

Teach A Billion Souls

By Glenn Brooke

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Introduction

Our aim is to change the lives of one billion souls through quality Bible teaching:

- Instruct and encourage teachers by distributing free information about proven teaching models via the Internet
- Rely solely on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit
- Multiply the number of teachers through mentoring

You can be part of a great Bible teaching movement. Come along with us as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ and develop at least 400,000 new Bible teachers by 2021, in order to teach a billion souls from the Word of God.

In this book you'll learn the basics of great Bible teaching that changes lives, and how to mentor others so they, too, can teach. Our approach is to develop *teachers*, to spend and be spent teaching others from the Word of God.

You can learn to teach like Jesus (see Mark 12:14). I believe that God is sovereign and this book has not come into your hands by accident or fate. There is a strong message here for you. "The fields are white for harvest; pray, therefore that the Lord of the harvest will send workers." (Matt 9:37-38) That's you. Our Lord has a place for you, and is going to give you an enormous spiritual legacy.

My Assumptions

Because we want this material to be useful worldwide, in every teaching setting, we're assuming:

- You are a Christian, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ
- You have a Bible (if you don't, check out <http://www.400kteachers.org> for help)
- You are willing to learn and take the responsibilities of being a teacher seriously (see James 3:1)

If you have the Bible and the Holy Spirit, you have everything required. (If more were absolutely necessary, it would have been supplied at Pentecost!)

This book is in two parts. The first part contains the essential ideas for being a great Bible teacher – an approach proven through time to be effective at changing lives. The second part is about mentoring other teachers.

Part I: Keys to Great Bible Teaching

Great Bible Teachers Use Four Key Elements to Change Lives

What Distinguishes a Great Bible Teacher?

The world today is crying out for Bible teaching. We desperately need men and women who can help people hear God's voice and obey it. I believe God is already working to raise up a whole new generation of teachers to prepare His people for works of service and increase the praise to His glorious Name. There are great revivals coming, friends, and more and more teachers will be needed to help these new believers.

First, there is the quantity concern. There are many teachers, but few teach the Truth. I believe that the days Paul describes in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 are here. "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." And Hosea 4:6 also rings with truth for our time: "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."

Many "teachers" will tell you the "secrets" of whatever you're interested in. We're lacking enough teachers who competently use the Scriptures as their source matter.

Then there is the quality concern. The Church (particularly in the United States) is trending towards shallow faith and biblical illiteracy. We are turning

out more and more poorly-equipped “greenhouse” Christians who only know how to honor and serve the Lord under controlled conditions and no stress. We dare not produce “biblical cripples” who are dependent on someone else to listen to God through His Word and tell them what to do. These are wonderful days for service for the Glory of Jesus Christ, and so we need many strong Christians.

Bible teaching is critical to reversing this decline. I am confident that a key element to strengthening God’s people is the diligent service of men and women who know the Word of God, know how to teach it, and love people.

What makes for a Great Bible teacher? How are Great Bible teachers different than other teachers? **Great Bible teachers are conduits of the love of God for people!** Great Bible Teachers:

- ❑ Have energy and passion for the Word of God and for prayer
- ❑ Always purpose to grow in knowledge of the Word, both breadth and depth
- ❑ Focus on the needs of their students, love them and desire to see them becoming spiritually mature
- ❑ See students as disciples, learners, future missionaries and Kingdom workers, each one a worshipper of the Almighty God of the Bible
- ❑ Are skilled at getting a group engaged in discussion – small or large -- and excited enough to continue to think about a lesson for days and weeks later
- ❑ Teach boldly, knowing that God desires to transform both hearts and minds
- ❑ Can either create new teaching content, breaking new ground, or adapt existing content to the needs of a specific group
- ❑ Do not merely echo what others have taught – they teach powerfully from the authentic character of Christ that is formed in them

- Never stop learning

Note: Some of you may be reading that phrase “Great Bible teacher” and think I’m recommending that teachers puff themselves up and draw attention to their “super ministry.” Absolutely not! Great Bible teachers are humble and recognize that they serve only one Master, and using the gifts and provision that He has provided for this very purpose.

I will use the acronym GBT for Great Bible Teacher in the rest of this book.

I have a passionate, prayerful dream of a Church with an increasing number of GBTs building up the body and training the next generation of GTBs. These GBTs will have minimal dependence on anything except the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, seeking to wrestle with the Word to bring precisely what God’s people need. These GBTs bathe their teaching in prayer – before, during, and after class. This is a generation of GBTs that sees their teaching as a primary ministry to the people within the sphere the Lord has established for them to influence.

We need hundreds of thousands of GBTs to “make disciples of all nations...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Apollos was a GBT

24Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

27When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. -- Acts 18:24-28, NIV

Apollos is one of my heroes. Apollos is a great model teacher for us to imitate – one of the earliest GBTs! He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures (v. 24). Other translations say he was “mighty” in the Scriptures – there’s a great picture of an effective teacher! We should devote ourselves to learning, absorbing, and understanding the Bible.

He spoke with great fervor (v. 25) and boldness (v. 26). That’s another key for great Bible teaching – heart-inflamed passion and bold speaking.

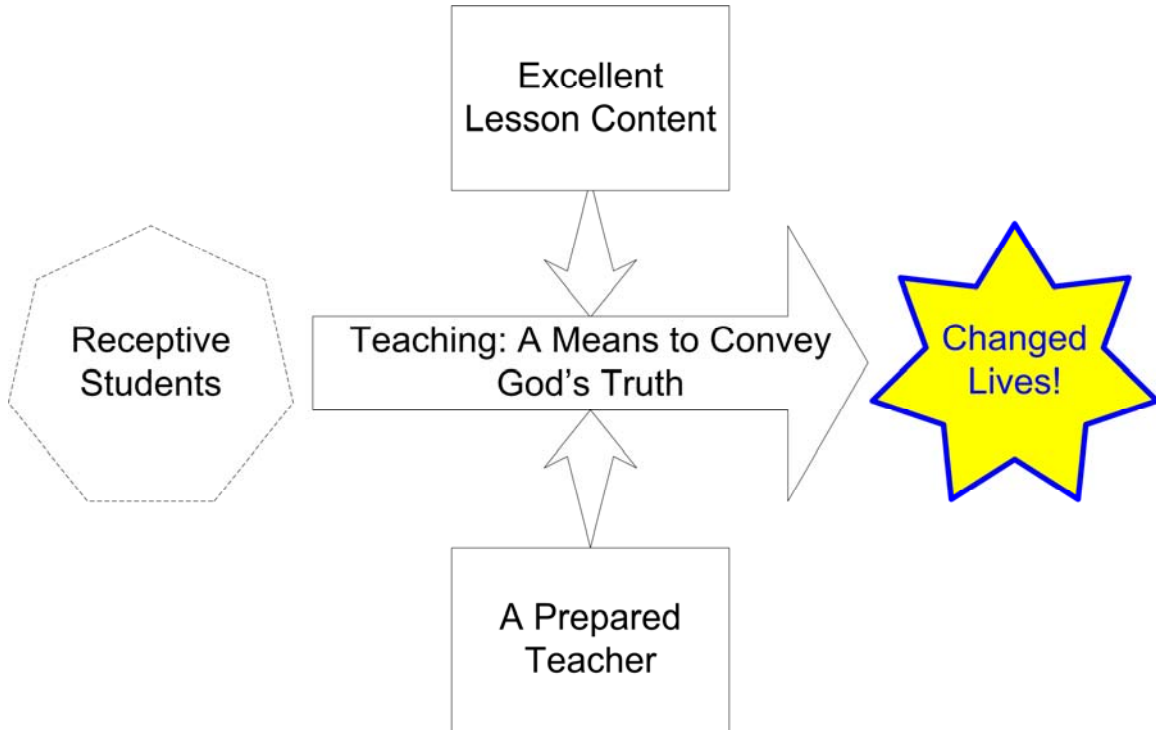
But note that Apollos has a teachable spirit, too. (v. 26) He receives instruction from Priscilla and Aquila. And consider how blessed Apollos was that they took this opportunity to help him – we need to look for opportunities to help other teachers.

Apollos’ teaching changes lives – he was “a great help to those who by grace had believed” (v.27) – and yet it is God who gets the credit. Apollos had the right perspective that he was only a tool being used by God.

The focus of Apollos’ teaching was Jesus, and the basis for his teaching was the Bible. (v. 28) And so it must be with us today if we are to honor the Lord. May our gracious God and King raise up thousands of GBTs like Apollos to build up His Church today.

The Four Key Elements

Here is a diagram illustrating the four key elements that God works together to change lives:



Our goal as Bible teachers is Changed Lives, and we should aim for nothing less. We cooperate with God to achieve this through powerful, God-saturated teaching! We work to become GBTs to meet the needs before us. The days are short, and there is much work to be done.

Great teaching depends upon four critical elements:

1. **Excellent Lesson Content.** There is nothing superior to the Bible, the God-breathed truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Week in, week out, your students need to receive instruction, correction, and training that comes directly from the Bible. Nothing else can consistently meet their deepest needs. Nothing else has God-given authority for teaching men and

women how to live. (See Matthew 7:29 about the crowd's amazement at Jesus' teaching.)

2. **A Prepared Teacher.** God uses men and women to teach the truth. He has given us everything we need in the Church to help us to grow. Preparation includes prayer, Bible study and meditation, and an effective presentation.

3. **Receptive Students.** The lesson needs a place to land and take root if there are going to be changed lives. Only God can prepare a heart to receive His teaching. We cannot do this on our own – we must prayerfully invite the Lord of the universe to prepare the hearts of those who will hear a lesson. (Consider Mark 4:1-20)

4. **Teaching is a means to convey God's truth.** Teaching is a process. Teaching is a kind of leadership. Teaching is really about loving people and wanting to see them grow and mature.

What Do Changed Lives Look Like?

The old saying is true: “If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.” We have to understand what kind of changed life we're talking about! **Your students are not only looking for information, but for transformation.** They need to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).

I use 2 Peter 3:18 as the benchmark. “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” **A changed life means that there is growth in grace and in knowledge of Jesus.** For not-yet believers, that means salvation. For everyone, it means changes in thinking and behavior.

The fact that it is both growth in grace and knowledge distinguishes Christians from everyone else on Earth. (C.S. Lewis pointed out that no other religion has anything that corresponds to the Christian concept of Grace.) There is no age or gender specified – growth is open to all. Note also the strong community of faith element here: Peter says “**our** Lord and Savior,” not “my” or “your” Lord and Savior. Genuine Christian growth takes place in fellowship, in community. Your teaching ministry is key.

Jesus said, “It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.” (Matthew 10:25) We should expect that disciples, growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus, look more and more like Him. Growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus affects both heart and head.

Growth in grace of Jesus means that our character is more Christ-like. We are more patient, kind, joyful, and gentle with one another. We exhibit self-control and all the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Our trust in God and obedience to His commands deepens. Other people cannot mistake that there is something different about us!

Growth in knowledge of Jesus means our minds are more fitted to accurately understand ourselves, our culture, and our Lord. We have information plus the ability to use it for service for our Master. We know how to apply the truths and principles of Scripture to everyday life. We are equipped to use the Word of God in ministry.

