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A Teachable Spirit (2019)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "A Teachable Spirit", Steve Gregg stresses the importance of having a humble and receptive attitude to growth as a Christian. He emphasizes that character, love, holiness, and an increasing understanding of God are all indicators of Christian growth, and that a willingness to receive instruction and correction is key to achieving such growth. Furthermore, he highlights the importance of discernment and a love of truth, which encourage receptivity without gullibility. Ultimately, Gregg argues that those who have a teachable spirit will mature in wisdom and grace, while those who stubbornly refuse to learn will suffer spiritual consequences.

Transcript

I thought this morning I'd talk about the subject of a teachable spirit, and to my mind, this is one of the most essential traits of a growing Christian. I've been, by the way, I've been a Christian since my childhood. I've been in the ministry since I was a teenager.

I actually went into teaching the Bible 50 years ago. I always say 50 years. It's really only been 49.

It was 1970 I began, and so next year will be 50 years. And that's what I do. I'm just a Bible teacher.

And early in my life, I was trained in a denominational church up into my mid-teens, with certain views which I thought were the only views responsible Bible-believing Christians would ever hold on just about every subject. I remember thinking when I had a Catholic friend in school who is now a priest, and he was already intending to become a priest when we were in school together. We used to talk about things a lot, and we agreed to go to each other's church to visit.

I visited the Catholic church, and he visited my church, which was a Baptist church, actually. And I remember when I went to his church with him, thinking, I'm so glad that I go to the true church. I'm so glad that I don't go to a church that follows any traditions.

Like these Roman Catholics, they are so steeped in traditions that I can't find in the

Bible, but fortunately our denomination only goes by the Bible. We're not steeped in any traditions at all. And as it turned out, my family moved to another town.

I didn't end up in a Baptist church. I ended up in a non-denominational church. Some things that were taught there are a little different than in our Baptist church, but they were defended scripturally, it seemed to me.

And so I changed my views on some things, but I received all the views of the new church that I was now in. I remember thinking, I'm so glad now to be in a church that has no traditions, that we just follow the Bible. And I won't carry this on through the rest of my life, but this has been a trend in my life, that every time I think that I've arrived at the true set of doctrines that the Bible truly teaches, and that I've shed all traditions of my upbringing, something else comes up that I find in the Scripture.

And I begin to say, wait a minute, that doesn't fit. In fact, it never really did seem to fit my beliefs. I was just willing to act like it wasn't a problem because there were so many, I thought, scriptural defenses for my views.

And I have to say that I learned early on that there's a good possibility I'm wrong about a great number of things. There are approximately 4, or 4,400, I think is the last term I heard, 4,400 Protestant denominations. Each one disagrees with all the others on something.

Many times there are very small differences, but they don't agree enough that they don't want to get along, so they start a new group. And that means that if I'm in any denomination or hold the views of any denomination, then there's 43,000, or 4,300, excuse me, it might be 43,000, come to think of it, denominations that disagree with me on it. And I have to assume that I'm the smartest of all Christians, and these people are all wrong about something.

Or else that maybe I could be wrong about some things, too. Maybe they see something I don't see. And therefore, after making a few of these changes in my early Christian life, I realized I'd better stay open to learning from what the Bible says.

Because I don't know everything, and the more I know, the more I realize I don't know everything. And the more I encounter of other Christians and their views, the more I realize that the things I've always thought about some subjects, some of them are minor subjects, some are more significant, have been challenged, in many cases, by Christians who have never seen it the way I see it at all. Now, I don't necessarily change my mind just because I meet them.

It gets me thinking. Why do they think the way they do? And it's always driven me back to the Scripture itself. And as a result of that, I've realized that most of my Christian growth has come from changing my mind about things.

Now, when I say Christian growth, I believe Christian growth is measured in character, is measured in love, and in holiness, and things like that. But our understanding of our Christian duty and so forth increases as we understand God better. As we get a better vision of God, a better understanding of how God operates and what He does.

And that's what our theology is about. It tells us who God is, what He's like, what He thinks about things, what He expects of us. And our growth has got to be brought about by growing in understanding of God and knowing God.

And that requires that if there's something I don't currently understand correctly, I'll be best off after I change and believe whatever it is that God wants me to believe. Now, I want to say that change is uncomfortable. And as I get old, and I'm now old, I'm less comfortable with change than when I was young.

And yet, I have to consider that change may yet be in my future on some issues. Now, I'm not wishy-washy. I'm actually, temperamentally, I'm very conservative.

I was raised in a conservative church. I've never thrown off my conservative orientation. I want to stay where I am and not change as long as I can.

But, on the other hand, from time to time, my own study of the Scripture, my own learning, has made me surrender what were, I would say, factory-installed understandings of things from my upbringing. And to refine them, I would say refine them. I would say improve them.

And some people who haven't gone the same direction I've gone might say, that's no improvement you've made. You're moving the wrong direction. But that's, of course, my responsibility before God to judge.

And I feel that if I had refused to change on anything, my growth would have stagnated. Now, what I'm talking about is a teachable spirit. I remember when I was quite young, I made a ministry trip across country with another young man.

