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Five Articles on Teaching the Bible

Help Your Students Think Above Level 1

(Article 1 of 5)

The article "Help Your Students Think Above Level 1" was printed in the December 1993 journal of *Sunday School Counselor*, published by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The author, Carolyn Lewan, is a high school teacher living in Kent, Washington. The author maintains that in order for students to "make the Christian message their own," they need to think at higher levels than just retaining factual information.

The six level of learning presented in this article include: (1) Factual knowledge; (2) Comprehension; (3) Application; (4) Analysis; (5) Synthesis; (6) Evaluation. Level 1 thinking is simply acquiring factual information about Scripture that answers questions that begin with "who," "what," "where," and "when." Level 2 thinking involves comprehending the lesson's meaning in such a way that a student can compare and contrast the lesson. Level 3 thinking requires the students to see themselves in the story using the learned concepts in new situations. Levels 4, 5, and 6 are usually dependent on each other. An example of Analysis would be drawing pictures of the main events of a story. An example of synthesis would be putting pieces together through role playing or writing a drama. Evaluation depends on facts, analysis, and synthesis.

A teacher has a responsibility to provide an atmosphere for the class that is conducive to learning at higher levels of thinking. In order to accomplish this, the teacher must understand the six levels of learning as presented and develop methods for incorporating the higher levels of thinking in the classroom. Understanding the different levels of learning will enhance my teaching ministry as I strive to teach at these higher levels, without neglecting the lower levels. I liked the fact that although the author believes that our goal is to teach students to think at the higher levels and to use judgment, evaluation, and assessment, she also mentions that all levels of learning are necessary for a student. I believe that her division of the different levels has been adequately defined, and that it is hard to distinguish between analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, since they are often dependent on each other.

NOTE: The following four articles all came from the same journal *Christian Education Counselor*, published in January 1995. Since this was a special leaders edition dedicated to celebrating the Assemblies of God's 60 years of Sunday School leadership, all of the articles are reprints from a much earlier date; however, the articles that I chose contain valuable messages on the teaching ministry that transcends time. For this reason, along with the fact that I only found one relevant article in my four available *Sunday School Counselor* journals, I have decided to write a summary on these older articles, *hoping* that you will agree that the ultimate purpose is being sufficiently fulfilled: learning valuable lessons from *relevant articles* on the teaching ministry.

Take and Teach the Word

(Article 2 of 5)

The article "Take and Teach the Word" was printed in the January 1995 journal of *Christian Education Counselor*, published by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The author, G. Raymond Carlson, was the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God from 1985 to 1993, and he was the executive director of the national Sunday School Department and Church School Literature Department when this article was first published in September 1970. The author proclaims that what the church needs in order to be effective are teachers who will "take the Word" and exalt the Bible above other materials, and then "teach the Word" expecting the student to respond.

A good teacher understands that people deserve his help and affection. He understands that God has called him not only to win his students to Christ, but also to take a personal interest in them and assist in molding them into the image of Christ by proclaiming the Word with anointing. While society in general tends to exalt the natural and material over the spiritual, the church's teachers must communicate life-changing truths of Scriptures with authority and confidence. "A short coming of Sunday schools, large and small, is that quarterlies tend to become textbooks and the Bible is put in second place." Quarterlies are good, but God blesses His Word. We are commanded to go and *teach*, using Jesus as our Master Teacher. Much preparation is needed in order to stimulate the student's thinking and for him to inquire and to be brought to a decision to act. Teaching provides opportunity to interact and to help guide the student into the Word and then get the Word into the student in such a way that he acts on what he has thought about.

A teacher has the responsibility to "take the Word" and to "teach the Word." Understanding the emphasis that Raymond Carlson has placed on these action phrases will strengthen my teaching ministry as I refocus my efforts to rely primarily on the Word and to teach the Word in such a way as to provoke a response. As a teacher I must take a sincere interest in the students and desire to see them conformed to the image of Christ by the Word of God that is proclaimed. God promises to bless His Word, so I must teach the Bible, using quarterlies as a guide or an outline (when necessary). To be an effective teacher I must adequately prepare my lessons so that I can stimulate the students' thinking with questions using "why" and to find encouraging ways for the class to participate and to respond to the lesson.

I agree with Carlson that "good instruction is important, but getting into the lives of students is more important." The teacher has an awesome responsibility before God to impart the Word to help shape and mold people's lives. Teaching truly is "a means of reaching, for we teach that we might reach." May I never forget the value of a soul.

The Teacher and Devotion

(Article 3 of 5)

The article "The Teacher and Devotion" was printed in the January 1995 journal of *Christian Education Counselor*, published by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The author, C.M. Ward, was the Revival-time speaker for 25 years and now lives in Modesto, California. This article was first published in September 1960, and is as relevant today as it was back then. The author clearly portrays that a teacher must be devoted to God, to humanity, and to the cause of Sunday school.

C. M. Ward reasons that devotion is more than just a bit of prayer or Bible reading; "Devotion is an intrinsic characteristic of a life that is truly dedicated." Because a teacher has the awesome responsibility for guiding lives through his lessons, the teacher must have a devotion to God. Also a teacher must be devoted to humanity and see each person as "worthwhile, if you could get the devil out of him." C. M. Ward answered a person's question of how he could make his ministry more successful by replying, "just love people!" A teacher must also be devoted to the cause of Sunday school. A devoted teacher is one who prepares eagerly and thoroughly for each class, seeing it as a great soul-winning opportunity as well as a training session.