The end result is that people are changed. They

- Know how to listen to God’s voice and obey it
- Offer their lives in worship (Romans 12:1)
- Have renewed minds, able to test and approve God’s will (Romans 12:2)

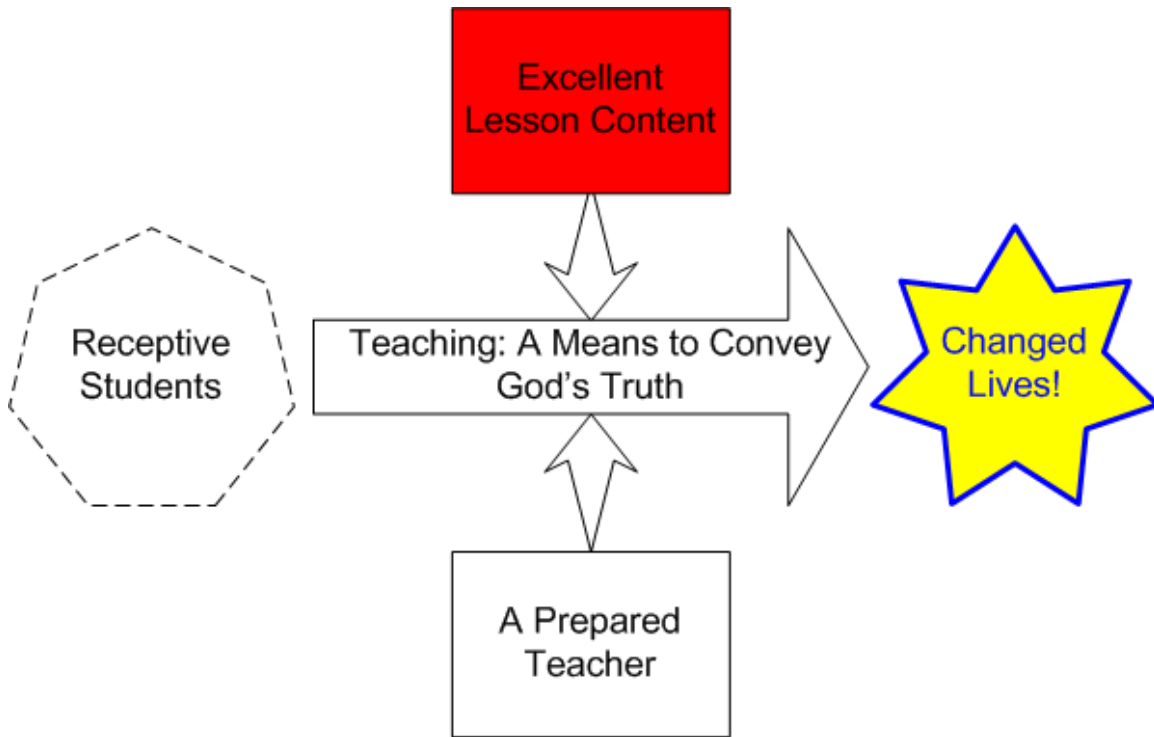
- Are competent to pass on what they know, to this generation and the next

Bible-based teaching plays a critical role in growth for both grace and knowledge. As we invest time in God's Word our characters and minds are transformed. GBTs are humble, remembering that God uses us, but it is up to Him to provide the growth. (1 Corinthians 3:6-7) We pray that we help rather than hinder the work of God, confident that our Lord can – and sometimes does – work in spite of us. Teaching is a high calling of cooperating with God's fellow servants to facilitate change in others.

Not all students are at the same place now, nor will all have the same growth rate. This reality shapes how we approach a group, and helps us remain patient as God works His change in people's hearts and minds. We remain dependent upon God! GBTs are called to faithfully present information, and call upon God to see the growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus. Changed lives are the fruit from our cooperation with God in teaching ministry. GBTs are encouragers, and do not stand in judgment over students. Our Lord is caring for His sheep.

" Don't give people your opinion. Give them the Word of God." --Neil Cassata

Key Element One: Excellent Lesson Content



We begin by answering the question “What are you going to teach?”

A GBT will respond this way: **“I will teach what the Lord desires these people to learn about at this time.”** That’s the only way to approach this question if we’re going to be part of God’s plan to change lives.

We must understand the needs of the people – at both a heart and head level. It means seeking the Lord’s guidance. (He teaches us before we can teach others!) It means being able to handle the Word of God in a trustworthy manner (2 Timothy 2:11), so we can create lessons from the Bible itself, with

the help of the Holy Spirit. It means being able to recognize when prepared lessons from other sources are a good fit for our students' needs. It means bathing lesson preparation in prayer.

Teaching to change lives is not always easy or comfortable. You may be able to recycle a lesson you've successfully taught before or picked up somewhere, but often not. You can't always stay with familiar Bible texts. You will probably step on a few "toes," just as Jesus did. You must be willing to tackle topics that challenge or stretch you, as well as your students.

It cannot be overemphasized that **the best lesson content always comes from the Bible**. Nothing less than the Word of God can meet every need and satisfy every heart, week after week. Your teaching ministry will have life-changing impact on student when it is based on the Word of God and Prayer – it will not be possible to explain the impact in human terms.

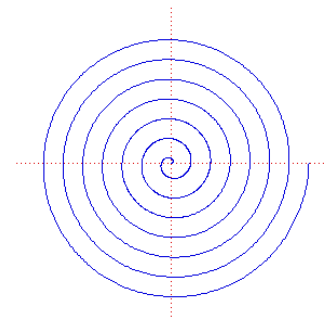
Real-World Bible Lessons Don't Begin Fully-Formed

Real-world Bible lessons are constructed over time.

This is a critical point for GBTs to understand, and is often misunderstood by young teachers. You build up and refine lessons in an iterative fashion. You select the general material, but you may not have the key points identified yet. You get some sense of alignment of this lesson against the needs of your students

(much more about this below!), but aren't sure exactly what to emphasize or in what order to present it. It's as if you "spiral in" on the final product. You certainly won't get the information for your lesson ironed out in sequence. So this section is about the early stages of lesson material selection and refinement, not the polishing stages.

Spiral of Archimedes



Be content with an iterative approach. Be patient. You can't finalize your lesson material until you've spent time studying it and praying through it. God is going to give you life lessons, too, which may not come until late in your lesson preparation. That's ok, because that's how the Lord keeps us in dependence upon Him (see John 15:5).

Three Sources of Lesson Material

There are three basic ways to create a lesson:

1. Create your own lesson from personal Bible study.
2. Use or adapt a lesson someone else has created.
3. Synthesize your own lesson components with a lesson or illustration that someone else has created.

The objective of every GBT is to identify and use material that is best suited to meet the needs of students at this time.

I will begin with discussion about pre-made lessons, and then come back to creating your own lesson.

Let us praise God that there are hundreds or thousands of Bible lessons already in existence! This is a wonderful legacy of a generous Body of Christ through many generations. This is enabling many busy pastors and teachers to bring high-quality information to their students without having to do a lot of original work. My research indicates that about 85% of adult Sunday School classes in the United States are using pre-packaged lesson material. Pre-packaged lessons play an important role in the equipping ministry of our churches.

There's a simple reason that the church today has only a small fraction of spiritually mature believers even though some parts of the world are awash in Bible studies: **Lesson content by itself does not result in changed lives!** All the other elements of the GBT teaching model (prepared teacher, receptive students, and quality teaching) are still needed. Frankly, we don't need more Bible study guides (the booklet kind), but we do need many more Bible study guides (the teacher kind).

If you are going to use lesson materials that someone else has developed, then invest your time in prayer, Bible study that corresponds to the lesson, and efforts to prepare your students. We'll be talking about all these things in the sections below. You will have opportunities to surface the needs of these students as you teach and interact with them – that will be important information for future classes. You're still responsible to teach well, so that the truth of God is conveyed.

As you select material that might be appropriate for your students, make sure the lesson content:

1. Demands that students think for themselves and evaluate Scripture for themselves. Sometimes lessons (unintentionally) train people to depend on someone “really smart and experienced” to understand the Bible and point out what a person should believe. We want to foster the Berean approach of checking the teaching against the Word of God, to see if what the teacher said was true (Acts 17:11).
2. Helps equip the saints for service for the Kingdom (Ephesians 4:12). We are servants of the Lord, and our growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus is to become a better servant and worshiper. We are building up the Body of Christ for ministry work.

3. Is tailored to meet the current needs (not solely the wants) of the students. You want to be able to adjust the emphasis or presentation order or depth to match your local assembly.

Reject lesson material that does not meet these criteria. The Church today is crying out for “men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what to do.” (1 Chronicles 12:32)

I’m very concerned that we develop teachers who are able to create Bible lessons using nothing but the Word of God and the help of the Holy Spirit. Without demeaning the many curricula that are available, I say to you that you can and must do better than a state of dependency on someone else. They don’t know your students. God will raise up qualified Bible teachers in local assemblies to equip His people for worship and service. This is absolutely necessary to the generational need in the Church today (see Psalm 78:1-8). If you’re reading this book, then it’s likely that God is calling you to be a GBT like this.

I do not apologize for my bias in this book towards creating lessons yourself. This is the skill that we need to develop, and that only comes through exercising the gifts the Lord has provided us. At a minimum a GBT must be prepared to enhance or tailor a lesson based on their students’ needs by adding from personal Bible study, and effective teaching presentation.

How to Decide What to Teach

Begin with Prayer!

Nothing of eternal value can happen without prayer. Ask the Lord to give you insights into what your hearers need to learn. He knows them and cares for them! As you pray, see yourself as a facilitator so these people can experience more of God. This is not about your agenda, or your ideas, but rather being a faithful servant to the Lord. I like to pray, “Lord, what does this class need to know from this passage at this time? Glorify your name through my teaching.” These teaching opportunities are divine appointments. The Lord will bring exactly the right people to each class or study you lead, no one will be there by accident.

Consider Multiple Sources of Input

How are you going to know what to teach a class? That can be a scary question! There are multiple sources of input to consider. Let’s explore a few of them, and then I’ll give you my recommended strategy.

1. Explicit guidance from others.

Your pastor or church leadership might have a specific topic or book of the Bible they want you to cover. This is often part of a larger curriculum effort. There may not be much more to your decision process, then, about *what* to teach.

2. You might be asked if you have anything ready that you could teach “without a lot of prep time.”

You still have some notes from those other classes you taught, right? 😊. This kind of input becomes common when you’re in a church or small group environment where there isn’t central planning or a standard curriculum identified.

But keep in mind what I said earlier about the importance of knowing what the class needs! Don't go with what is easiest for you unless you have other confirmation that this is the BEST for this class at this time.

3. An idea based on something you've read recently, or heard in a sermon or radio broadcast.

GBTs hear or read something and immediately start thinking of how to teach that to their classes. Or how to incorporate an insight, metaphor, or background fact into something they're already working on. This is because GBTs love to teach, and enthused about getting good ideas to their students.

(By the way, this is one of the reasons you need to take notes in your Bible or journal. You're likely to forget something valuable to share if you don't make a note of it. When driving, I will sometimes pull off the road to make a note.)

4. A book or topic that God is leading you personally to learn more deeply about.

A strong element with this input is that you will have a personal stake in it. There will be stories you can share. Your transparency can be high – “Hey, this is what God is teaching me about X, and I haven't got all this figured out yet.”

Be sure you are ready to teach this topic or book, however. It may well be that God has some more “seasoning” He wants to do in your life before you can teach this one.

5. A need you know about for this specific class.

Is the class all singles? Are there young parents, or parents of teenagers? Perhaps there have been a lot of job or health struggles? Are they 'primed' with interest about a particular spiritual discipline, or eager to tackle an OT book because they've spent most of their time in the NT for two years? What is their heart need? What will help them take greater steps of faith and obedience, for the glory of Jesus Christ? What will enlarge their view of the Lord?

→ My recommended strategy is simple: look for more than one of these sources of input to line up on a specific book or topic. ←

My experience has shown me that I need to see God confirming the topic for a class through multiple avenues, or else I risk getting into a situation where I can do no more than increase my pride or tickle someone's ears – lives aren't going to be changed for the better either way. If only one of these inputs is clear, be cautious.

If you ask me to pick one source of input, I'd go with what the class needs. If you are teaching in an area where there is a genuine need, the Lord can work out all kinds of other difficulties so that you can teach to change lives.

In most cases, several of these things will come together and you will be convinced this is God's will for you to proceed. Make sure that you take your idea to the Lord over a several day or week period. I believe that God always speaks clearly and plainly – our problem is faulty hearing and cloudy judgment. Prayerfully considering your planned teaching topic over several days gives you the best confidence that you have heard God's direction

correctly. Our loving Father will patiently work with you to ensure His ways are clear.

But what if I'm stumped and don't have any ideas at all?

This can and does happen. The first thing to do is prayerfully give thanks to God for surfacing this and ask Him for guidance. By giving thanks, you immediately work to frustrate prideful or demonic suggestions about what you "should" teach. (I wish I had learned this much earlier in my teaching ministry – and now I've given you a huge jump start!)

The next thing to do is to start asking questions.

Ask the pastor, class leader, and/or some people in the class what kinds of things they think would be valuable to learn about. What have they covered recently?

Talk with the person who was teaching this class previously. What kinds of questions were raised? Was there anything that seemed to need more attention? What excited people? What is the biblical literacy of this class? Did he/she sense there were areas where people needed to grow more?

