

## Pastor as Teacher of the Faith

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Christ gave his followers a final command, The Great Commission, in which He instructs them to make disciples by baptizing and teaching the nations all of His commandments (Matthew 28:19). This teaching is so that they may place their hope in God by remembering His works and following His commandments (Psalm 78:7). Training is a primary duty of the parents (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25; Hebrews 12:10), but is also the duty of the entire faith community (Deuteronomy 31:12-13; Proverbs 22:6; Hebrews 13:7; Luke 2:46) to bring their children up in faith (Ephesians 6:4; II Timothy 3:14-15) using the Scriptures to teach doctrine, correct wrong behaviors, and teach righteous behaviors (II Timothy 3:16; Proverbs 22:15; 29:17; Ephesians 6:4) to mature the faith (Hebrews 5:12-14; I Peter 2:1-3; I Corinthians 3:2; II Timothy 3:17). It is also a primary duty of the Church and a pastor may be both a preacher and teacher (I Timothy 5:17; I Corinthians 12:8; Ephesians 4:11; I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:11).

Once Jesus began His public ministry, teaching His disciples (and others whom He encountered on almost a daily basis) became His primary task (Matthew 9:35). Jesus taught in private a small core of disciples, in a principle of teaching the teachers (Mark 4:34; Mark 3:13-14; Matthew 13:36-52; John 16:29-33; Luke 11:1-5, Matthew 6:9-13, Mark 11:24; Matthew 17:19-21). While it is true that today we look upon Him as a miracle-worker, prophet, and preacher, He was foremost a teacher (Matthew 9:11; 12:38; 17:24; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36; 23:8; 26:18, et. al.). Even Mary Magdalene called Him “Teacher” when she recognized Him in the Garden after His resurrection. Throughout Galilee, Samaria and Judea, Jesus taught in synagogues, boats, temples, streets, marketplaces, and gardens. He taught on plains, trails, and mountainsides—wherever people were. And He taught as One possessing authority (Mark 1:22). After hearing His discourses, the only thing the people who heard Him could say was, “No man ever spoke like this Man” (John 7:46).

The teaching did not stop when Christ returned to heaven. He had trained others—apostles and disciples—to continue the task He had begun. The apostles were appointed by Christ (Matthew 10:1-7; Acts 1:24-26) so as to govern the church (I Thessalonians 4:8; II Thessalonians 3:6,14) to teach, write and preach with authority (I Corinthians 14:37; I Thessalonians 2:13; 4:15; II Peter 3:15,16), and to establish the Church upon the foundation of the “apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20).

They were sent to the uttermost parts of the Earth with the mandate to proclaim the “good news” through preaching and teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). This they did daily (Acts 5:42). The result was additional disciples, who then were rooted and grounded in the fundamentals of God’s Word (Acts 2:42) so they could teach others. In a single day, in a single city, over 3,000 people became Christians as a result of such teaching (Acts 2:41). This training starts with children (Proverbs 22:6).

In fact, so effective was this kind of instruction that Christianity’s bitterest enemies desperately tried to prohibit any further public teaching (Acts 4:18; 5:28), yet to no avail. Christianity’s message—and the unwavering dedication of those into whose hands it had been placed—were too powerful for even its most formidable foes to abate or defeat. Twenty centuries later, the central theme of the Cross still is vibrant and forceful. Christianity’s success today, just as in the first century, is dependent on the dedication, and honesty, of those to whom the Truth has been entrusted. But the power is not in the men; rather, it is in the message! This, no doubt, accounts for the instructions Paul sent to Timothy in his second epistle when he urged the young evangelist to “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

Faith is a hope and a belief in things we cannot prove (Hebrews 11:1), but it is necessary if we are to understand the world we live in (Hebrews 11:3), the Truth of God (I Corinthians 1:18-21; 2:14; Psalm 119:130; Jeremiah 15:16) and how we are to live (Psalm 119:105; Joshua 1:8). Faith is accomplished by hearing (Romans 10:17) and being taught the Word (Mark 2:1-2; Job 22:22) which allows one to grow in faith (II Peter 3:18).

This is because the Bible is God's work (II Timothy 3:16) and it will accomplish what purpose God has for it (Isaiah 55:11), that is so that we may "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37), and this gives not just life but a more abundant life (John 10:10). This faith has stages of maturity (Hebrews 5:12-14; I Peter 2:1-3; I Corinthians 3:2). We are built up by it and each other (Hebrews 10:24-25; Colossians 3:16).

