

How to Teach the Bible

The Basics of Teaching

I. KNOW THE CONDITIONS OF TEACHING

A. Know the Audience

1. Know the people (Matthew 3:7; Matthew 13:10-11; Acts 23:6)
 - a. Know their basic information.
 - (1) What is their age?
 - a) This could change the volume and tone of your voice.
 - b) This could change your mannerisms and approach.
 - c) This could change where, how, and if you stand.
 - d) This could change your illustrations.
 - (2) Are they male or female?
 - a) This could change your tone of voice.
 - b) This could change your mannerisms and approach.
 - c) This could change your illustrations.
 - (3) What is the level of their understanding?
 - a) If you are teaching an individual, this is easier. You can ask a few questions and find out where the student is in his learning.
 - b) If you are teaching a group, you will find that there is a wide range of their knowledge. Each lesson, the teacher should attempt to find something to feed both ends of the spectrum.
 - i) If you always aim toward the lower level of knowledge, you will bore your most knowledgeable and lose them.
 - ii) If you always aim toward the higher level of knowledge, you will overcomplicate the truth for new believers, and they will give up on learning the subject matter.
 - b. Know their culture.
 - (1) What are the dos and don'ts of their culture?
 - a) Are there certain mannerisms that are unacceptable?
 - b) Are there certain hand gestures that are unacceptable?
 - (2) What are the language differences? This could cause you to use a simplified vocabulary, minimize accents, and remove any use of slang.
 - (3) How do cultural differences change illustrations seeking to support the truths being taught?
 - a) Things clear in one culture may confuse in another.
 - b) Things true in one culture may not be true in another.
 - c) Things acceptable in one culture may be offensive in another.

- c. Know their background.
 - (1) What is their familial background?
 - a) Were they raised in a Christian home?
 - b) Did they have a good example of what a home should be?
 - c) In what kind of activities were they involved?
 - (2) What is their religious background?
 - a) What belief system did they grow up under?
 - b) How frequently did they attend church?
 - c) If saved, when were they saved?
- 2. Know their knowledge (Mark 4:13)
 - a. Know what they know.
 - (1) Find out what your students know by giving them a quiz, or by asking questions, or by general conversation.
 - (2) This is crucial because good teaching starts with the present level of knowledge possessed by the students and seeks to move them to a deeper level of knowledge.
 - (3) Along these lines, the Lord Jesus often used earthly truths to convey heavenly truths. For example, consider the Lord's dealings with Nicodemus (John 3:1-7).
 - b. Know how they learn.
 - (1) Consider the statistics. Generally, people learn and retain:
 - a) Ten percent of what they read
 - b) Twenty percent of what they hear
 - c) Thirty percent of what they see
 - d) Fifty percent of what they hear and see
 - e) Seventy percent of what they say and write
 - f) Ninety percent of what they do
 - (2) Consider various means of learning.
 - a) Reading—This involves a student merely reading content either based upon assignment or by choice.
 - b) Hearing—With hearing alone, this involves a lecture type environment where no notes are provided or taken.
 - c) Visualization—This can be done by incorporating charts, pictures, or other visuals.
 - d) Repetition
 - i) Research shows that if we do not recall, review, or work with what we have learned within twenty-four hours, we will forget between fifty and eighty percent of what we initially learned.
 - ii) Students often learn best what they repeat. This can be done by combining learning methods such as hearing and seeing or saying and writing.
 - iii) The various means of repetition were often employed by the Lord. At times, He encouraged people to write and say something. Throughout scripture, repetition is used to the point that modern English teachers would suggest words are overused.

- e) Doing
 - i) Hands on—Learning by doing what is being taught.
 - ii) Interactive
 - (a) This type of learning requires teacher and student interaction.
 - (b) The student must be able to participate in the class by answering questions, asking questions, and solving problems. He or she will also be put in situations where what is being taught needs to be implemented. For example, situational practice is a wonderful tool for teaching others to witness.

B. Know the Expectations

1. The expectation of time constraints
 - a. Introductory thoughts upon time constraints
 - (1) Many teachers/preachers refuse to acknowledge or accept time constraints of any kind, citing Acts 20:7 where the apostle Paul “continued his speech until midnight.”
 - a) Upon further reading, we are informed that “Paul was long preaching” and a young man named Eutychus fell either to his death or to his supposed death (Acts 20:9-10).
 - b) Whether the young man died and was resurrected or simply was falsely believed to be dead, we can agree that this situation could have turned out quite differently.
 - (2) Whether we want to acknowledge or accept time constraints today, they do exist and commonly exist in two forms.
 - a) The time constraints of schedule
 - b) The time constraints of attention span
 - b. Considering the constraint of schedule; Note: Some cultures place varying emphases upon schedules (i.e., start times/finish times).
 - (1) Considering a time constraint after teaching has begun is too late to do so. In this manner of consideration, the teacher will undoubtedly run out of time before covering all the pertinent information needing to be covered.
 - (2) Therefore, the teacher must consider the amount of time allowed for teaching along with the content to be covered in the allotted time.
 - c. Considering the constraint of attention span; If the pressure of time constraint was not enough, considering the shortness of the modern attention span is surely to complicate things.
2. The expectation of content covered
 - a. Before teaching, one must consider how many verses are to be covered or how broad the topic is that is to be covered.
 - b. If one does not consider this prior to the time of teaching, the end, and sometimes the most crucial of the teaching, will have to be rushed or skipped altogether.