

## 20 Characteristics of the Teacher

The third motivational gift listed in Romans 12:6-8 is the gift of teaching. The Greek word here for a person who teaches is *didasko*, which means, simply, 'to teach or to give instruction'.

We were tempted to use the word "researcher" because we found that many with this gift were especially drawn into fields of research and may or may not be overtly involved with the function of teaching. Or they may do their teaching through writing (papers, articles, dissertations or books) rather than in person.

### 1. Presents truth in a logical, systematic way.

Looking back over school days you can always tell the teachers who had this gift because their lectures were in outline form: points 1, 2, 3, a, b, c. The procedures were systematic. It was easy to take notes.

### 2. Validates truth by checking out the facts.

Teachers want to be sure that what they believe and accept is based on fact. This was the case with doubting Thomas. Being motivated by his teaching gift he did not want to trust what he heard about Jesus' resurrection and so it was natural for him to respond:

"Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25, NASB).

However, when Jesus did appear to him eight days later, Thomas could only respond, "My Lord and my God!" (verse 28).

If you have the motivational gift of teaching you have probably been called a "doubting Thomas" from time to time. Count it an honor. You were designed by God to investigate the facts and you are doing a good enough job of it that others are noticing. That's great!

### 3. Loves to study and do research.

Many with the gift of teaching also love to research!

When someone asks, "Why do you spend so much time on that research? Couldn't you cut it down a bit?", the thought horrifies teachers. What if they didn't look into the subject thoroughly enough and wound-up writing something inaccurate! Many teachers' thoughts would sound like the following: "The errors would be multiplied in vast numbers of innocent minds and they would be responsible. My research has to be complete. Besides, I loved doing it."

#### **4. Enjoys word studies.**

Teachers are fascinated with words. They like to investigate the root meanings and the Greek or Hebrew counterparts. They see words as the building blocks of communication. They want to use words well, and correctly.

They will often check out a word in a reference like W. E. Vine's An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words to determine the precise meaning of the original Greek. They also enjoy topical studies with aids like Nave's Topical Bible or Harper's Topical Concordance.

Sometimes the study of just one word will lead the teacher into hours of pursuit as one insight leads to another.

#### **5. Prefers to use biblical illustrations rather than life illustrations.**

The Bible is the ultimate authority for teachers. Even if they do not understand a particular verse, they believe that it is their own lack of knowledge, not the Scripture passage, that is the problem. It is a source of new understanding yet to be discovered. Teachers quote liberally from the Bible, often using stories, parables or characters to prove or illustrate a point. They can trust this source. Life illustrations are another matter; they are by their very nature subjective. They are not, in the teacher's estimation, a reliable rock upon which to build.

#### **6. Gets upset when Scripture is used out of context.**

They are so concerned for the integrity of teaching-be it spoken or written-that they cannot help but lose confidence in any person who proof-texts a point with disregard of the true sense of a passage. The teacher views misuse as abuse.

#### **7. Feels concerned that truth be established in every situation.**

Whether it's in business, education, religion, human relationships or any other area of life, teachers want truth to prevail. It is the foundation, the anchor, the framework within which they can securely work.

Aquila and Priscilla, both teachers by motivational gift, welcomed Apollos, who was also a teacher. But they could see that he was operating on limited knowledge of the Gospel and were quick to instruct him more perfectly in the way of the Lord (see Acts 18:26). With truth fully established in him, Apollos was then able to go to Greece and confound the intellectuals of that day.

## **8. Is more objective than subjective.**

In general, men tend to be more objective and women more subjective. There are, of course, exceptions. But when a man has the motivational gift of teaching we stereotypically see the most objective type of person of all. Such men often become research scientists, business analysts or judges.

Women with the motivational gift of teaching go into similar fields. And it is not unusual for them to hear a shrouded compliment like, "For a woman you are amazingly objective".

Teachers look at life with a certain detachment. They participate, but without their emotions getting in the way. This works as a sort of insulation factor that keeps them from being hurt or emotionally wounded.

## **9. Easily develops and uses a large vocabulary.**

Teachers use words well and are fond of learning new ones. Even as children they enjoy word games- Scrabble, Boggle, crossword puzzles. They are good communicators, often eloquent and commanding in their speech.

## **10. Emphasizes facts and the accuracy of words.**

Teachers are not so interested in opinions; they want facts. Facts are the building blocks of their lives. This combines with their exceptional objectivity and ability to use words well and accurately to make them gifted in editorial work. They make great copyeditors. Like a homing pigeon they readily find their target: misspelled words, improper grammar or inadequate vocabulary.

## **11. Checks out the source of knowledge of others who teach.**

Whenever we teach a motivational gift seminar it is the teachers who come up to us at the close of the session to say, "Now where did you get all this information?" Teachers are the ones most apt to ask: who, what, where, when and how come?

## **12. Prefers teaching believers over engaging in evangelism.**

When it comes to evangelism the teacher keeps a low profile. He or she will lead people to Jesus Christ, but usually in circumstances where a bridge of relationship or friendship has already been built.

Aggressive types of evangelism are not appealing to the teacher. They are definitely not drawn to street witnessing or door-to-door evangelism. But they are glad that others

make these efforts. And, once new people have been won to the Lord, the teacher will spend endless hours joyfully teaching the new persons.

