

# ***StraitWay***



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## **Overseeing The Flock Part Eight (Humility and Service)**

Although the flock is to be in submission to the elders, Hebrews 13:17, the elder is to be in submission also. The chain of command goes all the way to God. Paul said, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:3). We are given an example of being in submission to one another in Ephesians 5:21-24, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Jesus was doing the work of a servant when he washed the apostles' feet (John 13:4-9). He also taught this lesson in Matthew 20:25-28, "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The elders must always remember they are the servants of God, as were those in Acts 16:17, "The same followed Paul and us, cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." They must not think too highly of themselves, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3).

To properly serve others, one must realize he is not to seek anything in return for service rendered. "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." (Matt. 6:32,33).

Elders must serve and be humble before ALL the flock and not be partial to anyone or any group. James teaches we are not to show partiality to those that come into the assembly wearing a gold ring, or wearing goodly apparel. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." (James 2:1).

"The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility." (Prov. 15:33). "A man's pride shall bring him low" but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." (Prov. 29:2).

To prepare our young men to be elders we must first teach them humility and submissiveness. They must learn they will always be in subjection and service to someone. A man cannot be a leader pleasing to God until he has learned submission and service to others.

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## Preacher Training Growth

In this series we are breaking down the work of training preachers into segments for consideration and our hope is that some seed for thought might be encouraged in each area.

### Time for Growth

Paul told the younger preacher in his charge, the one he called his own child in the faith, “...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness...” and, “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.” **1Tim.4:7,14-16.**

I want to share an aspect of preacher training that admittedly is mostly my judgment. Others may disagree and that’s alright. When they do the training they can use their best judgment and do their way. When I read passages like the one above I am struck by the terms, “take pains”, “be absorbed”, “evident progress”, “pay close attention to yourself and your teaching”. These terms and other like them indicate to me that Timothy was to be diligent and consistent in spending time examining himself, examining his teaching and re-examining both. How would this translate into our discussion of “training preachers?”

I believe that men who preach need time for study. They need time for prayer and meditation. They need time to prepare lessons with depth and then go over those lessons again. It is true for all preachers, but it is especially true for young men. I will go on record right here in being opposed to the “concordance style” of preaching where one looks up a word, finds 3 to 5 points there in the lines of his concordance and then dispenses his 20 minute sermonette with a grin and a joke! Can you imagine in your wildest dreams men like Jeremiah, Amos, Elijah or Malachi being of any use to God with such? Can you see Paul at the Areopagas or calming the shouting Hebrews in Jerusalem so that he could deliver such? The church is definitely in difficult straits today and it may in part be because of outside forces and cultural influences. But, I cannot escape the Old Testament lessons that taught that the most insidious difficulties for Israel arose from their Shepherds! Their leaders, judges, and priests who were self-serving. We have the same today in many places. We need men of depth and courage whose preaching comes not from the concordance, but from conviction! Conviction that is based in study, research, understanding, prayer, and meditation. Young or old, we need them badly.

As trainers of preachers, whoever is in charge needs to make sure that the young man has the time and is using it to develop the above traits. He needs office hours, not to be kept track of to “make sure the church is getting it’s money’s worth”, but to make sure he examines and re-examines those fresh lessons. Too many preachers are WASTING valuable hours holding hands, consoling hurt feelings, traveling from hospital to nursing home to shut-in, and playing secretary or errand boy for the elders while the word of God goes wanting. The twelve summoned the early church together and told them, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.” Acts 6:2. Should preachers participate in the above activities? Absolutely. ALL Christians should. But, it appears that God has appointed shepherds and deacons for most of those tasks. Where there are no elders these tasks fall upon ALL the members to share. Teach your “intern preacher” that they are spokesmen of God, not denominational Pastors. Give them time to study, research, and meditate on their presentations. If there is any spare time encourage them and show them how to evangelize. Get them out on the street. Get them teaching home studies. Get them praying and studying and teaching and give them the time to do that.

