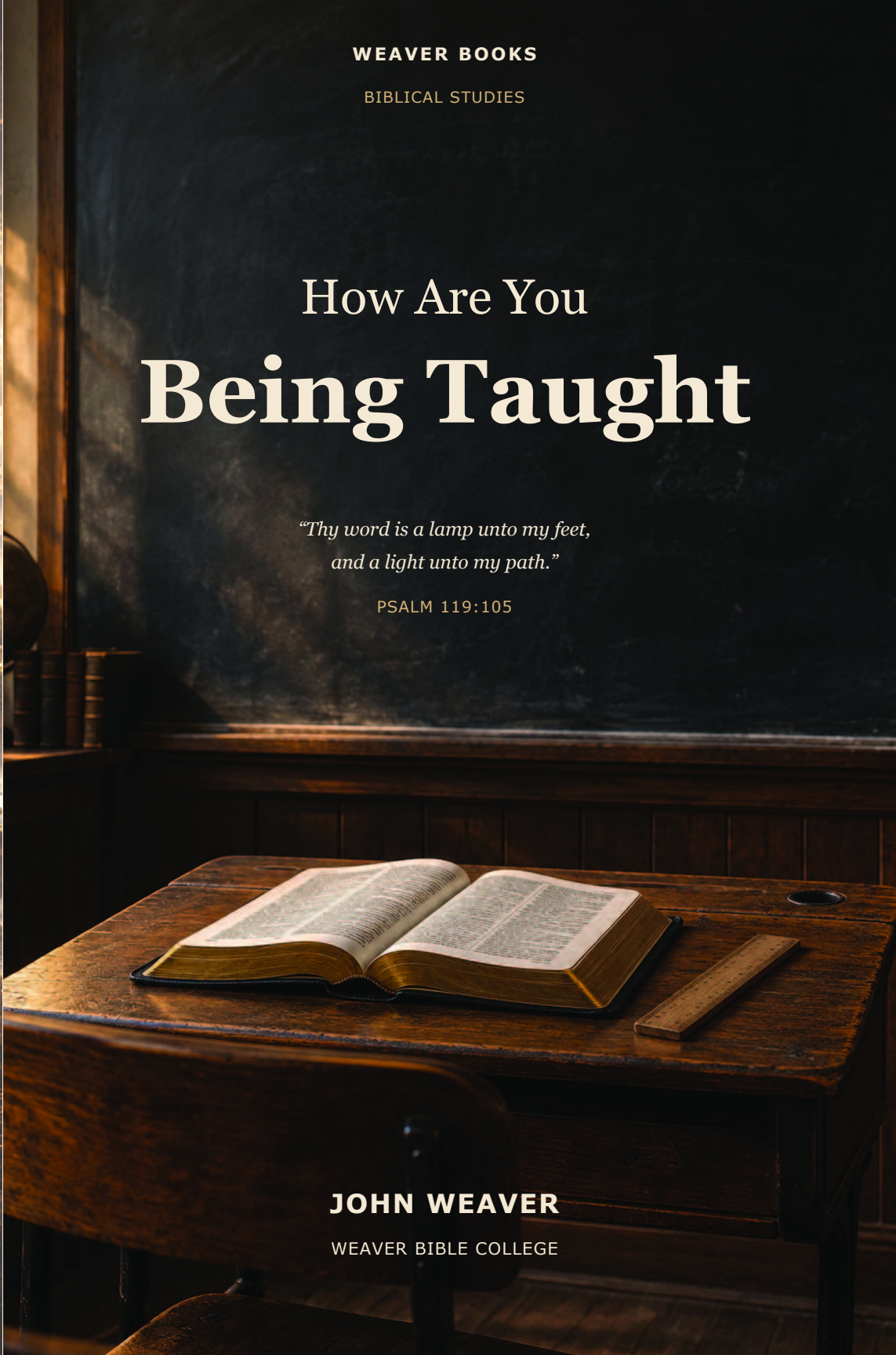
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How Are You Being Taught

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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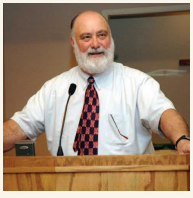
Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

PSALM 25:4

God teaches through His Word, examples, correction, and the circumstances He appoints. John Weaver considers the learner's responsibility to attend, study, and respond faithfully, as well as the greater accountability that comes with knowledge. These messages invite believers to recognize how they are being instructed and to receive that instruction humbly.

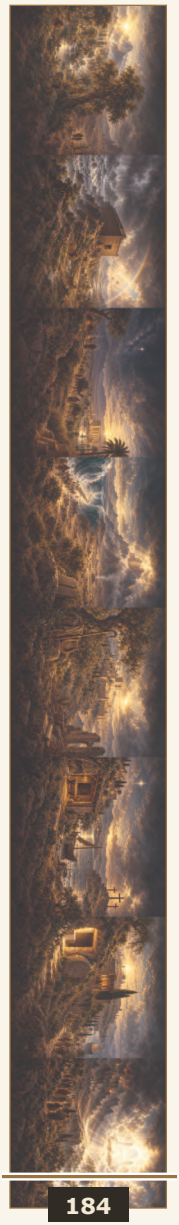
"God may teach us by using examples, through instruction, or through correction."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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Contents

Chapter 1: How Are You Being Taught - Part One of Three 5

Introduction: The Necessity of Teaching 5

The Mark of a True Christian: Receiving God's Word 7

Reasons for Ignorance Among Christians 10

God Chooses the Way to Teach Us 14

God Teaches by Example 15

Positive Examples in Scripture 16

Negative Examples in Scripture 17

Application: Be a Godly Example 21

Chapter 2: How Are You Being Taught - Part Two of Three 23

Review of Part 1 23

By Instruction 25

Introduction to Instruction as God's Second Method 26

God's Instruction Compared to Rain and Dew 26

Secondary Means of Instruction: Creation and Observation 28

Primary Means: God Uses Men to Instruct 29

How Pastor-Teachers Instruct: Exposition, Explanation, Application 32

Implications for Being Instructed 33

Applications: Time, Effort, and Meekness 36

Chapter 3: How Are You Being Taught - Part Three of Three 39

Introduction and Review 39

God Teaches by Correction 41

Biblical Rebuke and Its Nature 42

An Unusual Rebuke 44

Jesus Rebukes Peter 48

Correction Without Anger 49

God Teaches by Chastisement 50

The Purpose and Response to Chastisement 52

The Final Consequence: Death 53
Applications and Conclusion 54
Topical Index 59
Scripture Index 61
Study Guide Link 65

CHAPTER 1

How Are You Being Taught

Part One of Three

Introduction: The Necessity of Teaching

Open your Bibles to Psalm 25, and look at verse 12. David asked this question: “What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him, that man that fears the Lord, shall He, God, teach in the way that he shall choose.”

Think about that verse: “What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.” Teaching is needed by everyone, yet it is ignored by most individuals, including the majority of Christians. One can fill a church building with free meals or entertainment, but offer serious, studious, and solemn teaching of the Word of God, and discover how few really turn out for teaching.

The truth is, we would rather be amused than muse. You remember that the word “muse” in the Bible means to think. Amusement means not to think. We would rather be amused than muse, and we would rather be ignorant than instructed.

You have to understand that there is an ignorance that stems from inopportunity. Some people simply do not have the opportunity to be taught or the availability of instruction. But there is also an ignorance that stems from willfulness, and the Word of God condemns willful ignorance.

Let me give you several verses to begin with. In Isaiah 56:10, God speaks about the watchmen concerning Israel: "His watchmen are blind. They are all ignorant. They're all dumb dogs that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." Why are they ignorant? Because they love to sleep, slumber, and lie down. In other words, they have no time for study, teaching, or instruction. Probably they believe they have absolutely no need for it, either. God says that some people are like dumb dogs, with absolutely no desire to be taught.

In Romans 10:3, speaking about the Jews in those days, God says: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Here were people who were not only willingly ignorant of God's righteousness, but who then attempted to establish a righteousness of their own.

So you have to ask, were they willfully blind? The answer is yes. They were willfully blind, and not only were they willfully blind, but they gladly, willingly, and with great deliberation plotted the betrayal, rejection, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 5, the Word of God says this, talking about the apostates: "For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." Notice he said, "For this they are willingly ignorant of." There are a lot of people who are downright willingly ignorant. They want ignorance. In fact, when you find people like this, the only thing we can do is agree with the Apostle Paul when he said in 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 38, "If any man will be ignorant, let him be ignorant still." In other words, if you are not going to learn, if you do not want to learn, stay ignorant.

The truth is, we must all be taught and instructed. There is not one individual who was born wise, spiritual, obedient, and godly by nature. Not one individual. Jeremiah hit the nail on the head when

he said in Jeremiah 10 and verse 23, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” No man has the wisdom, insight, or knowledge to do so.

I understand that many people consider themselves very wise. But if you are one of those individuals, let me ask you a question: Have you ever considered your life before you were converted to Jesus Christ? If you have, I can ask one question, and if you are honest, I can tell you the answer before I ask it. If you could live your life over before you were converted, with the knowledge you have now, would you live any differently? Obviously, yes, you would. Well, we have to ask this question then.

What has made the difference in our lives since our conversion? The answer is obviously the teaching of the Word of God. David said it like this in Psalm 37:23: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.” Every one of us can look back and see how God has led us, directed us, and taught us. We have to confess and acknowledge that the changes in our lives stem from the teaching of the Word of God.

Since we are in Psalm 25, look at verse 5, the prayer that David prays: “Lead me in thy truth and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.” Look also at verse 9: “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.” Do you understand that God has promised to instruct us and teach us? In Psalm 32:8, God says, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” God has promised, then, to instruct us and teach us.

