

Ministering to the Weaker Brother in a God-Centered Manner

Introduction:

1) Definitions and Delineations

- a) “Ministering”—the English word *minister* comes from the Latin word *ministro* meaning *servant*.
- i) The public act of a redeemed person before God—*λειτουργός leitourgós* [# 3008-3011]
- Acts 13:2; Romans 15:16, 27; 2nd Corinthians 9:12; Philippians 2:25, 30
- ii) The obedient service a redeemed one renders another—*διάκονος diakonos* [# 1247-1249]
- Acts 6:4; 11:29; 12:25; 19:22; 20:24; **21:19**; Romans 11:13; 12:7; 15:25, 31; 16:1; 1st Corinthians 3:5; 12:5; **16:15**; 2nd Corinthians 3:6-9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3-4; 8:4, 19-20; 9:1, **12-13**; 11:8; Ephesians 3:7; 4:12; 6:21; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7, 17; 1st Thessalonians 3:2; 1st Timothy 1:12; 4:6; 2nd Timothy 1:18; 4:5, 11; Philemon 1:13; Hebrews **6:10**; 1st Peter 4:10-11
- b) “Weaker Brother”
- i) Without strength—*ἀσθενής asthenes* [# 769-772]
- (1) Feeble, frail, infirm, lack of strength or capacity
- Acts 20:35; Romans 6:19; 8:26; 14:1-2, 21; 15:1; 1st Corinthians 2:3; 8:7, 9-12; 2nd Corinthians 11:29; 1st Thessalonians 5:14; James 5:14
- (2) Their weakness is a weakness of conscience rooted in a lack of knowledge of God’s Word—1st Corinthians 8:7, 10
- ii) Unable to participate—*ἀδύνατος adunatos* [# 101-102]
- (1) Not having the strength or ability, to be weak
- Romans 15:1
- c) “God-Centered”
- i) Determined to address the situation based upon who God is, what He does, what He desires, and what He deserves.
- (1) Thus, we should not respond to the weak as our flesh or the world wants us to.
- ii) This is summarized in the command “love one another.”
- (1) To love one another is to desire God’s best for that person within the parameters of God’s Word.
- (2) It is not allowing them to continue in their weakness lest we disturb their emotions.
- (3) It is not responding in frustration toward those who are weak.

2) Principles

- a) Speak on a level they understand—Romans 6:19
- i) The weak normally struggle in their understanding of God’s Word. Make it plain to them. Show them that it is worthy of their trust. Train their consciences accordingly.
- b) Welcome (*προσλαμβάνω proslambano* [# 4355]) them—Romans 14:1
- i) The weak often struggle with not feeling accepted by others. They question whether others will fulfill the “one another’s” with them. They are uncertain of God’s working in the hearts of others.
- ii) We are often tempted to judge the weak as being inferior to us, and to condemn their weak conscience.

- c) Bear with (βαστάζω bastazo [# 941]) them—Romans 15:1
 - i) We are often tempted to push the weak aside as a bother to us. It is our joyful obligation to bring spiritual benefit to them and not focus on pleasing ourselves (Romans 15:2).
 - ii) Follow the example of Christ—Romans 15:3
 - d) Take care not to become a stumbling block to them—1st Corinthians 8:9
 - i) We don't want to sin against them or Christ—1st Corinthians 8:12
 - e) Cling to (ἀντέχω antecho [# 472]) them—1st Thessalonians 5:14
 - i) Be patient (μακροθυμέω makrothumeo [# 3114]) with them
 - f) Pray (προσεύχομαι proseuchomai [# 4336]) for them—James 5:14
- 3) An example of ministering to the weak Theocentrically—Hebrews 5:11-14
- a) The weak cannot comprehend Biblical teaching and need to be graciously told this—5:11
 - i) It is hard to explain (δυσερμήνευτος dusermeneutos [# 1421]) certain Biblical truths to certain people. The fault lies with the listener, not the subject matter.
 - ii) The weak have become sluggish (νωθρός nothros [# 3576]) in their listening to God's Word.
 - (1) Compare Hebrews 6:12
 - b) The weak need to be graciously taught specific spiritual basics (στοιχείον stoicheion [# 4747])—5:12
 - c) The weak are unskilled (ἄπειρος apeiros [# 552]) in the Word and need to be not only graciously told so but shown how to learn the Word—5:13
 - i) Their ignorance and lack of acquaintance with certain Biblical teaching leads them to be weak. They don't know how to test and examine the Word as they ought.
 - d) The weak can become mature as they habitually practice (ἕξις hexis [# 1838]) and exercise (γυμνάζω gumnadzo [# 1128]) their discernment (αἰσθητήριον aistheterion [# 145]) to distinguish (διάκρισις diakrisis [# 1253]) between good and evil—5:14
 - i) The weak cannot differentiate between what is well adapted to the proper end and what is injurious to that end.
 - ii) This maturity comes as they are consistently trained in the Word. This demands patience on the part of the one training them, just as a gymnastics coach patiently works with the beginning gymnast.
- 4) Summary and Applications
- a) Among those to whom I minister God's Word on a regular basis, which ones are weak? Which ones are strong?
 - b) Have I been responding to the weak Theocentrically?
 - i) See # 2 above
 - c) What specific changes do I need to make in order to respond more Theocentrically?
 - i) Identify what God desires
 - ii) Repent of and confess what God condemns
 - (1) In my *attitude* toward them
 - (2) In my *actions* toward them
 - iii) Pray for His grace and mercy to make the changes for His glory and the good of the weak.