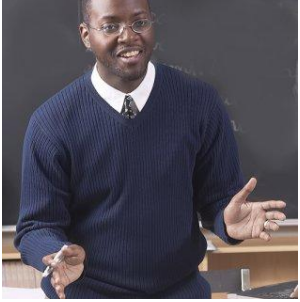


Better Teaching By This Sunday

Steve Burchett

Every Sunday school teacher, Bible study leader, and preacher should aim to teach Scripture with accuracy, clarity, and in a way that helps the listener stay interested. We are always dependent on the Spirit to illuminate, but that's not an excuse to instruct poorly. Here are three ways to improve your teaching immediately:



Meditate on your text far longer than on commentaries or Study Bible notes.

Some believers are so unsure of their Bible interpretation skills that they too quickly go and look at what others have said about the verse or passage they are to teach. Perhaps they say to themselves, after only a few minutes of gut-wrenching meditation, “Well, I guess I better go see what *[insert favorite Bible teacher]* says. I mean, who am I to say what this passage means?” Believers who say this have forgotten that they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are capable, with some patience and a careful reading of the passage, of understanding the Bible without having to be overly dependent upon the gurus of the day.

An easy way to be a dull communicator is to spend too much time reading what others have said about the Bible instead of studying Scripture itself. I agree with J.W. Alexander's assessment (written to pastors, but applicable to all Bible teachers):

If an hour is to be spent, either in reading and collating more of the text, or in reading human comments, surely the former is the way which gives more light. What is acquired in this way also makes a peculiar impression, and is more truly one's own. It also carries with it a savour of divine authority.¹

God will help us understand what He has spoken. Prayerfully wrestle with the text. Read it over and over and over. Try to determine the author's burden, and how he supports what he is saying. Your listeners will benefit from your teaching far more if you have personally mined the text for its treasures.

Teach one thing, not a bunch of things.

We have all heard a lesson or sermon that was full of interesting, biblical information, but we didn't remember much of anything because too many different ideas were shared. Some teachers overdo proof texts, having the hearers flip all over their Bibles. Wouldn't it be better to drive home the main point of the passage? Why not just say one thing well, even if you only teach half your usual time?

Make the heart of your message or lesson the point of the passage of Scripture under consideration. If you desire to bring other verses and passages into the conversation, have them ready to quote. You might say something like, “I want to read a few verses to support this idea. You don't need to turn to them.”

Also, teach the point of the passage with reference to the work of Christ. As you call people to obey, remind them that they must look away from themselves to Christ for the motivation and strength to do what God says (Titus 2:11-14).

Amplify your comments with colorful words and helpful illustrations.

Consider the difference between these two statements:

- Jesus did not spend his first night on earth in a clean place.
- Jesus did not spend his first night on earth in a sanitary hospital with nurses checking on Him every thirty minutes.

Both say the same thing, but the second sentence is more colorful and potentially memorable.

Jesus was a masterful teacher, frequently using objects and people around Him to illuminate the truth. He spoke of birds when He addressed the necessity of not worrying but seeking first the kingdom of God. He used the imagery of shepherds and sheep to illustrate His relationship to His followers. He compared sheep and goats when speaking of the final judgment. Jesus was not a boring teacher, and you don't have to be, either.

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¹ J.W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching* (1865; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988), 38.