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How I Perceive Myself as a Teacher of the Bible

Reflecting over the past 10 years of teaching the Bible, (primarily in small group studies in college dormitories, churches, and my work place), I have provided an assessment of my view of (1) preparation, (2) class management, (3) content, (4) methods, and (5) the student.

1. My View of Preparation

As a teacher, I realize that I have an awesome responsibility for serving and guiding lives through my lessons. Although some Bible studies may not require much preparation, I believe that an *effective* Bible Study requires much preparation on the part of the teacher in the areas of knowledge, character, and devotion. I normally spend at least one hour preparing for each Bible study if I am already familiar with the material and have gathered extensive research on this topic previously; otherwise I spend much more time enjoyably researching the theme and the Scriptures to expound on them for the lesson. My preparation includes not only knowledge of the material, 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. Since a teacher imparts his life which will either support or deny his words, I believe that I need to be an example in my character: my conduct and my words. In addition to knowledge and character, I must pray earnestly for the students, the meeting, myself, and God, knowing that I can do nothing profitable on my own and that I need His anointing and Spirit to help me lead and teach.

Preparation also includes being prepared to teach the class consistently and on time. I am intensely devoted to the cause of Bible studies, especially at my work place. For 4 years, I have rarely missed teaching a class, except when I have traveled out of the country or was sick. With excitement, I am always on time. I believe that this will set a precedence for the students.

2. My View of Class Management

My class management philosophy is to teach in such a way that not only *informs* but also *transforms*. I believe that it is my job and privilege to lead the students to a place where the *Holy Spirit* can drive home truths that are given through the Word of God. I view the class as an environment in which the students can learn and apply the Bible, as I strive to utilize appropriate methods of teaching in order for the students to attain higher learning levels. I have managed my classes using both the *directed* and *inductive* methodology.

3. My View of Methods

I have conducted *directed* Bible studies, where I have done the majority of the sharing, in the very beginning of my teaching "career" and when the classes have been very large or made up of new Christians with limited Christian knowledge or when I had to cover much material in a short time. The majority of the Bible studies I lead now are *inductive*, where each person is an active participant and contributes to the wealth of insights that come from several observers. When using this method I see myself as a discussion group leader who guides the discussion on track,

stimulates discussion, clarifies comments made, and affirms the contributions of others. I like to incorporate methods such as question and answer, discussion, and role playing, in order to provide an atmosphere that is more conducive to learning at higher levels of thinking. I often teach by a *question and answer* format using questions that begin with "who", "what", "where", and "when", which usually keeps the class thinking and reinforces the facts. Additionally, I ask people questions that begin with "why" and "how" to stimulate students to analyze and evaluate. I try to encourage the class to find ways to respond to a lesson out of love for God.

4. My View of Content

I prefer to give prominence to the Word of God in each Bible study, even though "quarterlies" (and other Sunday School helps) may be good supplemental materials in preparing and presenting a lesson. I strongly believe that God blesses His word when it is studied and proclaimed and that it is profitable for teaching, correction, training in righteousness, and doctrinal convictions (Heb. 4:12, Is. 55:11, 2 Tim. 3:16). I believe in utilizing sound principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) inside and outside of the class. This also helps me to assess commentaries more accurately and critically and helps me determine which ones should be used to supplement my lesson research and study. I like studying what the Bible meant to the original readers and then bridging the gap to reasoning what it means for us today. Although the core content of my Bible studies consist of the Bible and comments on the passage(s), I try to interweave practical illustrations and real life experiences into each lesson to enhance the learning of each student.

5. My View of the Student

Last, but most importantly, I view the student as the *reason* for the Bible study. I realize that God has given me an opportunity to **serve** other people (students) by using the gifts and talents that He has given to me. I serve by using the Bible to help educate, motivate, and encourage students. I believe that students want an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, practical, interactive teacher who has the ability to challenge them in their thinking and in their spiritual walk. I believe that the burden of learning rests on the student, but that I should facilitate in the student's investigation and discovery of Biblical truth. I believe in the "priesthood of the believer," and therefore I allow the Holy Spirit to speak to and through each participant as we investigate and apply the Word of God. In this context, I see myself as a fellow student learning from the ideas of others. I also know the non-negotiable teachings that must be proclaimed with boldness and those issues that may have several "right" views, of which the student should be gently guided to recognize his own view based on the Word.

I feel that it is important to take a personal interest in students. Teaching has provided me with an opportunity to interact with and to help guide students through the Word and for them to allow the Word to govern their lives and actions as they submit to Christ. I greet everyone with a warm, sincere smile as they come to the Bible Study. I view students as friends and I try to establish a relationship with them outside the Bible Study setting. I try to follow up and encourage the people who are not able to make the Bible study, but I am sensitive to not burden them with coming if they have "willfully" chosen not to come. I try not to base our relationship on whether or not that person comes to a Bible Study. I have served as a counselor, especially among those who rarely come to the Bible studies because of "problems" in their lives, realizing that God and His word are the true counselors.