

## CHAPTER 1

# THE CHRISTIAN AS A TEACHER

Acts 8:4

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

### Introduction

There are many aspects to the life of the Christian. The Christian, in his relation to God and his fellowman, should consider such things as his holiness of character, his worship of God, his attitude toward his brethren and also to the people of the world. He should also consider himself as a teacher of the word of God.

Teaching has always had an important place in God's plan. God chose Abram because He knew he was a man who would command his household (Gen. 18:19). During the Mosaic period He instructed parents to teach their children diligently (Deut. 6:4-9). Ezra was a man who had his heart set to study the law of the Lord, to practice it, and to teach it to others (Ezra 7:10). God's requirements for His people in the New Testament are no different in this respect. Jesus clearly stated that one must be taught of God in order to come to Him (John 6:44-45), and when He gave the great commission to the apostles He said they were to teach, baptize, and then teach the baptized (Matt. 28:19-20). Not only must one be taught in order to become a child of God, but teaching is necessary also

to growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14). With the emphasis that the Bible places upon teaching, every Christian should want to be a teacher and should want to be the best teacher possible.

## **He Is Expected To Teach**

When Jesus told his disciples to go teach all nations and to baptize those that were taught He also said for them to teach the baptized to observe all things He had commanded them (Matt. 28:19-20). It is quite evident from this that disciples of Christ are not only learners of Christ, but are also teachers of the words of Christ. Paul's statement to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), shows that Christians are expected to be teachers of the will of Christ. The early disciples understood they were expected to teach, for when they were scattered by the persecution that arose against the church which was at Jerusalem they went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4).

## **He Should Want To Teach**

One cannot become a disciple of the Lord until he has first been taught of God (John 6:44-45; Heb. 8:11). This should cause those who have already become Christians to want to teach others what they themselves have learned that they may share in the blessings of being in Christ. The Christian should want to be a teacher, even though he may realize that he will receive heavier judgment (James 3:1), because of the good he may do in saving himself and others.

Jesus not only showed His love for man by giving Himself as a sacrifice to God (Eph. 5:2), but also by teaching man how to be righteous in the sight of God. The Father was with Christ while He lived among men because He always did those things that were pleasing to God (John 8:29), and we are promised that we will receive the things we ask of Him when we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22). Doing the things that please God includes teaching others the way of salvation. Christians should want to become teachers because in doing so they are instrumental in saving the most valuable thing in the world, the soul of man (Matt. 16:26), and are at the same time becoming more like the Christ whom they serve.

## **He Should Want To Be A Better Teacher**

The Bible emphasizes the importance of Christians engaging in the act of teaching. The Bible likewise shows the necessity of teaching the right doctrine (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19). As we remind ourselves of the importance of teaching and of teaching the right doctrine let us not lose sight of the importance of developing and using skill in our teaching. In 1 Tim. 3:2 and 2 Tim. 2:24 the expression “apt to teach” is translated from a word in the Greek, *DIDAKTIKOS*, which means to be skilled in teaching. Therefore not only must an elder be apt to teach, but also the servant of God.

The New Testament scriptures teach that some (newborn babes in Christ) need the milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:1-2), whereas others who have experienced more spiritual growth (Heb. 5:12-14) need the stronger meat of the word. Determining who needs the milk and who needs the meat in their spiritual diet and presenting it in an appealing manner

requires some skill. The apostle Paul showed this when he said, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). And again, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1 Cor. 3:2). He went on to point out that the reason they still were not able to bear the meat was that they were yet carnal. Seeing the value the Lord places upon exercising skill in our teaching, we should be as concerned about developing and improving our ability to teach as we are about any other phase of our spiritual growth and development. If we ever expect to be perfect or complete – and this state we can attain by the proper use of the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17) – we must develop our skill as teachers, for so much of what the Lord expects of us as laborers in His vineyard involves the teaching of His word.

## **DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES**

1. Let each person in the group think of how he really came to know of God. (Some will have learned of God through their own study; most will have been taught by someone.) Let each think of what it was about the person that taught him that convinced him that God was real and that the Bible was the answer to reaching God... to knowing about Him.
2. Compare the warning “Be not many of you teachers” (ASV, James 3:1) with the exhortation to Timothy

to teach the things that he had received to faithful men “who shall be able to teach others also” (ASV, 2 Tim. 2:2). Make this comparison by having one half of the group discuss points in favor of the warning and the other half discuss the points in favor of the exhortation. Have each present their arguments, then come to a conclusion in light of the other scriptures given in this chapter.