And we were talking as we drove, because we didn't have the CDs and things like that to listen to in those days. And he asked me, he said, Steve, if there's like one key that you can name to speeding up your spiritual growth, what would that be? He says, does it just happen just as God makes it happen and you can't do anything about it? Or is there anything you can do to enhance and speed up your own spiritual growth? I thought for a moment, I thought, you know, the one thing that I think more than anything else, and I would still say this now some 45 years after that conversation, is the thing that is most conducive to spiritual growth is keeping a teachable spirit. Because a person who knows a great deal but doesn't have a teachable spirit is not going to know any more 40 years from now than he knows now.

And yet the person who knows a great deal still has a lot to learn, whether he knows it or

not. You know, the greatest theologian of the Reformation was regarded to be John Calvin. And Calvin, when he was 27 years old, wrote a huge volume called *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

And when he was, I think it was 30 or 40 years later, someone asked him if he had changed his mind. He said, I've not changed my mind on any point. I remember when I heard that, I thought, wow, if you can write a total theology of the whole Bible when you're 27 years old, and when you're in your 60s, you can say, I haven't changed my mind on a single point.

That either means you must have been omniscient when you were 27, or else you're not very teachable. You haven't learned anything. You must have shut off your capacity to learn things.

If I had written a comprehensive book of my beliefs when I was 27 years old, I would have had to revise it many times or probably just take it out of print and write a new one, or not write one at all. I wrote a book some years ago, it was like 17, 18 years ago or more now, called *Revelation Four Views*. I compared four views of Revelation.

I've held three of them in my lifetime. I've changed my mind more than once on what Revelation is about. I'm not here to talk about Revelation.

I just wanted to make this point. When I wrote the book, I intended to present the views side by side, objectively, so people could read and make up their own mind. That's what I actually did write.

But I contemplated when I was writing the book, maybe I should make an appendix and say what my views are. After all, why write a book on Revelation and not let people know what your own views are? I don't think so. I've changed three times already.

One thing I don't want to do is write a book and then five years later say, oh, I don't believe that anymore. I've often thought, what would Hal Lindsey, who wrote a book in 1970 that sold tens of millions of copies, what if he changed his mind on his view of the end times? It would be a very embarrassing thing. I thought, well, on something that still may be liable to change, I'd better not be too dogmatic.

I need to be teachable about things. I have to consider that even the things I write books on are things I may have to change my mind about. I very rarely have heard of people who distinguish themselves by publishing books on theology and who changed their mind and later wrote a retraction, but I've heard of a few.

I think it's a really wonderful thing. It's very refreshing to hear somebody who is dogmatic in a certain view who at a later time says, you know, I was wrong. There's a famous liberal scholar from Germany, Ada Leinemann, who wrote, she was studied under Bultmann, and she wrote liberal critiques of the Gospels, and her textbooks were used in

liberal Bible colleges and so forth.

And she then got saved, and she wrote a couple of books denouncing her old books. One of her books I read at the very beginning, she says, if you've read my other books, I suggest you do with them what I've done, throw them in the fire. That's pretty humbling.

When you've made your name for yourself and you're famous for being a scholar of certain views, and then you say, you know, I was wrong about all of that, just burn that, I now see the truth. And that takes a real teachable spirit to come to that place. That'd be very hard for someone to do.

Now, having a teachable spirit means that you can continue to grow. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3, 18, that we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And a teachable spirit is that capacity to improve and correct yourself by receiving instruction, counsel, reproof.

Somebody says, hey, you're doing the wrong thing, or you're thinking the wrong way, or that thing you've been saying, that's not true. And being willing to say, well, let's see if maybe you're right. Instead of immediately defending, which is what pride would do, to say, well, you can't be right because I'm right.

We can't both be right, and obviously it can't be you that's right. That means I'm wrong. That's pride.

We have to be of the opinion that somebody else might be as smart as we are, might be as godly as we are. There's just a chance, and that maybe they've seen something you haven't seen. Jesus said, if anyone comes after me, well, he said, come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

He says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me. When a person becomes a Christian, they come into the Christian faith with a whole bunch of pre-set ideas. If they were not a Christian before, which is the case when you become a Christian, you weren't a Christian before, you have a bunch of worldly ideas.

If you were raised in a church, you might have just a bunch of ideas that were installed through your upbringing traditionally. But the point is, you've got ideas, many of which probably are wrong and need to be improved, need to be changed. And if we're not teachable, we will never improve.

And I have met people who have been Christians for 45 years, 50 years, and they have never changed their opinion on anything. Not because they haven't seen reason to, it's just that they haven't been willing to. Now, to have a teachable spirit means I have a humble opinion about myself, and I need to be prepared to re-examine things I've been quite sure of in view of new light.

And that new light may come through somebody counseling, somebody telling you something. I was witnessing to a hippie back in the 70s, and I live in Southern California, and I was in a park. There was a festival, a bunch of hippies there.

And I was witnessing to this guy, and he said, like many hippies would say, I just feel like we need to follow our hearts, you know. And I was ready, because I had heard that many times. I'm a Christian, I have my ammunition.

