

# Teaching Effectively / COB / 09.18.16

---

## Introduction

- † **[1. Title]** Think of the best teacher you ever had. How did this teacher help you to learn?
- A good teacher can change someone's life. What if you could do that? What if God wanted to use you inspire people in life, to empower people in ministry, to excite people about scripture? What if God wanted to use you to help facilitate the miracle of spiritual transformation in people? I think he does!
  - Back in May, we talked about God's vision for every believer to grow into a teacher and mentor in the church. If you were not here for that sermon, you can listen online or I will be happy to share my sermon notes with you. But this is God's vision for every believer, and it is part of the Great Commission given to all of us in the church, to make disciples for Christ.
  - **[2. 2 Timothy]** In **2 Timothy 2.2 NLT**: [Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy] **You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.** This is how we pursue the gospel mission of making more multiplying disciples of Christ. We take what we know, teach it to others, and empower them to teach it to still others. The fellow in this picture, Bob McNabb, was a spiritual mentor to me, like Paul was to Timothy.
- † **[3. #1]** People have different tastes when it comes to preachers or teachers. One person might favor an intellectual speaker while another favors someone more emotional; one generation might prefer Charles Stanley while the next prefers his son Andy. Put that aside for today, because I want to talk about teaching concepts that are universal. When we are done today, you will have experienced some good training, to equip you to teach little children, teenagers, or adults.
- I have given you a handout which asks a series of questions. The first thing we need to ask today is what our goals are when we are teaching. [1] Is it more likely to be a better sermon if [A] I try to inspire you, empower you, and excite you about the text, or [B] I only want to share information with you? I would say A.
  - The goal of teaching is not merely to convey information; that is a big mistake teachers often make! We do want to convey information, but our goal is to cause people to learn. Teaching is inspiring students, empowering students to learn and analyze, and exciting students about the subject so they are motivated to learn. If those are your goals at the start, you will come up with a very different lesson plan than if you merely aim to convey information.

---

## Teaching Effectively

- † **[4. #2]** [2] If I am going to be up here for half an hour today, would it be more interesting to you if [A] I made eye contact and spoke to you or [B] I read off my page for thirty minutes? I would say A.
- One time in seminary, a world famous professor came to give a series of lectures on a topic that interested me, so I was excited as I waited for the first talk to begin. Then this fellow stood up there and read to me in a disinterested monotone for an hour. I did not go back for the other four lectures.

- **[5. #3]** Related question: [3] Would it be more interesting if [A] my voice fluctuated in intensity and volume to fit what I was saying or [B] I spoke in a monotone, with no emotion, regardless of what I was saying? A I would think.
  - When Jesus publicly said to the religious leaders of his day in **Matthew 23.33 NET: “You snakes, you offspring of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”** do you think he said it with passion or in a dull monotone?
- † **[6. #4]** Last week, we had a great turnout for our first Sunday school classes of the season. I was in Wade’s class on the prophecy of Amos. This is a serious subject, but several times, he had us laughing. [4] Is it more interesting if [A] the teacher makes use of humor or [B] stays serious all the time? Usually A, I think. There are some passages and topics, that do not lend themselves to humor well. But humor can be a useful teaching tool, because it makes things more fun, it makes things more memorable, and because it changes the tempo and intensity for a moment.
- Good music builds tension, then releases it, by fluctuating tempo, intensity, volume, and especially with chord progressions; it can even introduce playful moments. Good literature builds tension then releases it, using suspense and foreshadowing, varying intensity and tempo; it can make use of humor to do this. Good teaching also will build tension, then release it, over and over. We do that by building an argument and then resolving it, but also by intermixing other elements with the information. So we use humor, stories, quotations, statistics, real life examples or applications, all to add to the learning experience, but also to make the learning experience more enjoyable and fruitful.
  - **[7. #5]** Jesus did this too. **Luke 18.1 NET: Then Jesus told them a parable to show them they should always pray and not lose heart.** He used a story to illustrate his point. Jesus often used ironic humor, stories and parables, and real life examples in his teaching.
  - So [5] when I preach, is it better, [A] when I mix in some humor, stories, real life examples and other things or [B] I stay intensely focused on lecturing you? A I would say.
- † **[8. #6]** Wade also did a good job of sharing background information about Amos and his situation. For example, he showed us deep in the book that at one point the king of the northern kingdom of Israel demands that Amos leave the country, especially the area of Bethel where the kingdom had one of its two temples. Then Wade led us through why this is significant: they were using an unconsecrated temple, rather than the one God wanted in Jerusalem, the king himself was not a descendent from David, the nation should not be separate from Judah, and the king was commanding a prophet of God to leave rather than speak the truth! This will help us understand why God says what he does through the prophet Amos.
- When we started our series in Philipians, I showed you how we can take all the clues in the letter and what we know about Paul and the church in Philippi from other scripture passages, to piece together the historical context, which then helps us interpret each verse as we read the letter. [6] Is it more interesting and effective when [A] the teacher shows you the background to the situation so you understand what is happening in the text or [B] ignores it? A.
- † **[9. #7]** Another thing Wade did well last week was to use images. He handed out a timeline of events, so we could see when the events in Amos were occurring relative to biblical history, and so we could see who the other important people in the prophecy were, as kings of different lands. He also showed us a map of all the nations mentioned in the prophecy, and used the map to illustrate

