

05. The Motivational Gift of Teaching

Spiritual Gifts—God's Way

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And we have covered six of the seven spiritual gifts and we are going to cover number seven and we did it slightly out of order. I left this gift to last simply because I hadn't had time to create slides on this gift, but this is the gift among them that is the gift that I have. And Romans chapter 12 and verse six it says:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.¹

And, by the way, the key phrase in that whole passage in verse six is when he says, you know, whatever gift you have got, he says, "You know, wait on that gift." In other words, use that gift.

So really the idea here is just whatever gift God has given you, you need to figure that out so that you can actively begin to use that gift.

So this morning we want to look at the motivation gift of teaching and that is best illustrated in the life of Luke and, again, you tend to notice what your gift is most often by the things that irritate you about it. And the things that irritate people with the gift of teaching is of other Christians just don't seem to care deeply about studying God's Word and digging into God's Word and getting the meat out of God's Word. Or when you hear truth that is presented out of balance. In other words, somebody gives the lesson or they teach and you can tell that they haven't really studied it or they are just showing one side of it rather than the other and so there is a lot of different things to get out of balance. I mean, when I listen to people that are very, very hyper Calvinistic, you know, they are all really big on Calvinism, I am concerned because they get it so out of balance sometimes that they don't necessarily see the need for missions.

¹ Romans 12:6-8.

On the flip side of that, there is some people that are so the opposite direction that they don't really make room for the sovereignty of God. And you need to balance those truths in Scripture and make sure that both are presented, that man does have a free will. That is why it says, "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."²

And yet is there a sense in which we are chosen in him before the foundation of the world? Well, that is what Ephesians one says. You need to present both sides of the truth. And so it just bothers you when things are out of balance.

So looking at an overview, a little bit of it, you know the most important principle for someone with this gift to understand is the principle of...

Donald, we are about two slides behind or three. We are on the overview slide.

The most important principle for us to understand is the principle of meditation and that is if teachers don't meditate on God's Word, what tends to happen is they trust their own logic. They trust their own reasoning. And let me tell you a little secret. Most of God's Word, if you understand it properly, is not comprehended just intellectually. It is comprehended spiritually. If it was comprehended intellectually then smart lost people can understand God's Word. But the fact is that a lost person really can't understand God's Word. They need the Holy Spirit living inside of them before they can comprehend it and apprehend it and themselves.

And so the guideline I am giving for this gift we will talk about at the end, but Romans 12:11 says "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."³

So we go to our little cartoons we do every week for these and look at the teacher at dinner and so somebody spilled desert at dinner and the teacher is likely to explain why it happened.

Well, you know, the plate was too heavy on one side.

And they want to... their motivation is to explain why it happened. We are always good about wanting to tell the whys for something.

And then the... you go to the hospital the teacher, you know, might be the one that comes in by your hospital bed and says, "Well, I did some research on your illness. I believe I can explain what is happening to you."

And I have got to confess, I have probably done that a few times, probably gone to the hospital and after researching someone's illness and so I would understand what is going on.

² Romans 10:13.

³ Romans 12:11.

Now, as we mentioned before, the body of Christ, the Church is like the human body in that there are seven sense receptors. There are seven different kinds of nerves in our body that do different kinds of things.

Well, the sense receptor that corresponds to teaching is the balance receptor. The balance receptor, what it does is when a body leans too far out of balance, all of the sudden you have got this little nerve in your middle ear that says, "well, if you are going too far that way you need to lean back." And so like when I lean this way it tightens up muscles on this side of my body to make sure that I don't just keep going and just tip over.

And, by the way, this is one of those things that, you know, as you get older sometimes that doesn't work as well and that is why as you get older you tend to fall more. Interesting study about that, though. They discovered that older people who live in areas where there is a lot of sunshine, they don't fall as often. And they have discovered that that sense of balance is really tied to vitamin D. And so they say if you live in a climate and you are not outside a lot, you don't go outside for, you know, an hour every day and work in the garden, that you will take a lot of vitamin D, you know, 5000 or 10,000 IU of vitamin D a day, you will be less likely to fall because everybody knows once old people start to fall, you know, then it is not too long before they have to look at a nursing home or assisted care or something like that.

So if you want to maintain your independence, you get older and you take some vitamin D because there is a definite tie in there.

And, by the way, vitamin D is not actually a vitamin. It is a hormone that is created by our bodies when we are exposed to sunlight.

So you just a little free health advice there. But it is this balance receptor.