I said, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Jeremiah said. You shouldn't follow your heart because it's desperately wicked, and so forth.

And the hippie said back to me, quite mildly, he said, yeah, but who is that written to? And it stunned me. Here's a guy who doesn't even know the Lord, and he's asking the question that every exegete ought to ask when they read a Bible verse. Who is this written to? Who is this describing? And I stood back and thought, wait a minute, Jeremiah is describing the people of his time that were facing imminent judgment, and he's describing why they had gotten this corrupt.

And he said their hearts are deceitful above all things, desperately. He wasn't making an anthropological statement for a systematic theology book. He was making a prophetic denunciation.

And here, I remember thinking, you know, I think you're right. That doesn't mean you're right about not being a Christian or following your heart, but I think you're right about the comment you made. You've got to be humble enough to say, here's this personality of a Christian, but what he said is true.

That helped me understand, OK, some of the verses I use as proof text, sometimes I'm not really aware of what their context is. They're just in my arsenal of weapons against certain questions about things I don't agree with. But you have to be teachable.

The Bible talks about the teachable spirit in the book of Proverbs a great deal. It says in Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 1, whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. So to not be teachable and hate correction is, Proverbs says, stupid.

And to love correction, to love rebuke and instruction is to be wise. He says in Proverbs 12, 15, the way of the fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise. In Proverbs 15, 5, Solomon said the fool despises his father's instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent or wise.

A person who receives correction, a person who's teachable, who can be instructed, who can be corrected, who receives counsel, that person is a wise person. Why? Because they're wise enough to realize they don't know everything. And they're also wise enough

to know that it's desirable to learn what you don't know.

Anyone who doesn't realize that isn't wise. Anyone who says, I'm camping out here where I've always been because, frankly, it's uncomfortable to move from here, that's not wise. We're supposed to be growing in grace and in the knowledge.

And to grow in knowledge, you have to correct views that you had before that weren't correct. In Proverbs 17, 10, it says rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool. What that means is that a wise man will respond to a rebuke, a corrective statement, faster than a fool will respond to harsh discipline.

A hundred stripes, a hundred lashes. You can give a fool a hundred lashes, he may never learn. You speak to a wise man, just give him a correction, he'll learn.

Rebuke enters more into a wise man than a hundred lashes into a fool. Now, not only does a teachable spirit indicate that you are wise, but Proverbs also says that if you have a teachable spirit, you will become more wise. Which is, it not only exhibits that you have existing wisdom, if you're teachable, but that you will have more as time goes by because you're going to become more wise.

In Proverbs 8, 33, it says hear instruction and be wise. And do not disdain it. In Proverbs 15, these are in your notes, by the way, in your bulletin.

Proverbs 15, verses 31 and 32, it says, the ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise. He who disdains instruction despises his own soul. But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

So you not only show that you have wisdom if you're teachable, you will gain more wisdom if you're teachable, you'll gain understanding. Proverbs 19, 20 says, listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in the latter days. So if you receive instruction, you'll be wise later.

If you do receive instruction, you have a certain amount of wisdom now. You know, when Jesus told his parables, the disciples said, why do you talk to people in parables they don't understand them? He said, because it's not given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. It's given to you, disciples.

He says, because whoever has will be given more. And whoever has not, even what he has, will be taken away from him. What's that mean? What it means is that a person who's already got a heart toward instruction will receive more instruction.

A person who doesn't have one, all the things he thinks he knows, he'll even lose those. Jesus teaches the teachable. The disciples were those who were teachable.

The crowds, maybe not so much. And so he didn't cast his pearls before swine. You see,

the statement that you should not give what is holy to dogs or cast your pearls before swine, which Jesus gave in the 7th chapter of Matthew, it suggests that certain people are comparable to dogs or like swine in a certain respect.

Namely, they don't know the value of a thing. A pearl is valuable to people who know the value of things. It's not value to a pig.

You throw a pearl at a pig, he just thinks you're throwing rocks at him. He's going to get angry, Jesus said. He's going to charge you.

He doesn't know that's a pearl. He doesn't have the capacity. He's a creature that doesn't know the value of things.

A dog doesn't know if a piece of meat is holy meat from the temple or regular meat. The dog doesn't have that capacity to discern. There are certain people who don't recognize the value of truth.

They don't recognize the value of correction. They don't recognize the value of what someone is saying to them to help them improve them. And so don't bother with them, because if they're stubborn and don't want to hear it, you'll just pardon them.

But you want to make sure you're not one of those. Make sure that you're one of those that Jesus will teach the teachable. He will give his pearls to those who are not swine, who do recognize the value of the truth and so forth.

We need to be lifelong learners. Now, I say that because everyone knows you've got to learn stuff when you're a kid. Jesus said you must become like a little child, humble like a child.

You ever seen a humble child? Well, children sometimes are humble. Sometimes they don't seem very humble. But one humble thing about a child is they know they have everything to learn.

That's why they ask so many questions. They're always asking, why is it this way? Why is that? What is that? They know that they don't know things. That's the humility of a child.

