
Biblical Watershed Issues: Who Teaches the Believer? #1

Who teaches believers? The family? Anyone? Everyone? Current Issues: Age-integration; gender diffusion; proliferation of teachers; minimization of the pastoral role and local church. This issue creates confusion and division, and leads to departure from Scripture.

1. **Pastors Teach Believers** – Pastors are given to equip the **saints** (Eph 4:12) – all believers, not just the men or the adults. This would include teaching men, women, and children (not exclusively – pastors teach children, but so do their parents & others). 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 **all ages and both genders**.*

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

*Note there is 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. (cp 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 instructing both genders of varied ages.

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

*We are **commanded** to not have many of us become teachers. This places limits on SS and small groups. Because of the difficulty of rightly dividing the Word and resultant error if it is not (2 Tim 2:15), and because of the specific 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.*

IS THERE A CONTRADICTION?

How do we handle the seeming contradiction of the “Be few teachers” command (James 3:1) with the expectation that everyone is to be teaching and admonishing one another (Colossians 3:16)?

One (pastor, elder, bishop) requires meeting qualifications, the other requires everyone to be practicing this without any indication of qualifications. This suggests that there are two categories, or types, of teaching.

Two Categories of Teaching:

- 1) **PASTORAL Teaching (“authoritative” teaching)** – Requires training (2 Tim 2:2; cp. 2 Tim 1:13, 3:14; Titus 1:9a), and validation (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9b). 2 Tim 2:15 is often applied to everyone (the term for AWANA, a children’s ministry, is even based upon the verse). However, taken in its context, this command is given to a pastor, Timothy, and thus it applies to pastors:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- Paul commanded Timothy to “work hard” to present himself “approved” (reliable, trustworthy, genuine) to God.
- Paul defines that “approved” state as someone that is a “worker” (laborer), given the responsibility to work in a way that does not cause shame.
- How does one avoid shame? By “straightly cutting” the word of truth.

Pastors are responsible to “cut straight” the Word of God. This requires the necessary skills to do so (languages, theology) that can come only by training. There is also accountability (James 3:1; Heb 13:17) with this role.

- 2) **PASS-IT-ON Teaching (“repetitive” teaching)** – This indicates that a person is teaching what he or she has been taught by the pastors (Eph 4:11-16). The responsibility of “straightly cutting” is not directly given to “everyone,” and there is no specific qualifications or skills suggested, other than just first being taught. There is also not the appointment (Eph 4:12) or accountability (James 3:1; Heb 13:17) that is required for pastoral teaching roles.