

Are You Teachable?

I've been in the middle of hundreds of conflicts.

Divorces, custody battles, business lawsuits, forced pastoral exits, church splits, nonprofit disintegrations ... you name it, I've seen Christians fight over it.

After many long and difficult mediations, I learned that there was one factor that usually made the difference between seeing either genuine reconciliation or destroyed relationships.

Was anyone teachable?

Was even one person willing to admit that he might be wrong?

That he might not have all the answers. That his application of Scripture could be deficient. That someone's criticism might be valid. That another person might have a better solution. That there were still ways for him to learn and grow.

If even one person in a conflict was teachable, we usually made progress. If people on both sides were teachable, we almost always saw genuine reconciliation.

So the next time you find yourself at odds with someone, pray that God would give you a humble and teachable spirit.

You'll find faster solutions to most of your problems.

Better yet, you'll receive God's favor and grace (Prov. 4:10, Prov. 4:6), move closer to reconciliation (Matt. 7:3-5), grow in wisdom (Prov. 1:5; Prov. 15:32), and reduce the likelihood of similar conflicts in the future (James 3:17-18).

– Ken Sande

Reflection Questions

- Who were the most unteachable people that Jesus faced? What did that attitude gain them? (Hint: see Luke 6:6-11; Matt. 23:23)
- Read the Scripture passages cited near the end of the post. What do they promise?
- Think of someone you know who is unteachable. What kind of relationships does he or she have?
- Think of someone who is very teachable. What kind of relationships does he or she have?
- Who has more respect, influence, and credibility—and a more compelling Christian witness, a teachable or unteachable person?
- How does the gospel help us to maintain a teachable spirit? (see Alfred Poirier's excellent booklet, *The Cross and Criticism*)
- Is there a recent situation in which you have been unteachable? If so, what can you do differently in that situation in the days ahead?

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Proverbs 4:10

Listen, my son, accept what I say,
and the years of your life will be many.

Proverbs 4:6

Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.

Matthew 7:3-5

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Proverbs 1:5

let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—

Proverbs 15:32

He who ignores discipline despises himself,
but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.

James 3:17-18

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace- loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Luke 6:6-11

On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Matthew 23:23

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.