

**International Brethren Training Network: Third International Training Consultation
Dubuque 27 – 31 May 2014**

Theme: “Hermeneutics for the heart...and mind”

Evening Session 1 – John Hitchen
KEYS TO EFFECTIVE SERVICE

2 Timothy 2:15

Introduction :

For our opening devotion for the Consultation, let us look at one verse in the second chapter of 2 Timothy which offers us three keys to the right way to approach all we do this week: 2 Tim 2:15 The content of this verse suggests three questions to answer if we are to ensure the Consultation achieves the goals set for it.¹

1. **IS THE LORD WELL PLEASED?**

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by Him", v15a

a. ***A Commitment to make - Do your best...***

There is too much half-hearted Christian service, today. As Bible teachers, we of all people know that without commitment little is ever achieved for the Lord.

b. ***A Purpose to Concentrate on - Present Yourself to God***

We must choose who has first place in our aims and goals. In our teaching we are always having to present ourselves to one group or another: we must present ourselves to our students; to our fellow teachers; to our School Boards, to our churches who support us, We often spend a lot of time trying to make sure we are acceptable to all these. But the verse doesn't mention any of these. It is to God that our primary responsibility lies. 1 Cor 4:1-5 speaks to this accountability. Paul says, "It is the Lord who judges me." That is both a fearful reality, and an encouraging one – for the Lord knows our true motivation. But he also always seeks to encourage, to build up and to refresh his workers.

c. ***A Standard to Achieve - As one approved by Him***

Christ needs well-proven, well-tried, workers who have passed the tests and difficulties put before them. We must choose whose approval we want most - Self, peers, family or our Living Lord Jesus. *1 Thessalonians 2:3-4*

So, this is our first question for the consultation: "Is the Lord well pleased with our part in it?"

2. **IS THE WORK WELL DONE?**

"...A Worker who has no need to be ashamed ...: v15b

Things that make Bible teachers ashamed of their work are:

- Not doing the right work, or not doing it properly. Do you spend time learning to become a better teacher? We keep up with the subjects we teach. But when did you last spend time learning more about how to be a better bible teacher? Professional development is vital for people with our ministry and calling
- Doing shoddy, or poor work is cause for shame. Christ deserves our best effort. We

¹ I acknowledge my debt to Dr David Price of Melbourne Australia, for the three question format I use: David challenged me with these questions as he took over as Principal of CLTC in Papua New Guinea, and my family went off to Aberdeen, Scotland, for Post-graduate study leave in September 1979.

should aim for high standards in all we do for Him.

- Unfinished work is cause for shame, too. Time management and discipline are important, here. But so is knowing ourselves and focusing on the main priorities, not all the less important tasks.

We must each give an account of the work we have accomplished for our Lord - *2 Corinthians 5:10*

So the second question is: Is the work well done?

3. ***IS THE WORD WELL USED ?***

"... rightly explaining/handling the Word of truth..." v15c

The third key to effective service is how we handle or use and explain the Word of God.

a. *God's Word must be rightly handled*

The picture is of cutting a straight road through rough country. Keeping true to the right direction, not taking short-cuts, not heading off in another direction. The right use is contrasted in 1:15 with Hymenaeus and Philetus, "who have swerved from the truth". They did not keep to its straight paths, but diverted from its teachings. They wrongly used the Word. in Gal 2:14 Paul accuses Peter and Barnabas of, "Not walking in line with the Gospel," because they had stopped showing hospitality to Gentiles. We are using the Word wrongly when our walk no longer agrees with our talk. This is fundamental for Bible teachers.

b. *God's Word is the Truth for our Times*

John 8:31-32; John 17:17

The truth of God's Word is central in effective Christian work. Our task is always to declare and explain this truth so that it is grasped and accepted.

So God looks for people

- who will be faithful to His Word;
- who grapple with its proper meaning by serious study;
- who explain it accurately and reliably without swerving away from its truth.
- who live out its real meaning in their daily lives

2 Tim 3:16-27 reminds us it is only the Words of scripture which equip us for living and serving Christ. So the way we use the Word of truth is the third test for how we approach this week's consultation

Conclusion:

I ask you to pray for me this week so that together with you I may be able to finish the week with good answers to these three questions:

Is the Lord well pleased; Is the work well done, and Is the Word well used ?