Here's a list of prompters for questions about your students:

- Relationships (marriage, children, parents, siblings)
- Current local events (political, economic, school system, crimes)
- Changes in family (new children, aging parents, divorce, adultery)
- New believers
- Faith-testing events (e.g., unemployment, deaths, serious illnesses)
- Lack of unity in small groups or church
- Concerns for neighbors and coworkers
- Interest in spiritual disciplines
- Outreach possibilities
- Refreshed believers (seeing new growth in old members)

Continue to pray as you consider the answers to these questions. Panic and hurry are neither necessary nor helpful.

Sometimes I sit down in a quiet place and slowly page through my Bible book by book, patiently looking and listening for anything that “jumps out.”

Remember that this is God’s work, so He is going to lead you to just the right lesson material for this class at this time. Trust in Him, not in any mechanical way to determine “the answer.”

Organizing the Lesson

Sturdy, useful buildings need a good foundation. Sturdy, useful Bible study lessons are built on the foundation of the Word and prayer. But what do you build on this foundation? What fundamental elements go into a great lesson?

Here is the completely non-secret plan that I use all the time. Almost every lesson I've given in over twenty five years of teaching is crafted on this plan. It's repeatable. It's durable. It works. There are only four elements: Opener, Small Number of Focus Points, Life Application, and Closer.

Opener (Hook)

Begin with a good "hook" to bring people into the lesson, get them hungry for the big meal ahead, and ready for some life-change application to come. Make this as personal as possible.

A small number of focus points

My grandfather used to say, "If you don't want people to learn anything, try to teach them everything." (I doubt he originated this idea.) I'm sure you've been in a situation, maybe a high school or college class, where the teacher just piled on the content and you came away with...nothing. Your brain just shut down when it was overwhelmed. Good teachers work with human psychological realities, not against them -- pick fewer focus points and drill them home.

How many is the right number? That depends on your class. Limit yourself with one to three, my dear GBT, hold yourself in! If there are more items, then pick three for emphasis and only highlight the others. You aren't going to exhaust the depth of Scripture in any lesson, so there's no cause to feel badly about not covering it all.

You want to engage the class to discover these focus points by asking good questions. Where possible, illustrate these focus points by stories, props, and metaphors.

Life Application

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) The revealed Word of God will have an impact on us, and not return empty to the Speaker. (Isaiah 55:11) GBTs teach for changed lives, not just piling on head knowledge that does not also affect our hearts and actions. What do you want the group to DO now that they know this?

Identify at least one life application messages for your students. Usually the best way to communicate the life application is in the context of a focus area, rather than a separate point in time. I break it out because I want to think carefully about life application and not overlook its importance. (There will be more about life application in a later section.)

Closer (Launch)

Wrap up the package and make it easy to take home – or take to heart. This is often a quick summary with a final challenge to further growth in Christ. Sometimes an open-ended question or thought for reflection through the week. The purpose is to “launch” the group out into ministry, to love and serve others better.

That’s it. Opener, small number of focus points, life application, and closer.

When it’s done right, my students didn’t identify the different building blocks – they just flowed and worked together. But every student should have one or

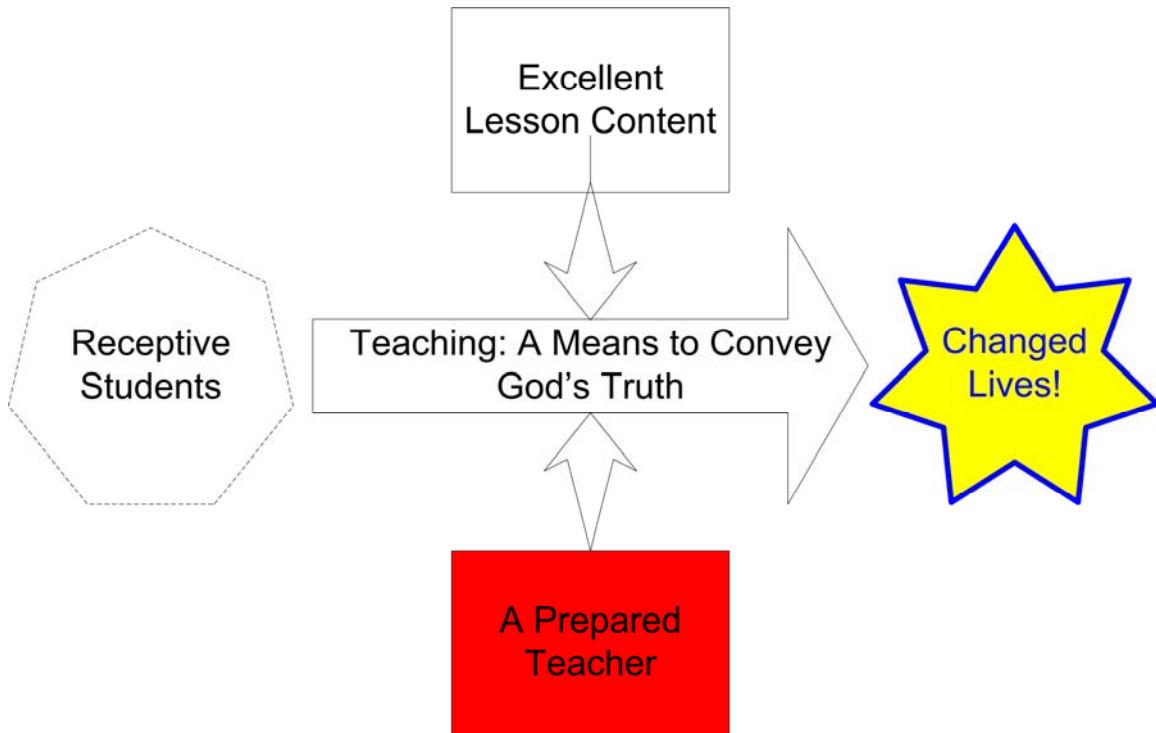
two take-aways that Christ can use to change their life. They don't leave saying, "Wow, wasn't Glenn's opener great today? Best hook he's had for months." They leave thinking about the application, or at least some new understanding of biblical truth.

* * * * *

You have a preliminary idea of what God desires you to teach this class at this time. And you have some early ideas about key focus areas, life application, and perhaps an opener and closer. You're moving forward. Now we kick in serious study and preparation.

"The Bible will make love burn in your heart. It will sting you to tears. It will prepare you for a banquet with God." -- Richard Rolle

Key Element Two: A Prepared Teacher



In this section we'll focus on **your preparation for teaching**. Having decided on lesson content, you need to study and prepare yourself to convey God's truth for this class at this time. There are tools and methods that can help you do this.

Studying the Bible in order to teach it to others is very rewarding – you'll learn more than your students! Once you know that you'll be teaching something, your attention will be ten-fold more focused and persistent – that's simply human nature. Studying the Bible for teaching is also different than personal Bible study. The responsibilities and expectations are high (see James 3:1). God will not leave you or forsake you, friend. He will be your blessed Guide.

Our Lord is our Master, Savior, Teacher, and Friend. You can trust him. The Holy Spirit is our enabler (1 Corinthians 2).

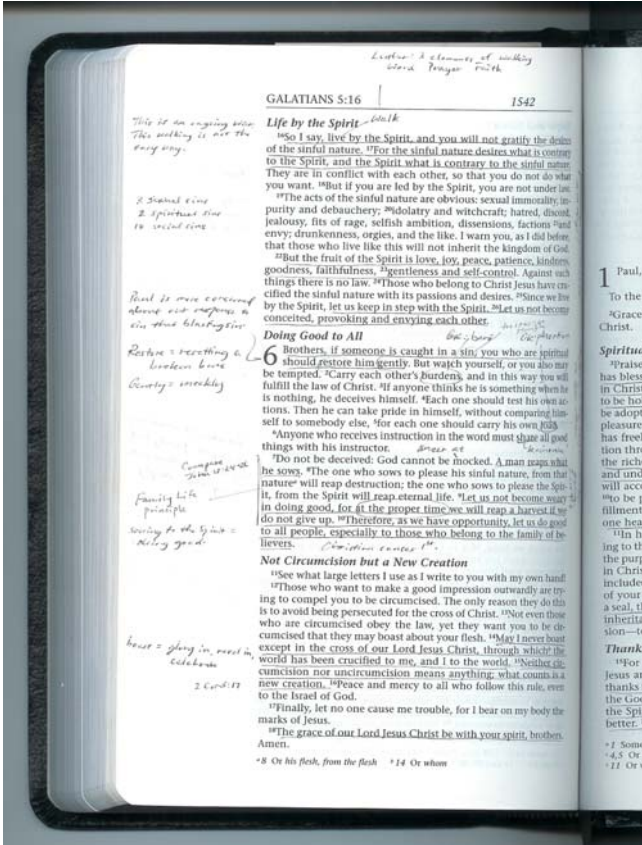
By the time you finish this section, you should have a whole new set of ideas to help you become a GBT. Everything I describe in this section is designed to put you into a place where you will be cooperating with God to be prepared to teach. That's the key.

Using Your Bible for Study

The reality is that **YOU are the 'tool' that God will use**. So this section is really about how to use your Bible as a tool for study and teaching. Take notes in your Bible or in a small notebook that you carry with your Bible. Your notes can include:

- Notes from other preachers and teachers
- summaries from studies you've done
- prayer requests for people close to me and for whom you have a special prayer burden
- great quotes that you can use sometime in the future
- outlines of short devotionals you can use in many situations (I'll describe more about this in a later section titled, "Short Lessons on Short Notice")

The habit of capturing notes and materials directly into my Bible creates an increasingly valuable resource to use when teaching or leading groups. So mark up your Bible with pen and pencil. Put dates next to verses and passages that are strongly speaking to you. Underline key passages. Circle words and phrases. Here's a scan of Galatians 6 from my Bible:



Make it your ambition to wear out Bibles from use! Leave them as a legacy to give to your children. They will treasure your worn, note-studded Bible as a great reminder of your faithfulness that lights their way. If there were a fire in my home, everyone was safe, and I could grab just one material thing, it would probably be my Bible.

You are positioning yourself to grow deep in the Word because you are depending on the Holy Spirit to be your primary teacher.

Only a Bible is required, but there are many Bible study tools which are helpful. You can get your free copy of a report on Bible Study Tools at <http://www.teachtochangelives.com/toolschecklist.pdf>

Prepared Teachers Study the Bible

The Bible is the most wonderful book in the world. Settle this fact in your heart before God, and all the rest will follow. The prepared teacher will be steeped in the Word of God, both breadth and depth. A GBT is competent to handle the Word correctly (2 Timothy 2:11). GBTs align their teaching ministry with the Word of God and fuel it through prayer.

Let us aspire to be like Apollos. “He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately...he was a great help to those by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.” (Acts 18:24b-25; Acts 18:27b-28) Some translations describe Apollos as “mighty in the Scriptures” in verse 24. Apollos is a teacher’s hero! My prayer for you, dear teacher, as well as myself, is that the Lord would work in and through us so that we might become like our brother Apollos.

I believe we need to encourage all disciples – and it must start with teachers of the Word – to do the hard personal work of Bible study and meditation under the authority of the Spirit. God intends to speak to *you*, personally, through the Bible. He intends to speak to your *students* through the Bible. The great Christians who have gone before us have left us wonderful insights and testimony, and we should be learning from them with humility and gratitude. But there is no substitute for the personal work of Scripture study. We can have great confidence in our Lord’s leading (see 2 Peter 1:3).

In this section I’m going to describe specific methods to study the Bible in order to prepare to teach well. Following I describe methods that are tested and that have been found reliable, but are not widely practiced today. Studying the

Bible in order to teach requires effort and is distinct from the devotional reading commonly taught to believers today.

Important: Your heart must be prepared before God if you are going to study effectively. Begin any study with a short devotional time in prayer, to re-connect to the Lord in purpose and the Spirit.

GBTs need to study both the breadth and the depth of the Bible to be effective teachers.

Remember that all these methods are designed only to place ourselves where the Lord can open our minds to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). They have no power in themselves. These study practices are mechanical steps we take to be open to the Lord's teaching so that we can teach others.