And so when God's truth is presented out of balance, the teacher is instantly alerted and they are a little freaked out by it and so they constantly want to go in there and they want to correct the teaching or they want to give, you know, the balancing truth.

So let's look at the characteristics of teachers and what characterizes someone with a gift of teaching. And the first characteristic is that teachers need to validate information. Any time a teacher has a desire, when they hear information either privately or publicly they go check it out for themselves, see if it is true. In other words, they don't want to repeat what they heard somebody say until they go verify it. So, you know, if somebody tells them a news story before they repeat it they are going to go check the news story. If somebody gives them an illustration they are going to verify the illustration. I have heard preachers use illustrations that were found out later if you went on Snopes dot com and they were actually urban legends. The thing never happened.

Well, you know, you lose your credibility if you use an illustration and you tell it as though it were true and find out later it is not true at all.

And, by the way, a lot of Christians obviously don't have the gift of teaching because we have got, you know, several times a week somebody forwards me some email that, you know, tells you something that has happened and they are all upset about it and I will go out to Snopes dot com and find out it is not even true. And so you need to be... you need to be discerning. You need to verify. You need to validate and it is one of the things that teachers like to do. They want to make sure that any statements that anyone makes are true and accurate. And also that the truth that they are telling, somebody is telling, actually has spiritual power to transform somebody's life.

Luke wrote his gospel to Theophilus and here is what Luke says. He says, "I am writing this to you," he says, "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."⁴

He says, "I want you to know this is the truth. I have researched it. I have documented it. I have interviewed people. I made sure that I am giving you the orderly gospel." He is going to make a big point of putting events in order. The other gospels sometimes tell things out of order. But Luke puts them in order of time.

I don't know if you have done that. Have you ever started to tell a stories from your past and then realized that the story you should have told the story before this and you got two things out of order just because, you know, your memory after a while, you lose the date and time stamps for things and I had the challenge this weekend. I was working on Faith's slideshow for her graduation and as I was dragging pictures in there, I suddenly realized some of the pictures were out of order, you know, and I am trying to move them in so you can kind of watch her grow up on the screen.

Another characteristic of teachers is that they want to check out other teachers. So when they... we are very alert to false teachers. So we don't like to hear God's truth taught in a false way and so when we hear someone else, we want to, first of all, maybe investigate the background of the teacher. In other words, you hear somebody speaking and I know a number of times somebody said, "Oh, you know, so and so is here. You really ought to go hear them speak." And before I am even in, you know and these people are enthused about this person that is coming. The first thing I want to do is go out and see who is this person and why is he worth listening to? What are his credentials, you know? Not so much in terms of his, you know, what degrees that he has, but what qualifications does he have to talk on that subject, you know?

If somebody is going to talk to me about parenting and has insights on parenting, I would like it to be somebody who is actually a parent. That doesn't mean that you can't learn about parenting from somebody who studies God's Word even though they are still single. But, listen. Somebody that has actually raised four, five or six kids and has gone through some of the trauma and some of the experience, they are going to have much more practical teaching. I call that credentials.

⁴ Luke 1:4.

So you have more of a reason to listen, but you want to check out.

Now Luke began his gospel asserting that, you know, he had a perfect understanding of all things from the very first. He had been an eye witness of it, but also he interviewed a lot of the other apostles and, of course, he knew the apostle Paul so he had kind of the truth of Christ after the resurrection.

You know, the book of Galatians says that Paul basically spent three years in the deserts of Arabia seeing the resurrected Christ and having private seminary with Jesus.

Now that would be a cool thing, wouldn't it? And so, you know, but he had the ability to know Paul and put things in spiritual perspective, but he interviewed the other gospels and he said that he was an eye witness. I think Luke knew the other apostles. I think he had an opportunity to travel around. He saw some things himself. And so, you know, we want to check out other teachers.

Another characteristic of this gift is you want to rely on established resources. You go to great extent to validate truth, but you want to make sure that you go against established resources. One of the things that I have noticed happening in history lately is that there has been a couple of issues that schools are teaching now and they say that such and such happened.

For example, they, you know, they try to point out that George Washington wasn't a Christian. Well, they haven't gone back and read the original writings. But there is a lot of untruth being taught in history now and one particular truth or one particular teaching point I was listening to. They quote a book in the 1800s, but that book made an assertion, and it never backed up the assertion. So, in other words, somebody comes up with something in the 1800s, says it even though it is patently false and they now have people quoting from it so they can sound like they are quoting from an authority that proves a point that they want to make. But that source doesn't have any validity to it. It is not an original source. It doesn't go back to the people it is talking about.