not only whom God would judge in the prophecy, but in what order and why. [7] Is it [A] helpful to use such graphics or [B] not helpful? A, it is always helpful.

- I often use slides to highlight a passage in the text, so you can see what I see when I am studying it, and so you can see how I came to my conclusions about it. I sometimes highlight a word and show you the Greek or Hebrew meaning if that is important. Even a slide of the text itself can be helpful – though I would like you to have your Bible open also – because I can point things out in it. But slides of just text can get a little boring. Maps and timelines are much more fun!
- **[10. Jesus]** Pictures also can be useful. I try to use pictures as background to my slides, partly just to make them more visually pleasing, but also because pictures can make something more memorable and the ones I choose often reveal something about the text or its background. When I can, I like to use a picture as a teaching tool, like Wade’s map. A picture can convey new information in a different way than text.
- What is another type of visual the teacher can use? [Ha, you see how I threw you off by not asking an A/B question? That is another teaching trick: using patterns can be good to help them see where you are going, but it also can be good to shake things up and surprise them. We will come back to that.] What is another type of visual the teacher can use? Props. I have used a football, a sword, a ladder, a table full of pennies, a whip, a supersoaker, my clothes, a long piece of string, and other things. Why? Any visual can help get your point across. Visuals often clarify or further enlighten what you are saying; they allow students to use multiple senses, which helps with learning and remembering; and they appeal to students with visual learning styles more than the text does.
- **[11. Matthew 18]** Jesus sometimes used visuals too. He did not have a slide projector, but he used trees, mountains, camels, and even children. **Matthew 18.1-6 NET: At that time the disciples came to Jesus saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, had him stand among them, and said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven! Whoever then humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a huge millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the open sea.”**
- **[12. #8]** So just to summarize, [8] is it better for the teacher [A] to use graphics and props or [B] to stick strictly to verbal teaching techniques? A.

† Let’s talk about those verbal teaching techniques. A sermon is a lecture: I study a lot, write the sermon, and then come in to deliver it. But sometimes I ask you questions.

- **[13. #9]** Sometimes Jesus did this too. When he wanted to teach parables about his kingdom, he began with a question. **Luke 13.18 NET: Thus Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? To what should I compare it?”**
- Why is that an effective teaching technique? When I ask a question, that forces you to think in a different way than just listening; it can call you back if you have let your mind drift or you were still dwelling on a previous point, it can signal a shift in the topic. [9] even in lecture, is it more effective if [A] I ask some questions of you or [B] I do all the talking myself?
- **[14. #10]** In the classroom, in smaller groups, this is especially important. In fact, I would say, the less you have to talk, the better teacher you might be! Whether you are teaching little

children, teenagers, or adults, it is more effective to ask questions to lead a discussion than it is to lecture. Why? It is more interesting to the students to have a discussion than a lecture; questions force them to think harder; discussion allows them to express themselves and feel like a valuable part of the process; and it lets them find the answers, which not only teaches them those answers, it helps them learn to think and results in greater buy-in or ownership for those answers. So [10] when you are preparing to teach, would it be better [A] to make a list of questions designed to draw out the information from the students or [B] make a list of things you want to share with them? A.