3. If teaching is a skill – and we say it is a number of times in this book – how can I be a good teacher if I’ve never taught?
  
4. 2 Tim. 2:24 speaks of one being apt to teach to be a servant (as we pointed out, literally, “skilled in teaching”). What about someone who says that teachers are born, not made – then goes on to say that “I don’t have it, so I’ll just let those who are born with it do the teaching”?
  
5. Discuss what might have happened if Priscilla and Aquila had decided that it wasn’t their responsibility to teach Apollos. What evidence do we have that Apollos already had done damage with his incomplete doctrine (Acts 19:1-5)?

Deut. 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE BIBLE AS A TEACHER-TRAINING MANUAL

Acts 8:35

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

### **The Message Is Inspired**

The Bible is the best place to go to learn how to be a successful teacher of the word of God. There is no better place to learn what to teach or how best to teach it. God gave us His word that we might know how to serve Him acceptably while here on earth. The Bible claims to be “inspired of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The next verse says that the scriptures inspired of God are able to make the man of God perfect, furnishing him completely unto every good work. It should be observed that the word “inspired” is from a word in the Greek language which literally means “God-breathed” and the word “perfect” means complete or mature. In the previous chapter we have shown that one thing God wants His people to be is teachers. Therefore we conclude the Bible is able to make us the kind of teachers God wants us to be.

Other passages which show the Bible did not originate with man, but came from God, would include the one which

says that it was according to His divine power that He gave “unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Paul also wrote that we should not “think of men above that which is written” (1 Cor. 4:6). A passage that should be studied carefully on this point is 1 Cor. 2:1-13 in which the apostle showed that things he taught were revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that our faith might not “stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (v. 5) and that the Holy Spirit chose the words, hence guiding the writer, “combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (v. 13, ASV). Truly the Bible is a teacher-training manual, but more than that it is God’s inspired textbook on the subject.

## **The Teachers Were Often Guided By The Holy Spirit**

Jesus promised the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (John 16:13). Jesus also promised them that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things, bring to their remembrance what He had taught them, testify of Him, and show them things to come (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). After His resurrection, when Jesus gave them the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, He also told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were “endued with power from on high” before they began their work of teaching (Luke 24:49).

That Peter and the other apostles were thus guided by the Holy Spirit in the beginning of their work of preaching is evident from Acts 2:1-4. Study the sermon recorded in this chapter and observe not only the message itself, but the manner of presentation. Of course we are not trying to minimize the importance of the message, but are simply

calling attention to the fact that we can learn something of the *how* of teaching as well as the *what* by studying the Bible. Surely the Lord approved of the way they taught as well as what they taught, and just that surely we can learn something of how we can effectively teach the word of the Lord today. Of course we realize that Peter, being guided by the Holy Spirit as he was, could know things about their needs that we are not able to know in teaching situations today, but observe that it was in reply to a question which they asked that Peter told them what to do to have their sins forgiven (Acts 2:36-38).

One of the lessons we can learn from this approved example is the value of knowing the needs of those whom we seek to teach. One good way to learn this is to give them an opportunity to tell you. In teaching techniques this is sometimes called “feedback.” The teacher needs to receive information back from the pupil that he may know how far advanced the pupil is and how to proceed in order to bring him along further in the learning process.

## **Wise Men Were Teaching**

Even if we can't prove that the prophets and apostles were inspired in their teaching *methods*, at least we know that they were wise men and had gifts of wisdom and knowledge. It stands to reason that God would have been careful in giving His message to people who were going to have the responsibility to teach others. It's unlikely that He would have wanted someone trusted with His message who would do a very poor job of teaching, especially since the population was without any other source of knowledge – the Bible not yet available to them.

## **Jesus Was A Teacher Teacher**

Jesus spent approximately 3-1/2 years with His disciples during which time He was preparing them for the work He had for them to do in the establishment and growth of His kingdom. This work was primarily that of teaching His word. Jesus, therefore, taught them to teach.

Jesus used various methods in the teaching that He did. One of the methods was that of answering a question with a question (Matt. 21:23-27). This got the student involved immediately and gave Jesus the opportunity to emphasize the thing he needed the most. By using this method today we can also learn what the student is thinking and what points he needs. Jesus also used the method of contrast. In the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:21-48), He repeatedly showed the difference between what they had heard “by them of old time” (v. 21) and what He said unto them.