Teaching the Word of God should be done in love (John 13:34-35; I John 18:19). We are not to judge or dispute over trivial matters, but to teach in love (Romans 14), so that they might grow in faith through that truth spoken love (Ephesians 4:15) and become transformed by it (Romans 12:1-2). Christ taught by asking questions (John 21:17; Luke 7:42), by telling stories to illustrate great principles in terms that his audience could understand and remember because they did not yet have faith (Matthew 13:10; Mark 4:11), by being a servant to those whom he wanted to teach (John 13:14), by not giving offense to challenges (John 8:6), but teaching in love (Matthew 23:37; c.f. Romans 12:9-21). Jesus approached those he wished to teach by first establishing a relationship with them and treating them with respect (John 4:9-29; Luke 19:1-10).

When someone is teaching in error we are to correct in love and in private, as in the Acts 18 story concerning Apollos, a Jew who was "fervent in spirit" and who "spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord" (Acts 18:25). However, when Apollos traveled to Ephesus, and began speaking "boldly in the synagogue," Aquila and Priscilla heard him and realized that he still was advocating the baptism of John the Baptist as it looked forward to the coming of Christ (see Acts 18:25-26). That baptism, of course, no longer was valid, having been supplanted by the baptism in Christ's death and burial (Romans 6:3). Certainly, Apollos was sincere, but he was wrong. Aquila and Priscilla "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). When his error was pointed out, he corrected it and subsequently continued with his preaching and teaching about Christ – apparently with much success, since, upon his arrival in Achaia, "the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:27-28).

When James wrote his New Testament epistle, he warned: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). It is a sobering thought indeed to know that those who teach God's Word one day shall be held accountable for how, and what, has been taught. Our teaching, therefore, should be designed to do at least three things.

First, it should present the sinner with the pure, unadulterated Gospel, in the hope that they will hear it, believe it, and obey it, thereby be saved from their lost state (Luke 13:3; Romans 3:23; 6:23). The ultimate goal of our efforts is not merely to inform, but rather that the hearer should be transformed by the Word (Romans 10:17; John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:1) to proper action by the action of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:9; see also John 14:26; 16:13).

Second, the things we teach, publicly or privately, should equip Christians for greater maturity in the faith so that they, too, can become teachers (Hebrews 5:12). The success of Christianity in the world is dependent upon those who advocate it being able to teach it to others.

Third, our teaching should edify the entire church so that should the time come when certain saints "will not endure sound doctrine" (II Timothy 4:3-4), there will be those well-grounded in the truth who can combat error and "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3).

Certainly, those of us who teach bear a weighty responsibility (Ezekiel 33:7-9; James 3:1), being appointed by the Holy Spirit to that office (Isaiah 48:16; Acts 13:2; 20:28) and empowered to teach in wisdom (I Corinthians 12:8; John 14:26; 16:13-4). But if it is done properly, we will receive from the Lord a "crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Equally important is the fact that if those whom we teach trust and obey Christ, they, too,

will enjoy a home in heaven, and a soul will have been saved from death (Ezekiel 33:14-16). The responsibility may be weighty, but the reward is commensurate to the task.

Luther had definite ideas concerning teaching the faith which he expresses in his Introduction to the *Small Catechism* in four main themes:

1. the laity doesn't know or understand Christian doctrine (Luther 243-4)
2. teaching them said doctrine is the duty of the pastor (244)
3. the method of teaching should be memorization of the *Small Catechism*, followed by study of the meanings, and then topped by moving to the *Large Catechism* (244-246)
4. the pastors should not make a law to study, but only set forth the benefit and harm (247-248)

Instead of commanding and condemning as a teaching technique, Luther wanted pastors now to just point out the benefits and consequences of not growing in their faith by practicing it and studying it. This method of teaching means that they must work much harder to instill a desire to learn in their congregations. They must start with easy forms of simple doctrine studied through memorization, then move to trying to gain understanding and finally to learning the nuances of church doctrine. Also, they must make partners of the parents in this endeavor, because the parents are responsible for their children's Christian instruction.