We need to be careful that we are looking at established resources, not just somebody that made an assertion and then never proved it.

So teachers prefer the works of recognized authorities. They want to confirm statements are true. Luke, he praises the Bereans. The Bereans had listened to the apostle Paul talk and Luke in writing the book of Acts praises them because they went back and checked the Old Testament Scriptures to see that what Paul was teaching was in accord with the Old Testament Scriptures. The fact is, the Old Testament just illustrates the New Testament. The Old Testament affirms what the New Testament teaches. It is just that some of the New Testament truths are in types back there.

So he praises them and he relates his gospel to the other gospels and also to the Old Testament. And probably one of the big ones for many is that teachers like to present truths systematically. We like stuff to be in order. You know, it bugs me sometimes

when I... some... I have a friend. Some of you know who that friend was. You may have seen videos by him. You may have heard him speak at conferences. He is an energetic, enthusiastic speaker. I promise you. You listen to this guy, you absolutely will not be able to fall asleep. You know, he is so energetic and he has so many great truths and he has so many wonderful illustrations. His spiritual gift is the gift of exhortation. He is a father of eight children so he and I have a lot in common there. But sometimes it drives me nuts to reason to him.

And the reason why is because he doesn't always put what he presents in a systematic order and I have had other people come up to me at conferences where he taught and they heard me speak, too, and they said, "Could you take that and put that in order and give it back to him?"

You know, because it is hard to outline what he talks about.

Now I just sit in and soak it up and I have learned to be able to do that, but we like to see things presented in order. And so we like outlines. We like to know the events in which things happen. So Luke emphasized the importance of his chronological structure so in the first chapter of Luke where he is telling Theophilus about this book he is sending him and he says that I am writing unto thee in order.

So when he researched the life of Christ he made sure that he knew which events happened in what order and that was one of the things he did.

Another thing is that teachers gather many facts. They like to do research and they delight sometimes as much in the research as they do in the presentation of that. You know, I just recently got... I had bought Logos Bible software years ago and I recently just got it again and it changed dramatically and it is now just an awesome tool. It is kind of hard to learn a little bit. You have got to watch some videos to know how to use the software, but it is awesome software and it is really just amazing. And I, you know, I love to do the research. I love to dig in. Sometimes I chase my own rabbit trails and find out stuff I wasn't even looking for, but teachers like to do that. They like... and then they like to give as many facts as possible. They like to give you enough facts that they know that they have proved the point, that they have gotten the point across, that they have given you the evidence.

Now, you might not be interested in that evidence, but teachers very often like to give you that.

Now Luke's gospel, by the way, of all four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—Luke's gospel is the longest. And it is the longest gospel. It is the most detailed gospel. It has stories in it that the other gospels, you know, one will have and maybe the others don't, but it has things that the others omit. And Luke in Acts chapter one and verse one he actually emphasizes the completeness of his account.

And another thing about teachers is they require thoroughness. When we hear somebody else speak we like to know that they did thorough study. We don't like it if they stop short, ok? So, you know, they go into details that others miss.

I know one of the things that bugs me is when people talk about the church at Laodicea in the book of Revelation chapter three and that is... you remember that church, that is the one they said you are lukewarm. And he says to the church at Laodicea, he says, "You know, you are neither hot nor cold, but thou art lukewarm and I want to spew you out of my mouth."

And so I have heard very popular teachers say, "Well, the [?] Christians is the one that is really on fire of the Lord and you know he is a Christian. He acts like it. The cold Christian, they are not really living for the Lord, but they... at least they don't tell anybody they are Christians so they are really not damaging the cause of Christ. It is those ones in the middle that say they are Christians, but they don't live like it."

In fact, there is a book out now. It is kind of an interesting book. It is called *Christian Atheists*. And that first time I saw that title I thought, "What in the world is a Christian Atheist?"

But the writer of the book makes the point. There are people who say they are Christians. They have professed faith in Jesus Christ, but they live as though God wasn't making a difference in their life and that is the point of that title *Christian Atheist*. Somebody has made a profession, but they are not living out that thing in real life.

But, you know, I always get freaked out when I hear this teaching because one thing when I looked at Scripture it says, "I would thou wert hot or cold."⁵

So Jesus is saying hot is good, cold is good. I wish you were either one or the other.

