

## God's Sweet Sixteen – Part 8

We're in the Sweet Sixteen. Heretofore, we've covered pray, praise, seek, surrender, rejoice, repent, rest, humble, obey, give, forgive, thank, tremble, trust, and testify. Now I'm sure that all of you all noticed there's only one left. And if I follow form, that one left will be covered today and this will conclude the Sweet Sixteen.

Next poster. This was a fundamental illumination to me to help play a role in releasing me to teach. To proclaim joyfully the truth of God to blank is blank. And the illumination is this. You can make up your own words that you think would best fit; but at one level to proclaim joyfully the truth of God to myself is encouragement as David encouraged himself in the Lord. To proclaim the truth of God to another is witness or edification—the building up of another through proclaiming the truth of God. To joyfully proclaim the truth of God to a class setting is called teaching. To proclaim joyfully the truth of God to a congregation is called preaching. And to proclaim joyfully the truth of God to God is praise; because what higher can we give in praise than what God tells us about himself? So the fundamental unifying truth is whatever we are functioning in in the Kingdom of God, it all comes down to this simple sentence. Our calling is to proclaim joyfully the truth of God to myself, another, a class, a congregation, or to God in the form of praise. So that's what all ministry is. And once I received that revelation, then there became no difference between sitting on my porch meditating on the truth of God to myself as opposed to if I were called to speak before 10,000 people, I would be doing the same thing—joyfully proclaiming the truth of God. So I learned to have no limit imposed about the number be it one to 10,000; not out of ego or pride, but out of this unifying concept which is part of the truth set me free to teach.

I Peter 4:11 – Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were the utterances of God. That should be the fundamental role of everyone who professes to teach; to speak as it were the utterances of God. Recall that I like to give definitions or foundational truths that serve as root out of which come other things. The gold standard that I use for all spiritual pursuit is whatever brings me and others closer, faster into oneness with God. That is the gold standard for a teacher as well. Now the Word of God tells us many things about teachers and today I'll mention a few. Matthew 23:8 (Jesus tells us) – But do not be called teacher for one is your teacher. God alone is ultimately the only teacher and anyone who presumes to teach is to always function in the light of that truth. But in spiritual pursuit there always seem to be at least two frames of reference that have to be balanced in a tension state, if you will. We're also to respond to Ephesians 4:11 – And He (God) gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers. So we're to balance those two frames of reference. Let no one be called teacher; but God has called some as teachers. So how do I hold those two in teaching as I teach? I am called to teach; but I'm not called to be called a teacher. I'm not to focus on the title of teacher. I'm not to focus on the position of teacher. I'm not to think that teaching places me somehow separate from the rest of the body of Christ. I'm called to focus on teaching having been called to teach by God; but not to focus on the position of teaching. And I am to speak, as it were, the utterances of God. Scripture tells us that I am simply an earthen vessel. The truth that I speak is the truth of God. I can only speak out of His illumination of that truth to me. In fact, I can speak only because of His gift to me of some speaking ability. Once I was offering praise to a person who had just rendered a song beautifully and her reply struck me. She said

God gave out a lot of musical ability and He happened to give me some. So God has given out a lot of speaking ability and He happened to give me some.

I Corinthians 4:7 – What do you have that you did not receive and if you received it, why do you boast? Thus, it is His truth, it is His revelation of that truth, and it is His gift to speak that truth. So where in there am I to boast? Thus, God gets all the glory. Boasting would be to sing my own praises. Another form of boasting is to seek or desire or hunger for the praise of others. John 5:44 freed me in that regard. It states – How can you believe when you seek the glory of men? If I hunger for praise for teaching, then in that moment I am not believing God. That's because I'm seeking a share of the glory that's due only to Him. When I do that I am not believing that He's the only thing in all of existence worthy of glory. So how can I believe when I seek the praise of man? The answer is I can't because in that moment I'm functioning as if I'm worshipping a god who's not worthy of all glory. Isaiah 42:8 (God says through the prophet) – I will not give my glory to another. Since I am another, then that includes me. Romans 12:3 – Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. If I think for a moment that I should share the glory of God, then I am thinking more highly of myself than I ought to think. If I think that I should receive praise from others, then at that moment I am thinking more highly of myself than I ought to think. This is why we began with the Holiness of God; because if you're not functioning in the light of the Holiness of God, you will be thinking that you deserve some of God's glory. But when you receive the revelation of the Holiness of God and your sin before a Holy God, it shatters that tendency to think that you should get some praise for what you're doing for God.