You have to become humble like a child to enter the kingdom of God. But sometimes we think, yeah, a child has to be humble because they don't know anything. But once you've been through high school and college and post-graduate work, once you've lived a few decades in your adult life, you pretty much know the ropes.

You pretty much know the way things are. If you've been in the church all the time, you're probably one of the best experts on theology in the church, especially if you've been to Bible college and Bible center. So I'm in a place where I already know what I need to know.

The rest of my life is to enforce that, to become fully established in that, to defend that against challenges, because my learning has been done. I did my learning in the early part of my life. Now I'm knowledgeable.

I'm mature. I'm the expert. Anyone who thinks that is not like Paul.

Paul was an apostle who knew probably more than almost anybody. In fact, before he wrote the Corinthian epistles, he had once been caught up in the third heaven and heard things so profound, he wasn't even able to repeat most of them. But he wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 13, he says, we know in part, we prophesy in part.

Someday I will know, even as also I know, but right now I know in part. He didn't claim that he knew everything. And if you don't know everything, there's still stuff to learn.

And so you need to learn for your whole life. In Ecclesiastes 4.13, Solomon said, better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more. Now that's interesting to say, an old and foolish king who will no longer be admonished.

Sounds like he used to be admonished when he was younger. He was willing to take counsel when he was younger, but he's old now. He's established.

He thinks he knows it all. He'll no longer be admonished. You'd be better off being a youth, a poor youth, a foolish youth.

But one who will be corrected. I'd much rather be in fellowship with people who disagree with me, but we're all teachable, so we can all learn together, than to be in a group that agrees with me, and no one's teachable. I sometimes think I'd rather be in a church that I agreed with only 50% on controversial issues, but they're teachable and I'm teachable.

We can all learn. If you agree 50%, we might agree 100% someday. I'd rather be in that situation than in a church that I agreed with 95%, but no one was teachable.

Because people who agree 95% but are not teachable will never agree 100%. To be teachable is necessary. To be in agreement on everything is not as necessary as to be capable of coming to agreement.

People don't agree about everything, but teachable people will grow. People who are not teachable will not grow, and you need to keep that up for your whole life. Paul, at an advanced stage in his life, when he was certainly one of the most mature Christians on the planet, I wouldn't be, I'd be willing to place my money down, he was probably the most mature Christian on the planet in his later years in prison.

When he wrote Philippians, he said this about himself, in Philippians 3, 12-14, Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself as having

apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to the things which are ahead, I press toward the goal or the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. He's not talking about going to heaven.

The upward call of Christ Jesus is not talking about going to heaven. Paul can't, would not say, I have not yet attained salvation yet. Of course he knew he was going to heaven.

What he's talking about is, what God has for me is to become like Christ. And to be like Christ, I need to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. And my mind cannot be renewed if it stays the same.

There are times when it's right to change my mind. And Paul said that he was still pressing on toward that goal. I have not attained it yet.

I'm not perfect yet, he said. But he's probably about as perfect as anyone on the planet, as far as Christian maturity goes. But he said, I'm still pressing on.

And if he has to, then I have to. I can't assume he knew less than I know. In fact, I have to assume that he probably knew a great deal more than I know.

And I'd like to someday know as much as he knew. But even he would say, well, don't stop there, because I'm not stopping here. Once you get a place where you know as much as I know, don't stop.

Keep going, keep pressing on, because even I have not attained what I've been called to. I'm working on it. Now, James has a couple of good passages about a teachable spirit.

He equates it with wisdom. And in James chapter 1, verse 21, he said, Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness... That's the word I want to work on here. Receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.

Now, he's writing to Christians. But he says, you still need to be receiving the word. You still need to be receiving it with meekness.

And he uses the same word again in chapter 3, in verse 13. James 3.13. James says, Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by good conduct, that his works are done with the meekness of wisdom. What is meekness? Well, the word *prautes* in the Greek, and Professor William Barclay, who's a tremendous expert on biblical languages, made an interesting statement.

He basically said that meekness is a one-word summary of the concept of a teachable spirit. Let me read. I put it in your notes.

You have it in your notes there. Barclay said this. *Prautes*, he says, No one can ever find one English word to translate what is a one-word summary of the truly teachable spirit.

The teachable spirit is docile and tractable, and therefore humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is without resentment and without anger, and is therefore able to face the truth even when it hurts and condemns. The teachable spirit is not blinded by its overmastering prejudices, but is clear-eyed to the truth.

Now, in other words, the teachable spirit simply means I need to recognize when I am overmastered by my prejudices, when I'm getting angry at someone who's saying I'm wrong, when I'm not being moldable by the Spirit of God, by the tools of the Word of God that are used by others to speak into my life. I need to have received with meekness the implanted Word that is able to save my soul. I can show my wisdom, if I have it, by showing that my conduct is done in meekness of wisdom.

And there's another word in James. This is in James 3.18. It's one word in the Greek, but it's three words in the New King James. It says, willing to yield.

It's in James 3.18. It says, but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. This phrase, willing to yield, as I said, is a single word in the Greek. It is the word *eupathes*.