In rejecting the former Catholic method of instruction through command and fear, Luther aligned it with the basic Christian doctrine that God doesn't force anyone to believe or trust in Him, but desires all to come to Him by not rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit. So too, we are to first receive the milk of the Word and then the meat, in order to not overwhelm the novice and cause them to give up.

Tolbert sees faith as something that you live; it is at the very essence of your being and guides your actions, lives in your heart and clarifies your worldview. It's more than trust, its trust that expresses itself in obedience that submits its will to God. Faith is beyond human understanding, but it is an assurance that He is there for you.

Whether this faith starts with trust or with knowledge matters not, both are necessary for faith and both are necessary for faith to grow. Even as our human personality needs a balance between the intellectual and the emotional, so we need a balance in our faith between deepening our understanding of God and our commitment to a relationship with Him. We grow in faith through the community of saints, Bible study, meaningful worship, service to others and hearing His Word spoken.

Whenever believers announce the forgiveness of sins to a penitent, that is sharing the Gospel. That is spiritual refreshment -- whether it be the pastor absolving, or another Christian. When one sorrowing over his sins hears the words, "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven because of the cross of Jesus," that is sharing the Gospel.

Sharing the Gospel also can mean pointing one who is struggling with something to the promises of God. For example, if a Christian is in trouble, and another reminds them that God has promised, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will glorify me" (Psalm 50:15), that is sharing the Gospel.

The Smalcald Articles, one of our Lutheran Confessions, speaks about this. In part three, article four, Martin Luther writes that the Gospel doesn't just come to us in one way, but in many ways. It comes first through preaching of forgiveness, but also through baptism and the Lord's Supper. It also comes, says Luther, "through the power of the keys and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters. Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together ..." (Smalcald Articles, III.4). Luther understood that God's grace can be given through the "mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren." He understood that spiritual refreshment comes when fellow believers share the gospel with us.

Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit that comes when God is shared, which can be by reading, hearing, observing and Baptism. Little children can have it, but it must be nurtured and built upon to remain, which occurs through the Word, exhortation of fellow believers in worship and fellowship and the imitation of the lives of the faithful. Only God can judge it, but we can see it in our actions. It justifies us, but is never alone – it is always accompanied by God-pleasing works. Faith blesses us by enabling us to do what we could not without it and reorders our priorities to align with God's.

Fryar sees Christian Educators as chosen by God to follow Him in self-forgetful love. Christian education is a form of discipleship, which involves: Shared life, model behaviors, lessons, meaningful assignments, praise for success, tools and knowledge to succeed, reinforced concepts, critical thinking skills, confrontation of sin and prayer for others and self. It is a matter of growing in God's grace to become confident in Him.

The methodology for Christian education is to: 1) determine needs; 2) set standards; 3) select curriculum; 4) consecrate those chosen (I Timothy 8-13; Acts 6). Teachers are: 1) part of the priesthood of all believers; 2) set aside by the church for service; 3) publicly acknowledge their call; 4) perform their duties in the stead of their church; 5) represent Christ; 6) rely on the Holy Spirit. If circumstances seem to be preventing us from being successful, we should turn to God to clarify the call. Some things to consider to understand a call are: 1) do we do that task well and enjoy it; 2) what does the Holy Spirit say to us; 3) what to other mature Christians say; 4) what kind of results are we seeing; 5) are we gifted with the Spiritual Gift of teaching; and finally 6) what is our heart telling us. Remember always that God is responsible for the results.

God's priority is you and your spiritual growth. To accomplish this requires four goals: 1) trust in God (faith); 2) remember God's deeds (facts); 3) keep God's commands (acts); and 4) be faithful to God (attitude). We are called to be fruitful and teach Law/Gospel application and function through experience (lecture/lab). The development of teaching plans include: 1) reverence and prayer; 2) apply text to our own life (text says to original readers, text in context of Christian doctrine, text means to me); 3) set objectives (facts, concepts, feelings, actions); plan a hook (auditory, visual, kinesthetic); 4) share objectives with students; 5) draw lesson activities from objectives; 6) evaluate how well objectives were met. However, never waste a "teachable moment"; they are usually the most powerful lessons.

Education is not worship, but our worship should include: 1) involvement of everyone; 2) brevity; response and reflection; 3) modeled behaviors; 4) elements of familiarity and freshness; 5) emphasis on the Gospel.

