

A SCRIPTURAL STUDY ON THE ATTITUDE OF “TEACHABLE”

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A. SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

1) The whole basis of being “teachable” is the realization that at salvation we are no longer the final authority in our lives. Jesus and His truth now rules our life. So....what WE THINK is no longer important. The only issue in our lives is discovering how the Lord views the situation. For the rest of our lives, His word is the final word. Our only job is to find out His will and obey it. (Note: This is why being opinionated is so dangerous to your spiritual health.)

I Corinthians 6:19, 20 *You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.*

John 14:6 *I am the truth.*

Romans 10:9 *That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

2) Scripture indicates that we are to have human spiritual coverings who help us find the blind spots in our lives.

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Acts 15:19, 24, 28 *It is my judgment therefore --- we have heard that some went out without our authorization ---It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements.*

II Corinthians 10:6 *And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*

II Thessalonians 5:12, 13 *Now we ask you brothers to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard, in love because of their work.*

II Timothy 4:2 *Correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.*

Titus 1:13 *Therefore, rebuke them sharply so they will be sound in the faith.*

Titus 2:15 *Encourage and rebuke with all authority.*

Philemon 8:9 *Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love.*

3) The motivation or the reason why human spiritual authority is so important is the realization that WE CAN BE DECEIVED. Anyone who has only himself as the final word on what the Lord is saying can be deceived. The safety net that the Lord has provided to protect us from deception is to have Godly covering to provide Godly counsel.

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things.*

Proverbs 19:16 *He who obeys instructions guards his life.*

Proverbs 19:27 *Stop listening to instructions, my son, and you will stray from words of knowledge.*

Proverbs 15:22 *Plans fail for lack of counsel but with many advisors they succeed.*

Proverbs 6:23 *And the corrections of discipline are the way to life.*

Comment

The subject of human spiritual coverings is a very sensitive subject. It has been taken to both extremes. We have studied God's word carefully and thoroughly to attempt to find God's balance. Time and space limit us from giving the hundreds of scriptures that directed us. However, we encourage you to search the scriptures yourself on our conclusion. The bottom line issue is: When do human spiritual authorities have scriptural authority to correct or rebuke a fellow Christian?

What we found in God's word are the following truths:

1) When God wants to rebuke you, His first method is through His Holy Spirit directly to you. This "Priesthood of Believers" is the single greatest message of the New Testament. We each can approach God directly and God is very able and willing to discipline us directly. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Whenever **human** authority is OVER-emphasized, the great truth of the Priesthood of Believers gets dangerously diminished.

2) When God wants to rebuke you, His second method is through your marriage partner. The highest covenant is salvation. The second highest is marriage. The covenant between believers is WAY BELOW the marriage covenant. Ephesians 5:21-33 says that the marriage covenant is the highest and clearest picture of salvation that we will ever see on the earth. This point is not only Biblical but Practical. If you are married, then you are probably already smiling at the obvious wisdom of this point.

3) When God wants to rebuke you, His third method is through circumstances.

Scripture is clear that your SIN is what rebukes you. (Romans 6:23)

When you won't listen to God, or your mate, then God will allow you to receive the wages of your sin.

4) The only New Testament examples of Church rebukes are for:

a) Open Sexual Immorality

b) Vicious Continual Strife and Gossip

c) Teaching Heresy (Not just minor doctrinal differences but major truths about salvation)

This brings us back to the real issue. If your HEART is teachable, then you will SEEK the input and counsel of trusted Deacons, Elders and Pastors.

Proverbs 15:10 *Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path. He who hates correction will die!*

Proverbs 28:26 *He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.*

II Peter 2:10 *Those who follow the corrupt desires of the sinful nature and despise authority...*

Comment

Un-teachable people always resist authority.

Proverbs 16:20 *Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.*

Comment

Notice a very important connection: Teachable people are able to rest under human covering, not necessarily because they always trust the human covering. Rather, they trust the Lord to work all things to their good if they remain teachable before Him.

4) Notice also: Proverbs 11:14; 13:13; 13:18; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 23:19; 24:6

B. GENERAL SCRIPTURES

Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Comment

To be “poor” is to be “aware of your own lack”. To be “poor in spirit” is to realize that you don’t “have it all” spiritually. You are humble, open to change, to grow. You are TEACHABLE. (I think it is significant that this is the first Beatitude and the first words of the Sermon on the Mount.)

Proverbs 1:23 (wisdom speaking) *If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.*

Comment

It is SO important to realize that wisdom begins with a rebuke.

Proverbs 1:5 *Let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance.*

Comment

Notice that the main qualification for Leadership is to be teachable.

Proverbs 12:1 *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge but he who hates correction is stupid.*

Comment

This is a blunt evaluation of what the Lord thinks about un-teachable people.