And Barclay says this about that word. He says, it can mean easy to persuade, not in the sense of being pliable or weak, but in the sense of not being stubborn and of being willing to listen, to reason, and to appeal. That's what the wisdom of God is like.

In fact, James is, in some respects, the New Testament counterpart of the book of Proverbs. Many of the same themes are addressed in James, as are addressed in Proverbs. And one of the main ones is wisdom and being teachable.

A teachable spirit is wisdom, and a teachable spirit will result in greater wisdom. That's what the Old and the New Testament tell us. And, of course, Proverbs tells us that the person who refuses to be teachable is going to have occasion to regret it.

There's a couple of good statements in Proverbs to this effect. In fact, in Proverbs 5, verses 11 through 13, he's actually talking about the young man who goes astray into sexual sin, despite the fact that people had warned him about it. But this would apply to anyone who goes the wrong way into any kind of error, despite being warned by others.

He says, you'll mourn at the last and say, how have I hated instruction and my heart despised correction? I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me. Now, this man who's suffering the results of his sin and his mistakes, he's kicking himself, saying, you know, I did have people instructing me. I did have people who were teaching me.

Why didn't I listen to them? Why wasn't I teachable? Now I would have avoided this horrible situation. My wife and I know a young man in the ministry whose wife ran off

with somebody else and he was left with four children. And a few months ago he told us he'd met a nice woman and they were seeing each other.

And then we just found out they got married. And it was very quick. And he told my wife, I didn't want to let you know that I'd gotten married this quickly because I was a little embarrassed.

Why were you embarrassed? You must have known that if you'd asked us, we would have counseled you to wait a while. Unfortunately, I got a voicemail from him just yesterday, and there's already trouble in the marriage. He just got married probably a few weeks ago or so.

But he's a godly man. And I think his wife is a godly woman. But they, you know, the old saying, marry in haste and repent at leisure.

You know, if you don't listen to counsel, you can rush into things that you'll have regrets about. And you'll say, why didn't I get some counsel about this? Why did I rush into this? Why didn't I listen to the people who were saying, you're going too fast. Why wasn't I teachable? Now I'm in a situation I can't get out of legitimately.

I'm going to have to work through this problem myself with my wife. And no doubt he will be able to. But it'll be, there are things that could have made it easier if he had gone through some, I know if he'd talked to me about some of the things that, you know, about marriage, I had some things I would have liked to have said to him.

I didn't get the chance. But in Proverbs 29.1, it says, He who is often rebuked and hardens his neck. Now hardening the neck is an image of not bowing.

You're stiffening your neck. You know, God's rebuking you, you're supposed to bow under that rebuke, or somebody else is rebuking you, correctly. And you should submit to that.

But you stiffen your neck. You harden it means you're standing erect, refusing to bow, refusing to submit to the word that's being spoken to, is what he's talking about. He that is often rebuked and stiffens his neck will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Now, this destruction comes upon him without remedy, but it could have been remedied had he not stiffened his neck. He was often rebuked, but he didn't listen to rebuke, and now he's in a situation that cannot be remedied. There are many situations that could be remedied or avoided with good counsel, if a person is willing to hear it.

And a person who doesn't, who gets often and apparently correctly rebuked, but they don't change, they end up in a situation that they'll also not be able to change. And they'll wish they could. Let me talk about three elements real quickly here of a teachable

spirit.

And some of them I've touched on. This is one I did not. One element of a teachable spirit is the fear of the Lord.

In Proverbs 1.7, it says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Now, a fool who despises wisdom and instruction is sort of a theme we've already encountered in earlier verses of Proverbs we looked at, but it's contrasted with the man who fears the Lord. The fool who despises instruction does not fear the Lord, apparently.

He that fears the Lord, he's on the path to understanding and knowledge and wisdom, but the person who hates instruction is not and does not fear the Lord. Now, what is the fear of the Lord? I realize some people have been raised in a religious training that keeps them in terror of God. There are people from very legalistic church backgrounds that they just think of God as, you know, by default He's angry and you have to work really hard to overcome His anger towards you.

That's not the way the Bible describes God. But such people, if you tell them you need to fear the Lord, all they can understand is fearing. Sometimes these people have had very severe fathers who beat them unkindly or unjustly or something like that, and so they kind of relate that to God and they just live in kind of terror of God.

Every time they do something wrong, they feel condemned. Every time they just don't feel like they can recover from it, that God's going to send them to hell. That's not what the fear of the Lord is.

The fear of the Lord is a healthy thing, is a clean thing. The fear of the Lord is like what a son used to feel toward his father who is a loving disciplinarian. When somebody would suggest, hey, let's go out and rob a liquor store, and somebody would say, oh, my dad would kill me.

I know I couldn't stand that. I knew a woman who had, when she was an unbeliever, she got involved in all kinds of drugs and alcohol and things like that. She would never sacrifice her virginity because she said she knew her father would really come down on her if she did that.

She wasn't a Christian, but the fear of her father kept her from doing certain things. It says in Proverbs, by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. But the fear of God doesn't mean you're walking around afraid.