According to Fryar, curriculum can be secular or Christian, but each has its own pitfalls to be avoided. With secular, they must often be analyzed for apostasy and adapted for the classroom lesson. For Christian, they must be examined for false theology and legalism. A teacher's often most effective activity is to practice discipleship with grace and patience.

Fryar advocates that Christian teachers should learn from the largely secular research that has been done on how children develop mentally. Her understanding of Piaget is that children have six distinct stages of intellectual growth through which they view and make sense of the world. These stages are universal, discrete, invariant, and sequential. While Kohlberg concentrated on the moral reasoning by observing how they handled moral dilemmas and then categorized their level of sophistication into stages of growth, much like Piaget. Piaget's stages are

- Early Childhood, preoperational where appearances are reality and are singularly focused
- Elementary Children, concrete operations where logic and complexity start but are focused on the *quid pro quo* and, eventually, intentions
- Junior High, formal operations where conceptual thinking starts with derived values, attention to social convention and integration of faith into life

Children develop not only in stages that are distinctively different than how adults reason and frame. But Fryer suggests that one must also take into account emotions, through which one can teach faith also. It is emotion that allows the development of relationships between us and a child and between the child and Jesus. To do so requires time, relating, loving, caring and listening. If one has developed a relationship, then one has earned the right to mentor and correct. Listening should utilize the 'active listening' skills that are a part of good communications skills.

Peters sees Piaget as focusing his work on cognitive development, Erikson on psychosocial development and Kohlberg on moral reasoning. Her descriptions of Piaget's cognitive development are much clearer and end with the admonition that a class will have varying maturity levels with different maturity rates so an assortment of activities needs to be offered to hold the attention and be effective with every child.

Erikson's stages of personality development also is postulated to occur in stages:

- Trust v. Mistrust, knowledge of a strong, loving God enables overcoming of the negatives in one's life
- Autonomy v. Shame & Doubt, development of autonomy enables obedience to God through a positive relationship where forgiveness is available for failures
- Initiative v. Guilt, loving relationships despite occasional fights influence children to explore, receive forgiveness for messes and responsibility for consequences of actions
- Industry v. Inferiority, worth is not a matter of success because God's love is not dependent upon our earning it
- Identity v. Role Confusion, adolescents need to confirm their identity as children of God and make a personal commitment to Him
- Intimacy v. Isolation, Christian community and fellowship are based upon the development of intimacy within a household of faith
- Generativity v. Stagnation, people need to feel that they make a difference and can put their faith into action
- Integrity v. Despair, integrity is found in the trust that heaven is real and imminent

Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning shows us that we need to deal with children at their level of moral reasoning and use that in teaching how that fits into the Christian faith and to create an atmosphere of trust where children can explore their understanding with moral dilemmas, that God's Word is the ultimate standard and how we can learn to live it.

Fowler relates to cognitive faith, Westerhoff relates to involvement of faith in life and Gillespie relates to a blending of cognitive and emotional faith stages.

Fowler's stages of faith are said to be universal to all faiths, including a faith in no god, build upon one another and are reflected in specific patters of thinking:

- Infancy and Undifferentiated Faith, not a stage but rather a pre-formation of trust
- Intuitive-Projective Faith, God is presented as loving, caring and blessing them
- Mythic-Literal Faith, God is presented as being fair, forgiveness includes punishment for the sin
- Synthetic-Conventional Faith, God is presented as a friend, counselor and guide as reflective of the faith of the authorities of their life
- Individuative-Reflective Faith, Faith is examined and evaluated to relate to the meaning of life and what God means to them in their life

- Conjunctive Faith, Faith readily admits some of the apparent paradoxes that we can examine but still accept
- Universalizing Faith, Faith is integrated into life

Westerhoff's stages of faith development is based upon the assertion the faith cannot be taught, but rather is shared:

- Experience Faith is developed by experiencing it
- Afflictive Faith is developed by belonging to a group
- Searching Faith is found through questioning and commitment
- Owned Faith is one that changes your life

Gillespie's theory of Experience of Faith are faith situations that correspond to stages of life:

- Borrowed Faith through relationships with authorities
- Reflected Faith of a community
- Personalized Faith through questioning and freedom
- Established Faith relates to applicability of life issues
- Reordered Faith is a reinterpretation of faith into practical use
- Reflective Faith is an re-examination of life and how their faith relates to their life
- Resolute Faith is both cognitive and affective