The fact that Jesus, after His resurrection and before his ascension (Matt. 28:19), commanded His disciples to “go teach all nations” is an indication that He taught them to teach. When some in the church today begin to make excuses that they do not have the background to become teachers they should look in the New Testament at the background of the apostles and note that they became teachers. Teaching others the things we have learned is one way disciples of Christ help in the saving of souls and also become like Christ, whose likeness we are in and in whose footsteps we should seek to follow.

## **Examples Of Techniques**

Jesus used different techniques in His teaching. We have already mentioned in this chapter that He answered a question with a question (Matt. 21:23-27). He used this technique on other occasions also. Experiences have demonstrated that this procedure gets people involved in the learning process in a way that enables them to discover truth for themselves. It is certainly much easier to accept something which we discover for ourselves than that which we are told by someone else.

Not only did Jesus use the method of contrast in the sermon on the mount, but this is also essentially what Paul did in his discourse on Mars' hill (Acts 17). He pointed out that they had gods of their own making which they served, and in contrast to that there was the God they worshipped in ignorance whom he declared unto them (Acts 17:23).

The process of going from the known to the unknown, which is a basic principle in the learning process, was used by different men in the New Testament in their teaching. One of the clear examples where this technique was employed was in Philip teaching the eunuch (Acts 8). When Philip approached the chariot and heard the eunuch reading he asked him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch knew that the language of the prophet which he was reading described the death of someone, but he did not know whether it was the prophet himself or some other man (v. 34). Philip proceeded from this scripture and "preached unto him Jesus" (v. 35). There is obviously some overlapping in the techniques that were used. In the example we just noticed we can see the use of the technique we now want to look at in more detail.

Determining the point at which a student has progressed and starting there is a very important thing to remember in teaching, especially in spiritual matters. The story is told that a preacher (I believe it was T. B. Larimore), while talking with a man about his soul, repeatedly said, "The Bible teaches us to do this," and would then give the chapter and verse for the point. After he had continued this for some time the man then spoke up and said, "But I don't believe the Bible." It is important, you see, to know something about where to begin in our teaching. Paul knew that Felix was an unjust man, lacking in self control, and unprepared for the judgment. Therefore he reasoned with him of these things (Acts 24:25). Ananias knew that Saul believed in Christ, there was much evidence he had repented and the thing he needed to do was to be baptized (Acts 22:16).

At the conclusion of Peter's formal discourse on Pentecost (Acts 2), he got some response from the audience (v. 37). He then proceeded to answer their question by telling them what they must do to escape the consequences of their sin. There are times when we need to get some student response so we will know how to proceed with the teaching.

Another technique we can observe in the New Testament is that of correcting false concepts. It is obvious that the scribes and Pharisees had a false concept about the commandments of the Lord concerning their traditions (Matt. 15:1-14). Jesus corrected this false concept and showed them they were making the commandments of God "of none effect" (v. 6) by their tradition. Priscilla and Aquila used this technique when they heard Apollos preaching the baptism of John after it had been superseded by the baptism of Christ in the great

commission. The Bible says “they took him unto them and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly” (Acts 18:26).

The Bible truly is a teacher-training manual, the inspired one.

## **DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES**

1. Small-group activity: Let each group look at the example of Christ teaching the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Make a list of the different techniques of teaching Jesus used in just this one example of teaching. See which group can find the most; report the findings back to the total group.
2. Class discussion: Discuss Paul’s approach to teaching the people on Mars’ hill in Acts 17. Why didn’t he tell about Abraham? Baptism? The work of the church?
3. Individual activity: Look at Matthew 5-7 and count how many words, expressions and concepts are used to make points (such things as salt, candles, light, etc.). Why did Jesus go to all this trouble to make His points? Weren’t the people intelligent enough to understand Him otherwise? What about us today?

4. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan had a message for David. Discuss as a class how he went about getting this message across to David. Who finally drew the conclusion, Nathan or David? How is this used as a teaching technique today?
  
5. Small-group activity: Let each group find examples where anyone in the Bible answered a question with a question. Discuss the results they got from this teaching method. Does it still work today?