II Corinthians 2:16 – Who is adequate for these things? The correct answer is obviously no one is adequate for these things. Since I am inadequate for these things (including teaching), then why do I teach? Again it's holding two frames of reference in perfect balance. II Corinthians 3:5 – Our adequacy is of God. As a teacher I'm to hold those truths in balance. I am inadequate for these things; so how can I teach? God is perfectly adequate; so how can I not teach? John 8:12 (Jesus said) – I am the light of the world. I Corinthians 3:16 (Paul writes) – Do you not know that the Spirit of God is within you? So I have the light of the world inside of me. That's why Jesus could say in Matthew 5:14 – You are the light of the world. So I am the light of the world. But it becomes a matter of where is my focus in light of being the light of the world. When I stand up to teach I'm simply letting the light shine; but I'm not letting self shine; because I have two choices: to let self shine or to let the light that is within me shine. That's how I'm the light of the world. When I stand up to teach and am speaking as it were the utterances of God, I'm letting the light shine through me as an earthen vessel.

The teaching is also flowing out of what I believe. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 4:13 – I believe; therefore, I speak. I do not have divine clearance to speak that which I do not believe; but what I do believe from what God has shown me of how He views reality I am cleared to speak. I'm not cleared to speak something only when I have attained it; because the focus is not on my attaining something. The focus is on the God Who has saved me through His Son, Jesus Christ. No preacher has ever experienced the resurrection from the dead. But every teacher is expected to speak about the resurrection of the dead. So I'm not to wait until I experience everything that I teach about; but I'm cleared to teach everything that I believe and that I desire to experience fully in my life on planet Earth.

At first I was a bit intimidated by James 3:1 – Let not many of you become teachers my brethren knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. So I had two choices: Refuse the call to teach so as not to be held to a higher standard or respond to the call to teach and trust God about the higher standard. Hebrews 1:3 – He upholds all things by the Word of His power. Since He upholds all things, then I know that He can uphold me to the higher standard. I am held to a higher standard; but He upholds me to that to which He holds me. That's my peace as I teach and that's how I walk by faith in Him, not by faith in myself to attain a standard that is higher because I teach. When my eyes are focused on the One Who is the standard, then I don't have to be worried about living up to a standard. If my eyes are on how I am accomplishing living up to a standard, in that moment I cease to worship the One Who is the standard. That's why we're told to fix our gaze upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. I'm not to fix my eyes upon myself and my ability to live up to a higher standard. It's a matter of focus.

Romans 2:21 – Teacher, do you not teach yourself? I'm never to teach while regarding the teaching as being primarily for those in the audience listening. The teaching is for me and perhaps often even primarily for me. I'm to seek to surrender to all that I teach. If I were to teach something that I refuse to surrender to, then in that area I'm functioning in self determination about what part of God's Word should apply to me and what part of God's Word should apply to the listeners. I'm to progressively become that which I teach. So I (for some odd reason) use the simple mnemonic about a radio station, KBBR. So I focus on station KBBR. That's to know, believe what I know, become what I believe, and then reveal what I am becoming which is what I believe which is part of what I know of God's truth. So station KBBR keeps me in tune so to speak. I listen to my own teachings as I edit the transcripts. I'm blessed by them. Is that pride or humility? It depends. If I am blessed primarily because I am listening to myself and rejoicing that others listen to me, then of course it is pride. But if I am blessed because I am listening to the truth about the One Who is truth, then it is not pride; it is humility. So the act itself doesn't tell you if it's pride or humility; it's the position of the heart as you engage in the activity.

