

Teaching is Important

By Bob Young

Jesus was a teacher. He was called “Rabbi” and “Teacher.” He taught in many different kinds of situations -- individuals, small groups, and crowds of thousands. Those who are committed to making Christ-like disciples today will follow Jesus’ example. The work of preaching is important, the work of teaching is of equal or even greater importance. Christians should have their eyes open to opportunities to teach individuals, small groups, and multitudes. Christians have their eyes open to teaching others about Jesus (evangelism) and to teaching believers (discipleship).

The disciples and the multitudes heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount. They asked, “Where did he get these words?” He taught as one having authority. The disciples and the multitudes heard Jesus’ teach in parables. After hearing Jesus’ teaching, they asked him to explain. Teaching raises questions, teaching gives opportunities to explain.

The contemporary church largely defines itself by its preaching. Most local churches can tell you how many are present for the preaching – either in person or online. Most local churches cannot tell you the number of members who read the Bible daily or pray daily. Most local churches today cannot tell you the number of spiritual encounters that occurred in the last week, the number of evangelistic encounters, the number of teaching encounters.

In most churches, weekly preaching is how the church defines itself. Ideally, preaching paints the broad strokes of faith, reminding God’s people of the great truths that bind us together. There is a need for evangelistic preaching, although such preaching has fallen into disfavor in the early twenty-first century.

Evangelistic campaigns have largely been discarded, and campaigns that do occur do not have the results that were common in years past. Preaching alone does not result in spiritual growth for a disciple. Teaching is important. It is difficult to preach people into faith, it is difficult to preach people into spiritual maturity.

Teaching is a key part of the discipling process. A disciple takes up the yoke of the Master by hearing the teachings of the Master and sharing those teachings with others. A disciple is one who hears and obeys Jesus. Hearing is useless without clear explanations of how to obey. Perhaps that is one reason the early disciples devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42). In the New Testament, the importance of teaching is emphasized again and again.

Most Christians are not preachers. Most Christians are not effective teachers in group settings. James warns against those who would presume to teach publicly when they are not teachers. But every Christian can serve as an informal teacher of others. Parents teach children. Spouses teach and encourage one another. Christians teach friends and neighbors. Do not miss the wisdom of God’s plan. God’s plan does not call for large numbers of formal preachers and teachers.

The world will not be won for Jesus and disciples will not be matured through the efforts of those who serve in formal roles as evangelist-preachers, prophet-teachers (who bring convicting words from God), and pastor-teachers. The world will be won for Jesus and disciples will be matured by the daily teaching shared by faithful Christians.

I am thankful for preachers. I am thankful for spiritual leaders and teachers. I pray that all Christians will live out the importance of teaching. May we become faith communities where every believer is encouraged learn, to share that teaching, and to put that teaching into action.