The Mark of a True Christian: Receiving God's Word

Now turn with me to Deuteronomy 33, and let us look at the first three verses. Remember, the title of this message is “How Are You Being Taught?” I am going to show you four ways from the Word of God concerning how God teaches. Notice Deuteronomy 33, beginning with verse 1: “And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: From his right hand went a fiery law for them.”

Now watch verse 3 very carefully: “Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.” When you read that passage, it should be very obvious that all his saints sit at his feet; everyone shall receive of his words. Let me tell you, the singular and most prominent mark of a true Christian is that he receives the Word of God.

In John 17, the high priestly prayer of our Lord, Jesus says almost exactly the same thing that is said in Deuteronomy 33:3. He prays to the Father: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou gavest me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.”

What did Moses say in Deuteronomy 33:3? Everyone sits at His feet and receives His word. Here Jesus Christ, in His high priestly prayer, is saying, “I’ve given them the words which thou hast given me and they have received them.” That is why I said the singular and most prominent mark of a child of God is that he receives the Word of God.

If all of God’s people are to be taught, we must ask ourselves what the implications of these two passages, especially Deuteronomy 33 and John 17, are. First, it should be obvious that all who claim to be the people of God are not necessarily the people of God. There are hordes of ignorant people in the churches—hordes, multitudes. Why are so many of them absolutely abysmally ignorant?

The answer is that they were never genuinely converted to begin with. The Apostle Paul himself makes a distinction between a profession and a possession. It is one thing to profess to be a Christian; it is quite another thing to possess the grace that makes one a Christian. It is entirely possible to be in an outward covenantal relationship and not be saved.

I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 9. Here's an excellent illustration, Romans chapter 9, beginning there in verse 6. I want you to see what the Apostle Paul says about national Israel. Everyone in this room knows that national Israel was in a covenantal relationship with God. If you were a national Israelite, especially a male, you were circumcised. That circumcision was the outward sign that you were in a covenantal relationship with God. It was a national covenant. Does that mean, therefore, that every male that was circumcised was saved?

And the answer is, of course not. If you look in Romans chapter 9, beginning there with verse 6, Paul is addressing this very issue, and he says this, "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect." Now watch this statement. "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel." Now when the Apostle says, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel," what is he saying? There's an Israel within Israel. In other words, there's an elect within an election. There's a national outward external election, but there's an internal spiritual election. So he says, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel."

Now, in case you do not understand verse 6, he explains it further in verse 7. He says, "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy children be called." So just because someone happened to be a lineal descendant of Abraham, still did not mean that he was a true Israelite. Because in Isaac shall thy seed be called, because Isaac was the child of promise. Now in case you don't understand verse 7, he makes it even plainer in verse 8. Now let's go back and read verse 6 and 7 so that you can understand it in verse 8. In verse 6, he says, "Not as though the word of God hath none effect, for they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because are they the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, that is, here's my explanation, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God. But the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

So fleshly Israel is not Israel. Only those who are in Christ are the true Israel of God. So what is the Apostle Paul telling us? That there is an election within an election. And you could explain that by just looking at the church today. There are many who are in churches

that may be in an outward covenantal relationship in the fact that they join that church. They were baptized. They may even take communion. But they're not saved. They're not Christians. There are plenty of unconverted people in the churches of America.

If you understand this, you can grasp why so many are abysmally ignorant: they cannot discern spiritual truth or receive it. The Apostle Paul made this exceedingly clear in 1 Corinthians 2:14: “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” He does not have the ability to know them. Thus, the first answer is that many ignorant professing Christians are not Christians at all; they are totally and absolutely lost. But if some genuine Christians are weak, ignorant, and untaught, what is the problem?

Reasons for Ignorance Among Christians

Well, there are numerous answers to that. Let me give you one right here. That would simply be this: pride. Do you realize that a lot of Christians are absolutely proud of their ignorance? I usually laugh and tell about the old backwoods country preacher who said—and I am sure no one ever said it; it was made up by someone, but I still laugh at it. It may have been said; who knows? He said, and I quote, "I'm ignorant. I'm glad I'm ignorant. And I'm planning on getting more ignorant." Well, he did not have to tell anyone that he was ignorant.

It started out with, "Blessed God, I ain't never been to one of them there schools. I'm ignorant. I'm proud I'm ignorant. And I'm planning on getting more ignorant." That is the way a lot of Christians are, because many claim that what they want to be is simply a simple Christian. In other words, what they mean is this: all I know, and all I need to know, is that Jesus saves. It makes them proud that they know Jesus saves, but they are ignorant of everything else.

They think they are taking the point of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 2, when he said, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." So they say, "That's all I need to know. I need to know Jesus Christ and

Him crucified, and that's it." But if you read the context of 1 Corinthians chapter 2, you would find that Paul is contrasting biblical, heavenly wisdom with earthly, fleshly wisdom.

When he said, "I don't want to know anything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified," he was saying, "I'm rejecting the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh." So when someone tells me, "All they want to do is know Jesus like Paul did," I say, fine. Wonderful. If you would like to know Jesus the way Paul did, I would be happy for you to know Jesus that way. Because if you really want to know Him like Paul did, you would understand His eternity, His Godhood, His incarnation, His mediation, His resurrection, His ascension, and His intercession. You would know His attributes, His graces, His threatenings, and His promises. Paul taught on all of those things. This is what I'm trying to share with you. Some people say, "All I believe is John 3:16. John 3:16 is so simple."

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Wonderful! Isn’t that simple? “For God.” Would you explain God to me? “So loved.” Would you explain that to me? How could God love a wicked, filthy, corrupt, rebellious, sinful people? “The world.” Did you know the word “world,” the word kosmos, is used over thirteen different ways in the New Testament? Explain the word “world” to me. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Oh, “only begotten,” monogenes, one of a kind, unique. Explain to me the incarnation of Jesus Christ. “That whosoever believeth in him,” would you like to explain faith? “Should not perish,” would you explain perishing? “But have everlasting life,” would you like to explain that? You see, John 3:16 is not that simple. When somebody talks about being a simple Christian, what they are trying to do is say, “I don’t need to know anything.”

If you want to believe like the Apostle Paul, you need to believe like he did in Philippians 3:10: “That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” Do you really want to be made conformable unto the death of Jesus Christ? It is basically pride. We

think, “All I need to know is that Jesus saves, and that’s it,” and we do not even understand the simplest verse in the Bible.

The reason most Christians are ignorant is because most Christians cannot be taught. In order to be taught, you must have a teachable spirit. Most are not willing to listen or learn. Most young people, when they go to college, do not go to learn; they go to show off how much they know and instruct their teachers. It is true, like David said in Psalm 119, verse 99, that if you understand spiritual things, you probably have more understanding than your teachers, because most of them have no understanding of spiritual things. That may be true. But the reason most Christians are not taught is that teaching requires time and energy, and we are not willing to devote ourselves or sacrifice our time in order to be taught.

You simply witness this in how many will attend a Bible study or come to church once or twice and then drop out. That is why I say most people do not have a teachable spirit. Most people will not be faithful to teaching. You will hear me say this probably several times before this brief series is over.

I am not required by God to teach an unteachable man. Moreover, I am not required by God to teach an unfaithful man. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 2, “The things that thou hast seen and heard among of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.” So it is not my responsibility to chase you down and try to cram truth down your throat. It is your responsibility to be faithful to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God so that you may be taught.

Why is it that so many Christians are untaught? Pride. They do not even think they need to be taught.

Paul says in Colossians 1:28, “Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect or mature in Christ Jesus.” If you want to be perfect, or mature, in Christ Jesus, what three things do you need? In this verse, Paul says you need preaching, warning, and teaching. It is impossible for any Christian to be mature without these three things.

The word “warning” is where we get the Greek word noutheteo; it refers to nouthetic confrontation. Paul says you need to be preached to, nouthetically confronted, and taught. What does nouthetic confrontation mean? I might say to Marshall, “Marshall, I see you are doing something here, and it is wrong and wicked. Let me show you from the Word of God how to correct that and what God demands of you.” What am I doing? I am confronting him about his disobedience or his sin.

There is a biblical way to do it and an unbiblical way to do it. Galatians 6 says, “You who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves, lest you also be tempted.” If I am trying to restore him, I am not going with a proud, arrogant, haughty attitude. I am trying to show him from Scripture how to be a more obedient and godly individual. If you are going to be mature in Christ, you need preaching, nouthetic confrontation, and teaching.

The reason that most Christians are so ignorant is because of our pride. We do not think we need the preaching. We do not especially want to be confronted with our sins, and we are not going to sit down and listen to serious, solemn teaching.

Now, there is a third reason, I believe, why so many professing Christians are ignorant, and it stems from what I would call an unbiblical fear. You may ask, “An unbiblical fear?” Yes. Increased knowledge carries with it increased responsibility. Somehow we try to deceive ourselves, thinking, “Well, if I do not know, then I am not responsible.” But we fail to understand that we have the opportunity to learn and refuse to learn. That is willful ignorance, and it also is sin. We are responsible not only for what we could have learned and did not learn; we are responsible for not learning. Thus, we have committed a double sin.

There is a fourth reason I want to give you. I believe it is the final answer as to why so many Christians are ignorant: rebellion. You may ask, “Rebellion?” Yes. Rebellion is sin. Pride figures into this, but pride and rebellion go hand in hand. The old Puritans had a saying; it went like this: “How many would be wise if they did not already think themselves so?” Oftentimes we simply think we do not need teaching. We are sufficient in ourselves; we know what we need

to know. We are content with what little we do know and do not wish to learn at all.