How to study the Bible in order to teach – Breadth

Many people simply haven't read much Scripture. I frequently meet Christians who have been believers for many years but have not read through the whole Bible. They've heard more Scripture read in sermons than they have read themselves. They don't have a clear idea of where to go in the Bible to get counsel on a situation they're facing. They remember some of the Bible stories, but have not been taught to understand Biblical principles that come from reviewing the whole Bible. This will not do! We desperately need to develop people who are capable of seeing the whole counsel of God in His Word – and can lead others by example.

Reading Large Portions of Scripture

One of the best things to do is to read large portions of the Bible or the whole Bible relatively quickly. You can't clean your whole body by washing with a cupful of water. Why do we think we can develop a comprehensive understanding of the most important book in the world in small servings? Try reading Luke and John in one morning. Read the Psalms in 3 days. Read Genesis on one day.

Here's a challenge: Read the whole Bible in 30-40 days. Look for themes, broad strokes, and relationships between characters. You are soaking your mind in the story of God's interaction with man. You will find that sin is more obvious and easier to reject. Praises will come more easily to mind, and more richly. It becomes easier to relate specific stories and passages with current events. The interconnectedness of the books becomes more apparent. The Bible – God's revealed Truth – is alive with His Power!

Here are some tips to read through the whole Bible in a short time:

- Don't read for details, just read and absorb God's story. Keep a pen handy and make notes about characters, parallel or similar events, or insights God gives you.
- It helps to partner with someone else doing this at the same time.
- It will take about 2-3 hours of reading time per day to do this, so go ahead and give up other reading and entertainment while you immerse yourself in Scripture
- My usual warm-up is to read Psalm 119 daily for four days before beginning in Genesis. This reinforces the power of God's Word in my life.

Here is a 30-day reading plan that you can follow or adapt to your schedule:

1	Genesis 1-39
2	Genesis 40 – Exodus 26
3	Exodus 27 – Leviticus 22
4	Leviticus 23 – Numbers 26
5	Numbers 27 – Deuteronomy 28
6	Deuteronomy 29 – Judges 5
7	Judges 6 – 1 st Samuel 16
8	1 st Samuel 17 – 2 nd Samuel 21
9	2 nd Samuel 22 – 2 nd Kings 4
10	2 nd Kings 5 – 1 st Chronicles 12
11	1 st Chronicles 13 – 2 nd Chronicles 24
12	2 nd Chronicles 25 – Nehemiah 13
13	Esther 1 – Job 42
14	Psalms 1 – 73
15	Psalms 74-150
16	Proverbs 1 – Ecclesiastes 9
17	Ecclesiastes 10 – Isaiah 33
18	Isaiah 34 – Jeremiah 4
19	Jeremiah 5 – Jeremiah 37
20	Jeremiah 38 – Ezekiel 14
21	Ezekiel 15 – Ezekiel 48
22	Daniel 1 – Amos 9
23	Obadiah 1 – Malachi 4
24	Matthew 1 – Mark 5
25	Mark 6 – Luke 16
26	Luke 17 – John 21
27	Acts 1 – Romans 9
28	Romans 10 – Ephesians 6
29	Philippians 1 – 1 st Peter 4
30	1 st Peter 5 – Revelation 22

I recommend you copy this page and put it into your Bible.

I learned this method from an older man in Evanston, IL, when I first became a Christian. His goal was to read through the Bible at least 4 times each year. No matter what the question, he could begin in Genesis and work his way to Revelation, quoting related Scriptures. I assumed he was a professor at Northwestern University, but later learned that he was a garbage collector for the city. He told me he had the best job in town because he had an opportunity to pray for every family in Evanston each week.

Those who diligently apply themselves to reading the whole Bible in 30-40 days will be blessed through the experience. We learn about the tone and quality of God's voice, and the "my ways are not your ways" nature of His working, as we seek the broad perspectives through His Word. These experiences help us fall in love with Christ and His Word all over again.

"For the first four years after my conversion I made no progress, because I neglected the Bible. But when I regularly read on through the whole with reference to my own heart and soul, I directly made progress. Then my peace and joy continued more and more. Now I have been doing this for 47 years. I have read through the whole Bible about 100 times and I always find it fresh when I begin again. Thus my peace and joy have increased more and more." – George Mueller (who had read through the Bible over 200 times by the time he died!)

Perhaps you're still reeling in shock from my recommendation that you read large amounts of Scripture. Here's another way to look at this. Let's say you desire to teach on forgiveness to people who have offended us. You can read through the New Testament in only 7 days (perhaps 15-17 hours) systematically and cover this. That's amazing! The sad truth is that we have done our congregations a HUGE disservice by giving the impression that Bible reading hard and difficult. GBTs encourage their students to be thrilled with the Bible, the most wonderful book in the world. Inspire your students by your example.

Character studies

Another tactic for studying the breadth of the Bible is to read everything in Scripture about a particular person. Think about how you would describe this person's relationship with God and with the people in his life. Ask and answer questions. Why did God include this person as an example for us to learn from? What are the "chapters" or sections of his or her life? In what ways are you similar and different than this person? How might their life have been different if they had made different choices?

This is easiest with Biblical characters where abundant material is available (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Ruth, Saul, David, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul) but worth doing with less well-known individuals. This method also is helpful to learn from the negative examples in Scripture (e.g., Jezebel, Judas Iscariot).

Word and Theme studies

Sometimes God presses us and we develop a thirst to know more about a particular theme – e.g., *peace* or *grace* or *stewardship* or the *covenants* or...

For larger themes like *righteousness*, *covenants*, or *God's plan to save the Gentiles*, read through the whole Bible with that particular theme in mind. Make notations in your margins about the theme as you recognize related passages. You might also want to keep a running tally of the most critical passages in the blank notes pages at the back of your Bible, or on a separate sheet. I recommend you pay attention to this theme as your journal, also – God can teach you through your regular experiences as well as your studies.

How to study the Bible in order to teach – Depth

Fact: We cannot exhaust Scripture or draw all the water from its well of meaning and application. The methods described below are specific approaches to studying Scripture (individually and in small groups) to plumb its depths and find specific applications for our lives. Out of these efforts come answers to the question of “How is God speaking to me through His Word today?”

Keep notes about what you learn as you study passages. This requires self-discipline. You will almost certainly forget details if you don’t write them down. Also, I recommend you talk with someone else about what you are learning and thinking through – this is an excellent way to practice teaching before you teach.

Praying through passages is essential. **Scripture study unaccompanied by prayer leads to error, self-focus rather than God-focus, and knowledge that “puffs up,” rather than love that builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1).** Our end goal is not head knowledge, but transformed lives. Use the “dissect a verse” strategy below, for example, and make these into prayers. (“Lord, please work in my heart so I may allow your peace to be active in me and abundant in me. Do surgery in me, remove anything blocking your peace. Let this be to your glory.”)

Check cross-references and parallel passages

Many Bibles have cross-references to verses in the center column or margin. If you are studying a passage in detail, look up the cross-references to every verse. These will show you related passages in Scripture. The general rule is to allow Scripture to interpret itself, and

check your interpretation against related passages to make sure they are correct. As a teacher you must work hard to be faithful to the truth – the whole truth of the Bible. Avoid errors associated with building a view of theology on just one verse. (See 2 Timothy 2:15 and James 3:1.) For example, many gospel passages have parallels in the other gospel accounts; these are worth comparing to highlight different facts about the same event. There are also parallel accounts in the Kings and Chronicles that are helpful to review.

Use the NOT method to understand a passage

Another useful study tool is to ask, “What does this passage NOT say?” This approach often clarifies and reinforces what it *does* say. You can use this approach on both familiar, clear verses (John 3:16) and others which are much more difficult to understand (e.g., Romans 11:25).

Let’s look at John 3:16a for example. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” does NOT say:

- ❑ God doesn’t love the world
- ❑ God loves part of the world (e.g., one nation or people)
- ❑ God loaned his son
- ❑ God has more than one son

This is a particularly good strategy with groups of people – invite them to help create the lists of what the passage *doesn’t* say – and with passages that are difficult to understand. I have found that students who are generally quiet are willing to respond out loud with this approach.

Read aloud

Scripture is meant to be read aloud. The Gospel is meant to be *heard* (see Romans 10:14-15 and Revelation 1:3). We often learn new things when we read aloud; it slows us down and keeps our thoughts from scrambling off in other directions. Most people can read silently much faster than they can read aloud. But we tend to skip over words and phrases when we read quickly.

It may surprise you to learn that no one read silently before the 1700's. Reading aloud was the norm. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading aloud when Philip encountered him on the road to Gaza (Acts 8:26-19).

We'll have more to discuss about reading aloud in class in Part IV. For now, use reading aloud as a tactic to improve your comprehension of a passage.

Read repeatedly

Read a single chapter or a short book every day for a month, and look for new insights each day. This deep study aligns your thoughts to God's message. For example, if you want to teach James, then invest a week or a month reading it daily. Keep journal entries about your observations. Persist even it seems dry for a few days. Lay hold of God's promise that He does speak to us through the Word!

My habit is to read the passages I'm going to be teaching on at least once daily during the week leading up to the study.

Use the Journalist Approach

Journalists ask six questions about a story: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Use this approach to work through a passage. I find this approach is especially helpful for difficult passages or for stories. I actually sketch a table for a passage, and make notes in it, like this:

Who	What	When	Where	Why	How

(By the way, you can use this approach when you are teaching – get your students to fill it out as a group discussion!)

Think like a grammar teacher

Work through a verse or short passage and pay attention to nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. Who is acting or being acted upon? How? Where and when? What is the tense of the verbs? There are no accidents in the tense or wording of the Scriptures, so analyze it very closely as a grammarian!

For example, when Paul writes in Ephesians 2:6 that God has raised up with Christ and seated us with Christ in the heavenly realms, that's *past tense*. God has already done this for us – it's not a future state.

Notice *who* closes the door to the ark in Genesis 7:16 – it's the Lord.

Jeremiah is asked to provide God's guidance to the people in Jeremiah 42:5-7 and the answer doesn't come for *ten days*. (How would that feel to us, who often expect "instant" results?)

This is a great tactic for getting detailed insights from the Word.

Use a sanctified imagination

When studying a story or part of history, put yourself in the place of the each of the people in the story. Remember that many people in stories are observers or on the sidelines, and don't have speaking parts. What are their thoughts and feelings like? What are they experiencing through their five senses (see, hear, touch, smell, taste)? What would you do in that situation? This is one of the most powerful ways to experience Scripture, and excellent for individuals and groups. When our children were smaller, our family acted out the roles.

As you begin remind yourself that you want to see the story afresh, and prayerfully invite the Lord to direct your thoughts and enlarge your understanding. A key problem as we get more familiar with Scripture is that we think "Oh, I know this story," and lose the humbleness that says, "I can still learn from this passage, today, and every day."

Here are some easier stories to try:

Adam naming the animals (Genesis 2)

Noah's family building the ark (Genesis 6)

Joseph meeting his brothers (Genesis 42)

The parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14)

David defeating Goliath (1 Sam 17)

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

Jesus feeding the five thousand (Luke 9)
The death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)
Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20)

You can do this with virtually every story in the historical books and the gospels. This method is more difficult to do with the prophets, letters, Psalms, and Proverbs. But you can imagine yourself in the author's place, or receiving this as a personal letter in the mail and sitting down to read it.

The caution with this approach is over-interpretation, going beyond what the plain Word of God says. There are reasons why God has not provided every detail. Use your imagination, but take care that you do not go farther than is warranted. There is a big difference between imagining what the disciples were feeling as they listened to Jesus give the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and coming up with "The daVinci Code" theory that Jesus was married to Mary Magdelene.

Dissect a verse one word at a time

Select a verse you want to memorize and meditate on. Now read it aloud, one word or phrase at a time. As you say that word or phrase, list all the things that come to your mind about it.

Here's an example verse, so you can see how this works: "Let the peace of Christ dwell in you richly..." (Colossians 3:15)

"Let" allow, I've got to let this happen, it won't just happen on it's own, I have some part in this

"Let the" the, not just any

“Let the peace” *peace = stillness, firmness, calmness, runs through with depth, big broad rivers*

“Let the peace of Christ” *not just any peace, but the true peace from Christ, “He is our peace,” the prince of peace, peace-making is a command, doesn’t say peace of the world (which is merely absence of conflict)*

“Let the peace of Christ dwell” *live in, abide, occupy, be a visible resident, actively move around in, not passive or without work*

“Let the peace of Christ dwell in you” *in me personally, in my mind, heart, and body, will affect the people around me,*

“Let the peace of Christ dwell in you richly” *not cheaply or scantily, but deeply, abundantly, in fullness and power, I can be generous with peace if I am rich in it, wealth comes from Christ alone*

... and so on. Plus, you’ve practically memorized the verse as you meditated through it! I have found that this method is terrific for personal study and preparing to teach, but it does not work as well for group study.