God has given us responsibilities and duties. Even if it is only carrying the tent peg to the tabernacle, that is our job and we must take it seriously. When elders and deacons pass their duties off on others, when the church family become spectators instead of participants, and when most of the duties fall upon one because, after all, “that’s what we pay him for”, we are in dire straits. Teach the young man his duty, encourage him in it (the devil will have plenty of discouragement later for him, don’t be Satan’s tool), and make sure he has the time to dedicate to develop himself in it. Time for Growth.

## **“Home” Needs A Godly Father**

In an earlier article we discussed the role of the husband in the family unit and noted obligations unique to that role. Now, continuing our study let's turn our attention to the role of father in this family unit which God designed in the beginning. As noted in previous articles, we again emphasize that this role involves a male of the species and not a female. The word “father” by its very definition shows this to be so. In Webster's first definition he says “father” means one who has begotten a child; a male parent. However, as the word is further defined we learn that there is more involved in being a father than just the ability to produce offspring. In another definition Webster defines it as one who cares for as a father might. And in Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, the word “father” is said to come from a root word signifying a nourisher, protector, upholder. So, even though the primary meaning of the word indicates the male of the species it also, as used in Scripture and in our society, implies some very grave responsibilities. It takes a “real” man as discussed earlier to be a father in the true sense. Obviously, because of space restraints, we cannot cover every aspect of being a father in detail, but let me make a few observations regarding the responsibilities of a father.

Some children are literally deserted by their fathers, while others are in practicality deserted because of the father's continued absence for various and sundry reasons. Some are orphans simply because of a lack of involvement in ordinary ways; fathers are present but are distant and withdrawn and leave the impression they don't want to be bothered. If a father provides his children with only the physical necessities, he provides them with no more than institutionalized children. The primary responsibility for nurturing belongs to the father Eph 6:4. God has always expected fathers to teach and train their children: note Abraham Gen 18:19; Moses Deut 6:4-9; and David Psa 78:5-7. It takes time and work to be a good father. One must begin early (even before birth) and be regular Prov 19:18. Don't wait till they are “old enough” Prov 22:6; develop your relationship with them while they are young. In a study from UCLA it was noted that the average father talks to his children 45 seconds a day. A man can not be a good father and talk to his children no more than that. Just here, let me specifically address preachers and men whose jobs involve service to the community. It becomes very easy for these fathers to become so involved in their work of helping others that they neglect their own families. This may have been the case with Eli and his neglect of his sons 1Sam 3:12,13. A father's first responsibility is to his own family, then to those whom he may help. Fathers must learn to discipline their children with love and understanding (Prov 29:15,17; 13:24) and that takes a lot of communication.

Discipline or correction is not a demonstration of hatred for children as some think, but rather proof of love for children. I have heard parents say, “I love my child too much to spank them.” The truth is, if you don't spank them **when they need it** you do not love them. God disciplines (chastens) children whom he loves Heb 12:5-11. “Spare the rod and spoil the child”; the Bible does not use this specific phrase but the principle is in many passages Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13,14; 29:15,17. You say, “but those are Old Testament passages”, well remember what Paul said in Rom 15:4. These Old Testament passages show us how God intends for children to be disciplined. Obviously, effective correction is not done by the rod (switch) alone, children need proper instruction Prov 1:7; 2Tim 3:15. Teaching children how to behave involves more than just the social graces. Jesus grew in four areas: “in wisdom (mentally) and stature (physically), and in favor with God (spiritually) and man (socially)” Lk 2:52. Most fathers are diligent in all of these areas except the most important one. Fathers are derelict in their responsibilities when they fail to instruct their children in God's word.

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## What do we see When we Look Into the *Mirror of Truth*?

There are times in life when our self will is directly confronted with God's truth. How do we react when confronted with truth? We must condition our heart to be ready to conform to His will – even if it is difficult to do so. There is a clear fact presented throughout the New Testament informing us that God desires and demands repentance. That He demands it is seen in passages such as 2 Peter 3:9: God *does not wish for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance*. Repentance requires a positive change with our heart. While we know it is expected of us, God desires we serve Him **because we want to**. Our attitude will go very far in determining our eternal destiny.