Here is part and parcel of our rebellion: we do not even obey that which we do know. James 4:17 says, “To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” If you know what you should be doing and do not do it, God says it is sin.

This brief series will go hand in hand with the brief series preached previously, “Seeing and Hearing but Not Understanding.” In Mark 4:23–25, Christ says, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what you hear. Now watch. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you, and to you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he that hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he hath.”

“Take heed what you hear: with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you.” Whatever measure you give in study and learning will be measured back to you. If you spend one hour studying, you will not receive twenty hours’ worth of truth; you will receive an hour’s worth. If you spend five minutes, that is all the truth you will get—five minutes’ worth. It will be measured to you according to the measure you put into it.

“For he that hath, to him shall more be given.” If you want more truth, you must obey the truth you already have. “For he that hath, to him shall be given. He that hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he hath.” Why would God give you more truth if you will not obey the truth He has already given you? He is also telling you that if you do not use the truth, you lose the truth—“from him shall be taken even that which he hath,” or that which he seemeth to have. If you do not use and apply the truth, then you really do not have the truth.

God Chooses the Way to Teach Us

I have taught for fifty years, from the fourth grade through college, in addition to my preaching and teaching. One thing I have learned is that students have different methods of learning. Some find it easy; it is a piece of cake. Others learn with great difficulty. Some can

simply hear, and it is theirs; some can see, and it is there. Some require seeing and hearing. Some require hands-on experience. Examples must be used, repetition enforced, and clarity distilled for some even to get a glimpse of knowledge. I do not claim to be an expert in teaching or to have all the answers. However, the great Teacher, our heavenly Father, revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, knows exactly how to teach you and how to get His truth across to you. For some it will be relatively easy; for some it will be very difficult. But He will teach you one way or the other.

Now I'm going to tell you: the easy way to learn is the easy way to learn. I want you to look back to Psalm 25. I want you to look at verse 12. Psalm 25, verse 12. It is a very simple verse, but look at it. Think as I read this verse to you. Look in Psalm 25 and verse 12.

God Teaches by Example

Plain as the nose on your face, he says it like this: "What man is he that feareth the Lord?" That is the question. Do you fear God? Are you saved? Then he says, "Him, that man that fears the Lord, him shall He, God, teach in the way that he shall choose." God will choose the way that is best to teach you. Job 36:22 says, "Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?"

Mark this down: God is going to teach you one way or the other, and He will choose the most effective way to get His truth across. So how does God teach us? I am going to cover one point today, one point next Sunday, and, Lord willing, two points the Sunday after that. The very first point is this: He teaches by example.

Learning by example is extremely easy. This is usually one of the methods we choose to teach our own children. If we see another child get hurt or get whipped, we say to our child, "Look what happened to Johnny. Don't do what he did. If you do, you are going to suffer the same consequences that he suffered." Or we see a child extremely happy, being blessed because of some good deed, and say to our children, "Look exactly at what happened to him. If you follow, if you imitate his example, then of course you are going to have these blessings as well." Thus we use examples to teach our children.

You have to remember that there are positive examples and negative examples. Romans 15:4 says, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” God said that whatever was written aforetime—primarily in the Old Testament—was written for our learning. Every example, both positive and negative, was written for our learning. Let me begin by giving you the positive examples. I will not go through all the Scripture, but I want to show you first of all the chief one.

Positive Examples in Scripture

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2, beginning at verse 21. The Bible says, “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Christ, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

“For even hereunto were you also called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” Jesus Christ is the premier example in the Word of God. Thomas à Kempis wrote the book Imitation of Christ. We do not want merely to imitate Christ; we want to participate in Christ and let Him, and allow Him, to live His life in us and through us. The Christian life is not an imitation. It is a participation. Nevertheless, Christ is our preeminent example.

He is the positive one. He obeyed the Father. He was principled. He was submissive. He was humble. In fact, if you look in your Bible, John chapter 13 and verse 15 is the passage where our Lord took a towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples’ feet. He is the positive example. Our Lord said, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” Why? “Verily, verily, I say to you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” But note what he says: “I’ve given you an example.” In other words, He showed what humility is all about. He

showed what helping is all about. Here is His example in this. He gave us His example.

Abraham is an example of faith and obedience in Scripture. He is called the friend of God and the father of all them that believe. The Bible says that the faithful walk in the steps of faithful Abraham. In other words, Abraham is a positive example. There are multitudes of positive examples in the Bible.

James gives us another example in James chapter 5, verses 10 and 11: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." But notice what he said: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example." All the prophets, then, would be a positive example.

So what we need to do is this: We need to read the Scripture. When we read about Abraham and Isaac, we say, "Yes, that is the way I should conduct my life. That is the way I should walk. That is the way I should live." When we read the Gospels and find out how Jesus Christ obeyed the Father and did what was right under every situation and circumstance, we should say, "Yes, that is my example." That is a very simple and easy way to learn. By the way, there are also negative examples given in the Word of God.

Negative Examples in Scripture

I want you to turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 30. Then we are going to Psalm 78 and then to the little book of Zechariah, which I think is right before Malachi. Notice, first of all, in 2 Chronicles chapter 30 and verse 7, look what God says. He is telling His people, "And be not like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see."

Verse 8 continues: "Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you." Let

me spell this out to you: Do not act like your fathers acted. Do not sin against God. Do not violate God's law. Here is what he is saying: If you want to be blessed, do not do what they did.

Look in Psalm 78, beginning with verse 6. He says, "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God." Isn't that amazing?

Did your mother ever tell you as a child, "Don't act like your father"? Well, she may or may not have, depending on what father had done. But that's exactly what God is saying: Don't act like your fathers. Don't act like your brothers.

Look in the book of Zechariah, chapter 1, right before the book of Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament. In verse 2, we read: "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord."

Now, here's what God says: Don't be like your fathers. Don't be like those stupid people that I told you and I instructed you and I taught you, but you would not listen. And where are they? They're destroyed. So don't be like that.

You remember Romans 1 and verse 18, where the Bible says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Passages like this can be applied to Korah and Dathan and Abiram, Alexander the coppersmith, evil and wicked rulers such as Jeroboam, Manasseh, Ahab, and a host of others. There are multitudes of scriptures like this where God says, "Don't do this. Don't be like these people. Don't act like this."

Now, let me show you. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and begin with verse 5. We're talking about Israel. In fact, go back to verse 1, just so you'll see: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea." So it's talking about the deliverance of Israel from Egypt as they passed through the Red Sea. Now skip down to verse 5.

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Do you know what the Apostle Paul just did? He took everything that happened to old Israel in the Old Testament and applied it to us in the New Testament. He said, "Here are negative examples. Don't do like these people did. Don't do that." That's plain.

In Hebrews chapter 4, beginning with verse 11, he says, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." What example is it talking about? Israel who came out of Egypt. By the way, the Bible said, "With many of them God was not well pleased." Do you know how many of the original men that came out of Egypt actually got into Canaan land? Two: Joshua and Caleb. He killed the rest of them.

And this is what he is saying in verse 11: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Use them for an example. Don't live like them. Don't do like them.

We are talking about negative examples. 2 Peter 2 verse 4: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." What? He said, "All of these are examples to you. Do you want to be like Sodom and Gomorrah?" That's exactly where we're headed, by the way. Do you want to be destroyed like that? Do you want to be destroyed like those antediluvians in Noah's day? Do you want to be destroyed like the fallen angels? He said, "These are examples." Do you understand it is possible to learn and receive teaching by examples?

We may learn virtue, patience, honesty, morality, kindness, tenderness, and a host of other attributes simply by watching, observing, and listening to others if our hearts are open. Likewise, if our hearts are open, we may be properly warned while we observe what happens to the wicked and the ungodly. When we see someone stick their hand into the fire, and their hand starts burning and their flesh starts falling off, if we are wise, we'll say, "I'm not going to do that. I'm going to learn from that. I'm not going to jump in front of a train the way some people do. I'm going to learn from that. I'm going to stop at the railroad track and look left and look right."

Some animals are smarter than people. Alice and I were going to Northern Michigan to preach. In Glen Arbor, I think it was, there was a doe by the interstate. A patch of green grass lay on the other side of the exit ramp. Alice was driving, and I watched the doe come to the ramp, stop, look to her left and right, and then walk across. I thought, "That animal's got better sense than most people."

We can learn if we pay attention. Learning by example is the easiest way to learn. Practically all animals learn by example. Calves eat what their mamas eat, and goats do the same thing. Even mankind learns by observation and example when we are young. However, when we get older, we think learning by example is for babies. We want to experiment and have hands-on learning, so we stick our hand in the fire and learn the hard way. The truth of

Proverbs 13 and verse 15 is, "The way of the transgressor is hard." Each of us has learned from example.

Application: Be a Godly Example

Each of us has benefited from other people's examples, whether positive or negative. When we see someone with a godly example, we should follow it; when we see an ungodly example, we should avoid it. But do you realize that you are an example to others? You may be a positive or negative example. You cannot escape being an example. You are one whether you like it or not—either an example for good or an example for bad. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3 and verse 17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." In 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 9 he says, "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."

He told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Here are my applications. First, it is your responsibility to be a godly example to others in every sphere of life. It is not your responsibility to apply your example to others; it is simply your responsibility to be an example. Whether or not God uses you as an example to others is His prerogative, but it is your responsibility to be a godly example. You remember he said in Matthew 21 and verse 32, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not:

“But the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” What was he saying? You had a responsibility to learn from the example of others, from the positive, and you did not do it.

