

Teaching the Bible requires five important steps:

Prayer:

Teaching is God's business, not ours. The students are his children, and God has given us the responsibility to feed them using whatever nourishment he gives us. Jesus instructed Peter to "feed my lambs" (John 21:15); thus the Bible teacher is helping the children of the King!

Prayer, then, is our first step. We must find out what the Master wants us to give his sheep, and we must ask for Heaven's resources not only to enlighten and strengthen us but to do the same for our students. If we turn to him, ask for specific help, and wait on him for real answers, then he will willingly give us what we need and work through us in the power of his Spirit.

The Bible:

Today it's the customary practice to depend on quarterlies for Sunday School lessons. But even if you use these in your teaching, your primary textbook is always the Bible. A Bible teacher is like a calculus teacher in school: the students sit at his/her feet because the teacher knows the subject; they wouldn't feel comfortable learning from someone who doesn't know anything about the subject.

In the same way, your students look to you for help in understanding God's Word. You need to be familiar with it yourself to the point that 1) you're not afraid of it, and 2) you are confident that you can get your students to the point that they understand it.

This means that, even if you use quarterlies or someone else's outlines (like SBI's outlines!), you need to study the Biblical passage yourself so that you can direct your students *there*, not to the quarterly. This will mean extra work on your part, but you honor God when you take seriously the book that you supposedly are teaching.

A Method:

You need to develop a method in your teaching. The two most-used methods in a classroom setting is the "**discussion**" method, and the "**lecture**" method.

The "**discussion**" method means that the teacher simply provides the subject for discussion and the students toss the idea around, like a brainstorming session, to help develop the idea further. This method is useful for finding life applications for Biblical ideas.

The "**lecture**" method is preferred if you have facts, or data, to get across to your students. Supposedly you have studied the passage before class, and you have an idea of what you want your students to learn about it. Since God has placed a heavy emphasis on "growing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10), you *have* to do this if you want your students to grow spiritually. Discussion is fine in its place, but you have to plan lectures (in whatever form you feel comfortable in doing

that) for giving them something to meditate on.

Bible study helps:

There are several tools that you can use to help you understand a passage well enough to teach it. The most important is a **concordance**, which is an alphabetical listing of all the words used in the Bible. If you are studying the subject of "love", for example, you can look the word up in a concordance and find all the passages in the Bible that use that word.

Another tool that you can use is a **Bible Dictionary**, which discusses all the subjects and ideas that are found in the Bible.

A third tool is a **Bible atlas**. Here you can study the geography of the Bible lands, which can often help you visualize the stories that you read.

Think:

This may seem strange that thinking is a requirement in teaching the Bible -- most people would assume that we think in whatever we do! But it's actually difficult to think about the Bible -- or to get the students to think about it -- because it requires so much effort. We would rather let someone else do the thinking for us!

But we start digging below the surface of the Bible only when we start doing some real thinking about it. Thinking involves at least two things: first, **ask questions**. This is, without a doubt, the most effective way of opening up a passage. Don't assume anything about the text. As you ask all sorts of questions about what is going on, and the "why's" of what is going on, you will begin to understand what's important in it.

Second, **meditate** on it. David said to "meditate" on God's Law (Psalm 1:3). This means to study it from all angles, to ask questions, to spend time on it, to compare it with other passages -- and then come back to it again and again to dig some more in it. It's sort of like a cow chewing her cud. The more you chew on it, the more you'll get out of it.

Creating a lesson plan

Notice that the Bible Lesson Planner has room for five points. That's for a good reason: a good Bible lesson won't be overwhelming either for teacher or student. Actually five points is pushing it a bit. There's a lot of wisdom behind the old saying that the "perfect" sermon has only three points!

Here are a few things to keep in mind when creating a new Bible lesson:

First, come up with a single statement that says the whole thing in a nutshell. If you can say it that simply -- in a single sentence -- that proves that you understand the point of the lesson. It may help you to think in terms of newspaper headlines. Imagine that you want to write the lesson up for the local newspaper. You'll need to

have a Title or Headline for the article that tells the whole point of the article in a few words -- just like the newspapers do it.

Second, write out the main points of the lesson. Each point should explain, expand or illustrate the main point in some way. Keep these points simple too; short, clear and plain points are easiest to understand and remember.

While we're on this subject, studies have been done that show that people remember only 10% of what they hear, 50% of what they see, and 90% of what they do. If they can't remember much of what they hear, then your best bet is to give them short, easy-to-remember points -- and not many of them! Plus, if you print those points out -- such as the reports that the Bible Lesson Planner makes -- they stand a better chance of remembering the points. If you have so much to say about the subject that it goes beyond five points, then you probably need to break it into two lessons and not stuff them all into one class session.

Third, use Bible passages to explain and prove each point. This is especially true for subject studies. Your aim is to teach the Bible, after all, and your students want to see if the Bible actually backs up what you claim in your lesson points.

Fourth, you can attach notes to each point; you can also attach an "Overview" page to the entire lesson. You can use these features to do several things: a) remind you of how you want to explain the point further to your students; b) make notes of other resources and the information from them that can help the students understand the passage better (like Bible dictionaries, commentaries, etc.).

Fifth, you can print the lesson out in various forms. Of course you want to give your students the listing of main points and references; you may want to print out the Biblical passage for them too. Then you can print a version out for yourself complete with notes -- to help you during the teaching session, so that you don't forget anything.