

LESSON 7 The Need for a Message

Every year people choose certain kinds of seeds to plant in their gardens. But most gardeners do more than just plant seeds. They prepare the ground by plowing it and marking rows before the seeds are planted. Then, at harvest time the gardener reaps results from his labor.

Preparing to teach is like that. The right message is chosen, and then it is prepared as a lesson. During the class time, the teacher plants in the hearts of the students the seeds of God's Word. All this work is done to ensure the student has a full life in Jesus Christ. Also, it is especially pleasing for the teacher to see his or her students replicate their learning.

The Plan

- A. The Message of the Word
- B. The Message From Your Life
- C. The Message for the Learner

The Goals

- 1. Explain why the teacher must believe the message.
- 2. Discuss how our example can teach others.
- 3. State the importance of a learner-centered message.

A. THE MESSAGE OF THE WORD

Goal 1. Explain why the teacher must believe the message.

God has given us the most important message in the world to teach: the message of the gospel. How we feel about it can help others learn from us about Him. Do you love to read your Bible? The psalmist said, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (Psalm 119:97).

We need to pray as we study to teach this message. This will open our hearts and minds to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Read and study God’s Word, and the Holy Spirit will teach you the meaning if you ask Him to. David prayed, “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18). Let us make this our prayer as we study the message we take to others.

Paul talked about this message when he wrote to the church at Corinth. He said, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Read Paul’s earlier message to the Corinthians:

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I

proclaimed to you the testimony about God.
For I resolved to know nothing while I was
with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
(1 Corinthians 2:1–2)

People need to know Jesus. They need to receive His forgiveness, which is available only because of His death on the Cross. Jesus is the one who forgives our sins and helps us grow in our Christian lives.

Application

Read 2 Timothy 2:14–19. Then circle the letter in front of the best completions to the following sentences.

- 1** A person who teaches the message of God presents
 - a)** lessons that show how much he or she knows.
 - b)** his or her own message.
 - c)** the truth about the resurrection.
 - 2** Teachers please God when they
 - a)** say that our resurrection is past.
 - b)** bring people to God’s truth.
 - c)** fail to present the message of new life.
 - 3** The message we are to pass on in our teaching ministry is
 - a)** that God will not forgive all sins.
 - b)** why we are to teach.
 - c)** how people can have new life in Jesus.
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Second Timothy 2:14–19 show us how important it is to work hard at teaching. If we want the blessing of God on our teaching, we must be careful to teach His truth. Sometimes it is easy to let our own ideas about these things become too important. God wants us to think for ourselves. But He also wants us to test our thinking by the truth of His Word. We must not teach something that is not verified in Scripture, no matter how good it sounds. To know Jesus is to have spiritual life forever. That is the reason we feel our message is important.

Application

- 4** Choose the best answer given in parentheses.
- a)** What should your attitude be as you study the Bible? (Questioning/Prayerful)
 - b)** What was Paul's message when he preached and taught? (His own ideas/The truth about Jesus)
 - c)** What happens to believers when we fail to teach the truth of God's Word? (They will grow/They cannot grow)
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B. THE MESSAGE FROM YOUR LIFE

Goal 2. Discuss how our example can teach others.

The goal of teaching is to see a change in those we teach. Whether you are teaching your family, friends, or a Sunday school class, keep this goal in mind. Furthermore, if you want to teach people to obey Christ, you must obey Him first.

It is not enough just to learn a lot of facts and pass them on to others. If you have not been changed by God's power, then you cannot expect those you teach to be changed. People need to see those facts from God's Word changing your life also. Then they will want the same thing in their own lives. Philippians 2:15–16 notes, "You may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life."

Application

- 5** It is most important in your teaching ministry to
- a)** teach many facts so those you teach will think about them.
 - b)** teach by being an example of how Jesus can change lives.
- 6** Does your life give a message that can teach others to change? Pray about this as you continue to study this course.
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Read the instruction Paul gave to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:11–16. Like Timothy we need to be an example to our students. When we say God’s Word is alive, we mean that His Word has the power to change our lives. But this happens only when we obey the commands of the Word and believe its promises.

As a teacher you should be the leader in bringing about change. To do this, you will need to study and share the Word. Paul teaches that “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

This verse helped me through many days when my heart was filled with fear. Then one day I was with another woman who was fearful of her future because of her illness. I read the verse to her and prayed that God would comfort her as He had comforted me. She, too, found strength to keep trusting God.

Application

7 Circle the letter in front of each true sentence.

- a)** Timothy was to wait to teach until he became older.
 - b)** His conduct and speech were to be an example to believers.
 - c)** If Timothy watched himself and his teaching, those who heard him would criticize him.
 - d)** Timothy was to practice the things that he also taught.
 - e)** If he lived a changed life, Timothy would be a good example to those who listened.
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Changes in lives are the evidence that learning has occurred. Either an action or an attitude shows these changes. Our purpose in teaching is to see changes in the lives of those we teach. Here are five things we must do in our teaching ministry to accomplish this end:

1. Let the students know what we want to teach them—the message of God’s salvation.
2. Repeat the message many times. This does not always have to be done in the same way. The same message can be given

by different methods. In our next lesson we will look at four methods of teaching.