Learning from What’s Going On

GBTs keep their antennae up and are alert for what God wants them to learn. Study the Scriptures, but also pay attention to what’s going on around you. Prayerfully ask God to teach you through any means – news and events, conversations with family and neighbors, prayer time

with little children, *anything*. Years ago I heard a saying, “The Lord is sometimes early, but never late.” And I have been astounded at His faithfulness to provide exactly what I need before a class. An offhand comment from someone, an insight from an advertisement, or a coin found in an unusual place were precisely what I needed. Although I wish He would sometimes give me these lessons earlier in the week, they’re never too late.

I could tell you many stories, and I bet you have some to share as well. I hope I never lose my wonder (or my confidence) at how the Lord teaches me through every day events.

The key to learning is to pay attention, and be expectant. Pray continually, my dear GBTs, pray continually!

Conclusion

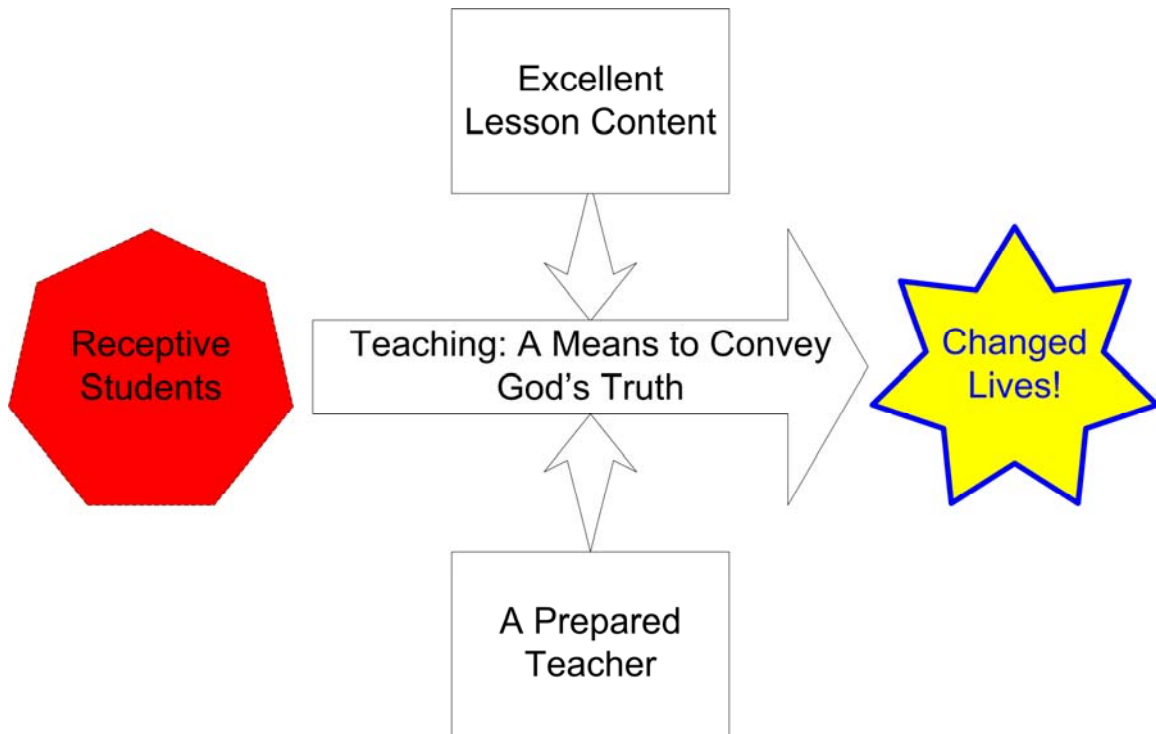
I’m sure that you’ll find several new ways to tackle the depth of Scripture. Our gracious Lord and Master Teacher Jesus will lead you. These are great methods to teach others. (That might be a very interesting series of classes for you to teach!)

Keep in mind, dear GBT, that **studying for both breadth and depth are necessary**. Over time you will develop a rhythm to keep this balanced. The last few years I’ve read through the entire Bible at the beginning of the calendar year, and at the beginning of summer. I’m mixing in a variety of depth approaches through the rest of the year.

After this study work you will have wonderful insights from the Lord to share. In the next section, let's talk about how to get your students ready for the truth of God's Word.

“A revival of real praying would produce a spiritual revolution.”
-- E.M. Bounds

Key Element Three: Receptive Students



The best lesson and best-prepared teacher can't be used by God to change lives if the students can't or won't receive the message. Their hearts are incapable of receiving the Word, like the seed sown on the path (Matt 13:1-23). GBTs do all they can to make sure their lessons are coming to prepared hearts!

You may have noticed that the 'Receptive Students' box in the diagram has a dashed line border. That symbolizes the openness and softness required for teaching to change a life. This chapter is all about making sure your students have perforated "borders" in their hearts and minds!

There are two keys to helping to prepare your students so they are 'primed' to receive God's blessings through your teaching.

Ask God to Prepare Your Students

The first and most important key is to pray for your students. A receptive heart and mind only come because God is working, and He desires that you invite Him to work. Call upon the Name of the Lord on their behalf, interceding for them. Lift them up to the throne of grace and pray the specific truths of the upcoming lesson into them. Pray for them by name. Here are some specific prayer suggestions:

- ❑ Pray that their minds would be opened so that they can understand the Scriptures, as Jesus opened the minds of the disciples (Luke 24:45). Ask that their hearts would be open to receive the message, as Lydia's was in Acts 16:14. Ask that their eyes would be opened to see the wonderful things of God, as the servant of Elisha saw the hills full of chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:17).
- ❑ Pray that their hearts would be changed from stone into flesh (Ezekiel 36:26), and that the Word you help sow would take root, flourish, and bear fruit that will last. (John 15:16)
- ❑ Pray that they recognize sin, and repent. (Psalm 51; Matthew 4:17)
- ❑ Pray that their view of Holy God would increase more and more!
- ❑ Pray against Satan and his followers and helpers, who seek to distract, discourage, and destroy these good people whom Jesus died to rescue. Ask the Lord to create a "hedge or protection" around your students.

If you find it difficult to pray for your students, there is a serious problem. Ask the Lord to soften your heart, show you any sin that is blocking His life in you, and to give you a renewed sense of compassion and power working through you. Do not teach students if you find yourself without a humble, God-oriented attitude.

I also recommend that you recruit others to pray for the people that you will be teaching. Never hesitate to ask for prayer. Your pastors, deacons, elders, and other teachers will be good prayer allies.

Remind your students about this prayer effort on their behalf. It is wonderful to be able to say at the beginning of a teaching time, “I and many others have been praying for you this week. We’ve been praying that God would work in your mind and hearts and change you to be more Christ-like. You are not here by chance. This is a God-ordained opportunity for you. I have every confidence that God will use this lesson for His glory and your benefit.”

Many a glorious lesson has been prepared but the delivery was wasted because the students weren’t prepared through the prayers of the saints. If you want to ‘tickle the ears’ of your students and have them leave thinking, “Well, that was entertaining,” then you don’t need to pray. If you want to teach the Bible to change lives, then recognize the limits of your teaching and devote yourself to prayer! I’ll outline a suggested prayer schedule in Part V.

Create Expectations

The second key is to create expectations for the lesson, a hunger for what God can provide them. The easiest students to teach – and the ones with the greatest life change for the glory of God! – are the ones who

come expectant! Here are some practical, tested ideas to help you build expectant students:

- Personally contact the people ahead of the teaching time. This is especially helpful before you start a new series of classes. Tell them a little bit about what will be in the lesson – and emphasize what they can get from it. Personal contact in advance can dramatically improve attendance. Even three minutes can make a huge difference in a student's expectations.
- Prompt your students to have some question in mind that they want to see God answer. For example, I recently taught a series about bringing the Gospel into our family relationships (often our most difficult!). I contacted the class members in advance, suggesting that they think about one family relationship that is challenging for them, and that they would love to see God transform by His power. That created some expectancy in their hearts, because they were watching and listening for how God will help them with their family.
- If you're teaching the same people over a period of weeks, then at the end of a lesson, give a quick statement about what you will cover next time.
- Contact people between lessons. Remind them of a relevant point from your past lessons, encourage them to apply it, and give them hints about what's coming next.
- Ask students to bring someone else – someone who they know would benefit from the topic -- to the next lesson.

- Remind students occasionally that they need to come to class and participate with anticipation that God will give them opportunities to share what they have learned with others. The Lord always teaches us what will be helpful to convey to others in appropriate times in the future. The kingdom of God is oriented towards growth this way. If your students know that they'll be teaching something themselves soon, their attention in class will increase tenfold!

- In humility in class, ask your students to pray for you as you prepare for future lessons. This helps orient their hearts toward the lesson and you as the person God is using to present it to them.

The general idea is to help people get excited about what they have learned and what they will learn.

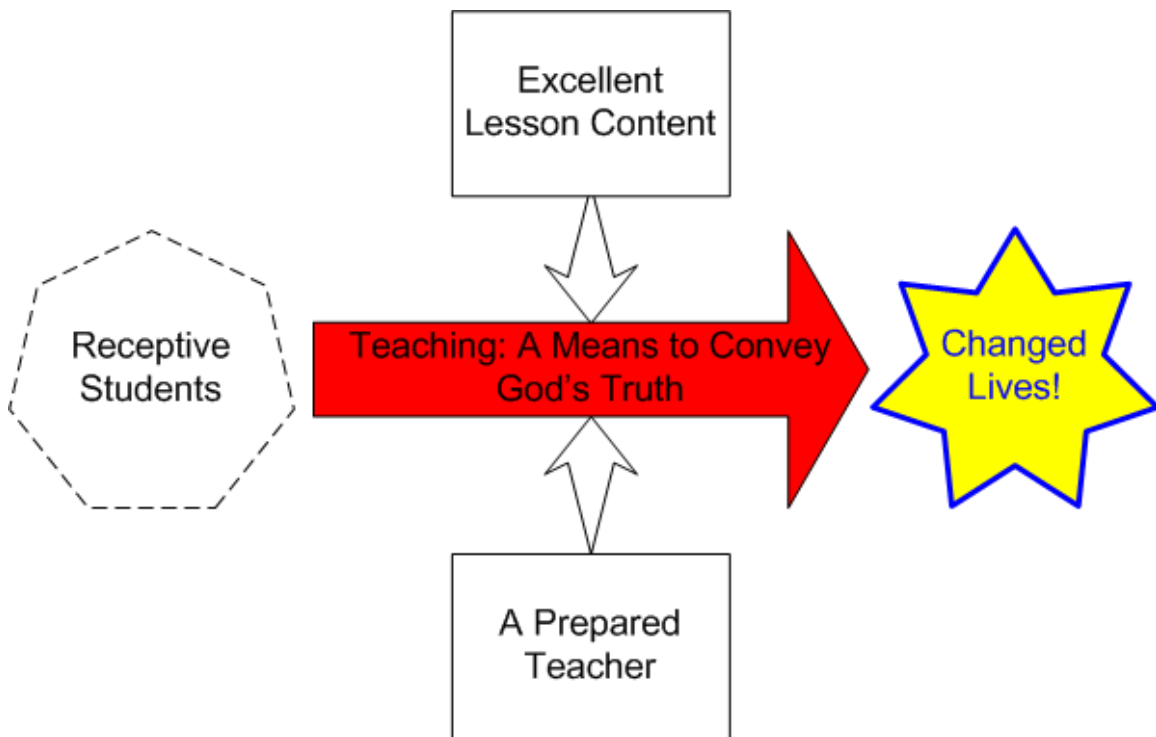
By the way, there are other benefits to these kinds of promotion opportunities. You will be building up the fellowship and unity of the group, and giving yourself the encouragement you need to do a great job. Your group is very likely to grow in size as people spread the word about their life-changing experiences. The kingdom of Christ is built up as we go from strength to strength.