Now why would Christ wish anybody to be a Christian that didn't tell anybody they were a Christian and didn't live like they were a Christian. That is just dumb. Ok? That is a bad explanation.

And so this is one of those things that I used to be really bothered by that. Is that the right definition of cold, because why would Jesus tell us cold was good if that if cold represents a Christian who neither says he is a Christian nor lives like it? I just can't believe Jesus would want that. So that is where, you know, I dug into the study and I found out that Laodicea had lousy water supply so they dug a ditch to Hierapolis to get hot water and people used to go up there. It is like Hot Springs, Arkansas, but in this case it was Hot Springs, Asia Minor.

And they would... they got the hot water coming down the ditch, but then the hot water lost some of its heat. It picked up the salts in the ground. It got to Laodicea it was lukewarm salty water and it made people sick to their stomach

⁵ Revelation 3:15.

Then they dug another ditch to Colosse because Colosse had these wonderful refreshing cold bubbling springs that came up out of the ground and you could go after you mowed the lawn on a hot day and Colosse you could get out your dipper gourd and dip it in that little pool of water that came up from the streams and it would be ice cold and it would just taste so good and you would be refreshed and you would feel good about that.

And once I understood that background, I thought, “Hey hot Christians, those are those that have the characteristic of being able help others heal. They are the ones that go to somebody when they see them hurting and they put their arm around them and they comfort them and they help them heal. And then in this cold Christians, it just refresh and encourage you.

Have you ever known a Christian like that, that they always seem like they were up and they were bubbly and they were excited and every time you are around them you just kind of felt energized. I remember when I was pastoring in Palestine there was one couple in our church and the wife always had this characteristic. And it was like any time I saw Rick and Dorinda, I just got energized and picked up and encouraged no matter how everything else was going in my life or everything else was going in the church. It was just... it was nice to be around somebody bubbly and effervescent. And you don't meet a lot of Christians like that. There is a lot of Christians that think there is some spiritual virtue in having a sourpuss face, you know, but that is not spiritual, by the way. That is being very worldly. You need to live as though you have hope and it needs to show up on your face.

So if you are happy to know Jesus, tell your face about it, please, ok? And so, you know, but that is the thing. Now that I understand it, there is a whole new insight. We need to be either helping bring comfort to people or encouraging and refreshing them. But when we are in the middle we are just useless and lukewarm and we make Christ sick to his stomach. So the big thing is don't be useless. And that is what he told the Laodiceans. He says, “You are useless Christians. You say you are Christians, but you are not really doing anything for the Lord.”

Well, you know, and there I went just getting a lot of elaborate details that weren't really part of the lesson. But, you know, that is one of those characteristics that you need to understand. Scripture says we love to gather facts. We like to make sure. We want to be thorough about this fact.

Now, Luke, by the way, he gives precise descriptions of events and conversations and circumstances of physical conditions. He gave more names, more titles, more cities, more dates, more events, more side lights than any other gospel writer. He gives you the details.

By the way, it was kind of funny because long before I knew anything about spiritual gifts, Luke was my favorite gospel. I just, oh, man. You know, other people get excited about John. My father-in-law. I think that may be his favorite gospel. At least he has

preached on that a lot in Taiwan, I know. But, you know, I read Luke and I get excited about Luke because there is just more in it for that.

Well, here is another characteristic. Teachers are uneasy with subjective truth. One thing that really bothers a teacher is when you come up and you claim some knowledge of spiritual truth and then you say, "I know this because I have experienced it myself."

Oh, that freaks the teacher out when you do that. Don't tell him you have experienced it. What you need to do instead is give him chapter and verse. I want to know from God's Word.

Now I have had people.... I had... the first church I pastored, in fact, in Nachdoches, Texas there was one lady that was all the time trying to share these spiritual truths with me and then she would tell me how she had experienced it. She had had experience speaking in tongues, for example and, therefore, she knew it was right.

Well, guess what? You can experience evil. You can experience wickedness. It doesn't mean it is right. So why just because you experience speaking in tongues do you assume that it is a valid experience. Just because you had an experience and it made you feel good doesn't mean it is from God, ok?

So what we need to do is go to the Word and validate what it says in the Word. And the fact is, one time she shared something with me and she had had a kind of a personal tragedy with her son when she was raising him and, you know, she was having struggle with the fact that God says in his Word, "Giving thanks," in Ephesians chapter five, "Giving thanks always for all things."⁶

Ok? Now we can handle it in 1 Thessalonians. It says, "Give thanks always in all things," but can you really give thanks for all things? But Scripture says you need to do that, too.

