointed by God to oversee **local** assemblies, and are required to be men.

(Eph 4:11-12) And He Himself gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

*This verse states that these God-appointed leaders are given to equip **the saints**, not just husbands, fathers, or parents. “Saints” would include **all ages**, and **both genders** (male and female) **in all roles and positions**. This would include teaching all women, youth, and children.*

(Matt 28:19-20) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age. Amen.

*Making disciples of all nations implies making disciples of **all ages and both genders**.*

(John 21:15-17) "Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep...Feed My sheep."

No limitation on gender or age. All believers are grouped here as lambs (new believers, which require special attention) or sheep (mature believers).

(Acts 20:27) For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Declaring the whole counsel of God would involve training gender-specific and role-specific duties, presumably to those that are instructed by these duties.

(Eph 5 & 6) “Wives submit...Husbands love...Children obey”

These instructions are written directly to those involved. Paul teaches wives directly in their roles as wives, husbands as husbands, children as children.

(Col 1:28) Him we preach, warning **every man** [*anthropos* = *person*] and teaching **every man** [*anthropos*] in all wisdom, that we may present **every man** [*anthropos*] perfect in Christ Jesus.

Paul preached to every person, and taught every person with the goal that every person would be perfect in Christ. (cf Eph 4). There are no gender or age limitations even remotely suggested here.

(1 Tim 3:2) A bishop then must be blameless... able to teach

A major function of a bishop [overseer] is to teach. He is required to have “mastered” Scripture; having a strong working knowledge of the Word. (Titus 1:9 “able to exhort and convince the gainsayers” is used to describe this same ability).

(Titus 2:1-6) But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the **older men** be... , the **older women** likewise... , the **young women** ... , the **young men**...

Teaching involves both genders of varied ages.

(James 3:1) ...let not many of you become teachers...

*We are **commanded** not to have many become teachers. Because of the difficulty of rightly dividing the Word and resultant error if it is not (2 Tim 2:15), and because of the much greater accountability for one who teaches (James 3:1), there should not be many who teach “authoritatively.” With other requirements for believers to teach, there seems to be a distinction between “pastoral [authoritative]” teaching and “pass-it-on [repetitive]” teaching.*

2. **Those Gifted With the Gift of Teaching Teach Believers** (Rom 12:6-7; 1 Cor 12:28; 1 Pet 4:10-11) – This is assuming that the gift of teaching is not limited to the position of pastor*. If this is true, all restrictions must still be identified and observed (1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tim 1:3-7; 2:11-14; James 3:1).

(Rom 12:6-7) Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, [let us use them:] if prophecy, [let us prophesy] in proportion to our faith; or ministry, [let us use it] in [our] ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

There are some that are specifically enabled by the Spirit with special teaching ability.

**Reasons that the gift of teaching may be limited to men:*

- *“he who teaches” is masculine; it is the only item in the list stated this way*
- *There are no separate qualifications listed for non-male teachers anywhere in Scripture.*
- *There is no evidence of “authoritative” female teachers anywhere in Scripture.*
- *There is no assignment to teach “authoritatively” in key passages discussing the roles of women (Gen 1-2; Prov 31; 1 Tim 2:11-15; 5:9-14; Titus 2:4-5)*
- *There are specific restrictions against women teaching (or teaching men).*

(1 Cor 12:28) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. (cf. 1 Pet 4:10-11)

*As it parallels Eph 4:11 listing apostles and prophets, “teachers” seems to relate to the **position** of pastor-teacher. If so, this would limit this to men.*

3. **Believers Teach One Another** (Col 3:16; Heb 5:12) – we are all to teach and admonish one another. This is not limited to the men or adults. I believe that this pertains primarily to passing on what we have been taught by our pastors (cp James 3:1).

(Col 3:16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, **teaching and admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

In comparison with James 3:1, this would seem to be a more repetitive teaching, repeating what one has been taught.

(Heb 5:12 – 6:2) 12 For though by this time **you ought to be teachers**, you need [someone] to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes [only] of milk [is] unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [that is,] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary [principles] of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Pertains to each and every believer learning, understanding, and being able to repeat the first principles – the basic fundamental concepts of the Christian faith.

4. **Husbands Teach Wives** (Eph 5:25-26) – this passage seems to primarily relate to applying the Word to the situations of daily life.

(Eph 5:25-26) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word

“Word” translates rhema (spoken word, applied word), as opposed to logos (message).

5. **Older Women Teach Younger Women** (Titus 2:3-5) – This seems to be woman to woman (informal), and deals specifically with key areas of **womanly conduct** and **attitudes**. Older, experienced godly women teach younger wives and mothers.

(Titus 2:3-5) the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things -- that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

Observations:

General Assignment: *no specific position or qualifications listed for a position; this seems to indicate an informal structure rather than formal structure.*

Gender Assignment: *woman-to-woman*

Generational Assignment: *older teaching younger; experienced teaching inexperienced*

Guided Assignment: *what are taught are specific, gender-role related topics – attitudes, relationships, roles as wife, mother, and woman – nothing else.*

6. **Parents Teach Their Children** (Eph 6:4; Deut 6:6-7; Ps 78:1-6) Parents have the **primary** and **daily** responsibility to teach and influence their children.

(Deut 6:6-7) And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

More than anything, parents are responsible for ongoing continuous influence in the midst of life, immersing their children in the truth and pointing them to God throughout each day and each task.

(Eph 6:4) And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (cf Proverbs)

This doesn't involve deep and complicated theology, but the instructing and integrating of foundational, life-settling truths into the lives of one's children.

*Time could be given to the danger of **having too many teachers** (2 Tim 4:1-4), which can and do include books, radio, TV, and internet broadcasts, etc.*

Application Questions:

- *Are you submitting to the instruction of your God-appointed spiritual leaders?*
- *Are you taking on more responsibility than God allows (James 3:1) and thus assuming a pastoral role?*
- *Are you fulfilling your teaching responsibilities as a fellow believer?*
- *Are you fulfilling your teaching responsibilities as a husband?*
- *Are you fulfilling your teaching responsibilities as an older woman?*
- *Are you fulfilling your teaching responsibilities as a parent?*