

HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD

Not long ago I read a remarkable thing by the Christian writer Oswald Chambers. He observed that people called by God first “do” and then they “teach.” I had never thought of that, but it has been true in my own life. After the initial dramatic call, I sought to fulfill what Jesus had called me to do. I studied and prayed, wrote, and did other things. Then there was a period of focusing almost entirely on healing. There is nothing quite like being in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and seeing God work – especially when for many present this might be the first time they have ever seen God work. But then as I moved along I found myself teaching more and more.

One day about four years ago Jesus clearly said to me, “John, tell them who I am and that I am coming soon.” He has repeated that, sometimes with elaboration, several times since. So I do. Now we still heal the sick and do other things in ministry, but the focus is on teaching all about who Jesus is and that he is coming soon. So in reality, first I “did” and then I moved into “teaching,” still “doing” along with “teaching.”

I have seen this pattern in others. One famous world-wide minister was for years focused on miracle healing programs. He held those everywhere. Now he still does heal, but his focus clearly has moved to teaching. He holds programs on teaching about how to minister. He refers to his ministry as an end times ministry. Why? Probably because he in some way heard something similar to what I heard. Jesus really is coming soon. It’s a time of picking up as many for the kingdom as possible.

Maybe doing builds the faith needed to teach the Word with boldness and confidence. Maybe.

Teachers of the Word, you know, are held to a higher standard. The Bible says that (James 3:1). Why is this teaching so important? Because knowing Jesus – receiving him as your Lord – is more important than anything else.

Once years ago we were asked by a relief organization to go to a difficult war-torn country and oversee provision of certain necessities to the people. One problem to us was that we were told we could not tell the people in that country about Jesus. We could just provide the necessities of life that the people did not have – in this case housing. Well, we realized, what does it matter if they have housing and do not know Jesus? Very little. Years later, I was asked to interview to be head of that organization, but the same issue troubled me, so I did not follow up.

What does it matter if you are healed physically but do not know Jesus? Nothing, really, except that for a miniscule moment in time you are healed. Because long-run, you will live in absolute torment unless you do receive Jesus.

Just remember if you are thinking about teaching the gospel, teachers are held to a

higher standard. In essence, Jesus is preaching/teaching through you. It is the Holy Spirit who is impacting the listeners.

AN IMPORTANT ASIDE:

There is another insight to this, really a warning for all preaching and teaching the Word of God. Once in a city when I had begun to speak to various local ministers, one said to me, "John, when you're going about meeting all these preachers, you're going to find that many of them haven't even been born again."

Now there is an indictment! He was saying that many of those preaching and teaching the Word don't know Jesus, don't have a regenerated spirit, quite obviously don't know the Holy Spirit. And they are preaching and teaching others, on Sunday mornings in churches and elsewhere. Yet teachers of the Word are held to a higher standard.

Maybe there is a warning to all of us here. We need to be wise about whom we listen to and sit under, in person and on television and in books. Always, be guided by the Holy Spirit in such matters.

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