

The “A, B, C’s” of Teaching the Bible

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Chapter One

“A” - Attitude

Before we begin to actually “teach” others, it is important to evaluate our own heart attitude about teaching God’s Word.

- Take a moment and picture yourself in a situation where you are teaching God’s Word. Briefly describe what that specific situation looks like in the space below. (Who are you with? Where are you located? What Bible lesson do you envision yourself to be teaching?)

- Still seeing yourself in the above teaching situation, what do you intellectually know to be true about your faithfulness in teaching? What does God think about the fact that you are teaching His Word?

- Now, look into your heart. In the above teaching situation, how do you “feel” as you step up before your audience to teach them? What emotions do you experience?

For most people, there is a dichotomy between what we mentally “know” to be true about teaching the Bible, and how we “feel” about actually instructing others. It is crucial that we align our heart with our head when it comes to presenting God’s Word. Our attitude matters.

There are two extreme attitudes that must be dealt with before any teaching begins. In one case, there are those who know that God wants them to teach, but they resist teaching because of their feelings of inadequacy. The second

extreme deals with those who eagerly grab every opportunity to teach because they love to be in the limelight. Both of these attitudes are wrong, and both are rooted in personal pride.

- Let's begin by "building" a proper attitude regarding biblical teaching. Put a checkmark beside any comments, ideas, or feelings, listed below that have crossed your own mind:
 - A. What, me teach? I'm no teacher!
 - B. I'm not a good speaker. Anyway, I don't know what I'd say if I was asked to teach.
 - C. I'm too busy to teach. It would take too much time.
 - D. I don't think that I'm qualified to teach.
 - E. There are other people who are better teachers than I am. Let them do it!
 - F. I'd like to teach, but my teaching style is so different from everyone else.
 - G. I'm afraid to teach because people might not like what I say. I don't want to step on any toes.
 - H. If people want to understand the Bible they should study it for themselves. It's not my problem.
 - I. What's the point? It's not going to make any difference in people's lives if they know the Bible or not.

Now, let's begin by looking at each one of these thoughts in light of God's Word.

A. What, me teach? I'm no teacher!

How did you learn about Jesus? Most likely, you first heard about the Lord from another person. Somebody "taught" you about Christ. Though God Almighty has given every person a testimony of His existence through creation (Romans 1:18-20), He has specifically determined that the message of the gospel be transmitted from person to person (II Timothy 2:2, 3).

"How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher (Romans 10:14)?"

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).”

People need to have someone tell them about the Lord, and faith results from hearing the word. That is what Bible teaching is all about.

Some believers erroneously assume that teaching the Bible is reserved only for those who have been given the “*spiritual gift of teaching*” (Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28). While it is true that God has given certain individuals the special gift of teaching, He has called every Christian to teach.

Actually, we are all teachers. Parents teach their children (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Proverbs 1:8; II Timothy 3:15), grandparents teach their grandchildren (Psalm 78:1-6), older women are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5), church leaders are to teach (I Timothy 3:2), and every mature believer should be teaching others (Hebrews 5:12).

Since spiritual growth is dependent upon teaching, the need for teachers is crucial. God’s people are exhorted to “*teach anyone who is ignorant*” of God’s laws (Ezra 7:28). Wise teaching lays the groundwork for every man to be presented “*complete in Christ*” (Colossians 1:28). God told Ezekiel that if he refused to warn the wicked not to sin, that their blood would be on his hands (3:17-20).

- The church today is being weakened because few Christians are willing to teach others. Think about your own attitude and experience. Why do you think that there are so few believers today who are willing to teach God’s Word?
- What would you say is your own greatest hindrance in teaching God’s Word?

People of all ages need to be taught, and God sends teachers to them. What do the following verses tell us about being spokesmen for the Lord?

1. Jeremiah 1:4-9

2. **Isaiah 6:1-8**
3. **I Corinthians 9:16, 17**
4. **I Thessalonians 2:4-7**

B. I'm not a good speaker. Anyway, I don't know what I'd say if I was asked to teach.

What do the following Scriptures tell us about our ability to teach?

5. **II Corinthians 3:5**
6. **Exodus 4:12**
7. **Isaiah 50:4, 5**
8. **I Corinthians 12:27-31**
9. **II Chronicles 16:9**

God does not call the equipped; He equips those whom He calls. What do people experience when the Lord empowers them to speak His words?