How do you thank God for the bad stuff? Well, you have to have enough faith to understand that the sovereignty of God can use bad things in our lives for good purposes. And so, you know, but she was just like, you know, she verbally, while I was preaching, said, "No, that is not right." You know? And she started to share her experience. And I had to make the point. I said, "I am sorry for your experience, but your experience does not match God's Word."

Any time we elevate experience above the Word of God, we are going to lead ourselves into heresy and danger. It doesn't matter what your experience is. Can you show it to me in Scripture and can you show it to me? And a lot of people will take Scripture out of... you know, they will take one verse and they will take it out of context.

I have a friend that goes to the church of Christ, he has for many years. He has one verse in Acts that he says proves that you can lose your salvation. Well, I have got at least 28 that shows that you can't, ok? So he, you know, he will proof text, but he doesn't read

⁶ Galatians 5:20.

the whole of Scripture. There is more reasons and I kind of have been making a mental list for years of all the things the Bible says about salvation.

We are very uneasy with subjective truth. Teachers, by the way, tend to remain silent until they can validate information. So when I hear something or I have a thought sometimes I think, “Oh, I want to share that.” Or maybe I will go to a conference I will hear a truth and I say, “Oh, man, that sounds really good.”

But then I come back and I don’t really share it with anybody until I can study it myself and make sure that Scripture actually backs that up.

Here is another thing. Teachers persevere with accepted teachers. Now if you have a teacher that has taught you well in the past, you could validate what they said from Scripture, or you had gone to school that gave you, you know, an understanding that the Word of God was inspired and inerrant, infallible and imperative and you knew that that was the way the Word of God ought to be treated, teachers will tend to stay loyal to those schools or stay loyal to those teachers so long as they perceive them to still be standing in the truth.

Now it is interesting that when Paul was in prison everyone else kind of left his side and Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:11, “Only Luke is with me.”⁷

So, in other words, a lot of other people abandoned Paul, but Luke was still with him. He was still faithful to him even though that meant he had to spend a lot of time in a prison cell to spend any time with him.

Another characteristic is teachers clarify misunderstandings. So it is like, you know, there have been passages of Scripture I have taught wrong for years and years. And one of the Scriptures I used to teach wrong and that I, you know, I know I preached it a lot of times is this Scripture I think it is in Proverbs, I want to say chapter 28. I will have to think about that for a minute. What is that Scripture that says that, “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly.”⁸

And I just thought for a long time that meant if you wanted to have friends, you had better be friendly to people, because that is what it sounds like. But then you go study the Hebrew and what it is really saying and the rest of the verse says, “But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”⁹

When you go the Hebrew you notice he uses two different words for friend. A man that wants a lot of shallow acquaintances, that is what the first word friend means, must show himself to be evil, because the word translated friendly in the King James is רעע (raw-ah’) which is the Hebrew word for evil.

⁷ Acts 4:11.

⁸ Proverbs 18:24.

⁹ Ibid.

So, in other words, if you want a lot of gods standing around you at the water cooler and you want to make dirty jokes with them and you want to be popular, all you have got to do is just be worldly and you will draw... you will be popular. You will be the popular guy at work if you do that.

But there is a different Hebrew word of friend in the latter part of that verse and he says, "But if you want a true blue friend, one that is close to you, one that knows your inner heart, one that will never forsake you," he says, "But there is a friend that is closer than a brother."

Well, Jesus is that friend for me.

I have some friends in the body of Christ, I have some friends in this church that I consider to be like my brother. I consider them to be family. You know, and it is kind of funny and our family has relationship with the Bateman family. I have to remind myself once in a while that we are not physically related to them. It is just... it has always been Uncle Jack and Aunt Trail. And, you know, when every time I saw Mark yesterday, Mark Bateman yesterday when we met at Faith's graduation, you know, and he is just like a brother to me. I love that guy and I just love to go up and put my arms around him and hug him and I, you know, we are just family. I can't even... I have to remind myself that we don't actually... we are not blood kin, you know, and we still think about them on holidays still share meals together, you know. That is the kind of friend that is closer than a brother. Now that is a cool thing. It is a special gift and a blessing from the Lord to have another family like that.

So, you know, teachers want to make sure that, you know, when I found out I didn't understand that verse in Proverbs correctly, you know, I got up and admitted to somebody. I said, "You know, I have taught you something before, but I need to erase it from your mind. Let me tell you what it really means," because I want to clarify the misunderstanding. I don't want to be the person guilty of giving you error.

