God-gifted Men

God gives "gifts unto men" (Eph 4:8,11-12). Christ's people should not think of themselves more highly than they ought, but at the same time they should judge themselves as being allotted gifts by God's grace (Rom 12:3-8). Some congregations today don't follow this pattern for preaching, teaching, and exhortation. In some congregations, one man does it all — as though he is the only one with the gift. In other congregations all men do it — whether gifted for it or not.

Men should be given the opportunity and encouragement to recognize, develop, and use their God-given potential. Paul encouraged Timothy to "stir up the gift" he had been given (2Tm 1:6). He also reminded Timothy of factors in his life that especially suited him to the Lord's service (2Tm 1:5, 3:14-15).

Young Men

Paul warned Timothy, "Let no man despise your youth" (1Tm 4:12). This indicates that there was prejudice against youth. Timothy had to neutralize this prejudice by exemplary conduct. Young men are the future of the church. Before we older men go to our graves, we should be training the young to take over.

Workmen Unashamed

Paul again warned Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2Tm 2:15, cf 1Tm 4:16). Whilst the responsibility is clearly on the young men to give diligence, is there not an underlying responsibility on the older men to encourage this diligence and give practical help to build the young men's confidence and competence?

Men Who Suffer

The ministry of the word is never easy. It is always accompanied by suffering. Paul encouraged Timothy to suffer hardship (2Tm 1:8,12, 2:3). Suffering and hardship come in various forms: persecution, illness, poverty, loss, and so forth. Troubles are an impediment and discouragement to ministry. The church should urge its men to persevere and find strength in the Lord.

Women's Men

It is a matter of some controversy that Paul tells Timothy that the public teaching is a task for men (1Tm 2:11-12). Paul and Timothy had the deepest regard for great women such as Priscilla, the wife of Aquila (2Tm 4:19).

Pricilla was instrumental in helping the eminent Apollos to correct his doctrine (Acts 18:24-26). If women have to sit and listen, let us at least train our men to give the women something they can listen to without frustration — a lesson at least as well presented as they themselves could do were they permitted.

Men Making More Men

I conclude by emphasizing the generative nature of the ministry we have been discussing. Paul says to Timothy, "The things you heard from me... entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2Tm 2:1-2). Here we have four generations of men: Paul (first generation) teaches Timothy (second generation). Timothy teachers faithful men (third generation), and they go on to teach others (fourth generation). In every church this process should be happening — men teaching and training more men, and these doing the same. This is the future of the church. If we are not doing it, the church has no future. If we are doing it well, the church's future is assured.