The second application is this: It is your responsibility to heed all warnings from wicked and evil examples and not to follow them. God said in Exodus 23 and verse 2, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.” He said in 1 John 3, verse 11, “Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”

You are an example. You may not like it, but you are an example. You are either a good one or a bad one. Someone somewhere is watching you, and someone somewhere will learn from your life, either that which is right or that which is wrong.

The easy way to be taught of God is to observe and learn. You need a teachable heart, an observant mind, and knowledge of Scripture. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and that You will teach us. We will receive Your words. It is simple and easy to learn from example. Help us take the easy path, because it gets harder and harder to learn. We ask for Your grace and Your mercy in Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

How Are You Being Taught

Part Two of Three

Review of Part 1

Our text is Psalm 25:12. David asks, “What man is he that feareth the Lord?” Then he makes this statement: “Him shall he God teach in the way that he shall choose.” God will teach him in the way that he shall choose.

How are you being taught? Last week, we looked at several passages that demonstrate clearly that our Lord teaches His own. Stop and think: each of us taught our own children. The reason we taught them was simply because we love them and wanted what was best for them. We certainly do not expect anything less of our Lord. Our text promises us that those who fear the Lord shall be taught in the way that He shall choose.

Last week, we generally looked at several specific promises. For instance, Psalm 32:8 says, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye.” In Psalm 25:5, David prayed, “Lead me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art

the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day." Then in verse 9 he said, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

Understandably, it is not in man to direct his way. We are not only born alienated from our Lord and His person; we were also born ignorant of our Lord's Word and His will. Since God has promised to teach His people, why is it that there are many professing Christians who remain untaught?

I gave four reasons, which I will review very briefly. The first is that many who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ are not really saved. They are not really followers of Christ. Our Lord stated, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and He tells us in Galatians chapter 5 what the fruit of the Spirit is. As you examine the lives of many individuals who profess to be Christians, there is absolutely no fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. If there is no fruit, there is no life. Thus, many who profess to be saved are really unsaved.

Secondly, there are some real Christians who are not taught, cannot be taught, and will not be taught because of pride of heart. In order to be taught, one must have a teachable spirit.

Moreover, learning requires time and energy, and it is not easy. Plenty of people are simply unwilling to invest their time and energy in learning and studying because of their own pride. Many think they do not need it.

Thirdly, some are unwilling to listen, learn, and be taught because of an unbiblical fear—a fear of responsibility. Many vainly think that somehow, if they do not know, they are not responsible. It is true that to whom much is given, much is required. But it is equally true that if you have an opportunity to learn and refuse to learn, then you are responsible for what you could have known but do not know.

Therefore, you have sinned against God as well. There is absolutely no way to escape responsibility. We are responsible to know, and we are responsible to use every opportunity God gives us to learn. The fourth reason is simply rebellion. You have to understand that when God commands us, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the truth," refusal to obey that command is nothing

less than rebellion. But the Bible does say that God is going to teach us all. As I quoted last week, Job 36:22 says, “Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?”

Since our Father does indeed teach His children, the question has to be asked: How does He teach us? The answer is that He teaches us according to His will and our way of understanding. Look back at Psalm 25:12: “What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him, that is, that man that fears the Lord, shall He, God, teach in the way that He, God, shall choose?” Our Lord shall choose the way, or method, to teach us. He will choose the best and most effective one. He knows exactly what it will take to teach us.

So what are the ways that God teaches? I covered one point last week and will cover one point today. First and foremost, our Lord teaches by example. There are both positive and negative examples. As we look in the Word of God, we can look at the lives of real men and women and see the consequences of their choices, whether they were obedient or disobedient to God. We can judge what they reaped by what they had sown. God therefore demands that we emulate the good and be warned by the wicked.

By Instruction

I pointed this out last week: this is the easiest method of instruction and the easiest method of learning. If Linda takes a hammer and hits her finger and busts it wide open, screaming in pain, while I observe and say, “I wonder how that feels. I think I’ll try it. Linda, hand me your hammer,” why cannot I simply say, “I don’t want to do that”? Look how she is jumping around, holding that finger, and crying for a doctor.

Why in the world would I suffer if I am able to learn by her example and take heed to the warning that I should not hit my finger with a hammer? So why then would we, like Lot, choose the path to Sodom when we know the outcome and the consequences? If we would simply heed the examples God gives us in the Bible, both for good and for bad, we would come out a whole lot wiser and be better prepared to live obediently.

Introduction to Instruction as God's Second Method

Today I want to cover the second method God uses to teach us. This is probably the method most frequently used by God. It is impossible for you to go to bed dumb and stupid and wake up in the morning smart and brilliant and spiritual in the things of God. It does not work like that. In 2 Timothy 2:7, the apostle Paul told Timothy, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Understanding is indeed the gift of God, but God will not give that understanding without our consideration, meditation, thinking, and studying. So how does God teach us? By instruction. Not only does He teach us by example, but He teaches us by instruction.

Look in Psalm 32 and verse 8. I quoted the verse earlier, but I want to point it out and give you the meaning of a Hebrew word: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” God has promised that He is going to instruct us and teach us in the way that we should go. The Hebrew word instruct here means to cause, to consider. It means to enable, to comprehend, to give insight into, and to teach. When God promises to instruct us, He is promising to cause us to consider certain things, to enable us to comprehend them, and to give us insight into them. Here is the promise of instruction.

God's Instruction Compared to Rain and Dew

Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 32. We are going to read the first four verses. I want you to see some things about God’s instruction. Beginning with verse 1: “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

I want to call your attention particularly to verse 2: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” Calvin commented upon this verse: “He therefore compares his

speech to rain or dew, as if he had said that if only the people were like the soil in a state of softness and preparation, he would deliver doctrine to them which would irrigate them unto abundant fruitfulness." Adam Clarke made about three or four paragraphs on this one verse. Listen to what he said, because he applies this not only to the Word of God, but to teaching as well: "This shall drop is the rain."

It shall come drop by drop, as a shower beginning slowly and distinctly, but increasing more and more until the plentitude of righteousness is poured down. The whole canon of divine Scripture is completed. My speech shall distill as the dew. My friendly, familiar, and affectionate speeches shall descend gently and softly on the ear and the heart as the dew, moistening and refreshing all around—not once only, but always, on every occasion a fresh shower. Scripture speaks of the showers of blessing, Ezekiel 34:26. Does not this ever mark a spiritual ministry, a refreshing shower?

Not a deluge of 10,000 words. The refreshment of heaven is to be in a true ministry, even in five words, coming through a faithful vessel to whom God in the anointing can commit himself. It is not to be a matter of drawing upon what is old and stale, like stock and trade. The Lord would have none of it for his disciples. He instructed the twelve not to take with them a scrip. They were to minister in the power and grace of the anointing, as persons who serve, or to do so as anointed with oil. It is a question of what they are in themselves, not merely that they have a cruise of oil.

What effect rain and dew have upon herbs and grass, making them fresh, fragrant, and growing, the same effect I may justly expect and hope that my discourse will have upon your hearts—in other words, to make them soft and pliable and fruitful.

God said that his doctrine shall drop as the rain, his speech shall distill as the dew, as a small rain upon the tender herb. Having been raised on a farm, I have watched rain, and every farmer wishes for and prays for a good shower. He does not want a pelting rain, a rainstorm, or a deluge, because that rainstorm will strip the tender leaves from the plant; and if it is too much, it will drown the plant. So God is saying, "Here is how I am going to instruct." How does God teach us? As I have already pointed out in Psalm 25:12, He

chooses the means by which He teaches us. The first means I pointed out was example. Today is instruction. God will use not only men, but other things for our instruction.

Secondary Means of Instruction: Creation and Observation

God will use men primarily, and He will use other things secondarily. Do you realize that we may be instructed not simply from men, but from creation, nature itself? For instance, turn in your Bibles to Job chapter 12, and notice verses 7 and 8. Interestingly, in this passage, we are given something that is very, very clear. Job is speaking, and he says this: “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.” Notice what he says: “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.” Have you ever noticed the beasts, the fowls, and the fishes? They have something to teach us. Creation itself can instruct us, if we will pay attention to what God has placed before us.

Isn't it amazing how God has implanted a certain amount of wisdom—we may call it instinct—in the animals? We could also take this and probably apply it to the Old Testament offerings, especially with the birds. The animals would be very instructive if we studied those Old Testament sacrifices and understood their meaning, intent, and implications. God said, you can look around; creation will teach you some things if you'll look.

If you will look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter six, here is another means by which we may be instructed, even by insects. Proverbs 6, verse 6, God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" Notice, if you would, God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."

There are some things that we could learn and by which we could be instructed simply through observation. Have you ever wondered why the birds fly south in the winter? They don't live up north either,

Henry. You know, he said the stork. And even the crane knoweth where she's to nest. The ox knoweth his crib. But he said, my people doth not know, and my people doth not consider.

But here he says, look, if you want to learn how to be frugal, if you want to learn to make hay while the sun shines, if you want to learn how to preserve and how to put up, go to the ant. Thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.

If you will turn very quickly in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 1, beginning with verse 18, look what the Scripture says. Romans 1 and verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” Now God says we can look at creation, and creation can teach us some things. We can be instructed by creation. We can also be instructed by watching and observing that which happens to the wicked. In fact, the Bible says in Proverbs 21:12, “The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.” What does he say? The righteous man wisely considers what happens to the wicked. He observes. He learns. So it is true that we may be instructed by insects, by animals, and by creation itself. We may be instructed by the judgment of God, but primarily God uses men to instruct in his word and in his law.

