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Five Major Ideas/Concepts from *Creative Bible Teaching*

1. Truth-Response

"Bible teaching must focus on truth-response" (62). First, truth about God and his will must be communicated to the students through the Bible. Second, through this knowledge a student can come to "know" and experience God in a personal way. Third, from this confrontation a student may be motivated out of love for God to respond in a way that "conforms to His will." "Each class must be structured not just to communicate a particular truth, but to guide students to discover how God wants them to respond to that truth" (62).

Too often, unfortunately, people teach and learn the Bible in a way that does not transform lives. By properly understanding the nature of Scripture, teachers could be enlightened to a better way of teaching. As conservatives, "we firmly believe that God uses His Word to transform" (18). When I came to understand this truth in 1985, my life was changed. I came to understand that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). I came to understand that the Bible is God Himself communicating with us and that His Word is infallible and inerrant. When this truth sunk deep down into my spirit, I was motivated to learn the **truths** in the Bible and to **apply** them to my life out of loving obedience to the one true God that I have come to know.

Similarly, just as I have been motivated to respond to the challenges of Scripture by the unction of the Holy Spirit as a result of learning truth about God and His Word, I believe that understanding the truth-response concept will strengthen my efforts in teaching the Bible. I will focus on bringing a lesson to a climax where the information taught will help students to "meet God" and respond to His Spirit's loving tug to change.

2. What is Creative Bible Teaching?

Creative Bible teaching includes making a class "fresh, vital and interesting," but it also means creating an atmosphere where the learning process produces change. When teaching a class, a teacher must have a "long-range goal of transformation." Teachers usually gear their class towards one of five levels of learning, subconsciously or consciously: rote, recognition, restatement, relation, or realization. At the *rote level* a student "repeats something from memory, without thought of the meaning" (69). At the *recognition level* a student attains the ability to recognize something that has been said or read, sometimes through a multiple choice test or true/false questions. At a slightly higher level of learning called the *restatement level*, a student can "take a Biblical truth, relate it to other ideas and values, and express that truth in [their] own words" (71). At the *relation level* the student is able to see a relationship between the truth taught and their own life. The goal of all Bible teaching is to attain the *realization level* where a student not only understands what response to God's Word is appropriate, but **actually makes that response**. It is the responsibility of the Bible teacher to teach in such a way as to guide his students to understand Biblical truths and then for them to discover how to make appropriate life-responses to God.

Realizing that students may learn at various levels, we can now more closely define creative teaching as *consciously and effectively focusing on activities that raise the students' learning level*. The weaknesses in our Sunday schools can often be traced to a failure to understand learning on the higher levels, and a resultant failure to help students learn significantly (73).

Similarly, I believe that understanding these five levels of learning will help strengthen my teaching as I strive to achieve the highest levels of learning in my classroom. My preparation will continue to include not only knowledge of the material being presented, but also ideas and ways for asking probing questions that will lead students to explore the meaning of the material and how the truths apply to their lives. I agree with the author that the focus of the class should be on the students not on the teacher, and I will continue to serve as a guide to the learning process instead of as a lecturer (unless I am preaching).

3. Teaching Preschoolers

Preschoolers include Nursery children (two and three years old) and Kindergarten children (four and five years old). Since "spiritual growth presupposes spiritual birth and most of the children in the nursery and beginner departments aren't born again" (147), the purpose for Bible teaching is different than for those who are older and who are Christians. Teaching methods must differ also since little children do not like to sit still and their attention wanders easily. Conservative Sunday preschool differs from the purpose of secular preschool who have as their goal the "good emotional adjustment" of the young children. Since "research indicates that during the preschool years, children are involved in a process of building a world-view--a way of looking at life," "the primary task of the nursery and beginner Sunday school teachers is to provide the basic concepts and information needed by their children to formulate a biblical view of the world" (152). Children must be taught who God is:

It's vitally important that they look on the world as the creation of a loving God, that they develop the assurance that Jesus, God's Son, is a powerful Friend who loves them and cares for them. They need to know that God speaks to them in the Bible, His book; that He tells them there of His love, and how they can show love for Him. Children who grow in this knowledge, who have a place for God in their thoughts and a picture of the way things really are, will be ready to respond to the gospel message of God's love expressed in Christ's sacrifice when they've reached an age of understanding. (152, 153)

The core of the curriculum must be truths that tell who God and Jesus are and not instructions for believers to please God. Responses to the lesson must be encouraged in order to "establish early in life a pattern of response to truth" (153).