Col. 4:6

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

## CHAPTER 3

# SOME BASIC PROBLEMS IN BIBLE TEACHING

1 Cor. 9:16

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

### **Lack Of Desire To Teach Can Be A Problem**

It is difficult to understand why a person who has been taught of God and has become a Christian would not want to teach others the way of salvation, but the fact remains that many do not want to be teachers. It occurs to us that many are lacking in a desire to teach because they are convinced that someone else would make a better teacher than they would. Did you ever stop to analyze that line of reasoning? Let's look at it for a moment. Would you apply it to every phase of your life? Is the reason you do not play golf, bowl, fish, or engage in some other recreation, particularly a competitive sport, because someone else is better at it than you are? Husbands, suppose your wife said she was not going to cook any more because she was not as good a cook as someone else? You wives have not stopped cooking because you are not as good at it as someone else, have you? Now we are well aware there is much more at stake in teaching the word of God than in recreation, or even in teaching, but we are also aware that the Lord expects us to do the best we can in teaching what we

know of His word and improving ourselves as we study and put into practice what we learn.

Some have a lack of a desire to teach because they feel they cannot teach at all. Certainly there are some who are better teachers than others, and perhaps there are a few who absolutely cannot stand before certain groups in a class teaching situation and teach a Bible lesson. But we are equally persuaded that a great many of those who say they cannot really could if they decided this is what they wanted to do. The Lord does not expect us to do what we cannot do, but He does expect us to use and develop the talents He has given us, and in fact will hold us accountable for such. Read Matthew 25:14-30.

One of the things which causes some not to desire to be teachers of the word of God is fear. Some are afraid of the criticism they may receive from others and consequently do not want to teach. Some will refuse to accept the responsibility of teaching for this very reason. If everyone who ever received criticism for something they said or did in their teaching suddenly decided not to teach any more there would not be very much teaching done. Those who teach are human and do make mistakes which need to be corrected, and constructive criticism needs to be offered. Critics do not always know how, nor do they always exercise wisdom and good judgment in offering their criticism, but Christians should not allow this to discourage us to the point of not becoming teachers or of quitting after we have become involved in this all-important work.

A humble Christian of our acquaintance, with a limited formal education, was teaching a lesson in a Bible class when

the local church was disturbed over a fundamental principle. In his efforts to show the teaching of the scriptures on the point at hand he misspelled a simple word on the board. An influential man in the congregation publicly criticized and ridiculed him before the class saying that he was not qualified to teach. While this kind of an attack hurt the teacher very deeply it did not hinder him from using his ability to teach and his influence to encourage people to accept the truth of God.

## **Some Are Afraid Of Questions**

Some hesitate to teach because they are afraid someone will ask a question they will not be able to answer. When we consider the different motives people have for asking questions – and the many questions that can be put to a teacher- we can certainly recognize that no one would be expected to come up with the correct answer to every question that may be put to him. There are some suggestions which should help overcome this fear, however. The teacher should always encourage the students to ask only the questions that will enable them to learn the truth, and let it be known that those questions which engender strife and confusion will not be considered. One can learn a great deal about answering questions by studying the example of Jesus. It is certainly true that we cannot look into the heart of another and know what his motive is for asking a particular question as Jesus did, but we can learn how to answer his question with a question and thereby place the responsibility of answering his question on him. This oftentimes brings out the motive for asking the question: whether the querist is sincerely seeking the Bible answer or is trying to trap the teacher.

There are some students who will ask questions for the purpose of getting the teacher to spend the entire class period telling them the answer. This diverts the attention away from the lesson assigned for that class period and lets the student shift his mind into “neutral” while the teacher lectures to the class. Usually questions of this type are asked to occupy time and not out of a desire to know the truth on the subject, and keep the student from becoming involved in class participation and the learning process. It is not always easy to know what motive prompts a student to ask a question, but it helps to prevent questions being asked for the purpose of wasting time, as well as helping to learn better the answers, to place a lot of the responsibility of finding the answers on the students themselves.

It is not a disgrace to be asked a Bible question to which you do not know the answer, but if it is a matter of concern and importance to the person asking it then an effort should be made to find the answer and report back at the next class meeting. This can be a means of getting participation from the class, i.e., by assigning the class the responsibility of finding the answer and then by beginning the next class period with a discussion of what they learned about it. So you see there can be worse things for a teacher than not being able to answer all the questions the students might ask.