The three main principles of devotion expressed in this article can and should be readily applied to a teacher's life. Understanding the dedication required to be an effective teacher will help strengthen my teaching ministry as I strive to practically devote myself to God, people, and the Sunday school ministry. I need to spend more quality time with God, preferably in the morning before going to work. I need to cry out to God for more love and compassion for people. Finally, I need to pray that God will help me maintain my enthusiasm for teaching and bring me back to the intense devotion I had years ago in preparing my lessons for my class.

This article was truly "eye opening" in that it expressed strong relevant truths in a unique way by first providing an alternate definition for *devotion*. According to Webster's dictionary, there are two primary meanings for the word *devotion*. In the first instance, the word is used to refer to an act of prayer, or private worship (or Bible reading, etc.). Secondly, *devotion* can mean "the state of being ardently dedicated and loyal (as to an idea or person)." I agree whole heartedly that a good teacher needs a strong devotion to God to be an appropriate guide, and needs a desire to reach out to needy people in love, and needs to be committed to studying and preparing to teach effectively. Unfortunately, I have not seen the Sunday school classes used as a great soul-winning agency as it seems to be portrayed in the article, but I know that it has the potential to be a means of out-reach. I hope and pray that as I dedicate myself to God and people that I will be able prepare lessons that will draw many "hungry" non-believers as well as believers to feast at the table where the Word is served.

The Ministry of Teaching

(Article 4 of 5)

The article "The Ministry of Teaching" was printed in the January 1995 journal of *Christian Education Counselor*, published by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The author, Thomas F. Zimmerman, was the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God from 1959 to 1985. When this article was first published in February of 1946, he was pastor of Central Assembly in Springfield, Missouri. Zimmerman explains that teaching has always been used as the means for preserving God's Word in the hearts of His people, both in Old Testament days and in New Testament days. The article lists and expands on eight prerequisites for a successful teaching ministry.

God ordained that religious truths should be preserved in the Promised Land by having the Israelites diligently teach their children (Deut. 6:6,7). Jesus reaffirmed the importance of the teaching ministry by commanding his disciples to go into all the world and teach all the things that He had told them (Matt. 28:19-20). "Jesus insisted that all of those who had shared the blessings of His grace should in turn communicate their blessings to others by the ministry of teaching." To have a successful teaching ministry a teacher must first have an aggressive burden that reaches out to those who would not come otherwise. Second, he must be faithful in his own attendance of class. Third, he must be diligent in preparing his lesson. Fourth, he must teach with the best methods. Fifth, He must have a personal interest in each member of the class. Sixth, he must enhance his own religious experience and be filled with God's anointing. Seventh, he must live a life that is consistent with the standards of the gospel that he teaches. Finally, an effective teacher has a heart and passion in his work.

After reading this article, I am even more convinced and motivated to teach and impart Biblical truths to others, hoping that they in turn will be able to carry the light to the next generation (2 Tim. 2:2). Understanding eight of the prerequisites that Zimmerman deems as essential to having a successful ministry will definitely lay a strong foundation for my teaching ministry as I strive to apply these truths into my own life. I will seek God's guidance in extending a friendly invitation to propel individuals to come to a place where they can hear an anointed and well-prepared lesson, as I allow myself to be used in word and in deed.

I agree that we must give ourselves faithfully to the ministry of teaching if we are going to see the teachings of Christ survive in our generation. I see more than ever before that there is a Biblical precedence to teaching the next generation the truths that have been imparted to me. I agree that teachers are unconsciously teaching by example as well as by words, and therefore they must ensure that their lives are above reproach. I concur that each of the eight principles that Zimmerman describes will help contribute towards producing a successful ministry of teaching.

My Teacher Was...

(Article 5 of 5)

The article "My Teacher Was..." was printed in the January 1995 journal of *Christian Education Counselor*, published by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The author, J. Robert Ashcroft, served as president of Central Bible College, Evangel College, Valley Forge Christian College, and Berean College. Although this article was first published in March 1955, the experiences are relateable to people of all generations. In this article the author describes the positive characteristics of one of his favorite past teachers. To him, his teacher was a *friend*, an *example*, and a *counselor*.

As a *friend*, his teacher would greet him each Sunday morning with a sincere warm smile. The teacher remembered birthdays and special occasions. When the author was sick or absent, the teacher called him and sent cards. His teacher was continuously encouraging him "to learn God's Word, to develop Christian character, and to witness for Christ."

As an *example*, the teacher exhibited a loyalty to Christ and always conducted himself in a Christ-like manner. He never got angry, but he was firm with the class. "Never worldly, yet joining in the fun." The teacher was an example in the Word, knowing where to find answers to perplexing questions. The teacher was an example in prayer, talking sincerely to God as though He were "a friend on the telephone."

As a *counselor*, he exerted a positive influence by his example to convince the author that "the Christian life was the only way." The author acknowledges that his teacher was one of those powerful influences in his life that guided him along the road to becoming a teacher too.

Having been able to relate to Ashcroft's experiences as a student, I would agree that these are admirable qualities in a teacher. Understanding these three characteristics will enhance my teaching ministry as I strive to practically implement behavior patterns that exhibit being a friend, an example, and a counselor. Likewise, I will earnestly greet my students as they walk into the class, remembering their special occasions as a friend. I will conduct myself in a Christ-like manner, realizing that I am being observed by both my students and my LORD. I will be open to helping students work through problems and life's decisions by sharing relevant parts of the Word of God that would speak to such issues and guide them accordingly.

Since Ashcroft was an experienced teacher when he wrote this article, he could accurately reflect and assess the good qualities of his prior teacher that should exemplify all teachers. The author did such a great job of sharing his grateful experiences as a student that it should motivate teachers who are reading his article to desire to emulate the author's model teacher who was a real person. Critically speaking, I think that the author was vague in his description of the role of a counselor, but I agree that the teacher does have a tremendous influence in guiding students.