How does all of this affect how we teach today? According to Arnold, the world is changing in a way that is a *"fundamental shift in thinking that profoundly affects ones worldview and ultimately affects the way in which one will teach the faith."* (author's emphasis) Our current age no longer looks to reason for answers but rather a kind of universalism of knowing nothing but respecting everything and assimilating much of it to form a personal religion that one is comfortable with. Instead, he argues that the issue now is one of "spirituality and how spirituality is manifested." New age and eastern religious philosophies are becoming predominate and increasingly Christianity is seen as exclusionary, intolerant, bigoted and hateful because it teaches one way to heaven and holds a standard of moral absolutism.

Arnold sees the world we live in today as being much like that of the early church and he sees a model within that era that would be successful today. "**Catechesis** is a process of teaching the faith that reflects the telling of the Christian story in a way that is meaningful to each person." This is a model in which both process and content are given equal attention. Our current culture is like the Hellenist culture in which there is no common historical understanding that existed between the Jews and the new Christians. When Peter spoke in Jerusalem at Pentecost, his audience understood his references to sin, the Messiah, the need for repentance and the need for salvation. In contrast, when Paul spoke at Mars Hill in Athens, he needed to first find a way to translate, educate and introduce his audience to the terms that define Christianity, before he could teach them.

To be effective, then, one has to understand the culture that the person is immersed in, translate the teachings into the *lingua franca* familiar to the hearer and then show how this affects that person's life. It means being willing and respectful enough to listen, contemplate, find some common ground and then build upon that relationship to teach truth. Then, when one is dealing with a neophyte convert, one needs to teach by having them do. Nobody learns to drive by watching; they must sit in the driver's seat and experience what it means to be a Christian, in prayer, in worship, in reading Scripture and in modeling Christian behavior. This

may also require a different setting to accomplish the traditional catechumenate, like small groups, and new materials that speak to this new generation with an old and true message.

No one is an island unto themselves, to paraphrase John Donne. We must all work in teams to be effective. Indeed, a pastor who works alone misunderstands the priesthood of all believers, the church as the body of Christ and the church as being made of living stones. That said, Fryar argues correctly that we seek, with the Holy Spirit's guidance and help, a sense of confessional oneness. We are to offer love, companionship, sharing of our time, information resources, ideas and faith. At the same time, we must pay attention to our human needs, also, such as having a clear understanding of our areas of authority and goals.

Just as we are ready to offer support, we should also be exhorters of one another (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25), building up the body of Christ to gird ourselves for the tasks ahead (I Thessalonians 5:11). We must see our fellow workers as collaborators for Christ. Sacrifice for the good of the team and for the work of Christ is paramount. Likewise, we are to hold each other accountable in that exhortation.

Building a team is never an effortless task. It is rather a deliberate process in which the leader utilizes all of the various activities that are involved in the church and shapes them to inculcate a sense of the unity of purpose and sharing of the joy of successes and the learning from setbacks. Only when each team member feels that they can take the risk to try to do their tasks without fear of condemnation for the inevitable mistakes that can occur will they truly be able to utilize the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them for the benefit of the body. This can only come about with effective training. First of the pastor as spiritual leader, then the leaders and workers of the church by the pastor, and then finally the laity of the church by the leaders, teachers and workers of the church under the pastor's oversight as shepherd of the flock. If all of the oars are pulling in the same direction, the boat will move swiftly to its destination.

Teaching effectively is to intentionally model oneself after Jesus. Jesus had perfect alignment of who He was with what He taught – He truly walked the talk. That gave power and relevance to His ministry, as it can to ours. First, He taught out of love for those He taught. When we love the learner our attitude and motivation is not only different but perceptible to the student and affects their willingness to be taught. Second, He taught from a position of integrity and practiced morality. People were drawn to His teaching because they were drawn to Him because they could tell that they mattered to Him and that He was genuine. Third, He taught from a position of knowledge. Jesus was always explaining what Scripture meant, in the Synagogue, in the retreat at Caesarea, by the seaside of Galilee, on the road to Emmaus. And when He taught even the demons listened. Fourth, He taught with skill. He used stories and illustrations and demonstrations and class projects and simple objects and great miracles, all to make sure that His point was meaningful and memorable.