- † **[15. #11]** When you come in to church, we mix up the activities: Most weeks, we have praise reports, music, prayer, sermon, more music, and announcements; sometimes we mix in a video, communion, a testimony or a dramatic reading. As much as we cherish God's Word and as well as I aspire to preach it, most people are more interested in a varied approach to our worship experience than they would be in hearing me preach for the full seventy-five minutes. Would you agree?
- This is true in adult classes and for teenagers and little children too. Variety is valuable. In economics, we teach the concept of declining marginal returns: eventually, your productivity of each moment decreases over time. I keep my sermons as short as I can while still teaching the essence of the passage. With the children, if you are talking more than ten minutes, you probably are losing them.
  - [11] If you were teaching the children, should you [A] break up the conversation into smaller chunks, intermixed with other learning activities, or [B] try to have a conversation with them for half an hour straight? A, mix it up! Do a learning activity, then talk a little, then play a game, then talk a little, then practice the memory verse or sing a song, then talk a little more. This will prevent boredom, increase participation, and help them learn in the short bursts of discussion. The highest potential for remembering what you hear is 10%; if you add seeing visuals to hearing, then the potential goes up to 50%. If add doing to seeing and hearing, then the potential rises to 90%.
  - Retention is much higher if you keep things as fun as possible. When I was preaching on grief earlier this year, we did not have much fun; it would have detracted from the message. But most of the time, you can have some fun, especially in the classroom. Wade playfully poked at a few people in his class last week, calling our elder statesman Tom, "Little Tommy," among other things. With the children, the more fun the better. That does not always mean games, it can just be a fun design to the discussion or interesting learning activities. When I led a small group of high school boys, I always began the evening with an amusing or fun activity which would illustrate one of the points of the scripture passage.
- † **[16. #12]** Another important step in this process is the hook. Do you know what the hook is? It is something designed to get your attention. [12] In sermons, is it more interesting if [A] I get you started on the topic with a story that illustrates the point, humor about the topic, and/or thought-provoking questions, or [B] I start right in lecturing about the text? A.
- Usually it is helpful to have a hook, a device to stimulate interest and launch the topic. I especially like to use humor here, because it helps people feel comfortable with what is coming, gets their interest, wins them over to your side so they want to listen.
  - When teaching children or teenagers, this is important too. You have to work a little to get them interested, to get them involved with the topic. Our children's curriculum each week offers you a choice of several learning activities designed to do this, so each teacher can pick the

one or two that s/he thinks will be most effective. Even with adults, you can start a discussion with an opinion question or a real life question, so there are no wrong answers and everyone can get involved in the conversation more easily. We call that an ice-breaker.

- **[17. Philippians]** We see this sometimes in scripture, even though the inspired writers had limited space and an urgent teaching to convey. For example, we saw that Paul and Timothy begin Philippians with **Philippians 1.1 NET: From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.** They provocatively identified themselves as slaves and referred to the suffering Philippians as “holy ones” or “saints.” I bet that got their attention!

† **[18. #13]** I mentioned earlier that it sometimes is good to have a pattern and sometimes good to shake things up. Two weeks ago at the start of the sermon, as my hook, I said, “I have good news, that God has given us a marvelous gift, a gift of grace, to please Christ, and this gift is called...” and then I paused, and then I prompted you with, “it begins with an S,” and the moment several of you said “salvation,” I enthusiastically said, “suffering!” That got your attention: it was a surprise, and I set you up for it by using language we usually reserve for salvation.

