

Making the Transition: Becoming the Unique Person God Created You to Be

Chapter 35 – Teaching

Description

Definition

The teaching aptitude is the ability to obtain and communicate information that will help others mature and prepare them for service. Within the Christian community, the Christian teacher can clearly explain and apply the Word of God to the lives of other believers. This is not necessarily describing a teaching position because many people have teaching jobs for other reasons. Someone may have a teaching position because they enjoy working with children or youth (pastoral care or extended motherhood, for example) or offering their skill (such as serving, fine arts, or craftsmanship) in an educational environment. The aptitude of teaching is a basic motivation to help others learn.

“It was he who gave some to be . . . teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13). “And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers” (1 Cor. 12:28). “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1).

From these verses we see that teachers have a prominent role in God’s kingdom on earth. God first uses an apostle to establish a new church or group of believers, then He uses a prophet to reveal His will to them, and a teacher to show them how to apply biblical truths to their lives. Along with the apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor, the teacher’s goal is to prepare other believers for service, to build them up in faith and knowledge of Jesus, until they mature into the image of Jesus. Because teachers have such great ability to influence and make impressions on those they teach, God requires them to be good examples and clearly be qualified to teach. The teacher has great influence over the student, helping them set priorities, develop skills, and learn to be functional in their area of responsibility. Because of this ability to shape people’s lives, the teacher will be judged more strictly than others by both men and God.

Because you have the teaching aptitude, you can understand the truths and principles of certain subjects and see how they can benefit people. This suggests you may also be a good student, readily learning new material and applying it to your life. This might develop into an active curiosity, motivating you to ask questions, probe for the real meanings, and strive to discover the truth. In addition to acquiring knowledge and understanding, you likely enjoy telling others about it in detail. You understand the importance of words, definitions, and shades of meaning, and you may often clarify or make distinctions that others miss. You are self-disciplined in your study, since you have a thirst for knowledge.

You probably have a knack for presenting things in an understandable manner because a key to your aptitude is effectively imparting your knowledge to others. If you are particularly skilled, your enthusiasm for obtaining and applying new knowledge will be contagious and

motivate others to learn more about the subject. Your aptitude provides a dual motivation: to be an effective student, studying and learning new concepts yourself; and making those concepts relevant to others, influencing their thinking and behavior. In fact, if you feel you are not influencing others with what you know, you may feel frustrated and unfulfilled, since influencing others is a vital part of your teaching motivation. You may frequently find yourself trying to persuade or convince others, since this is a vital part of your character.

You are very aware of individual facts and how they contribute to a body of knowledge. You may be keenly aware of how facts relate to each other, making associations between bits of information easy for you, especially if you are holistic in your thinking.

Teaching often becomes a full-time involvement, since it requires so much time to research and discover new concepts, understand them thoroughly, develop appropriate teaching material, and then help the students understand and apply them. You may spend a great amount of time learning and preparing, compared to the time you actually spend teaching, whether you teach frequently or only occasionally. This is not true of all teachers, however, because some will specialize in research and teach very little, while others reach a plateau in their specialty and not develop themselves further. If you lean strongly toward details and research, you may confuse people by overloading them with information, or you might become irrelevant or impractical.

Because much of your effort focuses on making long-term changes in people's lives, you seldom see the effect your teaching has on them. You usually don't see how they apply in daily life what you are presently teaching them, and afterward you may not know how much you contributed to their overall growth. This is why faith can be very important to you as a teacher, to believe that your efforts are worthwhile though you may not see any immediate evidence.

Typical Characteristics

- Strongly motivated to help others mature, and become more useful and effective.
- Able to explain ideas so others can easily understand and apply them.
- Enjoy learning and using what you learn to benefit others.

Tendencies

- General Orientation
 - Probably introvert. You are willing to spend time alone studying, researching, learning, and preparing teaching materials. The more introverted you are, the more time you are willing to spend doing this. Even as an introvert, you can feel secure in front of people if you are the acknowledged authority (fewer interruptions or challenges from the students), you do not have to become personally involved with your students, and you feel comfortable expressing yourself. You may even be a loner, having very little social interaction.
 - Maybe extrovert. If teaching is your secondary aptitude, you may be somewhat extroverted, making you weaker in research and stronger in presentation.
- Priorities
 - Information and knowledge. Your interest may be in facts and details about your subject, making the possession of knowledge very important to you. The discovery of new knowledge through research would be exciting to you.
 - Ideas and concepts. You may be more interested in the practical application of your knowledge, the relevance of information, and how it relates to the subject as

a whole. This would make you more inclined to theorize about your subject and emphasize understanding as opposed to knowledge alone.

- Issue Perception: objective. You are idea-oriented, not people-oriented, so you are unlikely to be subjective.

