

## LESSON THREE

### What Are the Characteristics of Teaching?

1. Teaching is a science and is therefore governed by laws. E.

L. Thorndike<sup>1</sup> postulated three laws of learning:

1. *The law of readiness*: When one is ready to act to do so is pleasant, and not to do so is annoying.
2. *The law of effect, satisfaction*: When an act is pleasant, we tend to repeat it until it becomes a habit. If unpleasant, we tend to quit.
3. *The law of exercise*: An act once performed tends to be more easily performed again, while neglect makes an act more difficult.

2. Teaching is an art and is therefore governed by technique. (Lessons will follow on the tools of teaching and the technique of presentation.)

3. Teaching is a social act and therefore requires good interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the taught.

1. The teacher's attitude toward his pupils.
  - He is not a dictator issuing decrees, but a guide offering leadership.
  - He is stimulating the growth of pupils by setting them an example.
  - The teacher grows through the self-discipline he expects of the pupils.
  - The learning teacher glows with enthusiasm.
  - The learning teacher enjoys learning, and so do many of his pupils.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thorndike was a pioneer in American psychology and education theory. His research into reward and punishment in learning—known as connectionism—led to the widely used stimulus-response theories that followed, and he made many other significant contributions to his field.

2. The right relationship between teacher and student enables the teacher to:

- Take his pupil with him because he has learned to talk their language.
- Bring a personal God to real persons.
- Bring the Bible to right where the pupils live.
- Encourage pupils to understand themselves because someone else understands them.

3. Teaching is a complex activity and therefore must be carried out according to purposeful plans and governed and guided by meaningful aims.

1. The importance of plans.

- Anything that is not planned is “planless”; anything that is “planless” will likely fail to accomplish its purpose.
- Just as any intelligent person demands detailed plans, specifications, and estimates of cost before proceeding to the building of a house, so teaching needs to be planned before it is carried into practice.

2. The value of purposeful plans.

- It makes more likely the attainment of the inclusive aims of teaching.
- A lesson plan helps to clarify objectives and to make them definite.
- It provides for suitable transition from previous experiences to contemplated ones.
- It makes for better selection and organization of content, material, procedures, and activities.
- It tends to use of better methods of teaching.
- Lesson planning gives confidence to inexperienced teachers and develops in them ability to improve more rapidly.
- It serves as an incentive to the teacher to make adequate preparation.
- It enables the teacher to teach with greater freedom.
- It leads to elimination of many difficulties by anticipating them and by planning how to avoid or minimize them.

- Reflective thinking done beforehand makes for better unity in lesson development than is possible from spontaneous planning done on the spur of the moment.
  - It stimulates the teacher to have ready pivotal questions and appropriate illustrations.
3. The importance and function of aims.
    - An aim implies activity directed in an orderly manner toward the accomplishment of some end. A bow shot into the air has a result, but not an end. An end is more than a result.
    - An aim is the major influence in controlling procedure in any great undertaking.
  4. The function of aims in teaching.
    - Gives direction.
    - Makes for orderly continuity.
    - Provides a basis for selection of materials.
    - Provides a sound basis for measurement.
  5. Inclusive aims of the Christian teacher.
    - To lead pupils to a knowledge of God's will. Note that this is different from imparting Bible knowledge.
    - To lead the pupil to follow or obey God's will.
    - Develop Christian character expressed through worship, right living, and efficient service.

4. Teaching is a simple act that can and will be accomplished by those who desire to do so. Only one step is required at a time. Anyone who possesses common sense and the love for the work, who studies the Scriptures and prays for wisdom, should have no difficulty.

There is no chance, no destiny, no fate,  
Can circumvent, or hinder or control  
The firm resolve of a determined soul.  
Gifts count for little; will alone is great.  
No man can place a limit on thy strength.  
All heights are thine, if thou wilt but believe  
In thy Creator and thy self. At length  
Some feet must tread some heights now unattained.  
Why not thine own. Achieve!