Primary Means: God Uses Men to Instruct

In the Old Testament, he used the Levites, the priests, and the prophets. Deuteronomy 17:11 says concerning the priests and the Levites, “According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.” So what is God doing? He is using the Levites and the priests to teach the people of God. The instruction concerns both the sentence of the law they were to

teach and the judgment they were to tell the people. They were not to depart from what was shown them, either to the right hand or to the left.

Deuteronomy 33:10, speaking once again about the Levites, says, "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law." Before this, the passage says, "And of Levi he said," identifying those being described. So God used the Levites and the priests to teach in the Old Testament. It is true that when the New Testament was being written, God did indeed use prophets and apostles. But notice what the Scripture says very plainly in Ephesians 4, beginning with verse 11: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." I know there is an "and" there, but actually pastors and teachers are one group.

Why did He give these? Let me stop there. Do we have apostles today? No. Why do we not have apostles today? You have to define the word apostle. Apostolos is the Greek word that simply means "a sent one." If our church sent Ed to a convention or conference to represent us, declare what we believed, and do so in the name of the church, he would be an apostle from this church because we were sending him. But there are no apostles like the original apostles, because you remember the requirements they had: they had to see the Lord, hear the Lord, and meet those kinds of qualifications. You can read it in Acts chapter 2 yourself. Obviously, no one today could be qualified as an apostle in that sense of the word. So, no, the apostles are no more.

What about prophets? Do we have prophets? The answer is yes and no—primarily, no. We do not have prophets today because prophets in the Old Testament and the New Testament normally prophesied things that had never been revealed. It was a new revelation. Is there a new revelation today? No, because we have the completed Word of God.

If I were to say, "If you die without Jesus Christ, you will die lost and in your sins and face a righteous, holy God who shall judge you," is that prophetic? It is prophetic, but what I am saying is based on that which is already revealed. There is a difference between saying, "I have a new revelation," and telling you what will come to pass in the future based upon what God has revealed.

So, in reality, no, there are no prophets today. When somebody says, “God just gave me a new vision, and this is something in addition,” that is hogwash. It is a denial of Jesus Christ according to Hebrews chapter 1. Christ is the full and final revelation of God.

Now, let me ask you this question. This may surprise you: “And he gave some evangelists.” Are there any evangelists today? You say, “Yes.” Who would be the evangelist? Do you know what the Apostle Paul told Pastor Timothy? He told Pastor Timothy, “Do the work of an evangelist.” So, actually, the evangelist should be the pastor doing the work of an evangelist. That leaves us with one group, the pastor-teachers. Why did God give pastor-teachers? Watch it.

Look in verse 12: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

Notice, if you would please, verse 11: “And he gave some.” If the ministry of the apostles is over, if the ministry of the prophets is over, and if the ministry of the evangelists is over, that only leaves one group: pastor-teachers. Now, wait a minute. Are pastor-teachers necessary for the being of the church? No. Are pastor-teachers necessary for the well-being of the church? Yes.

Why did He give us pastor-teachers? For the perfecting, or the maturity, of the saints; for the work of the ministry—it is the saints who do the work of the ministry; and for the edifying, the building up, the strengthening, of the body of Christ. Pastor-teachers are designed to build the saints up doctrinally, so that they may be doctrinally mature and will not be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, or by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Pastor-teachers are designed to instruct so that the saints of God may be built up, edified, and strengthened to the fullness of the

stature of Jesus Christ. I do not know about you, but that caused me to ask another question: If that is what pastor-teachers are supposed to do, how are they to do it?

How do we do it? I could answer theologically and say the teaching must be done in the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, with the blessings of God upon the expounded word. But I must answer practically and show you from the Scripture how it is to be done—how you are to be brought to maturity in Christ, to doctrinal maturity, and to grow up in Him.

Isaiah 28 shows us specifically who is going to be taught: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

He is only going to teach those that are drawn from the breast. In other words, you must get out of the baby stage if you are going to be taught. There is something wrong with a baby who is twenty years old and still nursing his mama, or twenty-five years old and still has a pacifier in his mouth. Something is dreadfully wrong. God says He is not going to teach babies with milk; they need to be weaned from the breast. But here is how they are to be taught: "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Truth must be given out consistently—line upon line; constantly—precept upon precept; and practically—here a little, there a little, as the people were able to receive it. Our Lord Himself taught that way. In Mark 4:33, the Bible says, "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it." Our Lord only taught as they were able to hear it. So we have to teach consistently, constantly, and practically: line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. Here is my next question.

How Pastor-Teachers Instruct: Exposition, Explanation, Application

How do we do that? Well, I want you to turn back in your Bibles to the book of Nehemiah, chapter 8, and look at verses 7 and 8.

Beginning in the middle of verse 7—I'm going to begin with “and the Levites,” that way I do not have to pronounce all those names, because it is just naming certain Levites—“and the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

Right in this passage, he tells us what real preaching is. Real preaching is not making you feel good. Real preaching is not entertaining you. Real preaching is not saying, “Oh, I had that warm feeling all up and down my spine.” No. If you want that, drink moonshine. You’ll get plenty of warm tingling feelings. You know what preaching is? Verse 8: “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly,” that is exposition, “and gave the sense,” that is explanation, “and caused them to understand the reading,” that is application.

You expound, you explain, and you apply. The passage is to be expounded in its context, explained in its meaning, and applied to the lives of the saints. That is what real preaching is: exposition, explanation, and application. I hope you have already understood that if that is real preaching, there is very little real preaching going on in this country today.

Let me give you some obvious implications from this passage and from the passage in Isaiah 28. First, if there is to be exposition, explanation, and application, we have to understand that it must be the Word of God that is being expounded.

Implications for Being Instructed

How can we grow up into the mind of Christ if we do not know the mind of Christ? How can we grow up in the word if we do not know the word? I've often said, I empathize, and yet I do not understand these wicked preachers who have to spend thirty or forty-five minutes in the pulpit preaching something other than the word of God. It must be absolute work to make sure that you have a sermon without mentioning the name of Jesus Christ or without mentioning something from the Scripture. But it has to be from the Word of God.

Everyone in this room probably can quote at least one passage of the Bible when it says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Everybody understands that. But it is not just that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 15:33 says, “The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.” Have you ever considered that the fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom?

What is wisdom? You don't have to turn there, but I will quote it for you. In Luke 11:49, our Lord refers to the Word of God as wisdom: “Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.” What does He do? He quotes the Old Testament. So the Bible is referred to as the wisdom of God.

Jesus Christ is wisdom incarnate, and His Word is wisdom revealed and written. We can never be wise apart from the Word of God, and we can never have the mind of Christ apart from the Word of God. The first implication is this: If you're going to be instructed, you must be instructed in the Word of God as it is expounded, explained, and applied. Here's the second implication: The saints must desire and want to be instructed. No one is going to attend the preaching and teaching of the Word of God without a real, deep, and genuine desire.

I am not talking about simply attending church. There are plenty of people who attend church but do not want to be taught and are never taught. They do not desire to have the Word of God expounded, explained, and applied. They attend for a host of other reasons: habit, peer pressure—“If I don’t go to church, somebody will think I’m a heathen”—conformity, or other reasons.

I am talking about consistent and constant doctrinal preaching, where it is necessary at times to think, study, and meditate. Such teaching is sometimes a slow, methodical process because you are building upon a foundation. You are laying stones, so to speak; you are laying truth, and one truth is built upon another. It may be slow and methodical, but it will enable you to understand truths taught in the future.

You have to understand that if you are going to learn truth, it will cost you time and effort. The first implication is that you have to be taught from the Word of God. The second is that you must truly desire and want to be taught. The third is that if the pastor-teacher is going to give out consistent and constant truth, you must be consistent and constant in your attendance to hear it. Many are not faithful to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and they readily and willingly miss such preaching and teaching.

You will never make up what you miss. You never will. You will never gain knowledge by being inconsistent. If you take the attitude, "I'll just pick it up later," no, you won't. If I miss an opportunity to kiss my wife and say, "I'll make it up tomorrow," I might kiss her twice tomorrow, but I have still missed one kiss. I cannot make it up, and you cannot make up what you lose.

Moreover, as I said last week, it is not my responsibility, or any pastor's responsibility, to chase you down and teach you. That is why Paul told Timothy in 2nd Timothy 2.2, "And 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." If you are not faithful, you will lose it. Scripture says in 1st Corinthians 4 and verse 2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Very few are really faithful.

Fourth, another obvious implication is that if you really want to be taught, you will listen, take notes, ask questions, and seek opportunity to apply the truth that is communicated. Do you understand that our Lord never promised that understanding His Word would be an easy and simple task? But He did say this in Proverbs 25:2: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but it is the honour of kings to search out a matter.

Searching is real, genuine hard work. Proverbs 2:1 says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Most of us simply do not like shoveling, digging, searching, concentrating, and meditating. Yet God says it is absolutely necessary if we are going to learn His Word. I started out by quoting 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." God has commanded you to study, and He called you a workman as you study.

Fifth, look at the context of Psalm 25, and you will see that everything concerning instruction deals with duty, responsibility, and obedience.

"What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." Go back to verses 4 and 5. David prays, "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Verse 4 says, "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths." Verse 8 says, "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." Verse 21 says, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee."

Applications: Time, Effort, and Meekness

God teaches us, first of all, by example; secondly, by instruction. Instruction requires not only effort but time as well. David says, "Lead me in thy truth and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." How many of us would be willing to wait on the Lord all day? Truthfully, most of us do not spend ten or fifteen minutes in prayer or Bible reading. Therefore, we are much less willing to spend all day in prayer and Bible reading. That could possibly be one of the reasons why we are so theologically deficient and spiritually mature. Most Christians spend more time watching television, reading newspapers, watching movies, and being with friends than they do studying the Word of God.