10. **Jeremiah 20:9**
11. **II Kings 6:24; 7:9**
12. **Psalms 39:3**

- Have you ever experienced anything similar to what is described above?

C. I'm too busy to teach. It would take too much time.

The Lord tells us that there is a great reward for those who shepherd His flock. When Jesus appears, they will receive the unfading crown of glory from Him (I Peter 5:4). Yet, the Lord is also very direct in exhorting His people to count the cost involved in being His spokesman.

According to the following verses, what will be the "cost" involved when a person accepts God's assignment to teach His Word?

13. Ezra 7:6-10

14. I Timothy 4:13-16

15. II Timothy 4:5

16. Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

17. Jeremiah 48:10

18. James 3:1

- As you read the above verses, did anything seem to be "too high a price" to pay for being God's spokesman? If so, what specifically causes you to have reservations?
- Are you willing to "pay the price" that God requires in order for you to be used by Him?

Chapter Two

“B” - Background

What is “teaching?” In the space below, write out your definition of the word.

Most of us would say that “teaching” is the presentation of facts on a given subject. Many Bible teachers assume that if they have an accurate, well thought out lesson, that presenting that material is the equivalent of “teaching” that material.

Yet, teaching is more than dispensing information. The Hebrew terms for “teaching” and for “learning” come from the same root word. The English dictionary defines “teaching” as “to cause to know the subject.” Teaching is inexorably intertwined with learning. If the student does not “learn” what is being taught, then “teaching” has not occurred. Teaching is not what a teacher does in front of a class; teaching is what happens in the student. If no learning is taking place; no teaching is happening.

In order to maximize learning, a teacher needs to consider how to best communicate with their specific audience. One key element to take into account is the background of your students. For example,

- ❖ It would be futile to teach a class in English to an audience who only spoke Japanese.
- ❖ It would be ineffective to teach two year olds a three hour seminary-level class in homiletics.
- ❖ It would probably not be very productive to teach the lineage of Babylonian kings to a group of pagan Aborigines.

Knowing the background of the audience enables a teacher to help the student actually “learn.” The background of the audience will have a bearing on both the content of what is being taught, and the manner in which that material is presented.

God’s Word is our food (Matthew 4:4), and Christ told His disciples to “*feed His sheep*” (John 21:15-17). What does the Lord exhort shepherds to do?

1. Proverbs 27:23

How do you think that this might apply to teaching?

What do the following verses indicate regarding areas in which Bible teachers should try to understand their audience?

2. Hebrews 5:13, 14

3. I Corinthians 3:1, 2

4. Mark 4:3-8; 14-20

- Select one of the three texts above, and give an example of how understanding the background of your audience in this specific area might affect the way that you teach:

Understanding the background of the audience helps a teacher to communicate in a way that they would understand. A good communicator will discern where the audience is located, then, go to meet that audience where they are.

5. **Genesis 3:9**

What question did God ask Adam?

Who approached whom in this conversation?

6. **Acts 16:13, 14**

How does this passage indicate that Paul understood his “audience?”

In preparing to teach God’s Word, we must begin by asking ourselves a series of questions. **The first question is; “why are these people in this class?”** Discerning the answer to that question is crucial for a teacher.

According to the following verses, why did some people want to listen to God’s Word being taught?

7. **Ezekiel 33:30-32**

8. **Mark 12:37**

9. **Mark 6:20**

- Do you think that knowing the motive of those listening to God’s Word might be important for a Bible teacher? Why, or why not?

The second question that a teacher should ask about the audience is; “What do these people really need from the Lord?”

Ask the Lord to reveal to you the real “point of need” in your audience. More often than not, those whom you are teaching are not aware themselves of what they need to learn, or hear, from the Lord.

How do the following passages indicate that the Lord was able to look beyond the person’s perceived need and see the person’s true spiritual need?

10. John 4:4-15

According to verses 7 and 15, what did this woman perceive her need to be?

What did Jesus identify as being her real need?

In what specific ways did Jesus communicate with this woman in a way that she would understand?

11. Matthew 9:2-7

What was this man’s perceived need?

What did Jesus identify as being this man’s true need?

The third question that a teacher should ask is; “How can I speak so that the students will understand what I am saying?” People cannot learn from a teacher who is unable to communicate with them.