When I think of the fear of God, I think of like the fear of a train. I'm not afraid of a train. Although if I'm standing very near the tracks, and I go by the loudness, the rumbling, it's awesome.

It's an awesome thing. That thing's huge, powerful. I'm not afraid of it.

It's kind of exhilarating to be near it. But if my car was stalled on the tracks and the train was coming, I would be afraid of the train because I'm on a collision course with something awesome and huge. I think of it as like being, are you afraid of freeway traffic? Hardly anyone here would probably say they are.

I'm not afraid of freeway traffic because I go the same direction at the same speed as the rest of the traffic. Therefore, I'm not afraid of it. If my car broke down in the fast lane and was stopped there, suddenly my car would not be in the right relationship with the rest of the traffic.

Or if I accidentally drove onto the off ramp and I was going the wrong direction of the traffic, well, I'd be in the wrong relationship. I'd be terrified of the traffic. You're not terrified of traffic when you're in the right relationship with it.

You're not terrified of trains when you're in the right relationship with them. And you're not terrified of God when you're in a good relationship with Him. And the idea is Christians do live in a good relationship with God, but the concept of being on bad terms with that train or with the traffic or with God should be terrifying.

It should be very sobering. A person should always feel like, you know, I want to remain on good terms with God. Not because He's scary.

He's loving. But it is a scary thing. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

He's a consuming fire. I don't want to meet God on bad terms with Him. I want everything in my life to be as pleasing to Him as it can be.

And I fear God. And therefore, if there's some correction, some rebuke that someone brings to me, if I see something in the Scripture that really challenges what I've always thought, I need to rethink about that. I need to think about it with an open mind.

I need to be teachable. Because maybe God is saying, OK, here's something that needs to be improved in the way you're living or the way you're thinking. If so, then I want to make that move.

People who fear the Lord realize that following God, being on good terms with God is really the thing that matters more than anything else in their whole life, if they are wise enough to realize it. It's the beginning of wisdom to fear the Lord. If a person doesn't fear the Lord, they don't have any wisdom.

Because that's the beginning of it. John Bunyan said, if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, then a person who doesn't fear the Lord doesn't have the

beginning or the middle part or the end either. Doesn't have any wisdom at all.

And so, wisdom is teachable. And the fear of the Lord is wisdom. Now, a second feature of teachable spirit is, of course, humility.

I've said some things about that, but I want to say some specific things about it. One is that you need to be humble enough not to think that you're always right. In Proverbs it says, in chapter 3, verse 7, Do not be wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. Being wise in your own eyes is the opposite of fearing the Lord. And it's the opposite of being teachable, because you think you're right already.

Who needs to teach you? You know. You're the expert. You're the instructor of foolish and instructor of babes, like the Jews in Romans 2 are said to be in their attitude toward Gentiles.

They're the instructors. They're not the learners. In Proverbs 26, 12, it says, Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There's more hope for a fool than for him.

Now, if you read Proverbs, you know that the fool is about as bad off as anyone can be. But there's more hope for a fool than for a man who's wise in his own eyes. That's pride.

I'm wise. I think of myself as wise. That means I think I know.

And that means I don't need anyone else to tell me. That's not humility. A teacher has to be humble and say, Well, you know, there's more things I don't know than there are things I do know.

You kids, it's only sensible and wise to say, You know, there's a lot more things I don't know than there are things I do know. And my parents and grandparents probably know a lot of those things. Because they probably have learned some of the things I haven't learned yet.

It's a wonderful and wise thing to be teachable. To receive instruction from your parents or from godly people. From the Word of God.

It also requires that you receive instruction from your inferiors. When that hippie told me, Well, who is that scripture written to? I could have said, What does he know? He's not even a Christian. But what he's saying is true.

You know? Balaam was a prophet, but he was rebuked by a donkey. And it says in 2 Peter, when it's talking about that, That happened in the book of Numbers, but in 2 Peter it says, That the prophet, it says, The dumb donkey, speaking with a man's voice, Restrained the madness of the prophet. The prophet, he was the man of God.

Everyone respected him. You'd pay him money to prophesy. In fact, that was what was going on in the story.

A king was paying him money to come out and prophesy and curse Israel. He was the expert. His donkey, not so much.

But the madness of the prophet had to be restrained by the rebuke from a donkey. If that's true, then you can't be too proud about who you will receive instruction from. I used to look like a hippie myself.

I used to, when I was a teenager, had long hair. My dad didn't like it much. We got into arguments about it a lot.

Once we had a heated argument about it, and I left the house kind of angry. I was walking down the street, and there was an elementary school. Some looked like kindergartners were out playing in the yard.

Quite a dance there. I was walking down the sidewalk, and there was a fence. Some of them said, oh look, a hippie, a hippie.

Which I was not. I was actually a Christian, but I looked like a hippie. I wasn't offended that they called me a hippie.

I was trying to look like a hippie. But someone would mistake me for a hippie. It was not offensive to me at the time.