Because of that love, Jesus used the needs of the learner to establish a relationship and guide the subject of the lesson. He kept the lessons in context to the learner's developmental level and ability to understand. He used teachable moments that created a readiness to learn and were contextual to the common experiences of all. He understood and used timing, sequencing of His teachings to build to the conclusion and using the environment in which He taught and the cultural and social condition context of His listeners to relate to them in terms that would have meaning for them.

Christ also made full use of His listener's range of assessment modalities: cognitive, affective, psychomotor and spiritual and he used all of the learning styles to reinforce His messages: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Teaching also has many skills involving such things as having clearly defined objectives, age-appropriate teaching, varying modalities, drama, passion, logical transitions that connect, anecdotes, voice projection, charisma and insight.

Jesus understood that each of us has a primary learning process of either seeing (visual), hearing (auditory) or doing (kinesthetic). Visual learning is an image-rich demonstration of principles or modeling of behaviors.

Auditory learning is by the dramatic presentation of spiritual word-pictures and the recitation of them back in their own words to imprint them. Kinesthetic learning requires the hands-on experience to translate concept into practical understanding.

Although all of us have a primary learning channel, all channels have some effect and the use of multiple modalities has an additive effect upon our retention and understanding, much as repetition also does, especially if every repetition is not quite the same experience but are all dramatic.

Learning is facilitated in groups, especially small groups where everyone's questions can be asked and answered, each can have their own needs addressed and where learning takes place between the students in a non-threatening environment of mutual valuation and respect. This cooperative learning leverages the strengths of each individual in a team setting and is more effective.

It all begins with a teacher that genuinely cares for and respects each student. Each student comes with a set of characteristics (e.g. age), needs (culture, ethnicity), learning methods (respect, reward, relate ideas) and learning channels (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). Therefore teachers should respect (value), reward (exhort), relate (connect the unfamiliar to the familiar) and repeat (reinforce). Respect and caring for the student facilitates the student feeling connected with the teacher and willing to respond. Rewarding the student encourages them to be more bold, take risks and accept constructive criticism without discouragement. Relating the unfamiliar to the familiar gives the student a key to discern new concepts and builds incrementally from knowledge to comprehension to application to analysis to synthesis and finally to evaluation (critical thinking).

Discovery learning (Socratic method) allows students to take the journey from facts to understanding through the gentle guidance of questions and allows the student to "own" the answer and the thinking. It is most helpful when studying a new concept to first frame it in the big picture (trunk of the tree), where it came from (the roots), the major supporting ideas (limbs and branches), before examining the specific learning (the twigs and leaves). Also, helpful are the use of metaphors that relate the abstract to the concrete to add insight. And, of course, the final technique is the old marking adage, "tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them and then tell them what you told them." Repetition reinforces retention.

La Verne correctly understands that creative teaching requires prayer, planning and preparation. Teachers receive power, strength and guidance through prayer and students receive information, transformation and critical thinking skills through learning channels. Teacher's need to begin the process of facilitation learning with prayer, not alone, but with fellow members of the body of Christ to conform, model and hold each other accountable for this great ministry.

Next comes setting goals and objectives that support the mission of teaching so that the students may become "disciples" and to learn to "observe all things" that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:20). Goals must support this mission and the objectives define how those goals are to be both met and measured. Objectives should be concrete and cover time frame, subject matter, demonstrable knowledge or skill by the student and modalities and methodologies employed to accomplish this transformation. As always, start class by personally greeting each student, have a memorable beginning to grab their attention, short devotion, outline what is coming for that day's lesson and how it fits into the overall goal, use a variety of modalities to facilitate learning, have the student demonstrate that they have acquired new knowledge or skills, lead them to see how this applies to them and then be sure to summarize and relate again at the end and offer a tantalizing preview of the next lesson, ensuring that the lesson is ended in a timely manner. The more this learning can be interactive, the better. Teachers can use Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge – recall, comprehension – restate, application – selection, analysis – explain, synthesis – solve, evaluation – judge) to both determine the

objectives and their measurements. Attention needs to be paid to try to have culturally and socially relevant illustrations that students can identify with easily.

