

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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Why We Preach and Teach

The goal of all preaching and teaching is love. But there is also a proscribed way to go about reaching that goal, and our teaching must honor that, too.

"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk" (1 Tim. 1:5-6).

The NASV renders the opening line of verse 5, "the goal of our instruction." Paul is highlighting, in other words, the objective, the reason, the end point toward which all our preaching and teaching should be directed. That purpose is simply *love*. It's a principle that was first summarized by Jesus, who said that the two greatest commandments were to "love God" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-40).

But notice that Paul also gives a three-step development path for achieving that desired outcome: It comes from a *pure heart*, a *good conscience*, and a *sincere faith*. Let's look at each of these.

The *heart* is at the core of every person's thinking. Every decision, good or bad, springs from the heart (Prov. 4:23). It stands to reason, therefore, that a "bad" heart will yield bad decisions and a "good" heart will yield good decisions (Lk. 6:45). So the starting point for

building a life of love is to develop a heart that is pure, uncorrupted by selfish passions and motives (Lk. 8:15).

If the heart is turned toward that which is good, then the *conscience* will be trained to follow. The conscience is that faculty of human reasoning that passes judgment on the rightness or wrongness of our behavior, based on an external standard (Rom. 2:14-15). Of course, the conscience can be suppressed, in which case, it ceases to function at all (1 Tim. 4:2). Ideally, the conscience is trained by constant exposure to God's word to become more responsive to His direction.

Finally, a pure heart and a good conscience will feed a sincere *faith*, that is, a genuine confidence in God as the source of wisdom and guidance in one's life. This faith will hold fast against hardships, temptations, tragedies, and whatever else life may throw at us.

These are not three switches that are flipped on or off instantly. Like every other aspect of human character, they are developed gradually through continual instruction and practice. And out of

that continual process gradually emerges what God really wants from each of us: *love* for Him and for others.

We cannot simply make up our own personalized definition of "love" and demand that everyone else accept it. The love that God seeks grows out of a pre-defined growth process that is rooted in His word. It's our task to follow Him, not the other way around.

It is the role of every preacher and teacher to help people make progress in this heart/conscience/faith development path. Every home study, every sermon, every Bible class, should be designed to help people achieve a deeper appreciation for what it means to love God and love others. When teachers lose sight of that goal and the process for reaching it, their teaching degenerates into little more than "idle talk." It fails to motivate people in the direction that God intends, and they walk away with hearts still tainted by bad motives, consciences still plagued with guilt, and faith that is still shallow and weak. They have not made any progress in learning how to love.

And whose fault is that?

— David King