### **13. Feels Bible study is foundational to the operation of all the gifts.**

Teachers cannot imagine anything more important than studying the Bible. They believe it is the foundation upon which all the gifts operate.

Their thinking goes something like this:

- How can the perceiver perceive accurately unless she has a solid understanding of the Bible?
- How can the server serve well if he is not acquainted with the biblical reasons for service?
- How can the teacher teach unless she has studied the Scriptures thoroughly?
- How can the exhorter exhort effectively unless he knows the biblical basis for his exhortation?
- How can the giver give properly if she is not aware of the biblical guidelines for giving?
- How can the administrator be an effective leader unless he understands God's will as revealed in the Word?
- How can the compassionate person minister God's love if she does not encounter that love in the Bible?

"Nothing;" says the teacher, "is more foundational than studying the Bible!"

### **14. Solves problems by starting with scriptural principles.**

Teachers believe that there is an answer to every problem in God's Word-if not in actual example or principle, at least by implication.

### **15. Is intellectually sharp.**

These are the ones you don't want to invite over to play Trivial Pursuit.

They'll win for sure.

The fact is that God has gifted these, the "mind" of the Body of Christ, with what they need to be successful in their sphere-a high IQ. They are often brilliant. They were good students in school, loved to study, were self-motivated and often came home with straight As.

The teacher's mind can be likened to a thirsty sponge, soaking up everything it can. As a result, he or she is a prolific reader, drawn to books filled with facts and accurate information. He or she has a good memory, especially for dates and history.

### **16. Is self-disciplined.**

Mix a good dose of seriousness with a lot of objectivity, add a love for truth and a keen mind, and you have the ingredients for self discipline.

Teachers can set goals and stick to them, set parameters and work effectively within them and project time schedules and abide by them.

### **17. Is emotionally self-controlled.**

Of all the motivational gifts, this is the one that grants the greatest emotional equilibrium. Some people have emotional ups and downs that track like the pathway of a roller-coaster ride. Others have smoother patterns of ups and downs with only occasional jolting bumps. But the teacher's graph of mood swings looks more like a horizontal line. Teachers are highly analytical. They believe reasonable choices can resolve potentially volatile situations. When someone's upset, they may advise, "Calm down. You can, you know".

### **18. Has only a select circle of friends.**

Common interests seem to be the prerequisite for the development of close relationships. Teachers are seldom drawn into superficial friendships. They tend to be aloof or uneasy in unstructured social situations and they hate meaningless chitchat. They prefer friends with whom they can discuss ideas and concepts. Sometimes they are loners. More often they are comfortable with just a few close friends.

### **19. Has strong convictions and opinions based on investigation of facts.**

Teachers have so many areas of interest. They willingly drop what they are doing to investigate a new area of knowledge.

Before long the dining room table will be loaded with open books, all contributing to the development of new opinions and convictions.

### **20. Believes truth itself has the power to produce change.**

When teachers teach, they present the truth without necessarily explaining to their listeners how to apply that truth to their lives. Teachers believe the application of truth is the job of the Holy Spirit.

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32) is a favorite verse of teachers. They assume that others will respond to truth in the same way that they do- as being energizing and liberating.

The teacher's problem areas are unique to the teacher gift. But in identifying the problems the teacher will believe that the solutions cannot be far away. (And so it is with each of the motivational gifts- the solutions to the problem areas will come as we see the need for change and cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us into maturity.)

## **Problems of the Teacher**

### **1. Tends to neglect the practical application of truth.**

Because teachers believe that their job is to communicate truth and let people make their own use of it, they usually do not give much in the way of practical suggestions. This especially frustrates exhorters. (They focus on the actual application of teaching.) It can also frustrate those with other gifts.

The listener may say, "So we've heard lots of facts, now what do we do with them?" The teacher responds, "You've got a mind. You figure it out"

But not all minds work with the degree of logic that the teacher's mind does. Many need specific directions - steps one, two, three. A teacher needs to learn how to give at least some measure of practical application to his hearers.

### **2. Is slow to accept viewpoints of others.**

The "know-it-all" attitude can be a real pitfall for people with the motivational gift of teaching. Of course, they do know a lot. But no one knows everything.

### **3. Tends to develop pride in intellectual ability.**

Pride is probably the number one problem for those with the motivational gift of teaching. Listen to what Proverbs has to say about it:

"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom" (Proverbs 11:2, NIV).

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18, NIV).

"A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor" (Proverbs 29:23, Nrv).

In 1 Corinthians 8:1, Paul says that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The greatest qualities a teacher can seek are humility and love. These will neutralize the pride problem.

#### **4. Tends to be legalistic and dogmatic.**

Being right is so important to the teacher that he easily becomes argumentative. The feeling may be "I alone am right and everyone else is wrong." Such lack of checks and balances can expose the teacher to deception. (Perhaps that's why some get into cults.) God's truth is not exclusive; it can be verified by many.

Have you ever been involved in a good group discussion where each person is openly interacting? And then a polluted teacher gift comes along and blurts out, "Well, I happen to know that the truth of the matter is ... No one can end a good discussion faster.

#### **5. Is easily sidetracked by new interests.**

Teachers are interested in so many things! Their prolific reading takes them into all kinds of areas. Their research extends to endless subjects. Focusing is not always easy.