There are several accounts within the Acts which demonstrate the power of the human heart in determining whether one will submit to God. In chapter 5 Peter finds himself before the Council after having been given *strict orders* not to continue preaching Jesus. (5:28) Instead of obeying their order Peter tells them he will obey God rather than men and then boldly indicts the Council of being guilty of putting Jesus to death. Luke says after hearing this, they were *cut to the quick and intended to kill them*. (5:33) The phrase *cut to the quick*, is used again in Acts 7:54 where the crowd reacted angrily to Stephen's preaching. In both cases, this phrase comes from a Greek word which means "to cut with a saw." When this phrase is applied to the heart it means the heart is violently agitated with rage. Thayer defines it as being *torn with vexation; to be sawn through mentally*. Peter and Stephen related truth clearly and concisely. Unfortunately, the hearts of the individuals in their audiences were unwilling to accept it. Their irritation would only go away with the death of God's messenger(s). It is hard to imagine a heart being so hardened against God's will that one would be motivated to take another life. But if left unchecked, the deceitfulness of sin, pride, and stubborn self will move a person in this direction. (Heb. 3:12-13)

Someone moving to *kill the messenger* may sound extreme. And it is. But the problem we seek to identify here can be very subtle. Bible teaching can help us learn the truth about self. James likened it to looking in a mirror. (James 1:22-25) What do we see when we look into the *mirror of truth*? What is our reaction? Denial? Rationalization? God's kind of Christian will move with acceptance and a quiet resolve to bring his life into compliance with God's will. The Psalmist speaks of the correct attitude when he writes: *Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer*. (Psa. 19:12-14) Do we pray for help in seeing self as God sees us? Let us pray for help in accepting even the most painful truths so we can change our ways! See 2 Cor. 13:5.

In Acts 2 we read another group's reaction to truth. Verse 37 says, *they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"* Our word "pierced" is translated from a Greek word used nowhere else in the New Testament. It means the people on Pentecost were suddenly and deeply affected with anguish and alarm at what Peter preached. One word that would go along with this is "compunction," or a *strong uneasiness caused by a sense of guilt or remorse*. Compunction was definitely lacking with those mentioned in Acts 5 and 7! Compunction results **only** from a **humble** heart! Note what the humble heart wants to do: **immediately obey God!** There is no hesitation and no excuses. After Peter's instructions those who received his words *were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls*. (Acts 2:41) This involved repentance as seen in 2:38. Their hearts were open to truth!

Remember: God knows us perfectly! Heb. 4:12-13 says *the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*. Do we genuinely love His truth?

## **Preaching The Gospel In Foreign Fields**

### **Preaching To Be Understood**

*"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God"* Romans 10:17. The great commission was Jesus' sending His apostles into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. Essential to producing faith in one, the hearer must understand the word spoken to him. Otherwise, no profit will come. Paul dealt with this matter of not understanding when he rebuked those in Corinth who spoke with tongues but did not interpret to others what they had said. He said *"Thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified."* (1 Cor. 14:17)

The ideal situation for those who go to preach in foreign lands would be to learn the language of those to whom they go. This not only allows one to preach in the native tongue but permits him to be able to converse with the natives, a great advantage to any. Of course when one is threescore and ten, and plus, learning another language is an almost impossible feat. Still, if one has plans to visit on recurring trips, learning the tongue would be most beneficial. For those who plan to remain for 3-4 years, learning the language is imperative.

The Philippines is a country in which English is widely spoken and communication with Filipinos is not nearly so difficult as it would be were one to go to lands like Japan, Taiwan, China, India or other countries. Nevertheless, even here when one is preaching, in most instances a translator is needed. Many times I have been told by brethren whom we were to address "There is no need for an interpreter, we all understand English" only to realize that an interpreter was needed. I was in southern Mindanao in June speaking to a group of liberal preachers and elders and was told that interpretation was not necessary. Before I concluded, some were asking that translation be done!

Of course, there are disadvantages when one has his lessons translated. One disadvantage is **time**. In essence one is cutting his speaking time into half when his lesson is interpreted, but better one lesson be delivered and understood by the hearer, than two lessons given where the lessons were not understood at all.

Another disadvantage is that one's lessons cannot "flow" as smoothly as if one were speaking without interrupting himself. Again, the advantage of being understood is more important than a speech "flowing easily". What profit does the hearer receive if he does not understand what you speak?

