

Teaching 101

Prayer

Good morning, today we are going to talk about teaching. Why should we use valuable sermon time to talk about this subject? Before I answer that, let me ask you a question. How many of you have ever tried to teach somebody something? How many here think that clearly relating the message of Jesus in a way that people can understand and learn is important?

Great, let's look at some of the aspects of teaching. These principles can be applied to teaching anything, but obviously, I want to equip you to be effective in making disciples.

When you try to teach something, a couple of things become evident right away:

- 1) If you are going to explain something through teaching, you need to understand it
- 2) If you can't put the material in simple terms, you really don't understand it yet and you need more prep...

The next considerations that pop up are:

- 1) How do you plan to get your message delivered?
- 2) How will you ensure your message is received?
- 3) How will you know that your message has been received?
- 4) How can you ensure that the lesson stays with the person?

Okay, let's consider a typical sermon in a typical church...

- Opening prayer
- Introduction to the topic
- Discussion of fundamental points to be discussed, usually 3-5
- Detail on fundamental points with scripture
- A call to change existing behavior to align with what the Word of God says
- Closing prayer

Let's look at the steps and some common thoughts that go along with them:

- Okay so I open in prayer...
 - That's pretty good; I like to pray for a bit at the beginning of the service
- Introduction to the topic
 - Am I interested in listening to this topic or am I going to think about something else?
 - If I'm interested... Let's see where he is going with this

- If I'm interested and critical... Let's see if where he is going with this is correct in my opinion
- If I'm NOT interested...
 - This doesn't apply to me
 - This is boring
 - I've heard this before
 - I think I'll take a nap
 - I think I'll let my mind drift to something I want to do or I will think about something I was doing
- I'm offended by the topic so I am going to sit and seethe and glare at the pastor.

At this point some of the congregation is present in body and absent in mind

- Let's say your still with me. Now we discuss the fundamental points of the sermon. IE) today we are going to cover A, B and C about topic X
 - One of a few things will happen... The person will believe:
 - 1) I am interested in hearing these topics
 - 2) I have heard all this before and I am not interested anymore and I tune out and so miss new information
 - 3) I have heard these before, but I am curious as to how he will present the topics. There may be a different slant or approach that could be interesting
- Okay still with me? You're doing great!
 - Now we look at the detail in the message
 - We bring illumination to the word of God through examples and illustrations so that a person can relate the sermon to today
- Call to change.
 - A challenge is issued to change behavior
 - I acknowledge this is an area that needs change
 - I decide to change
 - I deny the issue requires change
 - I deny that I need to change and conclude the sermon does not apply to me

Okay... here is my point.

- It is any wonder that so little information is retained?
- Can you see why so few people change when listening to sermons on Sunday morning?
- Can you see how a person could fall asleep in a service?
- Can you see how this common method of message delivery misses its mark?

Okay why does it miss its mark?

- It is because the teaching is telling you what to do. There is no effort on your part to consider all the aspects of the topic. You simply evaluate what is being said to you and you accept it or reject based on how you feel about it.
- People have been trying the tell people what to do method of teaching for a very long time. Without motivation it has little probability of success.

Consider a student in a college being taught this way... All the same thoughts go through their mind in a lecture, but some will record it and study the material anyway because they want to get a certificate or a degree. In short, there is a material motivation behind listening to the boring material and regurgitating it for a test. The lesson may never actually be embraced, but it will be learned enough to pass examination.

What motivation does a member of a church have to listen to the sermon? Do they feel obligation? Do they have a sense of servitude? Perhaps, and historically this was often the case, they listened out of fear for their eternal lives. Don't get me wrong many follow along and study and listen and try to apply this to their lives, but many more do not... So what is the motivation for a Christian to listen to and apply a sermon or a lesson to their lives?

In our culture we are very independent, we have become a consumer society and have come to believe that we can either accept or reject the message and do something or not at our own will. This is NOT in alignment with the word of God.

So...