3. Ensure our teaching is understood. Starting with something the students already know in order to explain something new will help them to understand.
4. Help students to believe in our message. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to teach in such a way that students will respond actively.
5. Guide our students into using truths learned. Show them how to use these truths daily. This is called applying the truth to their lives. When this is done, the life of the learner is changed. James explained it this way:

The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.
(James 1:25)

If I taught my small daughter to tie her own shoes without having her try to do it herself, she would not learn to do it. If she did practice tying her own shoes by herself, she would be applying what she had learned. This is the same way we learn and apply spiritual truths. We put into action the truths learned from God's Word.

Application

- 8** Without looking back at the lesson, circle the letter in front of each sentence that tells how a teacher should teach.
- a)** She lives what she teaches.
 - b)** He never lets the students know he has made mistakes.
 - c)** She shares her experiences, even her failures.
 - d)** He shares his feelings about the message.
 - e)** She does not repeat what she has already taught.
 - f)** He tells how the message can work in the student's life.
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C. THE MESSAGE FOR THE LEARNER

Goal 3. State the importance of a learner-centered message.

Preparing the Message

As we have said earlier in this course, the Bible is the textbook for Christian teaching. Therefore, the teacher must know as much as he or she can about the Bible. This is not easy; it requires a lot of disciplined study. And even after many years of study, we cannot know all there is to know.

Sunday school teachers usually have a lesson book that explains the message to be taught. This is helpful. If you use such a book to prepare your lesson, be sure then to read the Scripture passage in your Bible that is given in the lesson. Look at each person in a Bible story. Use truths from the story that will help you and your students to live better Christian lives.

When you plan your lesson, be sure to think about those you will be teaching. What needs do they have that can be helped by this lesson? The answer to this question not only will help you make your message more interesting, but it will also help those you teach to grow in their relationship with God and with one another.

Learning the best ways of preparing our message does not take away from the Holy Spirit's work in our ministry. He will help us learn to be better teachers. Paul told Timothy:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

Speaking the Learner's Language

Our language—our words—is what we use to communicate the truths we want to teach. We understand what we are saying, but sometimes the person we are teaching does not. There are certain words used in Christian teaching that explain what we

believe. Those who are not Christians do not always understand these words as we do.

For instance, once I was teaching a small group and talked about our need to have faith. One of the women asked, “What is faith?” We explained that many things we do in our natural life take faith. Faith is the belief that someone or something will do what he or it is supposed to do. Every time we sit in a chair, we show that we have faith that the chair will hold us. To have faith in God means we believe that God will do what He said He would.

It is important to know the language of the learner and to use such language clearly. This kind of careful teaching is especially needed for children or for those who are not familiar with the Bible. If we know the language level, we can use words they will understand. Then we will be better able to convey God’s truth to them.

It is also important to know that each learner understands the meaning of the words in the Scripture verses he or she reads. This takes time, but if the learner does not understand, he or she may not learn the message you are teaching.

Application

Complete the following statements by choosing the best answers.

- 9** To help the learner better understand your message, think of
- a)** what the lesson really is.
 - b)** his or her needs.
 - c)** what Bible he or she uses.
- 10** Learning the best ways of preparing your message will
- a)** help you make it more interesting.
 - b)** take too much time.
 - c)** make it hard to understand.

11 To speak the learner's language means to

- a)** stop explaining everything.
- b)** have him or her tell the stories.
- c)** know his or her language level and Christian maturity.

12 Think about those you have taught. Did you use words that you had to explain? Were you prepared to give your students a definition to help them understand your message?

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When you have an opportunity to teach, use the following list to remind of the process of preparing a lesson. Check off each step as you complete the list.

STEPS IN PREPARING A LESSON

1. Pray for understanding of the lesson.
2. Read the Bible verses for the lesson.
3. Read the lesson book.
4. Write down the truths in the lesson that you need to obey yourself.
5. Write down your students' needs that this lesson could help meet.
6. Pray for each student and his or her need.
7. List words in the lesson that the students might not understand.
8. Look up the meaning of each word and write it down.
9. Outline what you want to teach.

Check Your Answers

12 Your answer

1 c) the truth about the resurrection.

11 c) know his or her language level and Christian maturity.

2 b) bring people to God's truth.

10 a) help you make it more interesting.

3 c) how people can have new life in Jesus.

9 a) what the lesson really is.

b) all are correct.

c) what Bible he or she uses.

4 a) Prayerful

b) The truth about Jesus

c) They cannot grow.

8 a), c), d), and f) are true.

5 b) teach by being an example of how Jesus can change lives.

7 b), d), and e) are true.

6 Your answer