And so sometimes I will... you will probably hear me admit some day, because, you know, I am always opening what I believe to see if it is still true in verifying that. But you may hear me sometime say, "You know, I told you such and such in the past, but that was just wrong."

The fact is I will never forget I was pastoring in Shiloh Road Baptist Church in Dallas, right on the Dallas, Mystique border and one day I got up in church and I was preaching about Noah, you know? And I was talking about the fact that he spent 120 years building the ark. And later one of my church members who had the gift of teaching, she came up to me and she says, "The Bible doesn't say that."

And I thought, "Yeah it did." And God told him 120 years before the flood that he had to build an ark.

She said, "But it doesn't say he started building right away."

I had to get out my Bible and go back to the book of Genesis and found out she was right. The Bible didn't say that. I don't know when he started building. He may have waited until his three sons were old enough to help him. He may have done other preparations before that. He may have, you know, been trying to draw out the plans that God gave him to make sure that he knew... I don't know when he started, but the point was I shouldn't have been teaching people that if the Bible didn't say it. So I need to be careful that if I am reading something into the text and I am making assumptions as a teacher I need to be careful and admit that fact to you so that I don't create misunderstandings.

Well, let's look at some of the misuses of the gift of teaching and one of the misuses is just that teachers can become proud of their knowledge. They can do so much research. The Bible says that knowledge puffeth up. One of the problems, by the way, with public education in this country is when you teach someone in public school, you give them knowledge, but you don't give them virtue. You don't give them character. And when you give them knowledge without giving them virtue or character, what happens is they get puffed up. They get a little arrogant. They get a little proud and this is a real problem.

So you need to be aware of that. They become proud of their knowledge.

Sometimes they may appear proud because they give you more... they give you so much information that you get... you sit back there and you go, "Wow, I think he is just trying to impress me by how much information he is giving."

You can also appear proud by conveying attitude, "Well, it is not right until I research and say it is right and then it is right."

You know, you need to be open to other people having truth, maybe, that you haven't researched.

Another thing teachers have a problem with. Sometimes they despise a lack of credentials. Now I think there are people that say, "Hey, if you don't have a seminary degree and you don't have a little sheepskin on the wall and you haven't got your bachelor's degree and your master's degree or, you know, your PhD which stands for piled high and deep, if you haven't got all those things, then you don't have the credentials to talk to me.

Sometimes people get caught up in academic credentials. I don't really have that problem because I have realized that most of the stuff that I have learned that was useful to me in life I didn't learn on something that I got a degree from. But we need to just bear in mind that we need to be careful that we don't despise a lack of credentials.

And here is another one. Teachers can depend on human reasoning. Now one of the problems is that if a teacher is not meditating on the Word of God they very often will tend to rely on their human reasoning. And what is really bad is when you get a teacher

that went out and studied Greek philosophy or they took a philosophy course in college. And I just want to encourage you. If you ever, any of you ever go to college and they want you to take a philosophy course, turn the other way and run. Nothing will mess you up more than a college philosophy course. Just stay away from error. I don't think that you need to take courses in error so that you know what error is. I think you need to focus your mind on meditating on God's Word so you know what truth is. And once you know what truth is, everything else is error. You will know it instantly. You don't have to study about it.

My mind is just not big enough to hold room for all that stuff so I would rather focus on the truth.

That is why I think that young people need to spend less time reading works of fiction and you need to spend more time reading biographies of great Christians and they need to spend time focusing on God's Word. Forget all the fiction books. It doesn't mean that fiction books can't be a little motivating and energizing, you know, like a Ted Decker book or a Randy Alcorn book as much as anyone, but be careful that you don't make those things just kind of a way of life.

But they can depend on human reasoning and they can, if they don't put their mind in the control of the Spirit they will start relying on their intellect rather than relying upon things that they have learned spiritually by meditating on God's Word.

Another misuse of the gift is that they can criticize practical application. In other words, one of the things that they can do is that they can get a truth and they will hear a truth taught and somebody is teaching you to practically apply this truth and guess what? There is a phrase I learned in seminary that has stuck with me for many years and it is a great phrase. It says there is only one right interpretation of Scripture, but there are many possible applications. And I think that is a good thing. I think that if you really study you can get down to what the Bible writer meant when he wrote that thing and that is the correct interpretation.