I love each one of you, and I enjoy spending time with each one of you. But if Henry comes over and I spend four hours with Henry, I am thankful for that. Am I to love my Lord more than I love Henry? Well, yes. So if I spend four hours with Henry and five minutes with the Lord, it is something to think about. Who would the Lord say that I love the most, Him or Henry? All I am pointing out is this: if we are going to be instructed, it will require time and effort. I have heard people say, "I just don't have the time." Yes, you do. Each one of us has twenty-four hours in a day, no more and no less. It is priorities. I do not necessarily expect you to spend all day, every day, studying.

That is why God gives pastor-teachers. He knows you cannot do that. There is no way in the world any one of these doctors can spend all day, every day studying—not at work, or anybody making slings. But you can spend more time than you do. I am the one God requires to spend all the time, but you can spend more time if you arrange your priorities.

Look at Psalm 25, verses 8 and 9: "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." He said, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." The question is, are you meek? Can you be guided and taught?

If you do not qualify for being meek, at least you might qualify for being a sinner, because He said in verse 8, "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." So there is hope for all of us. He will teach sinners, and He will teach the meek.

Interestingly enough, He is going to lead and guide the meek. Have you ever thought about meekness? Our Lord said in Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Do you know what the word meek actually means? It refers to a mildness of disposition, a gentleness of spirit, and to those who are broken to yoke. It is the same word our Lord uses basically in Matthew 11:28–30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." If someone is meek, he is broken to yoke.

I used to have a horse named Apache. I could go out, hold up the bridle, and she would stand there and put her head in it. She was meek; she was broken to yoke. Doc had worked on that horse. When there was no bridle and nothing, I could simply have my arm around her neck, and she would stand absolutely still while he did whatever he wanted to do to her. She was meek. You could ride that horse and fall off her.

She would stop, look at you, and say, "What are you doing down there, stupid? Get up and get back on. Let's go." Then she would stand there and wait for you to get back on. Being meek is the opposite of being proud, self-assertive, and demanding.

When our Lord says, "Take my yoke upon you," He is saying that if you are meek, you will display a disposition of spirit in which you accept any and everything He sends your way as good and for your benefit, without disputing or resisting. And God says, once you submit to Him like that, "I will teach you. I will guide you."

You cannot work with a horse that is unsubmissive. You can teach a horse to be submissive, but you cannot work with him until he is submissive. You cannot teach a sinner, or a Christian, until he is submissive. Therefore Scripture says, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." If you and I want to be instructed, we need to develop a meek spirit and say, like Samuel, "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth," and, like Isaiah, "Here am I; send me."

Being taught by example and instruction are the two easiest ways to be taught. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You and love You. We pray that You would enable us to see, listen, and learn from examples. Help us to be instructed. Give us a meek and quiet spirit, an attitude of willingness and readiness to learn and apply that which You show us. Help us to be taught in these easier ways. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

How Are You Being Taught

Part Three of Three

Introduction and Review

This is part three of "How Are You Being Taught?" and the final installment of this message. Psalm 25:12 asks, "What man is he that feareth the Lord?" Then the answer follows: that man who fears the Lord, shall He, the Lord, teach in the way that He shall choose. The truth is, God does indeed teach His own people, just as we teach our children, endeavoring to teach them the right way and bring them up in truth. Likewise, God also deals with us.

Each of us has learned that there are easy ways and difficult ways to learn. In fact, we have learned from experience that it is really easier to learn the easy way, because many of us have attended the school of hard knocks and graduated from the university of difficulty. Many times, we seek to save our children from the heartaches and troubles that we received in getting our education. Just like us, at times they listen, and at times they do not listen. However, many of us have reached the stage in life when we know that it is best if we obey, and obey instantly and immediately.

I pointed out in the first message that God uses examples to teach us. Learning from examples is really and truly one of the easiest ways to learn. In the Bible, God gives us both positive and negative examples, and we look at both kinds in His Word. We are to emulate—that is, follow—the good examples. We are to be warned and admonished by the bad or wicked examples, and not to emulate or follow them at all. If we would pay attention to both kinds of examples, observe, listen, learn, and apply, we would save ourselves a lot of trouble and a lot of heartache.

It is much like our Lord said in Deuteronomy 15:5: “Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe all these commandments, which I command thee this day.” Only if thou wilt hearken. How many times have we as adults said, “If only I had listened. If only I had obeyed. If only I had not said or done such a thing, or if only I had acted differently, or if only I had paid attention”? That is exactly what God is saying. Only if we listen to Him, we will save ourselves an awful lot of heartache.

God teaches us by examples. He teaches us through instruction; and the very word “instruction” indicates that there is a teacher and a student. Instruction must come in some form, and usually it comes through a teacher. God does use means in instructing His children. He teaches us through creation, through the animals, even through plants, and oftentimes by His punishments as well.

Our Lord began a short discourse in Luke 12:27: “Consider the lilies, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon in all of his glory was not clothed like one of these.” Notice that He said, “Consider the lilies of the field.” In other words, look there, be taught, and be instructed.

In the Old Testament, God oftentimes used the priests, the Levites, and the prophets to instruct His people. Likewise, in the New Testament, He began using the apostles and prophets, and then He ended up using the pastor-teachers. Ephesians 4:11–15 says: “And He,” that is Christ, “gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastor-teachers.” Why did He give these gifts to the church? The answer is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we

all come in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect or mature man, unto the measure of the stature of

The fullness of Christ, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried away with every wind of doctrine and sleight of man and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ. So pastor-teachers are given to the church for the perfecting, or maturing, of the saints, so the saints may do the work of the ministry till we all come into the stature of the fullness of Christ.

In other words, we are to be as Christ was: obedient, submissive, humble, and yet at the same time erudite—that is, taught by our fathers. The primary means of teaching and instruction today is certainly through pastor-teachers. They lay, as I read last week from Isaiah 28, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. The pastor-teachers take the Word of God, expound it, explain it, and apply it. The two easiest ways to be taught are, first, by example, and second, by instruction.

What if the children of God will not listen or learn by way of example and instruction? Does God have other ways to teach us? The answer is yes. Thirdly, God teaches us by correction.

God Teaches by Correction

Correction is often equated with chastisement in the Bible, but it does not necessarily have to be. One may be corrected without being chastened. In Scripture, correction and chastening are sometimes equated and sometimes differentiated. In many passages they are one and the same; in others they are distinct.

Consider two familiar verses in which correction and chastisement are equated. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." When we hear of the rod of correction, we are naturally speaking of chastisement as well. Proverbs 23:13 says, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die." Here again is beating with the rod of correction.

So there, correction and chastisement are together. But 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17, says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.” What is it profitable for? It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. God says He has given us the Scriptures for correction.

Just as I may correct my child without chastening him, likewise, our Heavenly Father may also correct us without chastisement. Correction may come in many forms. It may come as encouragement, admonishment, rebuke, reproof, or confrontation.

Biblical Rebuke and Its Nature

When I use the words rebuke and reproof, understand that you can rebuke someone and reprove someone without necessarily doing so in an angry tone. Often a rebuke or reproof may be delivered, and may need to be delivered, in an angry tone, but it is not necessary to deliver it that way. Oftentimes in the Bible, rebukes and reproofs are given in an angry tone, and sometimes they are not given in an angry tone.

For instance, look in Psalm 39 and verse 11 at what David said concerning God’s rebuke of correction: “When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth. Surely every man is vanity.” So, if God is angry in His rebuke, David said, He makes man’s beauty to consume away like a moth.

I do not know if any in here have ever caught a moth. Try to hold one between your fingers, and the little moth begins to come apart, it seems. The little fluffy material starts breaking off. They are very fragile, and their wings break very easily. So David said, when you rebuke doth correct a man, our beauty simply fades away.

If we understand this, we can understand why David prayed in Psalm 6:1, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." In other words, David says, Lord, I do not want you to get after me when you are angry. If the Lord, by rebukes and correcting a man, causes his beauty to fade away as a moth, David says, I do not want that.

Many of you will remember Leviticus 19:11: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." God says that we may rebuke our neighbor. However, the word "rebuke" here literally means to plead with and to reason with. It is not that we are jumping down his throat, cussing him out, or telling him off. When we rebuke him, we are pleading with him and endeavoring to reason with him.

That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 27:5, "Open rebuke is better than secret love." It would be better for Clay if I rebuked him openly and corrected an error or sin in his life than if I loved him secretly and simply let him continue in his sin and wickedness. Open rebuke is better than secret love.

Then Ecclesiastes 7:5 says, "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools." The rebuke of the wise is far superior to rejoicing in having a good time, because the rebuke of the wise instructs us on how to live.

Now, you can look in all the Old Testament passages that you want to, and many times you are going to find this word “rebuke.” You are also going to find it in the New Testament as well. For instance, the Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 5:20, Paul wrote Timothy and told him, “Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear.” So if a sin is done publicly, it deserves and merits a public rebuke, which we are going to see. “Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear.”

In Titus 2:15, Paul told Titus, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” So he tells him to rebuke with all authority, and then the ones who are rebuked should never despise the rebuker. And I want you to listen to this one. In Revelation 3:19, Jesus Christ is speaking to His church, and He says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” So if our Lord loves us, He is going to rebuke us. He is going to chasten us.

Now, when we rebuke and reprove and exhort and admonish and confront, we must do so from a biblical stance. Let me emphasize this. Suppose I see Ed doing something that I do not personally like, and I jump down his throat and just get on to him. Do you

understand that a biblical rebuke, a biblical reproof, or a biblical admonishment is not designed to impress upon him my personal opinions and my personal likes and dislikes? Do you understand that? If I am to rebuke him, admonish him, or confront him, it is to be from a biblical stance.