Children in nursery school learn best through activities and experiences rather than through words or stories. Children of this age prefer to be in smaller clusters instead of large groups. Therefore, classes should be divided into sections in which children can move freely to another area and engage in activities that reinforce the biblical theme. Children in Kindergarten "learn best when words are made meaningful by experience" (166). These children enjoy being involved in group activities and "playing and experiencing the biblical event" (167).

Understanding the different ways in which very young children learn will strengthen my efforts of teaching the Bible to this age group. Although Biblical information must be shared (and usually through a story), my emphasis will be on activities that reinforce the Biblical theme using

such methods as singing, handwork, story role playing, prayer, and visual aids. I will try to exhibit and teach "the comfort of His presence, His love, His care."

4. Teaching Children

Children between the ages of six and eleven should be taught the Bible with several guidelines. "First, teaching should relate to a child's present needs and experiences... Second, the teaching must be true to God's Word... Third, the teaching must make the revelation relevant on the child's own level" (182-184). With these thoughts in mind, a teacher can pattern a productive teaching using Paul's first prayer for the Colossians (1:9-10).

First, spiritual growth begins with knowledge of His Word as implied in the first phrase of Paul's prayer, "filled with the knowledge of His will." Second, students must use wisdom to see the relationship of God's truth and their real life experiences as implied by the phrase, "in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." Third, students must not only see the relationship but also must respond appropriately to truths revealed in their lives as implied by the phrase, "so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects." Having known, understood, and responded to the truth, good fruit will follow as implied by the phrase "bearing fruit in every good work." As a final result, the student "increases in the knowledge of God." A teacher is ready to construct a lesson plan when he/she sees that the purpose of teaching is to obtain a student response.

The Colossian cycle just described suggests a four-step pattern: *hook, book, look, took*. The *hook* is the attention grabber that pulls a student into the lesson and may include playing a game, drawing, an open-ended story, role playing, using objects, wire bending, etc. Next, the *book* of the Bible is shared as information or as a story. Next, the students *look* closely at how the truths taught can apply to their lives. Finally, when an appropriate response has been given by the student, then we can say that the truths *took*. The teacher's job is to help children discover insights into the truths taught and to facilitate a way for them to "respond to God on their own level and in their own ways" (185). Responses can be stimulated by giving the student a homework assignment that applies what they have learned. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the parents to follow-up with their children to ensure that they are relating Bible truths to their daily experiences.

Understanding the Colossian pattern and the four-step approach along with techniques for teaching children will strengthen my efforts of teaching the Bible to this age group. Using methods that relate to children on their level, I will teach the Bible with the goal of leading students to a response to God out of their love for Him and because of His love for the children. I will encourage students to apply daily what they have learned (possibly with some help from their parents) and to share with the group the next week on their experiences.

5. Teaching Youth and Adults

Youth that are twelve years and older as well as adults should be taught in an interactive way as opposed to a lecture method. Too often a Bible study or class consists of a knowledgeable teacher who imparts his or her knowledge and experiences to a group without any real response on their part. This method often does not allow the student to have personal involvement with the Scriptures (241). The false notion then arises that only a gifted teacher has the ability to "handle and understand the Word of God right." Lectures are good and important when much material must be conveyed in a short amount of time. However, lectures should not be the only method used

if the teacher wants to encourage the students to study for themselves and to personally respond toward God and His Word.

Creative Bible Teaching begins when the teacher "resists taking an authoritarian role and instead stimulates his students to take full responsibility for discovering and discussing the implications of the Word studied" (255). In such an environment, people tend to be more open and willing to share in a meaningful way. When people are comfortable in saying what they really think, believe, and feel, then real growth can take place in their own lives and the Holy Spirit uses their experiences and insights to enlighten and minister to those who are listening. Therefore, the teacher must plan learning activities that will guide the students to interact with one another, transforming the previous lecture class into an interactive class where students open their lives to God's scrutiny and seek out ways to respond to Him (265).

Each individual may respond differently to the lesson taught. Therefore, the teacher should not expect that everyone will respond the same way nor should he/she ask the students to all respond in the same way. Instead, the teacher must "plan ways to encourage learners to face the necessity of response and to seek God's leading for just the specific response each is to make" (270). It is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is the teacher and not us. God may use us, but He is the real Teacher. It is our job to lead students to a place where the Holy Spirit can drive home truths that are given through the Word of God.

Understanding that people learn "better" in an interactive environment than in a class lecture will strengthen my efforts of teaching the Bible. Instead of planning lessons that just inform students of the knowledge that I have gained from the Bible, I will structure the class to first learn from the Bible passage and then discuss with each other how these truths apply to our lives. The chapters gave several good suggestions for stimulating creative discussion.