Misunderstandings

Your emphasis on accurate interpretation of facts may cause others to think you are legalistic, impractical, or argumentative. Your tendency to question and explore others' ideas can make you appear distrusting or arrogant.

Vocations and Roles

Teacher, professor, instructor, researcher, and author of technical or educational works.

Perversions

Self-Centeredness

(Perverts your aptitude by focusing it on you, emphasizing the pleasure or fulfillment it gives you.)

Self-centeredness will give you a strong desire to persuade or convince others of your ideas, primarily because they are your ideas or you have accepted them as valid. That is, you believe your information has validity and worth, so others should, too. You might even become impatient with those who seem uninterested in what you say. You can become restless or dissatisfied unless you are teaching a class.

Extremes

(Perverts by exaggerating, taking your characteristics and tendencies to extremes.)

You can become so compelled to teach that you insist on explaining a subject long after the listener has lost interest, or giving them far more information than they need. You can easily become academic and impractical, gathering knowledge for the sake of knowing it and failing to make it relevant to real life. You might slide into intellectual snobbery, becoming unwilling to listen to or even associate with those you consider less knowledgeable.

Control

(Self-centeredness makes you want to be in control, and you struggle for control in a way that is unique to your character.)

Knowledge is power and you might use yours to control others. In combination with your ability to influence people, you can use information selectively to cause them to think and respond as you wish. In a conflict, you are likely to flaunt your intellectual credentials as leverage, trying to intimidate others with your intellectual superiority and force them to accept your ideas. You might do this by informing them of your training or experience in the subject in question, or by revealing how much you know about it, or by using your vocabulary as an arsenal, overcoming the opposition with impressive words.

Redemption

Putting on Important Traits

Certain godly character traits are especially important to you as a teacher. Consciously developing the following traits will help you continue learning and explaining what you learn to others in an understandable way.

- Humility (Considers self relatively unimportant compared to others; prevents using abilities for one's own satisfaction.) Humility prevents you from using your abilities primarily for your own satisfaction, such as learning or teaching simply for the pleasure of the experience. It also prevents you from becoming arrogant about your knowledge or imposing it on others.
- Agape (Considers others' welfare, needs, interests, and desires more important than your own; motivates you to act for others' benefit regardless of personal impact.) Agape motivates you to invest yourself in your students, which will increase your effectiveness as a teacher.
- Goodness (Action on another's behalf, whether pleasant or unpleasant to them; motivates you to do what is best for others.) This causes you to teach what benefits others the most, even if they prefer to hear something else.
- Faith or faithfulness (Firm conviction regarding something for which there is no proof; action based on such conviction.) Faith assures you that your research effort will yield beneficial results and God will give you needed insight. Though teachers often do not see the results of their teaching, faith gives you confidence it will develop maturity and effectiveness in others.
- Desire for knowledge (Seeking to know, an enquiry or investigation; recognizing and obtaining knowledge or understanding.) This may be your strongest trait and it motivates you to gain understanding you can impart to others.
- Perseverance (Patient endurance.) Patient endurance allows others to learn at their own paces and make mistakes. It also enables you to spend long hours in study and preparation for a comparatively short presentation.

Repentance, Renewing Your Mind

(The changes you need to make in the way you think, including your attitudes, standards, priorities, and perspective.)

Your role is to invest yourself in others by imparting essential knowledge and understanding, which enables them to become more mature and effective. You serve others by helping them learn. In particular, you serve nonbelievers by showing them who Christ is and what He has done for them. You serve believers by helping them become more spiritually mature and effective in His kingdom. And you serve God by being both His voice and example in the world.

Denying and Humbling Yourself

(Rejecting your own desires and self-interests. Refusing to be motivated by desire for recognition or credit for the results.)

You should consider yourself a servant to those who need education—knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. You promote their development, helping them become the people God created them to be. You must be sensitive to the person's desires and at some point honor

their desire to stop learning.

Taking up Your Cross

(Accepting that which has potential for great harm, threatens to break you down, or reveals your inadequacies.)

Among the things that can wear you down and reveal your inadequacies are students who are indifferent, argumentative, or disruptive. Being required to teach material you believe does not meet people's needs can cause you great distress.

Following Jesus

(How you uniquely imitate Jesus by doing what He would in your situation.)

Jesus was a master teacher and you would be wise to learn His style. His methods included lectures, lots of storytelling (easy to remember and apply), safe hands-on practice by His disciples, frequent reviews of important information, correction, provocative questions, and patient explanations.

Becoming Like a Child

(Accepting what God gives you, believing what He tells you, trusting Him to take care of you, and simply doing what He says.)

You must rely on God to teach you so you can effectively teach others, to show you how to present your material so they will receive it well, and to tell you when you have taught enough and when to expect your students to advance on their own.