It took me years to understand the valuable of promotion work. My experience has convinced me that **the effort that goes into preparing students' hearts is often the difference between changed lives and tickled ears.**

"If you are going to bore people, don't bore them with the Gospel. Bore them with calculus, bore them with earth science, bore them with world history. But it is a sin to bore them with the Gospel."

-- Howard Hendricks

Key Element Four: Practical Teaching Helps



There are many practical recommendations in this section for the actual teaching process. They come from over twenty five years of teaching experience. Oh, that I knew then what I know now about teaching! If you're a new Bible teacher, these tips will give you an enormous jump-start. I'm confident that even experienced teachers will find new ideas here, too.

Worship First

It is imperative that you have worshipped in your heart before you teach. You simply cannot teach the Bible accurately and passionately until your heart is clean and connected in praise and adoration to the Lord.

In a church setting, it's often possible to go to a worship service before you teach.

Or use simple alternatives to worship alone for a few minutes. Read a Psalm. Spend time thanking God for His greatness and goodness, for salvation through Christ, for providing you breath and strength and opportunity to serve Him. Sing a praise song or a few stanzas from a hymn that draws you into His Presence.

God is omnipresent (Psalm 139), but He likes to be invited. Invite God to work in you and during the lesson time. Use your sanctified imagination to see yourself as a large and clean conduit of grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) to this class, today. Invite God to pour Himself through you and the lesson material into hearts and minds prepared to receive it.

Getting Started

The opening 90 seconds of your lesson are critical. If you're at all nervous, it will probably hit you right away. If you stumble in the opening seconds, keep going. Students are patient. Remember that these good people are not listening to you by accident – this is a work of God. Their hearts and minds are prepared. You're good, but don't lose perspective – your students are there to learn from God, not from you.

Here are two tips to will help your opening flow well:

1. Memorize your first two or three sentences.
2. Rehearse the timing and rhythm of your opening comments. Your tone and body language communicate as much as your words.

Reading Scripture aloud

It's sad to listen to a teacher or preacher who mumbles and stumbles through a Bible passage. No wonder people think the Bible is boring or hard to understand! Can you imagine Moses, David, Isaiah, Jesus, Peter, and Paul speaking in a boring way?

GBTs practice reading Scripture aloud with clarity and expression. Nothing less honors our Lord.

Few of us have had formal training in reading expressively, but we can improve with practice. This is not a performance that draws attention or praise to yourself. **The goal is to be clear and read well enough so that your reading style is neither obvious nor detracting.** Do not “put on” a different Scripture reading voice. Consciously read slowly, enunciating syllables, projecting your voice forward. Use your vocal range to emphasize words or phrases, just as you do in your regular speech. Actually, you need to exaggerate your vocal range, particularly with groups of more than 5-6 people, in order to be heard clearly. Be bold as you read – this is the Word of God for this class today!

Reading through difficult passages aloud several times will also give you some added confidence. Special note about those wonderful Old Testament names: I don't know how to pronounce all the names correctly, but I decide how I will pronounce it ahead of class and stick to it.

Appropriate Energy

GBTs are strong, energetic, passionate communicators. (See the example of Apollos in Acts 18.) They connect with people. They make eye contact. They engage people. No one struggles to hear them.

The simple truth is that you must project energy and enthusiasm. The larger the group, the more energy is required to keep them engaged.

You have to work at it. Move around, move your arms, adjust your volume up and down. Make eye contact. *Hold* eye contact on important points. Call people by name – use what you know of their stories, their struggles, their concerns, their joys in your presentation.

If you're a quiet person by nature, you likely will need to push yourself to get to the appropriate energy level. You might even feel goofy. Don't measure effectiveness by how you feel about it.

I say "appropriate energy" because there are times and situations where moving around, waving your arms, and speaking very loudly are not appropriate. There is power in a quiet word, fitly spoken, power that can seize attention and change a life. The Holy Spirit is a reliable guide on this matter.

Props Matter

A prop is a physical item that teachers can use to illustrate a story. Good props cement images in the minds of students. GBTs know that

props matter. The prophets and Jesus used props to help people understand their message, and so can you.

I do have two pieces of general advice about using props with Bible teaching:

1. Use simple props, rather than complex ones. Make sure your prop can be seen by everyone. Don't try to make one prop cover many points. A prop should either cover your central point or be the primary attention-grabber for intro points. Use the prop to help people understand or remember a key point of the lesson; do not build your lesson around the prop.
2. Learn from other teachers and salesmen. Watch to see how they use a prop to make points. What's the timing? How is the prop related to key points the teacher is making? What makes this prop effective? Does the presenter rely too much on the prop?

Telling Personal Stories

Telling a personal story is one of the most powerful ways to engage your students and help them understand the way God interacts with us. It creates transparency and authentic links between you and your students. A story can shorten the physical and "psychic" distance between a teacher and students (of any age). Your students are more likely to remember your story than they are some deep theological point, no matter how elegantly you've explained it.

Here are some recommendations about telling personal stories in adult class settings:

- Keep them short.
- Make sure they're relevant to the lesson material at hand.

- Balance them out – tell stories about your weaknesses and your strengths, about when you’ve blown it and when you’ve experienced God’s power.
- Respect confidentiality issues, particularly with your spouse and family members.

Let me talk more about that last point. It’s fine to tell stories on the kids when they’re very young, but as they get older it’s appropriate to seek their permission first. And you should clear stories that involve your spouse *before* class; don’t try to negotiate a “is this ok?” conversation after you’ve begun the story. Be sensitive about neighbors and coworkers; use pseudonyms (“My coworker, I’ll call him Joe, asked me the other day about ...”).

Involving students in discussion

This is not a sermon. This is not a sermon. This is not a sermon.

A good friend, a very good teacher, has told me that there are only three things to remember about a good adult Sunday School class:

1. Use the Bible
2. Pray
3. Get the class to talk

He points out that they may or may not remember what the teacher said, but they will remember what they said. Therefore it's critical to interact with students and create discussion.

The best way to develop interaction (with you and with one another) is to ask questions – and don’t give in to silence by answering your

question for them. Ask a mixture of easy and harder questions, those with definite answers and those that encourage reflection. Your objective is to explore the material as a group and increase your students' learning by their participation. Several of the Bible study methods described earlier (e.g., the "Not" method) work well in group settings.

Watch for signs that people are understanding you. Stop occasionally and ask if there are any questions. Don't worry too much about questions that aren't directly pertinent to your lesson – sometimes God takes the discussion to another topic. Steer the class back when appropriate or you sense the topic may not be of broad interest to the whole group.

Managing Questions

What if someone asks a question I can't answer? Or disagrees with me? It is perfectly ok to say, "I don't know" and refer them to a pastor or another teacher – especially if the topic is not related to your lesson. You cannot be an expert in everything, and people who try to be only look silly and draw attention to themselves rather than the Lord.

In my experience, getting outright disagreement with your teaching during the class is rare. Getting feedback (directly, hopefully, but sometimes you hear about it indirectly) afterwards is more common.

If you feel challenged by someone in the class, turn the question around and ask them to explain their point of view. This usually leads to constructive discussion, rather than pointed arguments (Proverbs 15:1). Sometimes a person who states bluntly, "I think it's really about ____" is

looking for an opportunity for further dialogue. You always have the option to defer additional dialogue to a time after class.

Sometimes a question from a student completely changes a class, and is clearly a work of the Spirit. You need to be prepared to go with where the Lord is moving the class. For example, I once taught a group of teenagers about the Ten Commandments. We were discussing God's amazing love for His people. Everything changed dramatically when one young lady said, "I know God loves me. He's God, so He's supposed to love me. My question is, does God like me?" It was a tender, heartfelt question that led us into a discussion about God's amazing desire to be with us. The class didn't focus on what I had planned on, but began wrestling with a much more important issue.

Life application

When you teach, always leave a challenge for life application. The purpose of teaching must be the application of the understanding of God's Word to change lives (James 1:22-25). GBTs always drive to application. It's got to be about the heart and the head! That's how Jesus taught, and you should, too.

Challenge yourself first. Make challenges personal, attainable, and measurable. "Commit to reading a chapter a day this week," is better than "Try to read more Scripture." Give it a time target. "What will you do by Tuesday night to express practical love for your spouse, your neighbor, or a co-worker?"

There are three fundamental questions all believers must address every day:

- ◆ Who is Jesus? (Luke 9:20)
- ◆ What am I going to do about that? (Luke 6:26)
- ◆ Where is your faith? (Luke 8:25)

Don't let your students get accustomed to Bible study that does not work towards changing their life. Scripture is a mirror for us – even the history and poetry sections of the Bible can and must be the foundation for application. Sometimes the application is focused on enlarging our view of God and magnifying His glorious name. Other times there will be specific acts we should follow.

You can count on the Lord to give you some real-life application opportunities for whatever you are being called to teach. God wrings lessons through us before He allows us to teach them with any passion. Prayerfully watch and learn, through first-person and third-person accounts. Be a student of the world around you. Share with others what you are learning. Journal – and set aside time to re-read your journals periodically. We often miss the longer-term directions the Lord is creating for us, because we're often consumed with what happens today and tomorrow and next week.

Praying as the Teacher/Leader

In most classes you will lead in prayer. It's traditional, expected, and entirely proper to close in prayer. Let's talk about that first.

Consider Jesus' words from Matthew 6:5: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." Pray from the heart, with passion, with

authenticity before the Holy Lord of the Universe. Either pray a-right, or ask someone else to pray that will. This is not a show.

Pray in a way that leads others to pray with you. Your prayer is a model for theirs. Your students can (and should) personalize your prayer in their hearts and minds.

Leading, teaching, and supporting through prayer is the most important thing you can do for your students. This is love. Ask the Lord to give you compassion as He has compassion, insight into the needs of your students, and power to pray effectively for their lives to be changed. The Lord will make you a large and clean conduit of His overwhelming love.

Pray boldly for your students, but include yourself as well. Pray like Daniel, who included himself with Israel in confessing the sins of their nation in disobeying God and breaking the covenant (see Daniel 9:1-19).

Don't mumble your prayers. Pray loudly so that everyone will be able to hear you clearly. Enunciate.

I've been asked if I "script out" prayers ahead of time. I rarely script out precise sentences to include in prayers, but I do think about what to pray about before the class. I'll have two or three key things I want to include. I do this because my desire is for these prayers to have weight and meaning, and be much more than a ritualistic closing.

Please don't limit your prayer to the end of class. Here are some ideas to help you think about incorporating prayer at other times in the lesson.

Even if a class has just prayed over other requests, I will often take 20 seconds for a brief prayer before I teach, or even after I've given the lesson introduction. "Lord, use this time to change us. Speak through me. We are here not by accident, but by Your sovereign power. We need You. Help each of us grow in Grace and Knowledge." Sometimes I will adapt the words from Psalm 19:14: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer."

Paul gave us the command "Pray continually" in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. That's a high standard, but you're a GBT and can pray continually as you teach the class. Let me explain what I mean.

If you have steeped your heart in worship and the Word before your class, you will find that you can operate on two levels. At one level you are teaching. You are speaking, interacting, and engaging students in discussion. But at the same time you can be praying unceasingly for this process. Ask the Lord to give you insights and wisdom to exquisitely match the heart-needs of these students today. You are filled with the Holy Spirit! Pray that the message from the Word of God would fill their hearts. Pray that they would respond for the glory of God. Ask that the seed would find fertile ground, grow, and produce a great harvest. Do not lose sight of spiritual reality.

Be available after the lesson to pray with your students. If someone asks you a question, or even gives you a compliment, take 10-20 seconds and pray with them. Create simple yet strong prayers. If you know a specific need, then lift that before the throne of all Grace. If you aren't aware of a specific need, then pray for their coming week. "Lord, thanks for Bill and your ministry through him. Give him boldness and insight this week."

These “micro-prayers” (as one friend calls them) reinforce that prayer is an essential part of all ministry for the Lord.

Short Lessons on Short Notice

GBTs must always be prepared to teach on short notice. It’s just part of the job description. Often you will be asked to give a short lesson, rather than a longer one.