The following verses give three instances where God’s people spoke to others. How did understanding the background of their audience help these people to communicate more effectively?

12. Acts 21:39-22:2

13. Ezekiel 3:4-8

Chapter Four

“D” - Delivery

- Getting and keeping their attention
- How to ask good questions
- Dealing with “challenges” during in class

God tells us that the Bible is “alive and active,” but some Bible classes seem dead and stiff. What a shame! The Bible should never be boring. As a matter of fact, the Bible is NOT boring; but some teachers are!

If you’re not the best speaker in the world you’re in good company. It’s not natural ability or innate talent that makes a good Bible teacher, it is the power of God flowing through empty vessels. The Apostle Paul was certainly not a boring teacher! Yet, what do the following verses reveal about Paul’s speaking ability?

1. **I Corinthians 2:1-5**
2. **II Corinthians 10:10, 11**
3. **II Corinthians 11:6**

Paul’s teaching flowed out of him as the Holy Spirit filled him. The Lord made Paul bold in speaking, even though he spoke in weakness, fear and trembling. And God can do the same thing in our lives.

But even the one with the least natural teaching “talent” can become an excellent communicator.

Getting and keeping their attention:

Have you ever noticed that some teachers seem to be more interesting than others; even when they are teaching the same material? How do certain teachers manage to keep our attention? What is their secret that keeps students on the edge of their seats?

There really are certain techniques that can help anyone to become a better communicator. Let’s begin by walking through a typical teaching experience.

A – Attitude; the Lord has called you to teach His Word and you are faithfully obedient. **B – Background**; you have considered your audience and discerned their spiritual needs. **C – Content**; you have prepared your message from Scripture, and prayed for the Lord to make His Word fruitful. Finally, it's "**D-Day**."

Begin by praying and preparing yourself spiritually to teach. Then, though it may seem mundane, consider the technical aspects of your teaching before presenting your message.

- Dress in an appropriate way that honors the Lord, and shows respect for your audience.
- Your goal is to communicate with your audience, so do not hesitate to use a microphone if it will help others to hear you.
- Be sure to arrive early in order to make sure that the room and any needed teaching tools are ready for use (microphones, tables, overheads, etc.).
- Begin, and end, on schedule. (This demonstrates that you honor other's time).
- If it is appropriate, stand up to teach; you are God's appointed spokesman. You are on assignment as the ambassador of the King of the Universe (II Corinthians 5:20).

At last, the moment has arrived to **Deliver** your message. You step up before your students and take a breath. What you do in the next twenty seconds will greatly determine the success of your communicating with your audience that day.

Two parts of your presentation are extremely crucial; your introduction, and your conclusion. Your mother was right when she said that that you only have one chance to make a good first impression. In the same way, the first twenty seconds of your presentation can make, or break, your ability to harness your audience's attention.

How should you begin your teaching? Your goal during that first minute of teaching is to bring your audience to a place where they are interested and they **WANT** to hear what you have to say.

How do you do that? Examine yourself; think about what you do well. What comes naturally for you? What kinds of things are a struggle for you? Use an approach that seems to “fit” your personality.

- Perhaps you’re a “critical thinker”; begin by asking a thought-provoking question.
- Maybe you’re a “warm and fuzzy” person; begin by telling a humorous or heartwarming story.
- You may be one of those rare “stand up comedian” types; start by telling a pertinent joke.
- Perhaps you’re a “stir the pot” kind of person who loves the thrill of debate; jolt your audience by making a shockingly controversial statement.

There are countless ways to grab your audience’s attention. Just be yourself. Your audience will know if you are having fun teaching, and they will feel uncomfortable if you are not at ease with your teaching approach.

Quickie Quiz #1:

As you consider ways to grab your audience’s attention, which of the above-mentioned approaches would be more your style?

Regardless of what approach you use, “give it all you’ve got!” Even the way that you physically approach the group will speak volumes; leap out of the starting blocks with gusto. After all, God has given you this assignment; He is your real Audience (Colossians 3:23, 24)! Be assured that the Lord will use His Word to accomplish His purposes, and be confident that what He has to say through you can, and will, make a difference in the lives of your listeners (Isaiah 55:11). Be bold (Ephesians 6:19, 20).