## **Teaching Requires Too Much Effort**

There are those who decline to accept the responsibility of becoming a teacher because they are unwilling to put forth the effort and spend the time necessary to prepare. It is a fact that it takes time and effort to be a successful teacher of the word of God and those who are unwilling to face up to this reality will

never become good teachers. Teaching is a skill and people do not become skillful simply by wishing or inactivity, but by proper application of methods which will develop the skill. If people put forth no more effort in learning the skill to enable them to perform the duties assigned them on their job than many do to develop the skill of teaching the word of God to others, how many would be able to keep their jobs? Business men require that the people they hire prove their qualifications for the job and/or show willingness to learn how to be proficient at it, putting forth the effort necessary to prepare for it. Yet in the Church many who are given the solemn responsibility of guiding the destinies of the souls of others put little time in learning what to teach them and even less in learning how best to enable their students to learn life's most important lessons.

Oftentimes when people in the church are approached and asked to teach or encouraged to prepare themselves to teach they begin to offer excuses such as "I can't teach," "some one else can do that better than I can," "I don't have time to prepare" or some such when in reality a lack of desire to teach is back of it. Desiring to be teachers while understanding neither what we say nor whereof we affirm (1 Tim. 1:7) is not the right thing to do, but the Bible does tell Christians to be apt to teach (2 Tim. 2:24). All Christians should desire to teach for the good they can do in saving souls.

## **Lack Of Good Teacher-Training Programs Is A Problem**

Another basic problem in Bible teaching is the lack of good teacher-training programs. In many local churches there seems

to be little or no program for the purpose of training people to be better teachers.

Perhaps one of the reasons there are so few good teacher-training programs being conducted is the failure to see the importance of such. Many seem to think that as long as we have classes with a fair number of people in attendance and someone to act as the teacher, that is all that is needed. We don't reason that way about those who teach our children in the public schools, but for some unexplained reason we do not seem to place as much importance upon having qualified teachers in the Bible classes.

Some members of the Lord's church have a lethargic attitude to teacher-training programs in a local church, and when elders plan a special series of lessons for the purpose of developing more and better teachers many do not avail themselves of the opportunity to participate. Obviously good teacher-training programs must have people who want to learn to improve themselves as well as those who will plan and conduct them. There need to be more leaders who have the vision to plan and conduct programs designed to improve the teaching of the Bible and there need to be more who will show an interest by attending such.

To have a successful teacher-training program there must not only be a desire to have such a program and a willingness to plan and conduct such, but there must also be some one who is qualified to do so to teach such a class. A good teacher-training program involves much more than having a meeting of the teachers once a month and/or a class in teacher-training periodically. It includes having leaders in the congregation who will have a desire to build up the church and recognize

the necessity of sound teaching in accomplishing this goal. Teachers, like heroes, are made, not born. Hence the need of having a continuous good teacher-training program. Periodic teacher-training sessions can serve a good purpose in a local congregation as gospel meetings can and do.

## **Teachers Must Deal With Under-Motivated Students**

Often when someone mentions something about motivating students to study the Bible, about the only thing some can think of is giving them candy, refreshments and the like. On the other hand there are those who believe the only motivation one needs for Bible study is the realization of the fact that it is the Bible. Students of all ages need proper motivation in learning at each class period discussion as well as in reaching the ultimate goal of eternal life. Appealing to a student's natural competitive spirit, his desire to excel, his demonstration of his ability to learn, can be as successful in getting him to learn important Bible principles as promising him a star if he attends every class meeting for a quarter, or says his memory verse every Sunday. Promising a reward is not the only way to motivate students to learn, and neither is the fear of punishment.

When students are under-motivated they often lose interest in learning, attend the classes infrequently, become discipline problems, disturb the class and hinder others from learning. One of the most stimulating and exciting ways to motivate students to learn is through the process of discovering something hitherto unknown to that person. Discovering a new idea, like discovering new territory on

land, sea, or in space, increases one's desire to learn, and consequently motivates him to more diligent study.

## **Improper Physical Facilities Can Hinder The Teacher**

Did you ever try to hold the attention and teach a Bible lesson to a dozen boys (or girls) in a cluttered storage room of a building used for kindergarten, girl scouts, baby health center, voting place, as well as for religious services? Perhaps you say this is an exaggerated situation, but it has happened (to me), and it is much more difficult to get the lesson across than with proper physical facilities. Let me hasten to say that it is possible to have all the latest and best equipment available and still not be successful as a Bible teacher. However, a skillful teacher will be much more successful with proper physical facilities than without them.