It is to be with the Word of God. Listen to what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2: "Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Doctrine. Doctrine. So if I am rebuking Ed, or if I am rebuking Clay or Dean or whoever, it is with doctrine. In other words, I am not trying to impress upon them my particular opinion, or my like or my dislike. I am trying to impress upon them the Word of God and the principles therein. I am trying to show them how to be more biblical, more holy, and more godly.

An Unusual Rebuke

Now there are a number of illustrations in the Bible of people being corrected with rebuke, reproof, admonishment, and confrontation. You are going to see that these rebukes sometimes not only corrected a situation, but corrected the person as well. I want to show you what I consider one of the most unusual rebukes and confrontations ever recorded in Scripture.

Many of you will understand this. Turn to the book of Numbers, chapter 22. After we read this, we will go to 2 Peter 2, where you will find another passage connected with it. Follow me as I read this, so that you can see this most unusual rebuke.

Notice Numbers 22, verse 1: "And the children of Israel set forward and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side of Jordan by Jericho. And Balak the son of Zippor saw that all Israel, what all Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was sore afraid of the people because they were many. And Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. And he sent messengers, therefore, to Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of all the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a

people come out from Egypt. Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me."

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 22:7-20 (KJV)

Peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand. And they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again as the Lord shall speak to me. And the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth. Come now, curse me them. Peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.

And Balaam rose up in the morning and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land, for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you. And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us. And Balak sent yet again princes more and more honorable than they. And they came to Balaam and said to him, Thus saith Balak, king of Zippor, let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me. For I will promote thee into very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me. Come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry you also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more. And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them.

SCRIPTURE READING - Numbers 22:20-34 (KJV)

But yet the word which I shall say unto thee thou shalt do. And Balaam rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

And God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the way as the adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand. And the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field. And Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, the wall being on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself into the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again.

And the angel of the Lord went further and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me, I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do such unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and a sword drawn in his hand. Then he bowed down his head and fell flat on his face.

And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy ways are perverse before me. And the ass saw me, and turned from me three times. Unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me.

Therefore, if it displeased thee, I will now get me back. And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt thou speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

In this instance, the prophet was named and the ass was prophesied. Here is a very unusual situation: God used the ass to rebuke Balaam. In 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 15 and 16, the New Testament says concerning this incident, "Which have forsaken the right way and are gone astray," talking about men, "following in the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." The dumb ass speaking with a man's voice was that which God used to rebuke the madness of the prophet.

The word "madness" there is the word for insanity. In other words, it was necessary, in one sense of the word, for this unusual means of reproof and rebuke to be given to Balaam because of the extreme insanity of what he was doing. He was purposefully and deliberately disobeying and violating the command of God because he loved the wages of unrighteousness; he wanted the silver and the gold. God used the dumb ass to bring him back to his senses. He said, had that ass not turned from me, you would have been dead and she would have been alive. That was a very unusual rebuke, where God used an animal to speak in a man's voice.

In Galatians chapter 2, Paul publicly rebukes Peter because Peter had sinned publicly. As Paul told Timothy, "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear." When there is an open sin, it merits and deserves an open rebuke. Beginning with verse 11, Paul says, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." He gets right up in Peter's face and points out his sin.

He says, “For before that certain came from James,” who was the leader of the church at Jerusalem, “he did eat with the Gentiles. But when they were come,” that is, these people from Jerusalem, “he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him.” The word “dissembled” there means to play the hypocrite. So the

other Jews played the hypocrite likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation, or their hypocrisy.

"But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as the Jews? We are Jews by nature, not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Paul confronted Peter and rebuked him to his face. Do you think Peter was uncomfortable at being rebuked? I'm sure. Was he embarrassed at being rebuked? I'm sure. But was the rebuke scriptural and biblical? The answer is absolutely yes.

Jesus Rebukes Peter

A rebuke does not necessarily have to be in an angry tone. It can be. It depends upon the person. It depends upon the sin. Notice how Jesus Christ rebuked Peter in Mark chapter 8, beginning at verse 31: "And He," that is Christ, "began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." Now watch.

"And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned about and looked upon His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

Peter had said to Him, "Far be that from the Lord." That was all he said when our Lord began to tell how He was going to suffer and die. In other words, Peter was saying, "Do not let that happen to You." Our Lord turned and, undoubtedly very pointedly and probably with a little anger, rebuked Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Do you think Peter was embarrassed? Probably. Humiliated?

Probably. Was it a biblical rebuke? Yes. Was it deserved? Yes. Did Peter learn from it? Probably. I am simply pointing out that when you look in the Bible, there are different ways to be corrected.

Correction does not necessarily always have to be done with rebukes and reproofs. It can be done by encouragements. It can be done by admonishments. The way you rebuke or reprove depends upon the person, the circumstance, and the gravity of the sin that is to be corrected.

Correction Without Anger

Hebrews 12:9 says, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” He says, “Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.” My earthly father corrected me many times. Thankfully, he did not always jerk a knot in my rear every time he corrected me.

Now, he did that several times, probably more than I cared to remember, but he did correct me. His correction was not always with an angry or loud voice. In fact, the one correction I remember the most, he spoke very softly, and what he said just broke my heart to pieces. A lot of times when my father corrected me, he began with these words: “Now, son, I want you to listen to me.” It was that simple. He was not angry, but he was correcting me. “I don’t want you to do this anymore. Here’s why I don’t want you to do this anymore.”

2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” If we will listen, receive the truth, and obey His Word, we can be corrected just by hearing. Read the book of Proverbs. You know what Solomon says many times? “My son, give ear to my words. Let thine ears be attentive unto my voice.” What is he doing? He is correcting us gently.

Just because in some instances there needs to be an angry rebuke, that does not mean it will be so in every instance. Look in the book of

Job, chapter 37. This shows the absolute sovereignty of God over the weather. Job 37, beginning with verse 6: “For He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain and to the great rain of His strength. He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know His work. Then the beasts go into dens and remain in their places.”

Now watch verse 9: “Out of the south cometh a whirlwind, and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given, and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering He wearieth the thick cloud, He scattereth His bright cloud, and it is turned about by His counsels, that they may do whatsoever He commanded them upon the face of the world in the earth.”

Now, he is talking about the weather and the clouds: “He causeth it”—that is, the rain, the clouds, the storms—“He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy.” Isn’t that interesting? God says that if we pay attention, we can even be corrected by acts of His providence in the weather. But we need to pay attention. God may teach us by using examples, through instruction, or through correction.

God Teaches by Chastisement

Now here is my question: What if we do not listen? Let me rephrase that. What if a real, genuine, and true Christian refuses to be taught by example, by instruction, or by correction? What is left? How does God teach us then? Here it is, the fourth one: by chastisement. By chastisement.

Now, I want you to look in several passages. First of all, go to Jeremiah chapter 7. Look in verse 28; then we are going back to Isaiah 28. Jeremiah chapter 7 and verse 28.

This happened to Judah and Jerusalem. So if we learn by example, if we will learn by instruction, and if we learn by correction, here it is. Jeremiah 7, verse 28: “But thou shalt surely say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction. Truth is perished and it’s cut off from their mouth.” They would not learn by example, by instruction, or by correction. So what is left? Go to Isaiah 28.

I want you to see that this is so beautiful. Isaiah 28, beginning with verse 23. You are going to say, “What in the world does this have to do with chastisement?” Just hang on. “Give ye ear and hear my voice, hearken and hear my speech.” There it is again: God’s instructing and God’s correcting. So verse 24, look at it.

"Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground?" Yes, he does. "When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye in their place?" Why does the farmer break up his ground, knowing exactly where to plant whatever he plants? Watch verse 26: "For his God doth instruct him to discretion and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

Why does the farmer plant all his different crops in different places? The answer is that he harvests them differently. If he planted them all in one place, he would destroy them, because they are harvested in different ways and at different times. He begins in verse 23: "Give ear, hear my voice, hearken, hear my speech." The reason the farmer is successful is that God instructed him. He listened; he knows how to plant, and he knows how to harvest.

Now skip down to chapter 29, verse 1: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel," that is Jerusalem. "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt," that's Jerusalem. "Add ye year to year, let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow. It shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and I will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and thou shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit out of the ground, and thy speech shall be a whisper out of the dust."

May I explain this to you? God said, You would not listen. You would not learn by example. You would not receive instruction. You would not be corrected. Now I am going to beat you into the ground. I will beat the living tar out of you. That is exactly what He had to do to Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel. If you will not be taught by example, correction, or instruction, what is left? Chastisement. You know what Micah 6:9 says? Listen carefully.

"Hear ye the rod and Him who hath appointed it." God said, if you won't listen either way, you better listen to the rod. Do you understand that God has a way of getting and keeping our attention? God has a way to teach us. We may learn either the easy way or the hard way, but we're going to learn. Remember Psalm 25, verse 12: "What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose."

Is it God that chooses the way for instruction? Or is it we? Or is it the man that chooses the method of instruction? First and foremost, it is God that chooses the method by which He instructs us. But in one sense of the word, we also choose the method by which we are instructed. When we refuse to learn by example, refuse instruction, and refuse to be corrected, we're choosing chastisement. That's the only thing that is left.

Do you realize the Word of God teaches us how to deal with, how to respond to, and how to receive chastisement? I want you to look at two passages: Proverbs 3 and Hebrews 12. In Proverbs chapter 3, notice verses 11 and 12. God says, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction. For whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Wow. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction."