But there may be many ways to apply it. So, for example in the Old Testament there is a law that says you will not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. In other words, if you are going to have an ox and he is going to be hooked to one of these things that goes around and around in circles and he is pulling the big grinding stone and you are putting the corn there and you are grinding that corn into corn flour, he says, you don't muzzle the ox. In other words, you let the ox eat some of the corn because he is helping you to grind out the corn. You can't starve the animal. That is counter productive to having good corn grinding, ok?

It is interesting because that was in a section of laws in the Old Testament talking about the treatment of animals. Paul, though, takes that Scripture and he takes it out of context and he quotes it when he is writing the book of Romans and he basically he says that, "Hey," or maybe it wasn't Romans, but anyway, Paul takes that out of context and he says, "You should pay your pastor well."

Well, the law was about an animal that you needed to treat right. But he quotes it and says, "You need to pay your pastor well."

Why? Because he is laboring in the gospel and he is teaching people. He labors to study> He labors to visit. He labors to pray. He labors to call and he is being... if he is being a faithful minister of God, you ought to pay him well because you don't want that man starving. You don't want that man's family being bitter because he couldn't make enough of a living to provide for some of their basic necessities. Pay that pastor well. In fact, if he rules well, he is worthy of double honor.

So what did Paul do? He quoted a Scripture and took it completely out of context to make another point.

Now was that wrong? No, because the underlying the principle was the same. The principle was the one doing the labor should be properly compensated. The principle of that translates from an ox to a pastor.

Ok, so you need to understand that you don't want to criticize Scripture because maybe there was a little flaw in the presentation, you know? It would be kind of stupid for me to go and say, "Well, Paul obviously didn't understand that that Scripture was in a context of animals and therefore he made a wrong application."

Sometimes, though, you will hear somebody make an application and because you have never thought of that practical application before, you think, "Well, that is not valid."

Here is another one. Teachers tend to rely only on established resources. So they like to go... Excuse me. That was not the one. Here we go. Teachers can show off their research skills.

In other words, sometimes they really get into it. I was listening. We have our sermons put up on a website called SermonAudio.com and you can listen to it around the world. The other day I happened to be out there and they have a listing of, you know, churches in the area where you are without pastors. And I clicked on this link and there was a church up in Allen, Texas that was without a pastor and I looked and the pastor... and I went out to their website just out of curiosity to see who the pastor had been, discovered it was a former classmate of mine. And I thought, "Oh, I am going to go listen to... and listen to a sermon and listen to what this guy had to say."

Well, the interesting thing was this was one of the most scholarly people I have ever known and I won't tell you the title of the sermon. I will tell you it was probably the best researched sermon I have ever heard. It had more details, more statistics from Scripture about anything I have ever heard. He obviously has the gift of teaching, but it went to such an extreme that I listened to the sermon for an hour. It wasn't over again yet. It was... I listened an hour and it was still going. I finally quit listening because I had other things I needed to do.

But the thing was there was in that sermon nothing of practical value. As far as helping me be a more effective Christian, there wasn't anything in the sermon that helped me be a more effective Christian.

And I think if preaching doesn't have a point to change lives or maybe quit people, there is something wrong. But it was very obvious that he had done his research. The problem is that teachers, especially pastors that are just pastoring and they don't live out in the real world and they have the gift of teaching, they can make their office into kind of an ivory tower and seclude themselves and all they come out after you with is the benefits of the their research. It is one reason why I think it is good for young pastors to learn to be bivocational for a while. I think before you tell people how God's Word should affect their employment and God's Word should affect their marriage, God's Word should affect their children and God's Word should affect the way you pay bills, you probably need to do some of it yourself and then you have more credibility.

Here is another one. Teachers can reject scriptural presuppositions. Now there are some things that we have to assume by faith. You know, if we are to please God we have to believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. That is a scriptural presupposition. I have to believe that the Word of God is inerrant and infallible and that every word is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works.

But I have to accept those things by faith.

Now the thing is, though, is that if you start getting a little too high minded not believing things by faith and not having a faith walk with the Lord, what you will start doing is you will start reexamining whether the presuppositions are true and if you have studied any philosophy you may start building your whole theology around philosophy instead of God's Word.

Another problem is that they can just trust their own intellect. And the best way if you do have an intellect, if you are an intelligent person, the best way to get your intellect under the control of the Holy Spirit is to meditate on Scripture. Fill your mind with the Word of God.

