

1 Peter 4:10-11(a)

1Pe 4:10 (NKJV) As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...

As we continue looking at the various spiritual gifts that are listed in the New Testament, we have been studying the gift of teaching. As we have previously seen, the Greek word for “teaching” is “*didasko*” and it specifically refers to someone who is gifted to provide instruction to others to help provide benefit for their life, but it is NOT limited to just pastor/teachers or elders – and that is a very important point. “*Didasko*” means to provide instruction in either a formal or an informal setting with the aim of providing understanding for others.¹ For someone like me as a pastor, it refers specifically to the idea of systematically teaching and instructing, but that particular kind of systematic teaching would be considered more as the “ministry of teaching” rather than the actual gift of teaching. It is important to make that distinction because if that distinction is not made, then people will think that unless they have some kind of position in a church or seminary and stand behind a podium every week that they could not have this gift. Once again, as with all of the gifts, anyone can have this gift – a housewife, a mechanic, a grocery clerk - anyone.

We all certainly understand that the character and strength of any church is directly related to the place that that church gives to the Word of God. Over the years people have asked me the question as to what should they look for in a church and my answer has always been the same – what priority does that church and that pastor give to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God? What is the nature and character of the teaching which it provides? If the teaching and preaching is strong, the church will be strong. If the teaching and preaching is weak, the church will be weak. Every church rises and falls on how it handles the Word of God and the priority that it gives to the Word of God.

Unfortunately, many people have a shopping list when it comes to looking for a church – what is the nursery like, do they have a family life center, what kind of music do they provide, is there a ladies night out, do they have multiple services such as traditional, blended, or contemporary, do they have a gymnasium. The list could be endless. There is nothing inherently evil or wrong with any of those, but unless the Word of God is given the ultimate and controlling priority and function in the church, nothing else has any more value than just being something social. What is critical and essential to the life of any church is whether the Word of God is being rightly proclaimed through strong teaching and preaching. In many segments of the church, the actual teaching of the Word is being marginalized and sidelined with other secondary forms of entertaining people, but we know that the Word of God is what feeds people, it is what makes them strong, it is what builds them up and gives them hope and courage. The value of the Word of God in a local church cannot be minimized or depreciated in any way, and if it is, the church will be weak and its believers will be weak.

I am personally convinced that many Christians are actually starving spiritually because of shallow teaching and preaching in their local church. They may have a great music program and a modern auditorium with great acoustics, but their soul is starving for truth, for conviction, for something to which they can anchor their life. It is very important to understand that people live out what they believe –

¹ Precept, *Romans 12:7*, ep.

whether it is right or wrong. People live out their convictions. My heart goes out to those people who were searching for truth, searching for deep spiritual conviction, and they attended a church and were given spiritual pabulum week after week. Over time listening to shallow messages and weak sermons, always listening to evangelistic messages, focusing on some music experience, they lost their spiritual hunger and became satisfied with spiritual mediocrity, and before you know it they have no meaningful connection with a church and find one excuse after another as to why they do not need to be connected to a local body of Christ. In all likelihood, much of that may have come from attending a church that was weak in its declaration of the Word of God, weak in the priority it gave to its teaching and preaching. People are literally starving for a strong foundational and biblical basis on which they can build their lives. They may not even know it, but they are starving for the Word of God, for the truth, for godly wisdom. Everything in the Christian life rises and falls based on the priority that someone gives to the Word of God in their life – whether it is in their daily personal life as well as in their corporate life in a church that teaches the truth of God’s Word accurately, boldly, and without compromise.

I say all of this because one primary characteristic of the gift of teaching is that the person with this gift understands the compounding impact of false teaching and where it ultimately leads, so they are consumed with ensuring that what is being taught is accurate, foundational, and biblical. I have shared my concerns with you many times of how the Emergent Church has adopted The Message Bible as its teaching Bible of choice. The problem with that choice is that it is only a paraphrase and can never properly communicate the nuances and intricacies and wonders of the original languages. Once it has been accepted by this generation, then the future generations will have a very weakened Bible from which their life is being directed, and it will not be able to sustain them when needed. It will not be accurate and what they are being taught may be culturally accepted, but biblically incorrect. For the teacher, accuracy is much more of a concern than cultural relevance. I have said it often, but the more culturally relevant we try to become, the more biblically irrelevant we will become in the process.

The person with this gift generally has excellent study habits and because of that they have a tendency to often provide you more information than you may need or enjoy, and in that process can become very boring if not careful.² It is my personal opinion only that there are many pastors, and especially in Baptist churches, that simply do not possess the gift of teaching. That is not a criticism of them individually because I know that many of them are wonderful Christian men who love Christ, His Church, and His Word. They may be good organizers or good promoters or good administrators. They may relate well to people and be great in difficult situations, but simply do not have the gift of teaching. I remember many, many years ago when my family was looking for a church home and we visited a local church where I knew the pastor. He was a wonderful, compassionate, and caring individual and we loved and appreciated him deeply, but he had no skills related to teaching. He simply could not teach and was not gifted in that area of his life. We tried the church for a month, but we were literally left starving spiritually with every message and we just felt compelled to look somewhere else for strong biblical teaching.

Anyone who has this particular gifting should be someone who is influencing the understanding that people have of the Scriptures, as well as stimulating obedience to the Word of God. What they teach

² Basic, *Teaching*, ep.

should be persuasive because it is accurate and well-articulated. I have heard it said, and I believe it to be true, that the real essence of teaching is to shape the will of the one being taught. I tell my students that I am always teaching to persuade them of what is being taught. It is never a mere informational transfer or just some academic exercise, and it should never be that in a church or in any teaching venue.