Acts 3:1-8 This relates to the story of the lame man who was seeking money at the Temple gate as Peter and John walked by. In verse 6 Peter said – I do not possess silver and gold; but what I do have, I give to you. This is another verse that released me to teach; because if a teacher waits until he understands all mysteries of God, then he will never teach. Every teacher is functioning with partial illumination about how God views reality. The key is not that I have what you ask for; the key is not that I have what you think you need. The key is that I have a heart position of such as I have I give to you; because freely I have received, so freely I give and trust God about the outcome. In other words I'm not responsible for conversion. I'm not responsible for drawing an audience. I'm not responsible for this growing within anyone; because my job is to sow the seeds that I have received. And if it grows, I know not how. So consequently, I am freed to teach because I don't have to perceive the needs of everybody who's listening; because if I don't have it, I can't give it. So I can only give that which I have; but what I do have I will give freely. My attitude became like Peter. I may not have what you're asking for. I may not have what you came to hear. I may not have what you think you need; but such as I do have I give freely to you and I trust God about the outcome of that process.

John 12:32 – And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Myself. This, of course, is Jesus speaking and certainly He was lifted up on the cross. Certainly He was lifted up in the resurrection. And certainly He was lifted up in the ascension into Heaven. What is left for me as an earthen vessel is to lift Him up in my teaching and know that if men are drawn, it's because He is drawing men to Himself as He is lifted up.

I finalize this specific section on teaching using the example of Cupid to make a point. Even a mythological creature can make a spiritual point. As you know, Cupid shoots arrows into the hearts of men and women to cause them to fall into romantic love with each other. However Cupid goes unnoticed in the background as he sits on a tree limb up there with his bow and arrow. He does not call attention to himself. He does not seek the praise of those who receive the arrows. His delight is to see the love relationship develop between the recipients of his arrows. That's the attitude as I teach. I fire the arrows or the truth of God into anyone willing to listen. I don't seek to have attention called to myself for firing arrows. I don't seek praise in how well I'm firing arrows. I don't seek praise for what kind of arrow I chose to shoot. My delight is to see the love relationship develop between each listener and the truth of God. When that occurs, then the next level of my delight is to see the love relationship develop among listeners who are all simultaneously falling in love with the truth of God. Of course I'm not speaking of sensual or romantic love as addressed by Cupid. I'm speaking of the love of God that's poured out in our hearts. So my goal as a teacher is not to have anyone ever say, what a teacher! But to have all hopefully say, what a God! And what delicious truths of God; I can't wait to learn more of that God to come into the fullness of oneness with that God and fulfill my reason for being on planet Earth.

So that finishes the final point about the Sweet Sixteen; but now I want to speak globally to review about the Sweet Sixteen. My desire is that the listener (including myself) at every moment of my life ask which one of these Sweet Sixteen am I functioning in at this very moment? If you're doing any one of them, then the likelihood is great that you're doing more than one of them; because you can distinguish these sixteen things, but these sixteen things cannot be separated. If you're doing one or more, then at that moment you are loving God. You are worshipping God. You are exalting God. You are pleasing God. And you are glorifying God. All other human activities shrink by comparison with that. I'll draw from a movie. Most of you are old enough to remember the movie about Patton where Patton was played by George C. Scott. In one scene in that movie Patton is speaking of the glory of war and he says that all other human activities pale in comparison to war. Well the Christian, of course, knows the wrongness of that even if Patton said that. All other activities pale before the giving of pleasure and glory to God for that is why we were created. And we do that when we function in the Sweet Sixteen.

Now I want to head through the final part of this by reminding you of something. II Peter 1:12-13 – Therefore I shall always be ready to remind you of these things even though you already know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you. And I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of reminder. Why do I read these verses? Because I want to remind you of something.