In the Philippines there are two different "methods" of interpreting. The first is "summarizing". The foreign preacher preaches his lesson without interruption. A Filipino brother takes notes and then gives a summary of what the US brother says. This is not the best thing to do. Frequently the Filipino brother makes his own points and adds other scriptures other than those the US brother spoke. And, if the brother who interprets is not really competent (often brethren will let some Filipino "practice" by interpreting the US brother) then the visiting preacher has wasted his time. An example: how can a brother summarize in five minutes the substance of a sermon which took 40-45 minutes to deliver? Reject this "method" of interpreting. It is wasted effort to preach 30-45 minutes and then the interpreter preaches his own lesson or else gives such a sketchy summary that the listener really doesn't understand what the US preacher said.

The best way of interpretation is "line by line". This makes a sermon choppy but is the surest guarantee that what you have said actually gets to the people you are preaching to. And, after awhile, speaking this way becomes easier for the preacher.

When using an interpreter, there are a few things which should be considered.

**Speak slowly and distinctively.** This is more difficult for some speakers because they are accustomed to speaking rapidly. Still, adjust yourself. You are trying to create faith and you must be understood in order that faith is created.

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# Passing The Sword

## Second Timothy

**Introduction:** This is the last writing that Paul did before he was executed.

Paul had been released from his first imprisonment about 62 A.D. and went about preaching the word of God again. During this time a great fire destroyed much of Rome in July of 64 A.D. The Emperor Nero blamed Christians for the fire, and began a severe persecution against them.

Paul was caught up in this persecution and was imprisoned again waiting his execution. During this final imprisonment he wrote the second letter to Timothy. The theme of this last letter was a personal charge and challenge to Timothy concerning courage and faithfulness in his life and teaching. Every preacher and teacher of the Word of God will find much guidance, help, and encouragement in this final letter of Paul to Timothy.

**Chapter One:** Begins with hope as in 1 Tim. 1:1 and Titus 1:1. Paul recalls his love and appreciation for Timothy; he is thankful for the faith of the young man he loved so much. The tears may have been shed by both of them when they finally parted at Troas (4:13).

Timothy seems to have been timid in some ways and this might have cooled his zeal in the use of the special gifts given by the laying on of apostle's hands. (1 Cor. 16:10). It also seems that he was youthful and sickly (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul charged Timothy to carry on the work. In doing so, he must prepare for assaults and afflictions. The threefold purpose of the first coming of Christ is stated in the 10th verse of this first chapter. It was to abolish death that is caused by sin, to bring salvation to light through the sacrifice of Himself and the ultimate spread of His gospel among men, and to illuminate for us the subject of immortality, by His resurrection and reign.

Many had turned away from Paul during these trying times. But one man (Onesiphorus) remained faith and was helpful to Paul. At great personal risk, he boldly sought out Paul in Rome. This example should encourage Timothy to overcome his fear in the face of opposition.

**Chapter Two:** In this chapter we find the requirements for the perseverance of the preacher. In verses 1-13 Paul tells Timothy of his personal responsibilities. Paul encouraged his "son in the faith" to be strong and to endure hardships as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. In verse two is given four generations in the line of teaching: Paul taught Timothy, Timothy was to teach other faithful men who themselves would also teach others.

He was to work hard and discipline himself, like an athlete. Also work hard as a farmer. He had a great responsibility before him and he needed wisdom. Paul was now in a cold cell, regarded as a criminal. But the Lord Jesus enabled him to serve with zeal and devotion in spite of the imprisonment. Note verse 10, Even while he suffered in prison, Paul's mind was on "eternal glory." Is that where our mind is focused?

In verses 14-26 we read of Timothy's public responsibilities. He was to teach the church to avoid useless controversies among themselves. Such disputes are even worse than useless: They lead to "subverting, ungodliness, error and overthrow." In verse 15 Paul tells Timothy how to properly prepare himself for meeting every error. He was to study to show himself approved unto God. He was to be a workman that did not need to be ashamed, handling aright the word of God. We will spend more time on this matter of study in our next issue. I have noted that other writers have commented on this as well. But maybe the things I present will also be helpful in preparing one in his studies to uphold and proclaim the pure word of God.