One of the problems in teaching where physical facilities are concerned is in deciding exactly what facilities are needed and procuring and using them. In most places people are convinced that certain things such as chalkboards, tack boards, flannel boards, maps, etc., are needed in teaching situations, but many times even the teachers do not know just what they need nor how to make proper use of what they do have. A part of the problem is in the general appearance of the room itself. Teachers should make an effort to have the room as cheerful as possible, and should have things arranged so as to cause the students to be glad to be there, and to want to learn. The teacher is greatly handicapped who does not have facilities, through means of which the students actually become involved in the learning process and through the use of which the application of spiritual truth becomes a personal reality. To

derive benefit from a study of the Bible we must make application to our own lives and this involves knowing how to make that application. Careful consideration should be given to what physical facilities are available and what are needed, and how to make the proper use of them in teaching the truth.

## **Lack Of Parental Concern Can Cause Problems**

This problem in teaching has to do primarily with children. When teachers have as their students those whose parents have no more concern for their attending Bible classes than the opportunity of getting them out of the house for an hour or so, those teachers have problems and the chances of the students learning very much is pretty slim. It is a true statement that Bible class teachers get some students in their classes whose parents really have little or no concern as to whether their children learn very much about the Bible or not. There seems to be an attitude among some parents that they want their children to attend some Bible classes so they will be able to say in later life that they used to attend Bible school.

Obviously this kind of situation presents a problem for teachers, for the teacher must provide most if not all the motivation for the student to learn. Sometimes it is possible for the child to get the parents involved by the enthusiasm he may show in the things he has learned. Truly there are times when “a little child shall lead them” (Isa. 11:6).

## **Students' Lack Of Bible Knowledge May Be A Problem**

It would be a rare situation if an entire class of eleven- and twelve year-old students, for example, had the same general knowledge of the Bible. That this presents a problem in effective Bible teaching is quite evident when the teacher, telling such stories as Jonah and the whale, suggests that the students read the account for themselves, then sees them thumb through the Bible in search of the book of Jonah, not knowing whether it is in the New Testament or the Old Testament. This problem not only exists among children, but among adults as well. When a small percentage of the students in a Bible class have such a limited knowledge of the Bible that the teacher must explain every point in detail the rest of the members of the class have a tendency to lose interest as they want to move along more rapidly in the learning process.

Since in most local congregations it is not expedient to divide the classes into slower and more advanced groups, as is sometimes done in public school systems, the teacher must find ways to stimulate and involve the whole class. Quizzing the class to determine the point at which each member has progressed in Bible knowledge and then assigning the students work according to their capabilities is one way to overcome this problem. Another suggestion that proves to be helpful is assigning group activities, putting at least one person in each group who is more advanced in Bible knowledge with some who are somewhat limited so he can help bring them to a greater degree of knowledge and understanding.

Teachers have the responsibility of recognizing problems when they exist and of seeking solutions to them. Jesus said, "For ye have the poor with you always..." (Mark 14:7), and this seems to be true of problems also. They will not go away by ignoring them, but they can be overcome.

## **DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES**

1. Two-group activity: Have one group list all the reasons they can remember that they have heard from people who were trying to get out of teaching (mostly, these will be excuses). Have the other group list justifiable reasons why a person could refuse to teach a class. When each is through, list their findings side by side on the board. Do any of them match?
2. Class discussion: What is the best answer to give to someone who uses the excuses given in the answer to Question 1?
3. Class discussion: How can a person overcome the problem of not being able to speak in front of a group? Are there other ways of teaching besides in front of a large audience? What are some of them (more than just personal work)?

4. Group project: In whatever way you decide to work on it, come up with a satisfactory teacher-training program for a congregation of average size. Decide how to build the interest for the class, how to encourage those who haven't taught before to attend, what the course goals are, etc.
  
5. Now look at the course designed above and decide how to keep training going so that new teachers continue to be developed, and experienced ones continue to update their methods. (This is a harder task than in Question 4!)

Acts 2:40

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

This is a sample of the material contained in  
*Success At Bible Teaching* by Sam Binkley, Jr.  
and Martin M. Broadwell  
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