How do we as Christians overcome all of these obstacles to bring the word of the Lord to people who don't see the need to receive it...

Many preachers and teachers have tried to captivate their audiences through entertainment. ...While some entertainment is a valid tool. It is not a tool that will bring about any change.

I think we understand the basics of the problem now... Let's look at some solutions:

First consider Albert Einstein, he knew that as a teacher, he could not teach his students anything... This is the first thing we need to embrace.

YOU cannot teach anyone anything...

YOU can however, provide the environment and the conditions under which a person can learn.

In teaching, we first need to understand that there first must be a desire or motivation on the part of the student to learn something; otherwise nothing will happen. Remember the old adage: you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink.

This is a sermon... Sort of... So I am going to use a great teacher for illustration. Any idea who?

JESUS

Have you ever noticed that there is no shortage of Christians out there that are more than willing to tell each other what to do? How you noticed that many are willing to tell them how to do it and even monitor them doing it? Why?

It is because of insecurity... We as a species need to feel control and so we try to exert it on others. We mask arrogance in trying to help.

How effective is it when you try to tell someone that their life sucks and they need to give up drinking or smoking or gambling or drugs or premarital sex etc. to be righteous and saved?

We looked at Einstein who showed us that **motivation** is required...

Jesus built motivation in his disciples through the investment of time with them. He built relationship and trust. With those who were closest to him he could be direct and did in fact correct his apostles directly many times, but it was always with relationship established.

This tells us that **longevity of relationship and ministry** is important to built trust so that when a message is delivered it speaks into a person's life.

When Jesus taught he used illustrations from the land or spoke in parables.

Have you ever wondered why the greatest teacher there ever was incarnate spoke in parables?

He taught that the Holy Spirit could illuminate the message to the hearts of his followers.

Think about it...

I can say to you: Don't waste what God has given you, do something with it. God's going to be judging what you did with what he gave you, do you want to be found worthy or not?

Now if we have relationship, you may act on this... if we don't you're more likely to think something like: "Ya whatever."

Now Jesus said it like this:

Matt 25:14-30 ESV

For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants[a] and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents,[b] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.[c] You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Jesus built a narrative story about a hypothetical group of individuals. His intention clearly is that the listener will look at the narrative and see his or her self; the person will place themselves; into the context of the narrative and form their own conclusions regarding their behaviour and whether or not it requires change...

Jesus placed the people in the situation where they could learn from the story. He made it clear that it was more than a story. The people put themselves into the context of the situations presented and they could self-evaluate and learn. He did this time and time again.

Jesus led people to choosing to change. Yet made it clear the consequences of their choices.

Another tool, our amazing Lord and Rabbi used was the question.

For example:

When the people are anxious and concerned about clothes he leads them to faith with a question

- Matthew 6:28-30
 - **And why are you anxious about clothing?** Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Jesus asks a question to teach a principle that we are brothers and sisters and mothers in the kingdom.

- Matthew 12:46-50
 - While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, **“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”** And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus seeks to establish if his apostle knows the truth of who he is.

- Matthew 16:13-17
 - Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

So we clearly see that Jesus uses questions to provoke thought and determine understanding.

What this means for us is that if we desire to have a disciple learn from us, we need to use certain tools:

- 1) We need to recognize that we can't teach anyone anything, but we can provide the environment, conditions and motivation for them to learn

- 2) We need to recognize that relationship and trust are required to speak into a person's life. The more trust the more direct the conversation can be before offense may be taken
- 3) We need to recognize that if a person is to grasp a concept we need to provide clear examples from modern day life that they can relate to. The examples need to be in simple terms that are easily understood. If the problem is not understood then how can change occur?
- 4) We need to recognize that for a person to make a change once a problem is understood, they need to be motivated and have a clear understanding of the solution.
- 5) We need to recognize that it is not up to us to dictate how another individual acts. It is up to us to lead people to recognize that they need to make the change within themselves. We need to provide concrete examples and we need to ask questions to stimulate thought on the subject.
- 6) We need to recognize that people need to participate to be engaged.