Churches come in all varieties and sizes, it is not necessary for every church to pursue children as their mission, some are called to serve the elderly, singles, empty nesters, the chronically ill and other parts of our society. That said, children are a special blessing from God and the legacy that blesses future generations. As with all people, we must concern ourselves with children's cognitive, physical and spiritual development in a balanced approach to Christian education. First, through the love that is shown and shared by the teachers. Second, by relating to their needs as appropriate to their level of development, stage of life and challenges in their lives, whether from an infants developing motor skills who learns through play and repetition, to the toddlers rhythmic and seemingly frenetic ever-changing activities, to the preschool memory and movement stage, to the early grades that are starting to learn cooperation and communication, to the middle elementary grades featuring competition and the concrete and so on up the physical development ladder.

Christianity is a disciplined life and obedience to Christ and His teachings is one of our goals. To that end, children need to have a mixture of discipline and choices with consequences that teach both law and grace. Our lessons are not empty moralisms to encourage a good life, but rather the ultimate goal is an understanding that our nature is to choose evil over good, but that with the help of the Holy Spirit through the grace of Jesus Christ we can become empowered to do good in God's sight because of the overwhelming love that pours out of us in response to what Jesus first did for us and to accept His grace when we fail. Pastors need to model these behaviors, and oversee, exhort and support the teachers at all levels and in all types of Christian Education. Bright, cheerful rooms with lots of colorful wall hangings and touchable props that teach and draw the students into the lessons need to be provided.

We teach baptism and Holy Communion not as empty symbols that are done only in obedience to His Word, but are symbols that are so close to the thing that they represent that they are those things and accomplish what they both represent and are in actuality – the washing of regeneration in the death of Christ through baptism (Romans 6:3,4,11; John 3:3,5,6) and the forgiveness of sins through the actual body and blood of Christ (I Corinthians 11:23-27,29; 10:16).

Teens and preteens want control over their lives and to be valued by others. It's a time of establishing both identity and self-worth, which means a tension between wanting love and approval and wanting space and control. Spending time with them, allowing them to control everything that is not essential to safety and the lesson goal, sharing yourself, modeling integrity and honesty and allowing them to explore their concerns in a non-judgmental environment that guides and engages rather than lectures, buys trust and permission to teach. In short, establish a relationship that shifts from the teacher-centered methods of their earlier years to a learner-centered environment of a shared journey of discovery.

At all levels, parents need to be involved to both reinforce the lessons being learned and to fulfill their godly role of raising up their children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 31:11-12). It also gives an opportunity to revisit lessons that parents should have learned in their youth, but often haven't. Often drama and other physical activities or rituals can be more powerful lessons than lectures. Whatever the situation or age of the student, we teach because first we have compassion on the students (Hebrews 5:2,7), and then we never, never give up. We seek teachable moments (like baptism, graduation, the end of a love interest, marriage, childbirth, a bad grade, winning a game, etc.) because that is often when the student is most open to consider change and to examine beliefs and behaviors.

Life changes are often the precipitating events for reconsideration of spiritual beliefs and practices for all levels of adults from college students to late adulthood, whether this be single parenthood, engagement, buying a house, mid-life crisis, children or grandchildren or facing retirement or death. Each of these can cause

the person touched by the event to be open to God's wisdom and comfort. Each of these events causes a shift in the paradigm that had provided a guide for their lives by causing disequilibrium that only God has answers to help us understand, hope and cope.

Finally, those who teach are not unaffected by the problems of others and their own. In addition to training and support, they need to celebrate completions of classes, seminars, studies, Sunday School term, Christmas pageants and the like. Their needs to be at least an annual time of refreshment and renewal away from the place of teaching so allow fellowship and sharing. The journey of learning needs to be documented – where they started, the progress along the way and the successful conclusion of that expedition. Thank them often, visit frequently, remember them in times of trouble and celebration and provide refreshments when possible – but most of all pray for and with them often – in order to encourage them in their ministry.

Without a leader who sets the vision and ensures that it is accomplished through a comprehensive Christian Education program that employs relevant educational methodologies and techniques that inculcate the church's teachings, the result will be at best hit-or-miss, mostly miss. Without the proper teaching of the Word, the people will not know its lessons and therefore cannot be faithful to it in their lives, as happened in the time of Josiah (II Kings 22-23). The Word of God gives faith and imparts a transformation of those who hear and believe. The people, both children and adults, cannot mature in their faith if they are not fed spiritually with the Word. They cannot learn Christian behavior if they don't see it modeled in their leaders, taught in the church and exhorted in their own living.

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