

## **LESSON THREE**

### **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>1</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 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!

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<sup>1</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.

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.
  6. A proper attitude toward the preparation of the lesson. It is a privilege, not a problem; it is a blessing, not a burden; it is an opportunity, not an oppression.
  7. A proper attitude toward the presentation of the lesson. What is it that makes you want to hear a teacher teach? Most people who answer that question would at least include passion or enthusiasm as an important trait of an effective teacher. Who wants to hear someone speak or teach who is dry, dull, or detached from what it is that the teacher is attempting to teach? Where does passion for teaching come from? It comes from spending time with God. The best teaching comes from overflow.
  8. A proper attitude toward the church. Each teacher, in accepting a teaching assignment, is expected to demonstrate an attitude of “seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” by faithfully attending all services of the church and by living a Godly life. All personal habits of an objectionable nature should be scrupulously avoided. While this is expected of every Christian, it is expected to the highest degree in the life of one who publicly teaches the Word of God.

9. A proper attitude toward the class. The teacher is not teaching for himself, even though if proper preparation is made he will inevitably learn more than the class. The teacher is teaching for the class. Every lesson should be prepared with the class in mind. What is there in this study that will speak to the problems, concerns, needs and hope of the hearers? What can I say from this text that will draw the hearers closer to God? What is there that will cause them to want to study more and learn more about Christ? How can I encourage them to bring others to class that will enable us to be more evangelistic?

These qualities are requirements, not electives. While perfection is not required, continuing progress is. Phil. 3:14 applies to the teacher in a special sense: "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The teacher who is not getting better is by definition getting worse. Getting neither better nor worse is not an alternative because standing still prevents one from getting closer to the goal, resulting in falling behind from where one should be.