### **What Are the Qualities of a Good Teacher?**

Where to begin? You don't have to look far to find a plethora of lists of qualities of good teachers. Indeed, there may be more lists of qualities than there are good teachers.<sup>2</sup> Far too long we have chosen teachers carelessly. "If they can read they can teach," we say, forgetting that understanding is an essential part of reading. So we add another condition. "If they can read and repeat what they read they can teach." That is not true either. All it establishes is that they can read the same material twice, first silently to themselves and then out loud to a group of people. So we advance a step farther. "If they can teach public school they will surely make good Bible Study teachers." Wrong again. How many of us have had bad teachers in public schools from first grade to college? I still remember my geometry teacher in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade who would drink a quart of buttermilk for lunch, and in my class, the first after lunch, would put the assignment on the board, lay her head on the desk, and go to sleep. I liked the history teacher better even though she threatened to tear my arm off of my body and

---

<sup>2</sup> "Google" "qualities AND teacher" and you will get nearly 25,000,000 hits in 0.16 hundredths of a second. Of course, they relate to public school teachers, but it does give an insight into the importance attached to the subject.

beat me to death with the bloody end of it! She at least cared. But what does make a good teacher? More specifically, what are the qualities that make a good Bible Study teacher?

Perhaps we ought to start with the obvious. Surely the primary quality, the most essential quality, is a true spirituality created by an extensive knowledge of Scripture and manifested in the teacher's life! Unless the teacher of the Bible lives the life of a devoted Christian, that which is taught will die in the air.

Sadly, this basic quality is often overlooked. In many instances congregations first determine the number of classes they wish to have. Having settled on say eight adult classes, and believing that the load is too heavy for one teacher, they next conclude that 16 teachers per quarter are needed. Since it is too much to ask that the teachers teach more than one or two quarters a year, that enlarges the number to a minimum of 32 adult teachers. Talk about the cart before the horse! The number of classes should not determine the number of teachers. First find the number of good, spiritual, biblically knowledgeable teachers available and then determine the number of classes. This approach will educate more for teaching and, combined with proper training, will prepare them to become good teachers of the Word.

### **QUALITIES (CHARACTERISTICS) OF A GOOD TEACHER**

1. Deep respect for the Word of God. The Bible should always be read with reverence and respect. This is teaching by example and is most important. Psalm 119:27. There is no hesitation or reservation on their part as to the inspiration and sufficiency of the sacred text.

- There must be constant study of the Word whether teaching or “on leave.” Paul exhorted Timothy to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth 2 Tim. 2:15).
2. A sense of urgency in imparting the Gospel. A person who dreads the preparation and presentation of a Bible lesson ought never to stand before a class. If it is a chore instead of a thrill to teach, then by all means, let someone else teach. The Bible teacher should shout with Jeremiah 2:29, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah.”
  3. An optimistic, enthusiastic outlook. A teacher who knows the blessings of God upon his faithful and who looks forward to the home of the soul cannot help but be positive and enthusiastic about the message of God. This is not to say that nothing negative can be taught. Restraining from certain things is a part of the positive life. However, the teacher should never let the class forget the final reward that awaits the children of God.
  4. A constant effort to improve. Any teacher who thinks he “has arrived” and knows enough to “wing it” in a class is stagnant. No matter how much the teacher knows, when there is no fresh study the bread of life is made stale and the water of life is stagnant. Those who come to learn are robbed. We who teach the Word should strive to make each week better than the last. When we are satisfied with where we are is it God or Satan who is setting our standards? 2 Tim. 4:13 is one of the most amazing statements in scripture: “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, **bring with thee,** and **the books, but especially the parchments.**” Paul knew he was inspired and who inspired him (Gal. 1:1, 12), yet even at the end of

his race, he wanted to keep studying and learning. We must be willing to pay the price of constant, continuing, and thorough preparation, fervent prayer, and personal devotion. Before each lesson we should ask if this is the best that I am capable of doing? Do I have any right to ask God to bless this lesson? Until we fully recognize the potential harm of an unprepared teacher, we will reap the sad fruit of the blind leading the blind into the ditch of spiritual immaturity.

5. A proper attitude toward the lesson. There is no such thing as an unimportant lesson. The lesson assigned in the planned series is a part of the whole. If the teacher does not get the particular lesson across at the appointed lesson period, the student may never have the second opportunity. A lot depends upon the teacher.