Here are some practical tips:

- Be sure to take time for prayer ahead of the lesson, and have worship in your heart. Orient yourself towards the Lord! If you are really short on time, then do this with the class – simply open in prayer, inviting God’s presence and His power to work in all your hearts, for the glory of His Name.
- You still need to have a sense that a lesson will match the needs of the students. Don’t select a lesson topic based on your convenience. Take this to God in prayer and make sure there is no check in your spirit against a specific lesson idea. If there is no check in your heart, then go ahead boldly and confidently. God will use you.
- I recommend four sources for crafting a short lesson from on short notice.
 1. Take part of a larger lesson that you already have worked up.
 2. Use something very fresh from your personal devotions and study – what has God been speaking to you about?

3. Convey some meaningful truth from a while ago that you captured in your Bible during a sermon or another person's study.
 4. If there are current events on people's minds, help them connect these events to the realities of God's kingdom and sovereign rule of the universe.
- Aim for 5-10 minutes of lesson time, tops. This gives you flexibility to expand if discussion warrants it, but does not run risks of boring people. You want to leave your students desiring just a little bit more.

Short-notice situations are a primary reason why we want to have our Bibles marked up as teaching tools. There will come times when you recognize that God has given you a short devotion or teaching lesson – mark it as such, and be confident that God will provide an opportunity to teach it someday.

The best way to always be prepared to give lessons (of any length, actually) on short notice is to saturate your mind and heart with the Scriptures. Invest yourself deeply into the Word of God.

“Help! I’m out of time!”

Covering the material you had planned, in the time available, with everyone excitedly participating – well, it's rarely happens. I recommend not being too concerned about this issue. Are you and your students are learning about God and His ways? Then be content.

Coming close to covering what you've planned comes through practice and willingness to be flexible. It's better to leave everyone wanting a

little more than to have the majority of the group calculating how long you have gone “over,” or thinking that you already made that point twenty minutes ago.

You can give yourself “buffer” opportunities. I am usually working on the following week’s material, so if I cover an area more quickly than I’d planned, I have the option to work into “next week,” even if only to give a strong preview. I also have developed a handful of useful 3-5 minute topics that I can adapt to different situations. It’s OK to end class early, but encourage enough discussion that this doesn’t happen often.

You’re Not Done Yet When the Lesson End

Your job as a teacher is not over when the formal part of class is done.

Let me repeat that: **Your job as a teacher is not over when the formal part of class is done.**

Your job now is to continue praying for your students, these dear souls whom the Lord has entrusted to you in some measure. Pray that their lives would be changed as they discover new life in Christ. Pray that the Spirit would continue to prick their conscience and reveal to them the way they should go. Ask the Lord to make plain the good works He prepared in advance for them to do. Pray that the key points of your lesson would have lasting impact in their lives. Pray that they would in turn teach these things to others around them.

Your prayers, dear teachers, will amplify the effect of the time spent in the lesson by the powerful working of God in their lives. Keep on praying for all the saints!

* * * * *

In closing this section, let me remind you of the importance of your attitude and presence while you teach. Great Bible Teachers project energy and enthusiasm.

I repeat: **GBTs project energy and enthusiasm.**

This is the Word of God! We are the adopted children of God! This is not a message to be delivered in a quiet monotone, hands bolted to your sides, feet glued to the floor, and eyebrows under control. So raise your voice, move around, and be energetic.

Your students will pick up on your passion, joy, and enthusiasm – or your nervousness, timidity, and dull heart. The Word of God and the Truth of God are important and wonderful and powerful – let your teaching style match, and you will see changed lives for the Kingdom!

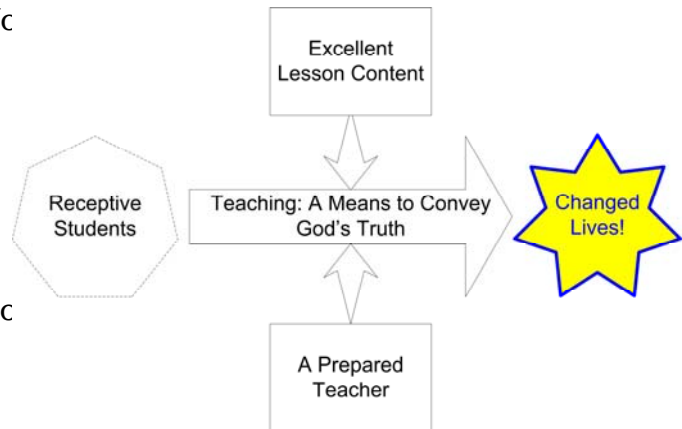
OK, now we've covered the four key elements for Great Bible Teaching. In the next section, let's go over some practical examples for how to put all this together.

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” -- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Putting It All Together

I’ve emphasized from the start that all four elements need to work together for lives to be changed. Yc

- Excellent lesson content
- A prepared teacher
- Receptive Students
- Effective teaching presentatic



all working in concert with the Holy Spirit so that people, including you, will grow in spiritual maturity and depth.

How do you put them together? That’s what we’ll discuss in this section. I’ve set up two practical examples to walk through this.

Example I: Bible book study -- Ephesians

Let’s suppose that you have 20 days to get ready to teach Ephesians to a group of about 30 people. And let’s say you get 5 Sundays to cover the material, but you weren’t given any specific requirements about what to emphasize in your teaching. There might be an expectation that you cover all 6 chapters, but you’re not sure. You know some but not all the

people in the class. You've read Ephesians before, but not taught through it.

Whether or not a terrified exhilaration has gripped your heart, **the first step is to pray**. Take some time to thank our precious Lord for this opportunity to be used by Him. Thank him for these students. Thank Him for the revelation of truth in Ephesians. Invite Him to work powerfully in your life and the lives of these students. Ask God for changed lives. This is God's work, and your part is a privilege and responsibility to cooperate with Him.

In the coming days you need to make a number of decisions, and get prepared. I recommend you write out a specific plan to get ready. That will help you think through all the steps, the sequence of events, and what you want to accomplish. Here is how I would set up the 20 days of prep time for you and your students.

Day	Prepare the Lesson & Teaching Plan	Preparing Your Students
1-2	Pray for guidance and insight Read through Ephesians 3 times (take notes while you read)	Get class list and contact information List out known needs of class Begin praying for class members by name Ask advisors, church leaders to pray for you and this class
3-4	Read through Ephesians 2 times and look at parallel passages in Colossians Look up information about Ephesus Check Acts passages where Paul was in Ephesus	Start contacting class members and letting them know about upcoming class – get any insights about their needs Pray for students Ask church leaders for insights about what this class needs and recent history for this class
5-6	Read through Ephesians 2 times Make initial decision about what to emphasize in Ephesians	Pray for students Continue student contacts Ask church leaders for insights about what this class needs and recent history for this class
7-8	Create rough cut of material to cover by week and likely focus points	Pray for students Complete student contacts
9-10	Praying for guidance, focus on	Pray for students

Teach A Billion Souls

	passages you plan to cover in 1 st lesson	Relay specific prayer requests for you and this class to your advisors and church leaders Ask God for life applications to give the students
11-12	Memorize and meditate on key verses from week one lesson Decide on life application keys	Ask God for insights into what students need from Ephesians.
13-14	Check commentary if you have questions about any passages Practice reading passages aloud	Pray for students by name Check with advisors and church leaders for insights they may have after praying for you and class
15-16	Sketch out first class presentation details	Pray for students by name
17-18	Imagine yourself teaching the class & God working through you powerfully Work on presentation structure, flow Mark up Bible with key teaching points Practice reading passages aloud	Start contacts with class members to encourage them to come to class, what they can expect. Pray that God would pour His love and truth through you abundantly
19-20	Rehearse opening section Practice running through presentation	Complete contacts class members to encourage them to come to class, what they can expect.

Ok, you're ready to teach that first lesson. On the day you teach, you want to be sure you have some worship time before you teach, rehearse your closing and opening statements, and invest time praying for students and for you.

Remember, you are God's man or woman for this particular group at this particular time. Nothing is going on by chance or accident. Be bold for Christ! Teach with confidence – you have the best material (the very Word of God!), you're prepared, your students are expectant, and you are going to convey Truth from God to them.

When the first lesson is over, praise the Lord that people are excited about Ephesians and what God is teaching them! There are 30 expectant students looking forward to your next lesson. Now you need to prepare for week 2.

You'll almost certainly need to adjust your teaching plans for the coming weeks. That's normal and to be expected. Perhaps you didn't get as far as you expected. No problem. Or something became clear during the discussion that causes you to rethink what people need to learn from the Word. Give thanks! GBTs are flexible and adjust, like sailors who adapt to changing breezes while keeping their destination in mind.

Check with the group leader or someone in the class to get some immediate feedback that may be helpful for the next four lessons.

Plan now for some mid-week contact with your students – encourage them, reinforce key points, get their feedback. I often find that someone will share something with me after the lesson that is good to relay to the whole group mid-week. This is also a great opportunity to “fill-in” with material that you might not have had time to cover. Perhaps there is some additional detail about a passage, or another illustration.

Continue to read Ephesians (the whole letter) and meditate on the specific passages you will cover in Week 2. Assemble your teaching presentation outline, and key applications. Practice reading appropriate Scripture aloud. Prayerfully invite God to be working in the lives of you and your students for His glory. Continue to pray for wisdom and insight into His Word and the hearts of your students.

Preparation for Weeks 3, 4, and 5 will be a similar process. Don't miss opportunities to prepare your students and encourage them mid-week. Continue to ask people to pray for you and the class. Adjust your lesson content and teaching plan to meet needs that surfaced in the first weeks, either in class or outside of class time in other conversations.

The main addition for Week 5 is that you need a closer. Take the opportunity to review key concepts and hit those life applications again. Give them takeaways that will “echo forward” in the coming weeks. Leave them hungry for more! Make sure they will be drawn back into Ephesians in the future.

A few more comments:

- Please note that the process will be the same whether you are focusing on just Ephesians chapter 1 for five weeks, or covering the entire letter.
- I’ve laid out an ideal plan. If you don’t have this much time, the process should be similar but more compressed. You might need to rearrange your personal schedule to give yourself more time.
- Don’t worry if God delays answers even though you are eagerly seeking God’s guidance on what to focus on, key applications, etc.
Remember the principle: God is sometimes early, but He is never late. You can trust Him to give you what you need. He may choose to deliver “just in time.” Refuse to panic or stop listening to God. Do not be like Saul (1 Samuel 13:8-10).
- Continue to steep yourself in the Biblical passages that you are teaching. Meditate on them often.
- If you are teaching from one of the history books, then set aside time for meditating on the stories and using your sanctified imagination (see description earlier in this book). This will help you engage students and invite them to find truth in the story.
- Longer books or longer classes create different challenges. If you’re teaching from Isaiah, then you probably aren’t going to read all of Isaiah each day. But read enough that you have meaningful context for your detailed study of shorter passages. Break down a

longer teaching project into successive 20 days efforts. That makes it easier to organize your time, stay focused, and not be overwhelmed.

- I'm sometimes asked how much time someone should put into lesson preparation. Since this is serious business, about the only definite answer I can give is "more than a little." I think you are going to spend 4-10 hours per week to get ready on new material, including time spent contacting students and others. This is an investment with huge payoffs in change lives. Think about this time in light of eternal matters.

Example II: Bible Topic Study

A topical study is when you cover a concept or theme with your students, rather than one section of Scripture. In my experience students respond well to topical studies because they are looking for information or help with a specific area. Topical studies are especially powerful if the subject aligns with heart-felt needs. I once taught a series of classes on applying the Gospel to family relationships. Because of the student needs identified before the series started, I focused one Sunday just on the issue of Anger. I was able to pull together Scriptural examples and help the class see biblical principles for dealing with unrighteous anger that is so common in our families today.

You'll use a lot of the same approaches mentioned in Example I for a topical Bible study. Use the same "preparing the student" activities and timeline. I'm going to focus below on the key elements for preparing the lesson and teaching plan.

First, make sure you have a topic for study that aligns with student needs. That requires prayerful reflection time.

Once you've settled on a topic, then you need to invest the time for serious study and comprehension on your part. Do not build a theology around isolated portions of Scripture! If there is time, and especially if it is a broad topic (e.g., Forgiveness), then read through the whole Bible in 30-40 days asking God to show you relevant passages for teaching to this class. Check out related topics, too, for additional insights.

