

Are you teachable or unteachable?

With Bishop Ronald K. Powell

There's one characteristic that separates the successful from the unsuccessful in every walk of life:

Think of all the successful people you know, what is it that distinguishes them all?

- Its teachability, isn't it.

Think of all the people you know that never really made the most of the gifts and opportunities God gave them.

- Unteachability is the common thread, isn't it?

The Importance of Having a Teachable Spirit

Proverbs 12:1-12 New International Version (NIV)

12 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.

Characteristics of an Unteachable Spirit

1. Chronic Failure
2. An Argumentative and Defensive Nature
3. Isolation and Withdrawal in Time of Difficulty
4. Blame Transfer
5. Surrounding Yourself with People Who Agree With You and Feeling Threatened by Those of Differing Opinions

So what does unteachability look like?

- Don't take notes, read books, or learn anything unless it's the bare minimum or what's essential for exam purposes.
- Don't ask questions or attempt anything that might reveal your ignorance or risk you looking stupid.
- Don't accept responsibility for your failures but blame anyone and everyone else.
- Don't seek or accept one-to-one personal guidance or mentoring from parents, teachers, pastors, elders, etc.
- Don't listen, but talk, talk, talk about yourself, especially when you're with someone you could learn a lot from.
- Don't take criticism or correction without resentment or retaliation.

- Resist moving out of personal comfort zones in work, study, ministry, or relationships, but always look for the easy and familiar route.
- Don't read, listen to, or learn anything that challenges existing presuppositions, practices, and prejudices.

(Matthew 7:7–8; John 16:13 (NIV); Proverbs 9:8–9, 13; Proverbs 21:9; Proverbs 18:1–2)

Matthew 7:7-8 New International Version (NIV)

Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷ “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

John 16:13 New International Version (NIV)

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Proverbs 9:8-9 New International Version (NIV)

⁸ Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.
⁹ Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

Proverbs 9:13 New International Version (NIV)

¹³ Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing.

Proverbs 21:9 New International Version (NIV)

⁹ Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

Proverbs 18:1-2 New International Version (NIV)

18 An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels.

² Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

Root Causes of an Unteachable Spirit

1. **Pride**
2. **Rebellion and Independence**
3. **Insecurity**
4. **Foolishness**
5. **Laziness**

The unteachable usually fail.

No matter how much talent and gifting we have, if we are, or become, unteachable, we will never reach anywhere near our full potential in our careers, our callings, or our relationships.

(Isaiah 53:6; Proverbs 16:18; James 4:6; Ephesians 5:21; Proverbs 22:15; 15:14; 26:16; 13:4)

Isaiah 53:6 New International Version (NIV)

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Proverbs 16:18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

James 4:6 New International Version (NIV)

⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

Ephesians 5:21 New International Version (NIV)

Instructions for Christian Households

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The Four Characteristics of a Teachable Spirit

1. **Humility**
2. **Graciously Accepting Correction and Input**
3. **Seeking Wise Counsel and Input in Times of Decision, Difficulty or Chronic Failure**
4. **Submitting to Authority and Staying Accountable**

In contrast, teachability means:

- *You're aware of the limitations of your own knowledge and abilities.*
- *You admit limitation, inability, and ignorance to others who can teach and help.*
- *You regularly ask for help, instruction, guidance, and advice (before the event, not after disaster strikes).*
- *You learn from anyone and everyone you can (the best educated pastor I know writes notes for his own benefit even when listening to a novice preacher).*
- *You listen to others carefully and patiently with a desire to learn from everyone.*
- *You're prepared to move out of your comfort zone, try something different, make mistakes, look stupid, answer wrongly, etc.*
- *You don't give up when you fail at something, but seek help, and try again and again until you get it right.*
- *You're willing to change your views and practices when convincing evidence is presented to you, even if it means admitting you were wrong.*

(Proverbs 9:8; Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 15:22)

Proverbs 9:8 New International Version (NIV)

⁸ Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.

Proverbs 11:14 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.

Proverbs 15:22 New International Version (NIV)

²² *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

Those who are teachable, and remain so, usually succeed.

Closing

Teachability gets people to the top. But if you lose teachability at the top, you won't be at the top for long.

Roger Ebert Said

“Be willing to be a beginner every single morning.” “What I believe is that all clear-minded people should remain two things throughout their lifetimes: Curious and teachable.” “The unteachable man is sentenced to being taught only by experience. Hard Knocks

Proverbs 9:9 ESV /

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

There's another word for teachability.

Humility.

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” **1 Peter 5:5**

“The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.”

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this message?

All scripture is from the NIV Version unless otherwise noted.