Examples:

Mary has recently accepted Jesus as her savior. John is Mary's friend from church. He and Mary sit down to study the bible. John wants Mary to be a successful Christian so with the best of intentions, he tells her what she needs to do. Mary is interested in how to pray, but John thinks it's more important that Mary learns about baptism. Mary asks about prayer but John is not on board with her desire, he wants to relate his passion for baptism to her. Mary doesn't understand baptism and so while he shows her all the scriptures he knows about baptism and how wonderful it is, she has no context or frame of reference so she tunes him out and leaves as soon as she feels it's polite to do so. John feels proud of his accomplishment of telling Mary everything he knows about baptism, but Mary walks away, frustrated and having learned nothing.

Let's say in this second example that Mary tries to understand baptism, but to her it looks like a holy bath. She tells John this and he laughs at her. She is embarrassed at her lack of knowledge and never opens her bible again due to embarrassment.

Let's look at a third example. Mary was raised Catholic and was sprinkled as a baby and so she considers herself baptized. John tells her that Catholicism is a cult and she has been misled. He shows her lots of scripture to substantiate his position on this. She explains her Mom and Dad were Catholic. John says he is sorry for her but they are going to hell. Her baptism doesn't count because babies can't repent. He proudly tells her that John's baptism is a baptism of repentance. Mary leaves the church.

Let's say John really cares about Mary and her walk with Jesus. John asks Mary what she would like to study and suggests baptism. Mary says that's interesting but she feels that she really wants to learn how to pray. John puts his favorite subject on the back burner and asks her what she knows about prayer... She tells him she was

raised catholic and she knows novenas and the stations of the cross and can pray the rosary. John tells her that it is wonderful that she already has been talking to God. He says that she has learned about praying regularly and that is good, but what he believes she is asking for is how to pray in a relationship with God? So he asks her. Mary do you want to know how to pray in a relationship with God, in a more intimate way? Mary gets excited and says yes that is exactly it. So he explains that Jesus is a friend and we can simply talk to him. He shows her scriptures that tell her he will never leave her nor forsake her. He shows her scriptures that he is closer than a brother and that he wants a relationship with her. He shows her that prayer is not necessarily a ritual but a relational conversation. Mary is so excited. John asks her if she wants to try, but she seems embarrassed so John says: "Do you want to hear me pray to Jesus?" She says yes. So he does and when he is finished he asks her. Did that seem hard? She says no that seems way too easy, I thought there had to be more to it. John takes her to Galatians 1 and shows her it is for freedom she has been set free. She goes home excited about Jesus, eager to pray and eager to meet with John.

All of that occurred because John put his agenda and pride on the back burner to deal with what she Desired to learn. He provided the environment and conditions for her to learn and he successfully brought her closer to Jesus.

My last point...

So often Christians will quote scripture and each other and argue over doctrine. Which the word clearly tells us profits nothing... but they do it anyway...

My approach has always been more of a Columbo approach. I will sit down and ask the person. Okay I hear what your saying, help me to understand it... I may in fact learn something. But many times, when the person tries to explain a flawed or false doctrine that they have gotten out of a book or from the TV, they are unable to do so. I can ask questions such as: Matthew x:y says: "example" how does that fit with this? I can ask Luke z:w says: "example" help me to understand how you get this? Pretty soon when the scriptures do not support the position and the questions with the correcting scriptures correct the doctrine. I have had to say nothing, but the scripture speaks to the person's heart and they change their doctrine themselves. It takes humility to allow the Holy Spirit to teach instead of showing all we know. But the word of God tells us that when a person is in error we are to restore them Gently and in Love. I would rather allow a person to try to explain their position and let them discover the error, than whack them over the head with my bible and my bible college degree.

We need to exercise grace and love and provide the environment and conditions in which a person can learn. In this way they will make the right choices based on the scripture and not opinion.

Let's choose to teach Christ's way, with patience, love, understanding and guidance. He has already given us the tools.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Prayer.