Proverbs 13:1 *A wise son heeds his father’s instruction but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.*

Proverbs 15:5 *A fool spurns his father’s discipline but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.*

Proverbs 15:31 *He who listens to life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.*

Proverbs 15:32 *He who ignores discipline despises himself but whomever heeds correction gains understanding.*

Comment- This verse makes a very interesting point – an un-teachable person will have a poor self-image.

Proverbs 19:25 *Flog a mocker and the simple will learn prudence, rebuke a discerning man and he will gain knowledge.*

Proverbs 21:11 *When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge.*

Comment- Those two verses make a very important point. The main difference between a wise man and a mocker is how TEACHABLE they are. A wise man is so teachable (so eager to learn and be corrected) that you don’t have to beat him over the head to teach him something.

Proverbs 19:20 *Listen to advice and accept instruction and in the end, you will be wise.*

Comment- Being teachable doesn’t mean you are wise, but it means that eventually you will become wise.

Psalms 141:5 *Let a righteous man strike me – it is a kindness. Let him rebuke me – it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it.*

Comment- Notice that a teachable person is actually thankful for correction. They consider it a kindness.

Mark 5:22 *-And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins and both the wine and wineskins will be ruined. He pours new wine into new wineskins.*

Comment- Jesus very clearly stated that the condition for receiving the “new wine” of the Holy Spirit is that you must be changeable, stretchable, TEACHABLE!

James 3:17- *(KJV) Wisdom that comes from above is easily entreated. (Amplified) Willing to yield to reason.*

Notice Also: Proverbs 1:8, 25, 30; 4:1, 2, 13, 20; 5:1, 2; 6:20, 23; 7:2; 8:10; 22:17; 23:22; 24:32

C. SCRIPTURAL ADMONITION TO NOT WASTE YOUR TIME ON UNTEACHABLE PEOPLE

This is an astonishingly important Bible Command. This is the only attitude someone can have where God says to not waste time with them.

How VERY, VERY important then it is for us to understand this attitude. It is the beginning of discernment. We must know it thoroughly and be able to recognize its traits and characteristics quickly.

Years and years and years of effort have been wasted by sincere people who really wanted to help. Whole lives of ministry have been wasted because they kept trying to help unteachable people and were sucked dry.

Proverbs 9:7,8 *Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult. Whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. ****DO NOT**** rebuke a mocker or he will hate you.*

Comment -Now, notice the opposite of this wicked man, mocker. It is a man who is characterized by the trait of wanting to be corrected. (TEACHABLE)

Proverbs 9:8,9 *Rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still. Teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*

Matthew 7:6 *Do not give to dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.*

Comment- Without a doubt the most sacred and most valuable pearls you have to offer anyone is your TIME, ENERGY AND CARING. Nothing you have is more valuable than these. So who is this group of people that you are supposed to withhold those pearls from? The strongest common denominator between pigs and the street dogs that existed in the 1st century was that both of them were renowned for their filthiness. But if we dig a little deeper, we realize that the attitude they both possess is that they didn't want to change from their filthiness. They are UNTEACHABLE. If you go to a lot of energy and trouble to take a pig or street dog and clean and scrub it, what will it do as soon as you let it go? It will immediately return to its filth. You could spend a whole lifetime trying to “teach” them how to live a “clean” life and in the end, all of your efforts would have been useless.

Notice the rest of the verse: **Matthew 7:6** *If you do, they may trample them under feet and then turn and tear you to pieces.*

Comment- Not only will your time, energy and caring be completely wasted, but very often they will conclude the relationship by turning against you.

Proverbs 17:10 *A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.*

Comment Notice the tremendous effort and energy to try to get the attention of (impress) a fool (A hundred lashes is a lot of work!); it still didn't have as much effect as a simple rebuke to a teachable man.

Proverbs 19:19 *A hot tempered man must pay the penalty. If you rescue him, you will have to do it again.*

Comment- When you approach someone to help them, if they are not very humble and willing to change, then they have not “paid the penalty”; they have not yet learned their lesson.

Proverbs 22:10- *Drive out the mocker and out goes the strife. Quarrels and insults are ended.*

Comment- Remember that according to Proverbs 9:7,8, a mocker is an un-teachable person. This verse is saying that the healthiest thing that can happen to a church is for the un-teachable people to leave.

Proverbs 23:9- *DO NOT speak to a fool for he will scorn the wisdom of your words.*

Comment- Remember that Proverbs 12:15; 15:5; 17:10; and 29:9, among others, all clearly says that a fool is an un-teachable person.

D. SEEKS COUNSEL / RESPONDS TO COUNSEL

1. Seeks Counsel

There is such a BIG difference between being “willing to receive” counsel and SEEKING counsel. To actually seek counsel requires initiative! Hungering so intensely to know God’s truths that you seek out your mate, your children, your Elder, your boss, your employees.