But the point is, one of them said, hippie, hippie, and then one of them, who must have gone to church or something, said, hippie crit, hippie crit, hippie crit. Now I knew that that five year old probably had no idea what the word hypocrite meant. But I thought, am I being a hypocrite? And the Bible says, if you have something by which your parents could be profited, and you say it's devoted to the Lord, and you don't give it to your parents, you're basically violating the rule about honor your father and your mother.

Jesus said that to the Pharisees. I realized that, wow, here I think I'm a spiritual man and I'm mad at my dad and getting arguments with my dad instead of honoring him and these little kids, these five-year-olds, are calling me a hypocrite and they don't even know what the word means. Well, I realize, you know, I think they're right.

You've got to be able to receive correction from your inferiors, even little kids. I mean, if your zipper is down, you're walking around in public, you don't care who it is that tells you your zipper is down, you thank them for it, right? It might be a homeless person that you don't have any respect for, hey, your zipper is down, oh, thank you so much, here's five dollars, you know. Or if you have bad breath, don't you hope that someone tells you earlier rather than later about that in the day? It's not what you really want to hear, but it is what you want to hear if it needs attention.

The person who corrects you is doing you a favor, and even if they're your inferior, you should be so teachable, you're welcome correction, even if you're superior to them. Now, I'm going to have to skip over a little bit here, but I wanted to say the next element of the teaching of the Spirit, of course, is a love for truth. You have to love truth more than you love your ego, more than you love your acceptance in the group you're in that thinks you're one of them and think like they do, and if you have to change your mind, oh, I don't want to lose their friendship, so I'll just not change.

I had a pastor actually listen to some lectures on a subject that he and I disagreed about, and a friend of mine later talked to him and said, what'd you think about those lectures? And he said, well, he said, they sounded right, but he says, but I'm a pastor in such-and-such a denomination, and I can't believe those things and hold my job. So, even though the lecture sounded right, he said, I just can't go there in my denomination. You know, he loved something more than the truth, apparently.

I can't think of anything I wouldn't sacrifice for the truth if I knew it was the truth. You know, I'd sacrifice my job if I had one, because you have to love truth or else, frankly, you know, the Bible says God will send strong delusion to those who don't receive the love of the truth, but receive a lie. We need to, if you don't love truth, you don't love integrity.

If you don't love integrity, you don't love God, because Jesus is the truth, and you'll never go the wrong way if you're honestly pursuing the truth, because it'll always lead you closer to Jesus, even if it leads you further from wherever you were standing before. You have to see the value of the truth. You know, in Proverbs chapter 2, verses 1 through 5, this is a wonderful passage, Proverbs 2, 1 through 5, it says, My son, if you receive my words, that is, be teachable, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear toward wisdom, you apply your heart to understanding.

If you cry out for discernment, if you lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek for her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Well, that's what I want to find, the knowledge of God, and understand the fear of the Lord. How will that happen? If I crave the knowledge of the truth, if I cry out for it, if I seek it as I would seek silver, as I search for it, as I would search for hid treasures, I have to love it.

You have to love the truth, and that means that when someone says something to you that disagrees, you have to say, okay, not, the question is not, do I feel comfortable with that? The question is, is that the truth? I need to find that out. It says in Proverbs 18, 15, the heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. A wise person will be seeking to know the truth, to seek knowledge.

Proverbs 23, 12 says, apply your heart to instruction and your ears to the words of

knowledge. You need to love and seek and want knowledge. You know, if you love the truth, you'll learn wherever you can get it.

Solomon learned from other people's mistakes, and frankly, that's a lot better than learning from your own. A fool may have to learn from his own mistakes. A wise man can learn from other people's mistakes and not have to make those same mistakes.

Solomon was walking down the street one day, and he tells us about it. It's Proverbs 24, verses 30 through 34. He says, I went by the field of a lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding.

And there it was, all overgrown with thorns, its surface was covered with nettles, its stones, its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well. I looked on it, and I received instruction.

Here, he's walking down the street and sees a broken down retaining wall and a lawn full of weeds, and he gets instructed from it. There's a teachable spirit. You're drawing truth, drawing instruction from wherever you can find it.

Here's just a weedy lawn, and he says, I received instruction. And here's what he learned. He says, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, so shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man.

Now, what Solomon observed is what we today would call the second law of thermodynamics. If you don't take care of stuff, they wear down. But what he got from it was something about human nature and human responsibility.

And that is, if you fold your hands and sleep and you're lazy, like this guy who owns this field, you're gonna get, you're gonna go broke. You're gonna be poor. Your poverty is gonna come against you like an armed man, like a soldier.

You're not gonna defeat it, it's gonna defeat you. And so learning from someone else, some who owned that field made the mistake. Solomon learned from it, said, I don't want to go there.

I don't want to make that mistake. I don't want to be lazy. That's wise, that's teachable.

When you say, I can learn even if someone doesn't talk to me. I just see something and learn a lesson from it. Solomon did.

He observed trees and plants and bugs and animals and birds, and he made proverbs of it. He learned things about them from his observation. Of course, and this is a very important thing, and I realize we're, it's time for me to wind this down, but I want to make sure I make this point.