Next poster. The reminder is this. We're never to forget how these things are to occur. As natural beings, we automatically drift to the system of law. When we do this, we focus on works; we focus on our performance of those works, and we use the power of self to perform those works to a level that we self-pronounce as being adequate or inadequate to please God. That will always result in defeat, failure, and death. Hebrews 2:1 – For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. If we do not pay close attention to these things, we will constantly drift to the flesh with self on the throne relying on law to please God. That brings glory only to self and never glory to God. The Sweet Sixteen, therefore, do not represent sixteen self-improvement projects. The Sweet Sixteen, if viewed as self-improvement projects, will bring either self pride if you self-pronounce that you are self-performing them well. They will bring self condemnation if you self-evaluate that your performance is not sufficient. So when you're under law, you're functioning in one of the two polarities of pride. One is to pronounce that you are performing at a godly level and the other is to pronounce that you are self-condemned because you're not self-performing at a level that you have self-pronounced you should be self-performing at—both of which represent pride because they're all based on self. So I don't care if you think you're doing it well or if you think you're doing it poorly. If you think it is based on your doing it at all, you're functioning in law bringing no glory to God.

Kingdom life, however, functions when we function in the system of grace. In this system it is all about Jesus. Our gaze is fixed upon Jesus. All things are summed up in Jesus. Everything is to the glory of Jesus. And every spiritual blessing was purchased for us through the means of the cross of Jesus Christ. Only the system of grace, where Jesus is the source, the cross is the means, and the power is the Holy Spirit, brings maximal glory to Jesus and brings maximal witness of Jesus. Thus, functioning in the system of grace is the only thing that looses the power of the Holy Spirit as our helper. The Holy Spirit is not our helper in self-performance of works according to law. The Holy Spirit is our helper only when we're functioning in the activities prescribed to the Holy Spirit by Jesus. The Holy Spirit came to bear witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit came to bring glory to Jesus. So the power of the Spirit is loosed only when we are engaged in those activities, fixing our gaze upon Jesus, regarding Jesus as the source of all, regarding Jesus as the basis of all, regarding Jesus as the rock on which we stand, and all spiritual blessings purchased for us by Jesus were purchased through the means of the cross of Jesus Christ. When we do those things, the Holy Spirit is loosed to be our helper,

The Sweet Sixteen, therefore, may be either valid or counterfeit. Using the system of law produces counterfeit. I don't care how humble someone appears if their humility is evolving out of a self-reliance on self-power. Then it becomes pride in appearing humble. It is counterfeit. That becomes II Timothy 3:5 because it is a form of godliness, but without its power. Why? Because you're not tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit. And if it's not by the Spirit, through Jesus, then it is not valid because it is not of grace; it is of law and law is based on the power of self and brings glory to you. But using the system of grace produces the real fruit, not the counterfeit fruit. It must be by grace that God get all the glory. What gives God glory is what is spiritually sweet. What gives self glory is spiritually sour. The Lord Jesus Christ paid it all. All that we are called to do as Christians is to pay attention lest we drift from the truth that He did it all. The truth that He paid it all is how we know love. We know love by this; that He delivered Himself up for us. Then we love. How? Because He first loved us. It's all rooted in

knowing the love of God as exhibited by Jesus Christ on the cross. As we grow in love, that love then is expressed as the fruit of the Spirit. As we grow in the fruit of the Spirit, we will then grow in the Sweet Sixteen. As we grow into the Sweet Sixteen, we are growing into the image of Jesus Christ. As we grow into the image of Jesus Christ, we become a fragrance of Christ to God as referred to in II Corinthians 2:15. And how could the Father not regard the fragrance of His own Son as sweet savor? The Sweet Sixteen are only sweet because they're the fragrance of God to Himself—the fragrance of God Himself because the Father and the Son are one.

And that concludes the Sweet Sixteen. And hopefully in the course of this session today, in the course of all parts of the Sweet Sixteen, I have spoken as it were the utterances of God; because that is the final evaluation of anyone who professes to stand up and teach as one of the Sweet Sixteen.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.