Proverbs 15:12 *A mocker resents correction. He will not consult the wise.*

Proverbs 2:3, 4 *If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure.*

Comment Notice the ENERGY in these vivid illustrations. Asking questions and seeking counsel is not something that is done on rare occasions. Rather, it is a consuming passion.

Proverbs 18:15- *The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.*

Proverbs 18:13- *He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame.*

Proverbs 20:5 *The purpose of a man’s heart are deep waters but a man of understanding draws them out.*

Proverbs 23:5 *Apply your heart to instruction, your ears to words of knowledge.*

James 1:19 *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen.*

2. Responds to Counsel

Again, there is a BIG difference between “willing to receive” counsel and RESPONDING to counsel.

Matthew 7:24 *Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice....*

Matthew 7:26 *But everyone who hears these words and does NOT put them into practice....*

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says!***

E. HUMBLE

Our concept on how strong the Bible is on the concept of being “TEACHABLE” is greatly expanded when we realize that “Teachable” and “Humble” are almost exactly the same word.

Proverbs 13:10 *Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

Comment- Notice that the opposite of Pride (what we call “humility”) is those who are “teachable”.

Zephaniah 3:2, 11, 12 *She obeys no one. She accepts no correction...I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble.*

Comment- Another way to see this clearly is to imagine a person who “acts” very humble. How do you know if they are truly humble? After all, the Bible warns against being deceived by false humility.

Colossians 2:18 *Do not let anyone who delights in false humility...*

Colossians 2:23 *Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom with...their false humility.*

Comment- So how do you look past pious words and looks to recognize true humility? Very simply, truly humble people are those who are “easily correctable”, “teachable”.

Notice: 1 Kings 21:29; 2 Chronicles 12:6,7; 2 Chronicles 30:11; 2 Chronicles 33:12; 2 Chronicles 34:27; Psalm 68:30; Psalm 44:9; Psalm 107:39; Isaiah 2:9; Isaiah 2:11, 12, 17.

Comment= In all of these verses, the Lord calls someone “humbled” when they are subjected to, or respond to, correction!

F. OPINIONATED = OPPOSITE OF TEACHABLE

This is an important trait to help recognize un-teachable people. An “opinion” is defined as taking a strong stance on partial knowledge.

Proverbs 18:2 *A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.*

Comment- Notice that sharing your opinion is the opposite of seeking understanding. Sharing your own opinion focuses on what partial truth you already have. Seeking understanding (being teachable) focuses on how much full truth you would like to learn.

1 Corinthians 8:1 *(Partial) knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*

Proverbs 10:8 *The wise in heart accepts commands but a chattering fool comes to ruin.*

Proverbs 17:19 *He who loves a quarrel loves sin.*

Comment- A quarrel is usually two people adamantly exchanging their opinions.

Proverbs 12:15 *The way of a fool seems right to him but a wise man listens to advice.*

Comment- Again, notice that the opposite of an opinionated person is a teachable person.

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death.*

Comment -Being opinionated can kill your spiritual life.

Romans 14:1 (NIV and NAS) *Now accept the one who is weak in faith without passing judgment on his opinions.*

Comment- Notice that someone who is weak in faith is characterized by their opinions.

Notice Proverbs 26:3-11 In these verses, there are given many, many derogatory descriptions of a fool. The, next verse says:

Proverbs 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? (Opinionated) There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

G. MOST IMPORTANT ATTITUDE

Isaiah 66:2 Declares the Lord, *"This is the one I esteem, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."*

Matthew 23:11, 12 *The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

Comment- This is the attitude that is most important to the Lord.

Matthew 18:4 *Therefore, whoever humbles himself (makes himself "teachable") like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Comment Think about little children. What is it about them that caused Jesus to name the trait of humility to be universal among children? They are by nature very selfish, so that cannot be what Jesus was referring to....

Think about this... All little children are under authority, and all little children are aware that there is MUCH they do not know. They are TEACHABLE, and Jesus said this is the GREATEST trait.

1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6 *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

Comment The factor in your life that determines whether the Lord is FOR you or AGAINST you is whether you are TEACHABLE or not.

Matthew 11:29 *For I am gentle and humble in heart. (Jesus' description of himself.)*

Comment- The truth that being teachable is the most important attitude answers a very big question. That is.... **On what basis will God judge Christians' works?**

How can God compare the works of a peasant lady who lived in the dark ages, who was a Christian but had so little Bible truth available to her, to the works of the preacher man who was raised in a Godly family in the 1980's, who has so much Bible truth available to him??

Very simply! God evaluates us on how teachable, easily correctable, humble, and willing to change we were in relation to how much truth was presented to us. At the end of all things, we will be judged as Christians by how teachable we were!

1 Samuel 16:7 *Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*