And that is that the love of the truth will have you listen eagerly and respectfully to the

arguments of people who disagree with you. And Proverbs makes this clear in a couple of very good passages. In Proverbs 14, 15, I'm sorry, Proverbs 18, 13, sorry, Proverbs 18, 13, Solomon said, he who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.

A lot of times in a controversy, we know what we already think, and if someone brings up the controversy, we'll blur it out, but we haven't really heard what the other side says. We don't even know what the other side says, or if we've heard it, we're not listening because we know we're just waiting to get our chance to say our part. Many people argue like that.

They don't really argue. They don't listen to the other side. They know, while the other person's presenting his case, they're just trying to think of what their next point is, not even hearing what the opposite side says.

The man who answers a matter before he's really heard it out, he's a fool. It's a shame and a folly to him. And in the same chapter of Proverbs, chapter 18 and verse 17, it says, the first one to plead his cause seems right until his neighbor comes and examines him.

That is, whatever you first heard about a subject, whether it was politics or religion or, you know, an opinion about somebody else or whatever, the first thing you hear is going to color your thoughts about them initially. He that is first in his cause seems right, because it's all you've heard, until his neighbor comes and cross-examines him. If you watch CNN, you're going to think certain things about Mr. Trump.

You turn over to Fox and say, oh, I'm not trying to make a political statement, I'm trying to make a psychological statement. The thing that you hear first is going to sound good if it's presented well, but it doesn't mean it's true. And it may well be that many of the things we currently believe are not true, but they've been presented well to us, we've not really heard another side.

You need a neighbor to come and cross-examine, because he that is first in his own cause seems right until his neighbor comes and cross-examines him, Solomon said. Now, the last point I want to make, and this will be quickly, and the last feature of a teachable spirit, I said it has, one feature is the fear of the Lord, another feature is humility, another is the love of the truth, the fourth feature is not being gullible, but being discerning. Now, what this means is, although you're listening, you're not accepting everything.

When you hear something, you need to put it through the grid of what the Bible really says. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Paul said, test all things and hold fast to what is good. Everything you hear, whether it's in church or a secular setting, if it's different than what you've known before, well, test it.

It may be wrong, but it may be right. The main thing is you have to test everything and hold fast to what is good. That's what, if you love the truth, you'll do anyway.

You'll want to know the truth, but you're going to not want to receive something that's not the truth. Being gullible is not being teachable. Being teachable means you love the truth, and therefore you're going to be discerning about what you hear.

You're going to test it by Scripture like the Bereans did. You know, in Acts chapter 17 and verse 11, it says the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians because they heard what Paul said eagerly, and they searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so, and therefore many of them believed, it says. And so, this is a teachable spirit.

They received what he said graciously, then they said, let me go read the Bible, see what it says. Okay, you passed the test, and therefore I believe. They searched the Scriptures to see if they were so, therefore many of them believed, it says.

And that's being teachable. It's not being gullible, but it's being receptive and open, but not so open that your brains fall out. But you're really, you know where the truth is found.

The truth is found in Scripture. But you have to remember, sometimes what you think the Scripture says might not actually be what the Scripture means. It may be, but you know there are many Scriptures that good Christians have different opinions about what they mean.

They can't all be right. They could all be wrong, but no more than one of them could be right, because they disagree. And that means that I need to hear, like, I grew up a Baptist, and therefore I thought, I don't know why so many denominations believe in infant baptism.

There's nothing about that in the Bible. So I bought three books on infant baptism by Presbyterians and Catholics and people who believed in it. I read them, and I listened to their arguments.

I said, I still don't believe in it. I still don't believe the Bible teaches it, but now I know why they think it does. They had certain arguments that they use Scripture.

They use Scripture a certain way. They think it's like circumcision, and they circumcise their babies, so Christians baptize their babies. That's not what I believe.

I don't think the Bible teaches that. I think they're arguing wrongly, but I wanted to know why they thought that. I wanted to listen to their arguments and test all things, because after all, if they're right, I want to be like them.

I want to be right. The most important thing is not that you're right. Paul said, if I understood all knowledge and understood all mysteries and did not have love, it profits me nothing.

So being right isn't the most important thing, but is not an unimportant thing. Being loving is the most important thing. Being right, I think, comes in a close second.

In Proverbs 14, 15, it says, the simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his way. So although he tells us to listen to counsel and listen to rebuke, he says, hey, but you don't believe every word you hear. The prudent believes, I mean, the foolish, the simple, believes every word, but the prudent person, the wise person, considers well his steps.

So you test all things in Scripture. Testing and saying, I'm not going to believe that until I can find that Scripture teaches it, is not being unteachable. It's just being discerning.

But you should also have the attitude that if I find the Scripture perhaps does teach that, then I'm going to be open to that, even if it's different than what I thought before. That's a teachable spirit, and without that, you cannot grow. And many people do not have it, because they don't have the humility, they don't have the love of the truth, or the fear of God, or frankly, the discernment.

Those are all features of a teachable spirit that are absolutely necessary. And another thing about being necessary is that a guest preacher should end when he's told to end, which I did not do. So I'm going to turn this over to your pastor, and he's, let him do, I will receive the hundred lashes if necessary, all right?