## Preaching The Gospel In Foreign Fields

(Continued)

**Avoid colloquialisms.** There are problems with colloquialisms even when we preach in another country or region where the language spoken is English. I am told the following incident occurred in Australia some years ago. An American brother was working in that land and one morning his wife was ill. He explained her absence to the assembled congregation by saying "My wife is 'under the weather' this morning". A shocked expression appeared on the faces of his Australian brethren. There the expression "Under the weather" means one who is drunken! Since colloquialisms differ from region to region among English speaking areas, more often than not when the native tongue is something other than English, they leave the people baffled at the message you have given.

**Avoid "jokes".** Our jokes often depend on words which can sometimes be double in meaning. "Jokes" often are lost on the foreign audience and fall flat. To them, they see nothing amusing or "funny" in the things the speaker has said.

**Cite passages and enlarge upon them.** It isn't necessary to cite half a dozen scriptures to establish the point your wish to make. Choose one or two, thoroughly enlarge upon the cited passage and your point will be well made.

You go to preach. That is the reason you go. Then, preach when you go and try, as much as in you is, to be understood by those to whom you preach. Otherwise, there is no purpose at all in your going.

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### “Home”

(continued)

In regard to discipline let me suggest some guidelines that will help you earn the respect of your children. Identify the rules well in advance, then be consistent (it seems that inconsistency is one of the greatest problems). Keep your word, if you say, “I’m going to spank” then DO IT. Control yourself, don’t discipline while angry, but if discipline needs to be immediate, then be sure your method of discipline will not injure your child. Remember the purpose of discipline is to correct undesirable behavior. Punishment is something one does FOR the child not TO the child Heb 12:11. You see, you love your child too much to allow them to behave badly.

Fathers are responsible for providing the proper environment for their children both sons and daughters. Some psychologists have concluded from research that father-deprived girls tend to show extremes or either promiscuity or withdrawal from males. In what direction have you “pitched your tent” Gen 13:10-13; 19:14-25; 2Pet 2:7,8? This may involve the kind of work you do; the community in which you live; where you send your children to school or even the congregation with which you worship. Who do you have to visit in your home? Who are the individuals that your children look up to and imitate? Yes, instruction and discipline are important as noted but more is needed. There must be the proper example set before your children, because example is a very powerful teaching tool. The old saying “do as I say and not as I do” will not get the job done, because your children are going to do as you do. Fathers must practice what they preach. The conflict between precept and example greatly confuses our children. The most important example of all is faithfulness to the Lord; living a godly dedicated life 1Tim 4:16.

Fathers, how much do you love your children? You say, “that’s a silly question.” But, is it? Do you take your role as nourisher, protector, upholder seriously; are you shirking your responsibility to bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

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## Responsibility

*“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”* **Romans 12:3-5**

It has been said “ability plus opportunity equals responsibility.” Surely each of us can recognize that everyone in a congregation has responsibilities. The big question is are we fulfilling those responsibilities?

Elders are to lead the congregation, overseeing its work and worship. Guiding and directing so that all are built up in the faith, growing and developing into more mature Christians as the years go by. Deacons are to serve the church, following the direction of elders while caring for the needs of the local assembly of Christians. Preachers are given the responsibility to preach the word, presenting to each member and the congregation as a whole, that which will help them grow and become stronger Christians. Each member has a responsibility to help their brethren to increase and grow, while growing themselves. Men are to take the lead in directing the worship and classes. Women are to teach the younger women, by word and example.

Every member of a congregation has the responsibility to visit and comfort the sick and needy. Every individual Christian has the responsibility of seeking out those who have erred from the Truth and helping them correct their error that they might be saved. All Christians also are responsible for seeking the lost of this world. Each one of us must recognize and use the opportunities given to us to the best of our ability.

Consider the abilities God has given to you. Consider the opportunities that are presented to you every day. Such consideration should lead you to understand your responsibilities as a Christian and a member of a local congregation of God's People. Now ask yourself, “Am I fulfilling my responsibilities to God and my brethren?” “What can I do to better use the abilities God has given me in taking advantage of the many opportunities that I see each day?” Carefully consider these thoughts and fulfill your obligations to God and your brethren. Prepare diligently for eternity.

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