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“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,” II Timothy 2:2.

## Teaching Other Stewards

**Central Truth:** The church should plan and observe a program of stewardship education.

**L156. Date:** August 1986. **Text:** Acts 20:17-28.

**Topic:** Stewardship; Teaching; Discipleship.

*“The things that thou hast heard of me . . . commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (II Timothy 2:2). That is the teacher's commission.

*“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation”* (James 3:1). That is the teacher's accountability.

Together the two passages tell us that the business of the teacher is to teach and that the teacher will be judged more strictly in the day of accounting. What a challenge!

New Testament teachers did not have a Sunday School classroom or the pulpit of a church building where they taught. There were no church buildings, and the Sunday School did not come into existence until recent years. Those teachers spoke in private homes or public places, wherever they could get someone to listen. Often their “class” was only one person; sometimes it was a great crowd. But whether they were teaching “publicly” or “from house to house,” their desire was to impart the knowledge of God (Acts 20:20).

Acts 20:17-28, the text for this study, recounts the teaching ministry of the apostle Paul in Ephesus. A review of the passage will help us to understand Christian teaching today.

## I. THE TEACHER'S HONOR (Acts 20:17)

**A. Honor the teacher because the Holy Spirit has gifted him.**

Teaching is one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28, 29; Ephesians 4:11. A person gifted of God to teach should receive the respect and hearing of those to whom he speaks.

**B. Honor the teacher because God has set his office in the church.**

First Corinthians 12:28 places the office of teacher only after that of apostle and prophet in the list of importance of respective ministries which God has placed in the church. Teaching is one of five essential office ministries in the church (Ephesians 4:11). Every church that is dynamic in ministry must have gifted teachers functioning among her (Acts 13:1).

**C. Honor the teacher because he is God's messenger to the church who is commissioned to "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28). Let the church receive what she is taught (1 Thessalonians 2:13), submit to the spiritual authority of her teachers (Hebrews 13:7), and live by the principles of Holy Scripture (James 1:22). Your pastor-teacher is the "*angel*" (messenger) of God to you and your church (Revelation 1 — 3). Honor him. Members of the church faculty are his assistants in teaching you.

## **II. THE TEACHER'S EXAMPLE (Acts. 20:18-21)**

**A. The teacher must have a consistent life-style** (verse 18). The word will get around whether or not he lives what he teaches. Teachers must be able to say in truth, "*Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe*" (1 Thessalonians 2:10). An unworthy life-style will cause the Word of God to be blasphemed among unbelievers (Romans 2:24). The pastor-teacher "*must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*" (1 Timothy 3:7); that same principle applies to all his assistants.

**B. The teacher must keep a humble spirit**, "*serving the Lord with all humility of mind*" (Acts 20:19). The Bible commands, "*Serve the Lord with fear*" (Psalm 2:11). That means all service for God must be done with a deep sense of reverence and respect for Him and His Word. Paul wrote that our having the good news of Jesus Christ was like having a "*treasure in earthen vessels*" (II Corinthians 4:7). That is enough to keep us humble.

**C. The teacher must be faithful in all things.** Paul set forth four particular areas of faithfulness that are required of teachers.

(1) Be faithful in the content of the message. "*I kept back nothing that*

*was profitable unto you. . . . I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:20, 27).*

(2) Be faithful in ministering at all times. *“I . . . have taught you publickly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).*

(3) Be faithful in reaching all kinds of people. Paul testified *“both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks” (Acts 20:21).*

(4) Be faithful in keeping evangelism primary. The message to the unsaved involves *“repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).*

### **III. THE TEACHER'S MINISTRY (Acts 20:22-27)**

**A. The teacher must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.** He must go *“bound in the spirit” (Acts 20:22).* Even when he is not sure of God's leading, he must follow (Acts 13:2; 16:6). The Holy Spirit sets him in a church and directs his work. It is a blessing to follow as He leads.

**B. The teacher must live by faith,** *“not knowing the things that shall befall” him (Acts 20:22).* It is not necessary for him to know what lies ahead so long as he follows God who knows.

**C. The teacher must persist through problems.** Paul experienced *“tears and temptations,”* as well as *“bonds and afflictions.”* In the face of all difficulties he said, *“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).*

**D. The teacher must be free in his spirit, knowing he has been faithful to his ministry.** *“I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26, 27).* A convicted conscience because of ministry unfulfilled or motives impure (as in verse 33) will disturb the peace of a teacher of the Word. Neither act nor attitude should burden the teacher of God.

**E. The teacher must be complete in his message.** *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).* He must exhort, comfort, and charge everyone upon the principles of Holy Scripture (I Thessalonians 2:11). Nothing must change the message, for it is the inviolable and eternal Word of God.

### **IV. THE TEACHER'S CHALLENGE (Acts 20:28)**

**A. The teacher is challenged to exercise personal discipline.** *“Take*

*heed therefore unto yourselves.*” Good teaching always begins with the character of the teacher (II Corinthians 13:5).

**B. The teacher is challenged to be a shepherd.** *“Take heed . . . to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”* Not for just half an hour on Sunday morning, but all the week the good teacher seeks, counsels, and prays with his class.

**C. The teacher is challenged to minister to need.** *“Feed the church of God.”* He is not just to *“teach the lesson,”* but to *“feed”* the *“flock.”* That means full truth plus personal application. It deals with every Bible principle in view of the student's question, *“How does this apply to me?”* That will produce truly effective teaching.

**D. The teacher is challenged to esteem every person to whom he ministers.** The whole flock of God has been *“purchased with his own blood.”* That makes each person of infinite value to God. Believers are the *“apple”* of God's eye and valued as the *“stones”* of His crown (Zechariah 2:8; 9:16). *“They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels”* (Malachi 3:17). The saints are *“a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God”* (Isaiah 62:3). Teachers are challenged to handle them with loving care.

The teacher will face a more strict judgment as a leader of God's people. What a privilege it is to teach! What a responsibility it is to account to God as a teacher! What a debt believers owe those who teach them the Word of God! Students should listen to them, encourage them, pray for them, and obey them. God will bless both the student and the teacher.

## Questions

1. How is II Timothy 2:2 the teacher's commission?
2. What warning is given to the teacher in James 3:1?
3. What does Acts 20:20 say about where teaching is to be done?
4. Why should you honor the teacher of the Bible?
5. How can you show honor to your teacher this week?
6. How does I Timothy 3:7 relate to Acts 20:18?
7. In what areas must a teacher be faithful?
8. What problems beset Bible teachers today?
9. How can a teacher *“take heed”* to himself?
10. How can a teacher *“take heed”* to his class?