

Supporting Our Teachers

Galatians 6:6

With Study Questions

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Galatians 6:6

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. (Galatians 6:6).

We are at a portion in the text where Paul is giving bite-size, somewhat self-contained, admonishments; don't be conceited or envious (5:26), restore an erring brother (6:1-5), share with your teachers (6:6), a man reaps what he sows (6:7-9), do good to all (6:10), etc.

Where as justification by faith alone is the theme of the entire epistle and monumentally practical (if that be strong enough) for Christian life, these admonitions are highly practical in terms of the proper behavior and structure of the church. We will now focus our attention on verse six.

Teachers and Students

One clear implication in this verse is a distinction between teachers and students; one is taught and one teaches. Perhaps in some respects all are teachers and students in the same way that all are doctors and patients. A mother must practice amateur medicine when a knee is scraped. My six-year-old has been known to put a band-aid on my two-year-old. But if she starts to perform an appendectomy, the authorities may have to intervene. A doctor, on the other hand, might find the performing an appendectomy a minor procedure. Yet he is still a student and remains one during his entire practice. But for the most part, doctors treat and patients receive treatment.

With this in mind it would be wise of us to recognize that all are not teachers. James warns us,

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

Even elders are divided into those who teach and those who don't.

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17).

A Teacher of Israel

It is one thing to discuss your beliefs with your friends at Starbucks, it is quite another thing to view yourself as a teacher of Israel. Consider the mild chastisement of our Savior when the ignorance of Nicodemus was made manifest. **"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things'" (John 3:10)?**

We live in a day and age when to imitate a doctor or lawyer carries penal sanctions; but anyone who walks down the sawdust trail on Saturday night can

start a Bible study the following Thursday. Para-church organizations are notorious for this. One is lead to Christ by a theologically questionable tract, is disciplined for a few weeks or months, and then is given a set of tracts to do the work of an evangelist.

We forget that when Paul tells his reader to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5) he is writing to the pastor of a church. This is not to say that at some level we shouldn't all be evangelists or teachers or ministers. Again, we all might need to do some doctorin'. But we're not all doctors. What do we do when our friends are really sick? We take them to a doctor.

The Ordinary Means

This may be shocking for today's Christian to hear but the Westminster Confession teaches

The visible Church...is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation!¹

The ordinary way that people with dire medical conditions are healed is by going to the doctor. The ordinary way that people in dire spiritual conditions are healed is by going to church. Private and personal discussion has its value; but it was when the church gathered in their time of worship that God added thousands to His kingdom (Acts 2:42-47).

This militates against the modern trend of gospel presentations. The church is often cast aside in favor of one-on-one evangelism and the enticement to pray the sinner's prayer. The ordinary, biblical (and arguably most effective) means by which God saves sinners is by their being made privy to the word and sacraments in the church service.

Not only does this provide a proper venue for continued sanctification and glorification of God, it also protects the young convert from being brought into the kingdom with potential birth defects. How many of us have had to unlearn the improper doctrines taught us by self-proclaimed, uneducated teachers of Israel?

Full-Time Paid Clergy

Another implication of this passage, and many others (1 Timothy 5:17, 18; Romans 15:27; 1 Corinthians 9:14), is the validity of full-time professional (paid) clergy. They are paid so they need not be entangled in the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:4). Again, physicians and attorneys labor in study in order to care for our medical and legal needs. How much more ought our pastors be students – they care for our very souls! I wouldn't want to show up in court only to find that my lawyer spent the day selling insurance or doing finish carpentry.

¹ Smith, M. H. 1990; Published in electronic form by Christian Classics Foundation, 1996. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.). Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press: Greenville SC

In short, the preferred method of fulfilling the Great Commission is through the institution Christ created called the church. And Christ has manned His church with pastors and teachers who are to devote themselves full-time to this task. Home school, where mom and dad teach the children may be quite biblical; home church, where dad is the pastor, board of elders, and deacons is not.

Tithing

Let us delve a little deeper into Apostle Paul's instructions regarding giving. Here he merely says to "share in all good things"; elsewhere he is more specific. The teaching in the church has become quite a muddled affair in this area. It is actually quite simple.

It is not debatable that the method of giving prior to Moses was the tithe (meaning a tenth of one's income – Genesis 14:20). It is also not debatable that the method in the Law of Moses was also a tithe (Nehemiah 10:37). All of sudden, in the so-called church age, we are to cheerfully give what we have purposed in our hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7). A quick comparison of 1 Corinthians with 2 Corinthians reveals that this is not the whole story.

In 1 Corinthians Paul writes regarding a church's support of their pastor. Arguably this includes everything necessary to support the ministry of that pastor, i.e. meeting place, chairs, study materials, etc. In this portion of Scripture Paul appeals to the law.

Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same also? ⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses, "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.*" Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰ Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? ¹² If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar? ¹⁴ Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:8-14).

Briefly put, those who preach the gospel are to be subsidized in the same manner as those who served at the altar. There can be no argument that this was the tithe. Compare this now to 2 Corinthians where Paul is addressing, not his local church, but the support of the poor Jerusalem churches. He now makes it clear that he is not appealing to the law.

I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others (2 Corinthians 8:8).

This culminates with the very popular admonition,

So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Here we have both tithes (1 Corinthians 9) and offerings (2 Corinthians 8 and 9).

A Practical Suggestion

Driving down the street the other day I realized that I had forgotten my wallet which holds my drivers license. Since it is the law to have a driver's license and since Christians are called to obey the law, I was not where I should have been. However, it would have not been very prudent of me to stop my car in the middle of the freeway and walk home (since this would be jaywalking). What was required was a well thought out plan to correct the problem. There are many people in the church who have so extended themselves that the idea of tithing is unthinkable. This is not where we, as Christians, should be. We need to plan in such a way as to correct the problem. Here are some suggestions:

Make a target budget and include the tithe. Work toward that budget responsibly. Examine your records at the end of the year to see if you're in fact tithing. Bring all your finances under the prayerful responsible, prudent care of the Lord. Don't give under compulsion, guilt or any other ungodly and manipulative impulse. Search the scriptures and be faithful to be a doer of the word and not merely a hearer.

God has not only determined the end but the means as well. May we faithfully trust His most wise and holy counsel.

Questions for Study

1. In what respect are all teachers/ students (page 1).
2. In what respect are all not teachers (pages 1, 2)?
3. What is the ordinary means by which God saves souls (page 2)?
4. Is there biblical justification for full-time paid clergy (pages 3, 4)?
5. What is a tithe (page 4)?
6. Is it a biblical imperative that Christians tithe (page 4)?
7. Discuss the difference between tithes and offerings (pages 5, 6).
8. What is a practical way to be financially responsible in tithing (pages 6, 7)?