

## Sunday School / Bible Study (SS/BS) Teacher's Helper

### Scripture First and Foremost

This is not a foregone conclusion. There are many wonderful books written on countless subjects and topics. It is often the tendency to be interested in these and translate them into the Sunday School arena. The problem with this is that in general it is the topic or subject that is stressed over and above God's Word - i.e. healthy marriage, child rearing, knowing the will of God, prayer, etc. When the subject is stressed in excess the Scripture can become secondary or even extraneous. In other words if a certain book makes prayer make sense, we need not examine the Lord's prayer as it is written in Scripture. We have gone from learning Scripture to learning about something in Scripture and this is dangerous. Easy questions to stay on track are: What verses did we learn in this study? Or, how after this study do I better understand the Bible?

### Quality Verses Quantity

It may be better to really digest a smaller nugget of truth in Scripture in a study than to breeze through many passages and not internalize anything. This is not an excuse to stay elementary in our teaching (Heb 6:1,2), or that we should give small doses of *milk* in every study. For example, a six year study on John 3:16 may prove detrimental. This is not to say this verse or any other is not profound enough to keep us in study this long. We're seeking a balanced diet of good portions of Bible Truth in a particular sitting. One can only handle so much at a time. What we're suggesting is that you not overload a class with too much information to handle in a short period of time. "This week, we're going to learn the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit and the Ten Commandments... hold on tight!" People are well served to take in hearty meals of meat one bite at a time. "This week we are going to look at the First Commandment." Now we can really enjoy this feast.

### God Doesn't Need Our Opinion

One common problem in Sunday School / Bible Study is the "What do you think this means?" syndrome. One simple reason for this is a lack of confidence in the teacher in his preparation and delivery of the material. In other words, when we are not forthright in proclaiming what God has said on a subject or in a passage, we tend to opt for democratic learning - As though if we come to a conclusion as a group it must be right and valid. Further, the teacher has not had to disagree with what the class has said. However, when the teacher is confident in the Word of God and his understanding of a passage, he does not teach based on consensus, but with authority. This is not a dictator who is not teachable, but a diligent student who believes God has spoken clearly. So the questions in this class are not like the one above, but rather in the tone of, "Since God has said such and such, how can we apply this to our lives to serve Him more fully?"

### Preaching is Monologue (Between God and Church) – Teaching is Dialogue

This can be a very difficult thing to grasp. We have already suggested that we not let opinion rule in studies of Scripture. How then can we properly come to Biblical conclusions in SS/BS by asking questions if we are not encouraging the opinions of others to have a bearing on the text? In a school classroom, does the instructor know what must be taught and subsequently tested? Are there instructors that achieve this and have good class involvement? Since this is the case, it should be the goal of the teacher to develop this ability. Like an attorney who examines a witness or a salesman who leads up to a desired answer (not manipulation, but questions which help decision making), we ask questions that guide the discussion toward our understanding of the text or doctrine. The next time you are in a worship service notice how the attentiveness can decline as minutes go by. In a classroom this can really hurt unless the teacher is extremely gifted and/or charismatic and can lecture so his students absorb it. So involvement is quite necessary to a healthy study. Discussions have proven very fruitful and also build relationships within the congregation, so ask lots of involvement questions that stay on topic.

### Let the Word Do What it Does

The Bible is alive (Heb 4:12). We do not make it come alive as though something we say *makes* it powerful. It is powerful! (Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 1:18, 2 Tim 3:15). The effective teacher spends his energy on effectively teaching *what the Word of God says*. Not on being clever and using tactics to energize it. It is often said that we need to make the Bible relevant. This is not correct. It *is* relevant because it is the Word of the Eternal God – Eternal is always relevant. There is no amplification required. Any lack of interest or understanding is not the fault of the Almighty and His choice of words, but our desire to have things our way. It is the clear understanding of Scripture that is effective in believers and converts the soul of unbelievers. Not our dressed up version of it. If you have a choice between interesting and accurate, choose accurate. Lord willing though, a teacher has the giftedness to deliver both.

### Teaching Is a Terrifying and Wonderful Privilege.

If our chief goal is to glorify God, can you imagine a higher honor than helping others do that? It is this understanding that should make one desire wholeheartedly to be a teacher of Scripture to the people of God. To help others grow in grace and knowledge is a tremendous blessing. A teacher is accountable to God directly for how he handles both God's Word and God's flock. It may hurt, but be willing to ask those you teach how you might improve. A teacher must to some degree have the heart of a shepherd and look out for the sheep even above his own feelings. Recognition and reputation should not be motivators to teach. But seeing others live for God's glory should be our ultimate quest.

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)*