The Purpose and Response to Chastisement

Now look in Hebrews chapter 12, beginning with verse 5. Here this passage is enlarged, the same truth from Proverbs 3, but it is an enlargement. Hebrews 12, verse 5: "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and

scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they, that is, the earthly fathers, verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure. But He, our Heavenly Father, for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. So God tells us we are not to despise His chastening. We are not to grow weary of it. We are not to grow tired of it, and we are not to faint under it.

Let me ask you a question. Think about this. What if a Christian—and I am talking about a real, genuine Christian, not a professor, but a real, genuine Christian—was so disobedient and so rebellious that he would not be taught by example, would not be taught by instruction, would not be taught by correction, and would not even be taught by chastisement? Is there something else that would happen? The answer is yes. What?

The Final Consequence: Death

I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 John 5. As you are turning there, I want to quote two passages. Jeremiah 2:30 says, “In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction. Your own sword hath devoured your prophets like a destroying lion.” So here were people who would not be corrected. They would not even receive it through chastisement. Jeremiah 5:3 says: “O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved. Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock. They refuse to return.” What is left if you will not be taught by chastisement?

And the answer is death. God is not going to be dishonored by your wickedness. In 1 Corinthians 11, verses 30 and 32, were people who were abusing the Lord's Supper. The apostle says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." That is, they are dead. God killed them. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we're judged, we're chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

There is a sin unto death. In 1 John 5, verses 16 and 17, John says, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death."

So he says there is a sin unto death and there is a sin not unto death. If a man refuses to be taught either by example, by instruction, by correction, or by chastisement, the only thing left is death. Let me put it to you plainly: God brought us into this world, and He can take us out of this world. God is not going to be dishonored by our own wickedness. Yes, we can go so far, but there is a line that we better not cross because there is a sin unto death. God will be glorified in our lives one way or the other, either in our lives or in our deaths. There are many people in the Bible to whom God pointed in their deaths, saying, "Be not like unto your fathers," because He had killed them in the wilderness.

Applications and Conclusion

So let me make some applications. I have two. The first is this: How are you being instructed? Four ways God teaches us. Are you willing to listen? Does God need to bring the rod of correction into your life in order to gain your attention and get your obedience?

Lamentations 3:33 says concerning our God, "For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." I never took delight in whipping my children. I did it because it was needed, necessary, but I never delighted in it. It grieved me many times that I had to do it. The Bible says the same thing about God. He does not afflict willingly, nor does He grieve the children of men. God does not want to chasten us. He is not some old meanie in heaven just waiting to beat the living daylights out of us. He does not want that.

Isaiah 48:17 says, "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit." Even chastisement was for our profit. God's going to teach us for profit one way or the other. He continues, "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." I've given you instruction. I've corrected you. Then He says, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as waves of the sea. Thy seed also should have been as sand, and an offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof. His name should not have been cut off, nor destroyed from before me."

Did you hear what God said? God said, "I don't have to chasten you. I don't have to take you out of this world. If you had just listened, I am the God that teacheth thee to profit."

God's commands are not for our detriment, but for our good. The second application is this: We must remember that if we are chastened, afflicted, or whipped, it is because of our sin. Listen carefully. It is not the chastening or the whipping that is grievous; it is the sin that is grievous.

I used to think my dad was lying. Before he would whip me, he would say, "Son, this is going to hurt me a whole lot worse than it hurts you." I thought to myself, I know better than that, because it hurt me. But when I grew up, married, and had children, I understood exactly what he meant.

Thomas Watson, a Puritan, said it like this: "There is more malignity in a drop of sin than in a sea of affliction. For the sin is the cause of the affliction, and the cause is greater than the effect." When God chastens us because of our sin, that is why He said, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." Why? Because it is not the chastening that should be bad. Chastening is the evidence of His love for us and His concern for us. What He wants us to see is that the sin is wicked, vile, and bad. We are not to hate the rod, nor the one who wields the rod. We are to hate the sin which caused the rod to fall upon us.

God is going to teach you, if you are His, in one of these four ways. You will either learn by example, by instruction, by correction, or by chastisement. If you refuse to learn, if you are His, He will take you out of this world. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He, God, teach in the way that He shall choose." How are you being taught, and are you learning anything?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. We thank You, Father, for teaching us, and help us to learn the easy way: by example, by instruction, and by correction. But Lord, we will not despise Your chastisement. We do want to be taught, and we do want to honor and glorify Thee and Thy name. We ask for Your blessings, and we thank You for Your grace in Christ's name. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: How Are You Being Taught - Part 1 of 3
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Chapter 2: How Are You Being Taught - Part 2 of 3
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Chapter 3: How Are You Being Taught - Part 3 of 3
JW01464 | YouTube

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

An Unusual Rebuke p. 44

Application: Be a Godly Example p. 21

Applications and Conclusion p. 54

Applications: Time, Effort, and Meekness p. 36

B

Biblical Rebuke and Its Nature p. 42

By Instruction p. 25

C

Correction Without Anger p. 49

G

God Chooses the Way to Teach Us p. 14

God Teaches by Chastisement p. 50

God Teaches by Correction p. 41

God Teaches by Example p. 15

God's Instruction Compared to Rain and Dew p. 26

H

How Are You Being Taught - Part 1 of 3 p. 5

How Are You Being Taught - Part 2 of 3 p. 23

How Are You Being Taught - Part 3 of 3 p. 39

How Are You Being Taught? p. 5, p. 23

How Pastor-Teachers Instruct: Exposition, Explanation, Application p. 32

I

Implications for Being Instructed p. 33

Introduction and Review p. 39

Introduction to Instruction as God's Second Method p. 26

Introduction: The Necessity of Teaching p. 5

J

Jesus Rebukes Peter p. 48

N

Negative Examples in Scripture p. 17

P

Positive Examples in Scripture p. 16

Primary Means: God Uses Men to Instruct p. 29

R

Reasons for Ignorance Among Christians p. 10

Review of Part 1 p. 23

S

Secondary Means of Instruction: Creation and Observation p. 28

T

The Final Consequence: Death p. 53

The Mark of a True Christian: Receiving God's Word p. 7

The Purpose and Response to Chastisement p. 52

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Exodus

Exodus 23 p. 21

Leviticus

Leviticus 19:11 p. 43

Numbers

Numbers 22 p. 44, p. 45

Numbers 22:20-34 p. 46

Numbers 22:7-20 p. 45

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 15:5 p. 40

Deuteronomy 17:11 p. 29, p. 30

Deuteronomy 32 p. 26

Deuteronomy 33 p. 7, p. 8

Deuteronomy 33:10 p. 30

Deuteronomy 33:3 p. 8

Job

Job 36:22 p. 15, p. 24, p. 25

Job 37 p. 49, p. 50

Psalm

Psalm 6:1 p. 42

Psalm 25 p. 5, p. 7, p. 15, p. 36, p. 37, p. 52

Psalm 25:12 p. 23, p. 25, p. 27, p. 28, p. 39

Psalm 25:5 p. 23, p. 24

Psalm 32 p. 26

Psalm 32:8 p. 7, p. 23, p. 24

Psalm 37:23 p. 7

Psalm 39 p. 42

Psalm 78 p. 17, p. 18

Psalm 119 p. 12

Proverbs

Proverbs 2:1 p. 35, p. 36
Proverbs 3 p. 52, p. 53
Proverbs 6 p. 28
Proverbs 13 p. 20, p. 21
Proverbs 15:33 p. 34
Proverbs 21:12 p. 29
Proverbs 22:15 p. 41
Proverbs 23:13 p. 41
Proverbs 25:2 p. 35
Proverbs 27:5 p. 43

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 7:5 p. 43

Isaiah

Isaiah 28 p. 32, p. 33, p. 41, p. 50, p. 51
Isaiah 48:17 p. 55
Isaiah 56:10 p. 6

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 2:30 p. 53
Jeremiah 5:3 p. 53
Jeremiah 7 p. 50
Jeremiah 10 p. 6, p. 7

Lamentations

Lamentations 3:33 p. 54

Ezekiel

Ezekiel 34:26 p. 27

Micah

Micah 6:9 p. 52

Matthew

Matthew 5:5 p. 37

Matthew 11:28-30 p. 37
Matthew 21 p. 21

Mark

Mark 4:23-25 p. 14
Mark 4:33 p. 32

Luke

Luke 11:49 p. 34
Luke 12:27 p. 40

John

John 3:16 p. 11
John 17 p. 8

Romans

Romans 1 p. 18, p. 29
Romans 10:3 p. 6
Romans 15:4 p. 16

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2 p. 10, p. 11
1 Corinthians 2:14 p. 10
1 Corinthians 4 p. 35
1 Corinthians 11 p. 53, p. 54
1 Corinthians 14 p. 6

Galatians

Galatians 6 p. 13

Ephesians

Ephesians 4 p. 30
Ephesians 4:11-15 p. 40, p. 41

Philippians

Philippians 3 p. 21
Philippians 3:10 p. 11, p. 12

Colossians

Colossians 1:28 p. 12

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 3 p. 21

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 4 p. 21

1 Timothy 5:20 p. 43

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2 p. 35

2 Timothy 2:15 p. 36

2 Timothy 2:7 p. 26

2 Timothy 3 p. 42

2 Timothy 3:16 p. 49

2 Timothy 4:2 p. 44

Titus

Titus 2:15 p. 43

Hebrews

Hebrews 12 p. 52, p. 53

Hebrews 12:9 p. 49

James

James 4:17 p. 14

2 Peter

2 Peter 2 p. 20, p. 44

1 John

1 John 3 p. 21

1 John 5 p. 53, p. 54

Revelation

Revelation 3:19 p. 43

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