Now, one of the things that Peter says in [1 Peter 4:11\(a\)](#) is the following,

1Pe 4:11 (NKJV) **If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...**

The Greek word for “speaks” is “*laleo*” and it is in the present tense, indicative mood, and active voice. If I can simplify the parsing it simply means that speaking, proclaiming, and teaching the Word of God is what this individual always does. In this context it simply means to teach and preach in an absolute sense, in a declarative manner.³ Jesus always taught and spoke this way. For instance, [John 7:46](#) uses this Greek word to describe Christ when some officers were directed to bring Him to the scribes and Pharisees,

Jn 7:46 (NKJV) **The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"**

What Jesus was saying was so penetrating that the officers literally were not willing to take Him. I think that Jesus summed up His “speaking” in [John 12:49-50](#) when He used this word “*laleo*” four different times to describe how He spoke.

Jn 12:49 (NKJV) **For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."**

So, what is this person in [1 Peter 4:11](#) to speak? The term “**the oracles of God**” is the word “*logion*” and simply means a declaration, the teachings of God, and here in [1 Peter 4:11](#) it includes the utterances of those Christians gifted to proclaim the truth of God from the Word of God.⁴ Now, at this point, it is critical to make a very important observation. It is **NOT** – I repeat – it is **NOT** that the individual himself is given oracles or utterances – not at all, but rather that the individual is to utter, to teach, to proclaim what has already been given by God. There is no new truth. It does not exist. Whatever this individual is to do, it is to simply repeat and utter what God has already proclaimed, to teach what God has already given, what God has already declared in His Word. This is never about the individual declaring his ideas, but about his declaring God’s Word. That is the issue with speaking the “**oracles of God**”.

The idea in [1 Peter 4:11](#) is incredibly simple – **whoever speaks, let him speak what God has already spoken**. Let him teach God’s Word, let him proclaim God’s truth, let him reveal to us what God has revealed in His Word. Let him proclaim that God is sovereign over all things, let him speak of salvation, let him speak of hope and give encouragement from the Word of God. Let him declare that God saves sinners and forgives men of their sins. Let him declare that eternal life is in Christ alone and that all who come to Christ and believe in who He is and what He has done and commit their life in faith to Him can and will be saved. Let him speak what God has already spoken. The one who is making these utterances is not giving his opinion about the Word of God or the opinion of others about the Word of God or the

³ Zodhiates, 906.

⁴ Harris, *logion*, #3025, ep.

consensus of contemporary Christianity – which may be way off the target of biblical truth.⁵ That is not what he does. It is the Word of God that reveals God, that reveals the truth regarding God, that reveals who Christ is, and that reveals how someone is saved and can truly and intimately know the living God of creation. This is someone who nurtures the church and who faithfully gives the Word of God to God's people through the faithful ministry of teaching and preaching. [Luke 4:43-44](#) says this about Christ, the most gifted teacher and proclaimer of truth ever,

Lk 4:43 (NKJV) **but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."**

What did He mean when He declared “**I must preach the kingdom of God**”? It meant that He was to teach everything about God that was possible, everything about God's kingdom, and everything about the dominion over which God sovereignly rules. It includes God's truth, God's doctrine, God's faithfulness, God's love, God's forgiveness, God's grace, and anything else that pertains to His kingdom. It includes His Second Coming, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and the eternal state. It includes everything about God that God has given in His Word. Jesus told His disciples in [Matthew 10:7](#),⁶

Mt 10:7 (NKJV) **And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'**

Look at [Acts 10:42-43](#) when Peter is at the house of Cornelius,

Ac 10:42 (NKJV) **And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."**

Jesus was a preacher, the disciples were preachers, Paul was a preacher, and Paul's protégé Timothy was a preacher. Listen to what Paul told Timothy in [2 Timothy 4:1-5](#),

2Ti 4:1 (NKJV) **I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

I am sure that there are people today who think that the preaching and teaching of God's Word is outdated, outmoded, old-fashioned, and obsolete, and they are more than satisfied with having some long period of “praise and worship” or some kind of drama event and less time of actual teaching, and especially doctrine which they consider to be irrelevant. So, what is the point? The point is that the gift of teaching is one of God's appointed means of declaring His truth. Nothing has changed because this is God's design. When Paul was in Corinth, he said this in [1 Corinthians 1:17-18](#) to the orators who were enamored with being clever and cunning in their arguments,⁷

⁵ MacArthur, ep.

⁶ MacArthur, ep.

⁷ MacArthur, ep.

1Co 1:17 (NKJV) **For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.** ¹⁸ **For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

Listen to what Paul said in [1 Corinthians 1:21](#),

1Co 1:21 (NKJV) **For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.**

What the world sees as “foolishness”, as being absurd, as being completely irrelevant to their life is the very thing that God uses to “save those who believe”. The issue is never how relevant we make ourselves or how clever we may be in what we say and how we say it, but how complete and clear we are when we handle the truth. Martin Luther once said, and he is absolutely correct, that “*The highest worship of God is the preaching of His Word*”. Whether in a church service or live streaming on the Internet due to the Coronavirus, no gathering of believers, can honor and worship God more than by listening with an obedient and reverent heart to the Word of God being accurately expounded.⁸

One last thing about this particular gift is the warning given to us in [James 3:1](#) which says,

Jas 3:1 (NKJV) **My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

Even though this is not a verse related to spiritual gifts, it does have some bearing on our discussion. What this verse should do is to create a sense of gravity and importance relative to the act of teaching at any level. There are no exemptions here for being unprepared and taking the task of teaching lightly. I think this applies to every venue of teaching in the church from the pulpit down. Based on this verse, I would suspect that the gift of teaching is not actually one of the more prevalent motivational gifts provided to believers simply because of the seriousness of the task of teaching others. So, if you feel compelled to study, then please take any opportunities for teaching that you may have very seriously.

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⁸ MacArthur, ep.