Address their point of need, and let them know how the lesson of the day will change their lives. Communicate to them the one sentence content of your message.

Be careful not to begin your presentation with an apology, such as:

- ✓ *I didn’t have much time to prepare this week.....*
- ✓ *This might be boring for some of you....*
- ✓ *I’m no authority on this subject, but*

After “getting” their attention, the challenge is “keeping it.” Here are some ideas:

- The bigger the audience, the larger the body movements needed to maintain their attention. Don’t be afraid to exaggerate your movements while teaching!
- Enthusiastically tell the class that you are glad to be there. Get them to be on your side; cheering for you to be successful in teaching.
- If you sense that the class is beginning to drift away, do something bizarre; walk around the room, jump up and down, burst into song, lead some cheers, ask a random question...keep that element of surprise going 😊. It may help to stop teaching, and humorously let the class in on the fact that you know they’re “leaving you;” asking them with a smile to “come back.”
- If you’re losing their attention, ask a question and divide the class into small discussion groups to discuss it.
- If you “blow it” during class don’t try to cover it up; make a joke of it and keep going.

One of the greatest Bible teachers in Scripture was Ezra. He “had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). God appointed him to re-introduce the Law to the Jewish people after they returned to Jerusalem following the Babylonian Captivity.

Read the following text carefully, and record any insights that you glean regarding how Ezra taught Scripture to God’s people.

4. Nehemiah 8:1-12

Who asked Ezra to teach the law of Moses?

Who comprised the audience?

How long did Ezra teach?

Were the people attentive?

Chapter Seven

“D” - Delivery

- Drawings
- Songs
- Humor

Drawings

As we learned in Chapter Five, visual learning greatly multiplies the effectiveness of verbal teaching. One teaching technique that can be of great benefit is incorporating drawing into your class lesson.

When you are teaching a passage that lends itself to making a pictorial representation, ask the class to draw a picture of what is being described. Sketching Scripture can benefit the student in many ways:

- Drawing what is being described can help to simplify something that seems complicated.
- Drawing can personalize the text. For example, having a student sketch his impression of Psalm 23 can help him to see how the Lord is his very own Shepherd who cares for his personal needs.
- Making diagrams or pictures is also a great tool for helping one to retain information. It is possible to “draw pictures” of entire books of the Bible, of certain chapters, or of various verses.

Let’s practice. Read the following verses, and draw a picture of what is being described.

1. Matthew 7:13, 14

2. Daniel 2:31-36

Did you find that drawing what was being described in the above texts added to your comprehension, or retention, of the biblical text?

Songs

God invented music. Singing accompanied God's creation of the universe (Job 38:7). Scripture says that "the Lord is my ...song" (Exodus 15:2), and He "gives songs in the night" (Job 35:10).

God's people sing to Him.

- Moses wrote a song describing God's faithfulness and power that He showed on behalf of Israel (Exodus 15:1). He led the nation in singing that song before the Lord.
- Deborah and Barak sang a song recounting God's faithfulness in defending His people (Judges 5).
- The nation of Israel sang a song of gratitude for God's provision of water (Numbers 21:17, 18).
- National heroes were honored by having songs sung that described their victories in warfare (I Samuel 29:5).
- The priests led the nation in singing songs of praise to God (Ezra 3:11; Nehemiah 12:42).

- King David wrote many “psalms“(songs) that addressed the Lord in praise and in prayer. The entire book of Psalms is literally the hymnal of Israel. The Psalms were written to be sung with the accompaniment of stringed instruments.

Read the following verses. What insights can you glean regarding how songs may be beneficial to use in teaching a Bible study?

3. Psalm 106:12

4. Deuteronomy 31:19-22

5. Psalm 42:8

6. Psalm 119:54

7. Ephesians 5:19

(The word “speaking” literally means, “to talk, utter words, to preach.”)

8. Colossians 3:16

How might a teacher incorporate “songs” into a Bible study? Here are a few ideas:

- a) Write your own song, or poem, about the Scripture being studied and teach it to the class.
- b) Challenge the class members to each write their own spiritual song or poem related to the spiritual truth being studied.
- c) Pick out a spiritual song that everyone knows and sing it together in class.
- d) Find a hymn that presents a doctrinally sound message and use it as your “Bible study.” Here’s an example.