After you do that, your intellect will be subject to it. And I remember when I was in college. There was a period of time I was very backslidden, I relied on my own intellect and my own reasoning for everything. It was ultimately Scripture I had memorized when I was 14 years of age that caused me to really quit backsliding and to return to the Lord.

So be careful about trusting your own intellect.

So if a teacher fails to be mighty in Spirit, then they will exalt their intelligence above the Word of God.

Another thing is teachers can just take teaching to an extreme. Any time you take one truth of Scripture and you pull it out of balance, it is heresy. So, for example, I could take the truth of God's sovereignty out of balance and all I could do is very day get up and preach to you how God chooses people to be the elect and he chooses people to be saved and I can make that the subject of every message and so it would lead to heresy because there is a balancing truth in Scripture that man has a free will.

Similarly I could go off on another tangent and talk about something and if that is the only side of the truth if I don't teach both sides of the coin, what happens. We get Scripture out of balance and we lead to heresy, I can tell you teaching to an extreme.

And so if you, for example, if you take any kind of doctrine out of its moral setting you can have a real problem. One example of that would be if. Right now because I got a letter this week from maybe somebody can help me remember the name. It runs Family Radio ministry. What is his name, Dennis?

[off mic voice]

Thank you. Got a letter this week from Harold Camping. And he has had a ministry called Family Radio dot com. I will tell you that it has had some of the most beautiful music on it so I listened to it for a long time. But I hear, you know, a couple of year ago he started saying when the date for the rapture is going to be. And so the rapture according to him is going to happen this month on May 21st. And he really believes it. He has bought billboards here in the Dallas area. He has got teams of people going throughout the US telling them judgment day is coming May 21st and if you are not saved by then, you get to finish the last five months of the tribulation by yourself.

It is kind of interesting because my understanding of Scripture is the last three and a half years of the tribulation are pretty bad and he is saying, "Oh, it is just the last five months that are pretty bad," and he has written an 80 page book outlining all of his understanding on the end time. And in this letter I got from this week he basically was saying goodbye. He was saying, "You know, we have just got a few days left till judgment and we hope you will continue to support the ministry until the rapture comes on May 21st. And I wanted to say goodbye to you."

And I thought, "Well, if you really believe the rapture is coming May 21st, why don't you just say, 'We will see you in a few days?'" Ok? That would make more sense. Wouldn't it? But he has taken it so far out of balance that he has misunderstood that the Scriptures that teach about the coming end time were to have a purifying effect on our lives. In other words, the fact that Christ is coming back is not so that I can sit down somewhere and wait for till he comes in the cloud. The fact that he is coming back should purify my motives, purify my ministry and make me want to live for the Lord until he does come back.

So you can take it to an extreme. You can take something out of balance. You can take communion to solve all of your problems in your family without undemanding the principle of self examination.

The last misuse I will mention this morning it is that teachers can argue over minor points. They can get little nitpicky. It is kind of like you get a whole presentation and it is kind of like, well, you one thing wrong. And they want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, you know? And I have probably been guilty of this before that somebody made one mistake and I felt like, well, I kind of invalidated the whole thing because they, you know, they didn't get that right. They used the wrong Scripture reference or they misquoted the Scripture or they, you know, they didn't obviously didn't study that passage. So a lot of times we... it is hard for us to take truth unless we know how the other people arrived at that truth.

Well, each motivation gift has a special caution and so the caution for this gift is in Romans 12:11 and so here is the spiritual destruction. The slide is wrong there. It says 12:14, but it should say 12:11.

It says, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."¹⁰

And so he uses three cautions to teachers. He says, first of all, don't be slothful, because teachers would love, sometimes, just to sit in front of their computer and sit in the middle of their library and study and study and study and they would love to just focus on that. But the problem is life is being lived out in the real world. So don't be slothful in actually doing ministry and trying to justify it by saying, "Well, I have got to study."

Ok. You need to study, but you need to be out there serving people and ministering to them, giving them counsel, pointing them toward Christ.

Then he also says you need to be fervent in spirit. In other words, don't be so fervent in your intellect, don't be so fervent in your mind, don't be so fervent in learning the facts, but be really fervent in meditating on God's Word and asking God to change and transform your heart. Be fervent in the Spirit.

And then the third thing he says, he says you need to be serving the Lord. Don't just be doing research in your ivory tower, but be out there being a true servant of Jesus Christ.

You are going to have a more valid ministry if you demonstrate that you are serving the Lord.

So that is kind of an overview of the gift of teaching.

¹⁰ Romans 12:11.