- When one of the religious leaders of the Jews, Nicodemus, came to Jesus with very flattering words, Jesus chose to shock him with his reply: **John 3.3 ESV: Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** That left Nicodemus, one of the most esteemed teachers in the land, stuttering with confusion. He certainly was more interested in learning what Jesus wanted to teach after that.
- [13] Is it better when teaching [A] to sometimes excite people with something surprising or [B] to always be predictable so they know what is coming? A.
- In the children’s room earlier this summer, Dave, Dan, and Matt were teaching as a team, and they started with a learning activity. They asked the children to draw the church. When the children had finished, they said, “No, that is the church building, I asked you to draw the church!” This made the children think, “What are these crazy old men talking about?” They came to realize the theme of the lesson, which is that the church is the people, not the building. So don’t be afraid to use suspense or surprise as a teaching tool.

---

## Teaching Wisdom

† **[19. tips]** Before we end this discussion, let me share a few other bits of wisdom with you.

- Keep in mind that any Bible lesson should meet three types of needs, whether you are preaching from the pulpit or teaching in the nursery: you should meet a cognitive [or intellectual] need by providing information and helping them process it; you should meet an affective [or emotional] need with motivation and encouragement; and you should meet a behavioral need by showing what to do with the information, how it can be useful.
- If you are teaching soon, prepare well and early. If you are teaching from curriculum, like we use for the children, look it over early in the week, pray about it, think on it in spare moments, revisit it again later in the week and figure out what activities you will use, in what order, what questions you want to ask, what is important to convey to the students. Feel free to call or email me with questions or anything you want to talk over.
- Also if you are using curriculum, fix any verses out of context or theological issues. Curriculum seems to come in two varieties most of the time: it either is biblically accurate and boring as

paste or effectively enticing and riddled with poor scholarship. We try to find curriculum that is biblically accurate and interesting, but it can be a challenge. Just be aware that you might have to fix things. If you are making your own lesson, be careful about these things.

- Use a Bible translation that fits your audience. For the children, we have NIRV, which is the NIV edited to a third grade reading level. For the youth, we have the NLT, which is a seventh grade reading level and which is a thought-by-thought translation instead of word-for-word, which makes it easier to understand. I suggest this translation for people new to reading the Bible.
- **[20. more tips]** In most of our classes, we have a wide variance in age, knowledge, and spirituality. Be conscious of that as you are helping them learn. You will have to find a way not to lose the youngest in age or faith without boring those more mature.
- Teach to those who are there! Trust God brought them. Some days you might have twenty little children and other days two. That's God's problem, not yours. You teach what he has given you to teach! Maybe God wanted those two children to have extra attention that day.

† On the bottom of your handout, I shared a few protocols for when you teach in the church.

- Take attendance so we can keep track of who is coming and what they are learning.
- Pray with your students. Find out what concerns they have, pray with them, encourage them to pray, and be sure to follow up the next week at church, so they know you really care.
- Always follow the church's child safety policy. We will share a written form of this policy with you in October.

† **[21. Matthew 26]** Let's finish with one more scripture passage. **Matthew 26.36 NET: Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."**

- Jesus modeled what was important to him. He sang worship songs with his disciples, he prayed before them and with them, he followed the Jewish law completely.
- We too can model what we believe for our students. This is especially true if we spend time with them outside of church, such as couples who go out to dinner together or small groups that meet during the week. But even for our little children and teenagers, we can lead by example in the classroom, showing them our excitement for scripture, dedication to prayer, passion for God, unwavering faith and obedience. And by preparing well for each lesson, we show them the importance of giving our best to Christ's service, their value to us, how much we treasure growing and serving.

---

## Conclusion

† **[22. thanks]** If you are not teaching in the church, please be praying and preparing to teach in the near future! I say that because we need everyone involved to grow the ministry, but also because we need you involved to grow you into the spiritually influential person God designed you to be!

- If you are teaching in the church, thank you! Please be careful about your own spiritual health and growth. Invest in that process and in getting further equipped for ministry. We will continue to provide you with teaching, training, and coaching, and you can always ask for help without shame. Let's pray now again for our schools and for our teachers in the church.