Saturate topical study in prayer and reflection! You must have understanding. Ask the Lord for wisdom, calling upon His promise to provide it (James 1:5). You must be confident that you represent a topic accurately and appropriately for this class.

Having studied the breadth and depth of a topic, then you need to craft this into specific lessons. Here is my recommended two-part strategy to do this:

1. Outline the key ideas and principles that need to be brought out in class. Identify supporting Scripture passages.
2. Reverse the presentation during the lesson. Don't list out the principles and main ideas with associated Bible references. Instead, go through the Bible passages and draw out the principles and applications as you discuss this during the class time.

This approach deals with a primary weakness many of us face – we just want the take-home lessons, and push the Bible in the background. GBTs push the Word of God into the foreground, encouraging students to learn and see how applications are drawn from the Bible for any given theme or topic.

You will want to organize your time so that you work a little bit each day on preparing the lesson. Be mindful of what the Lord may teach you through interactions with others in your life, situations in the world, etc. Our Lord never fails to provide useful examples and applications! A big part of effective teaching is simply paying attention and desiring to have a powerful impact on your students so their lives are changed.

You may have noticed I haven't recommended reading commentaries and books about the topic you've chosen. There are good ones. Your pastor or advisors may recommend one or more. That's fine. GBTs put the Bible first and use other resources as supporting materials (e.g., illustrations, background and historical details, word origins). Develop your key ideas by listening to the Lord through His Word.

Time crunches happen. I believe God permits this because He wants us to remain utterly dependent upon Him and not rely on our own strength and understanding. If you have only a short while to prepare a topical study, then I have three recommendations:

1. Focus on a shorter section of the Bible. Just look at the Gospels, the Epistles, the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy), or the Major Prophets. Explain to your students that you've done this, so they understand your perspective.
2. Sharpen your lesson to align to what you are confident your students need – from conversations with others, past experience with these students, and *especially* prayer.
3. Resist the temptation to panic, skip prayer preparation, and find a ready-made lesson from someone or somewhere. This is God's work, and He will provide everything your students need through your teaching.

A warning: there is a great temptation in preparing topical studies to only teach to part of what the Bible says, because sometimes the messages aren't popular or easy. It's easier to "skip" over Hebrews 10:26-31 when you teach on the fear of God. It's easier to zoom by Matthew 7:21 when you teach on the Lordship of Christ and the need to obey. Continue to pray for guidance about what our Lord and Master wants you to teach. Trust in His guidance. Do not teach to please men foremost.

Topical studies tend to create more side discussions in class than book studies. That's ok. Pay attention to the discussion – you may see more of what your students need, and that will help you shape future lessons. Guide the discussion back to the main topics when you sense it is time. Interaction and discussion is more important to learning than you getting through "your" lesson.

If you want to see revival begin, then draw a circle on the floor, kneel in the middle of the circle, and pray this prayer:
"Lord, send revival. Start it inside this circle."

Going On

Evaluating Your Teaching

All of us can improve. GBTs are men and women of humility, understanding that the Lord deigns to use weak vessels for His glory. It's important to evaluate the impact of your teaching – that is, if you desire to teach the Bible to change lives!

You need to get feedback from

- ❑ The Lord
- ❑ A trusted associate
- ❑ People in the class
- ❑ Yourself

How do you get feedback from the Lord? Ask Him. “Father, were You glorified? Did I miss anything from Your Word that needs to be brought to them next time? Thank you for helping me be part of Your work to change their hearts and minds.” Then listen. Listen over the next few days. Sometimes our emotions are running high in the hours after we teach, and the Lord will speak to us more clearly later on. If you've invested yourself in the material appropriately, it is difficult NOT to be emotionally close. We need to have a sensitive, teachable heart.

Every GBT needs a trusted advisor, a person of spiritual depth. This may be a pastor, a lay leader, or your spouse. Select this person with

prayer. You want them to be praying for you, too! Grant this person – God’s gift to you! -- freedom to provide you with critical feedback and suggestions. Don’t wince at their words; take their feedback seriously. Confirm it with the Lord.

Ask others for input on your teaching as well, both soon after class and later on. Don’t fish for compliments here. Do not ask something generic like “How was the class?” because most people will give you pleasant but useless feedback (i.e., “Fine!”) no matter what they really thought. Instead, ask for specific feedback. “Did I make my two main points clearly?” “Was there appropriate class interaction?” “What would you recommend I do differently if I taught that again?” These kinds of questions are more likely to generate constructive feedback you can use.

Do not look for feedback from class participants about the *content* of the class – let that feedback come from the Lord and your trusted advisor(s). Do seek their input on how you taught and the way the lesson was received, plus suggestions for the future.

As the Lord leads you, discuss the class with specific students. Ask how God is using the class to make a difference in them. Ask how the Lord is working in their lives. Your questions can be used by the Spirit to reinforce His transforming work in their hearts and minds.

Don’t trust your gut impressions until you’ve had feedback from the Lord and others first. You might be evaluating incorrectly. Some classes have not “felt” good to the teacher but were used powerfully by the Lord to change lives. Sometimes that change didn’t happen until later on – and it might have been a complainer or someone upset with your class!

Again, the issue is whether God was glorified and His Word honored, not how people (including you) *feel* about a lesson.

Creating and Helping Your Prayer Team

Apart from Jesus, we can do *nothing*. (John 15:5) Your teaching ministry and mine are completely dependent upon the finished work of Christ and the active work of the Holy Spirit. These facts drive us to pray.

I strongly recommend you create and help a team of people who will pray for you and for the Lord to work powerfully through your teaching. This should be your ongoing core prayer support team, all the time. As I mentioned earlier, you will want to solicit prayers for each class you teach. Here are a few ideas to help:

- Solicit at least three people. One should be your pastor, one should be a peer (another teacher or leader in the church), and one should be younger than you spiritually. This reflects the Paul, Barnabas, Timothy principle. If you have more than three, make sure you have a distribution of spiritual responsibility and maturity. I have found the “younger” partners are very effective prayers, and delight in being drawn into the work of upholding you.
- Keep reminding them to pray, and give them specific requests. Your partners need to hear what concerns you have for your students, about the subject you’re teaching on, and reminded that you are aiming for changed lives. Get information to them by phone, letter, or email frequently. Report on successes and progress, too.
- Say thank-you often. Stay humble, remember the One you serve.

Encouragement for GBTs

I hope you have found this information useful and inspiring. I am confident that God is bringing up a new generation of Bible-teachers because of the coming revivals. He wants to use you – yes, *you* – to help believers grow in Christ-likeness.

Our goal is to see Christ working to change lives. Remember what I said earlier about changed lives? *“I use 2 Peter 3:18 as the benchmark. ‘But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.’ A changed life means that there is growth in grace and in knowledge of Jesus.”* The path of becoming a GBT and helping others means that YOU may grow faster and deeper than the others around you. Hallelujah, Amen!

The needs of this generation are so great that we need more than a handful of GBTs. We need hundreds and thousands of teachers, scattered throughout the kingdom! That’s why I’ve written this book to help give people a jump-start and enable them to become more effective right away. The methods I’ve outlined in this book are also designed to put you on a path to consistently deeper spiritual maturity. I encourage you to consistently put yourself in position to learn, grow, and share with others.

Continue to work at your teaching craft!

May God add His blessing to this guide,
for the sake of His Name and His glory.

The grass withers, the
flower fades, but the word
of our God stands
forever.” Isaiah 40:8

Glenn Brooke

Part II: Mentoring Other Bible Teachers

“Giving it all away adds to who you are.”

There are two reasons you need to mentor other teachers:

1. Mentoring others increases the number of teachers, and that means more people can be taught the Word of God. This helps fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20)
2. You will find that you learn much more about Bible teaching, and more deeply, when you are mentoring new Bible teachers. In fact, there are probably things you will only learn by mentoring others!

Let me encourage you to be a mentor. If you're a GBT, then I assure you that God will send men and women your way who have potential to become GBTs, too. Be their advisory and helpful guide. God raises up these teachers for His glory, not yours. You can cooperate with Him by encouraging other teachers and giving them helpful feedback. Inspire them. Give them help. Share what you learn from them as a means to encourage them. Share stories of your teaching successes and failures with them. Work with your church leadership to help them find opportunities to serve through teaching. Pray for them, and remind them you are praying for them. Encourage them to keep looking to Jesus!

Your objective in mentoring is simple: develop teachers capable of not only teaching the Bible to change lives, but also (in time) capable of mentoring others.

I recommend you look at the example of Barnabas for being a good mentor. Let's review this passage from Acts 11:

“Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. *When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith,* and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” (Acts 11:19-26, emphasis added)

Let's observe that Barnabas did not go to Antioch and try to create more teachers just like himself. He (1) sees the evidence of God's grace in their lives, (2) rejoiced, and (3) “encouraged them to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.” He built people up according to the Lord's grace that was unique to them!

Barnabas also didn't try to do everything himself. Once he assessed the situation in Antioch, he traveled about 100 miles to retrieve Saul from Tarsus. (Keep in mind that at this early point in Saul's life, most people knew him as a Christian-killing Pharisee, not as a great apostle.)

Note that Barnabas' key qualifications were that he was "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith." He had not completed seminary, nor was he certified through special coursework. Barnabas would have taught as much with his life and interactions with people as in any formal class setting.

Lastly, please note that Barnabas and Saul taught together, and taught great numbers of people. We have a tendency today, sadly, to think about teachers as singles. There is great power in teams of people teaching! We marvel at Paul's ministry, but let us not forget how many people like Barnabas influenced and encouraged Paul, particularly in his early ministry.

Given this example from Barnabas, let me encourage you to think about how you mentor new Bible teachers.

First, you don't need to be a "super" teacher or have many years of experience before you can mentor someone else. (Yes, you do need some experience, but much less than most people think.) The qualifications are more about matters of the heart than head knowledge and years of experience.

Mentoring is best thought of as collaborative teaching, working together on lessons and even teaching together. This is a wonderful model for learning and growth. New teachers need practical experiences, starting small and developing as they go. In time it will become plain when they are ready to teach on their own and begin to mentor other teachers themselves.

Some of you may be shocked to hear me describe the process this way. I believe teachers are held to high standards, and should work very hard to please the Lord. The process must always be about relying upon the work of the Holy Spirit, dear friends! It is good to have high expectations of our teachers, but this is a ministry from the Lord, not a performance where we judge one another based on our standards. No great Bible teacher ever stops learning and growing and developing – but he or she can certainly be teaching long before someone might categorize them as an "expert."

I'll give you the rest of my guidance on being a mentor in the form of answering questions you likely have.

“How do I find people to mentor?”

Pray and invite. Ask the Lord of the harvest to bring in workers for His kingdom! There is no substitute for prayer in this matter, because we will fail if we depend upon our human capabilities to find and attract new teachers.

Invite people to study the Word and pray with you. The men and women that the Lord desires to become teachers are always willing to do this step. If this goes well, and you sense from the Lord that they could become teachers, then invite them to study about how to teach with you. Give them a picture of what teaching ministry could look like for them, an exciting view into a future of teaching the Bible to change lives!

“How do I get them started?”

Use Part I of this book! Go over the material with them several times. Then begin studying the Word together and praying together.

Out of this shared study time, they can begin to put together short devotionals and lessons. Have them teach them to you at first, and then to a group of people that know them. Give them lots and lots of encouragement and feedback. Help them develop a prayer partner team.

“What should they teach at first?”

I recommend you let them join in your teaching ministry – both to observe you, and to teach with you. Give them some assignments going into one of your lessons. “Watch to see how I weave in the life application in this lesson.” “Listen to the tone I use as I ask questions.” And then afterwards share with them your thinking about how the lesson went, what adjustments you made as you taught. These young teachers will learn so much so quickly as you help them come “inside” the lesson from a teacher’s perspective.

Begin team-teaching with them a few times. Share some of the teaching responsibilities. Let them help you develop hooks and illustrations. You can team-teach a series of lessons to the same group and learn together.

Give them a range of teaching assignments. Make sure they know how to teach from a single passage of Scripture, on a topic that covers several passages, and how to use questions in the lesson to engage the students.

“Should I work with more than person at a time?”

If the Lord provides them, yes! It’s common to have two or three teachers-in-training working with you. They will actually learn from one another, as well as from you.

I don’t recommend you have more teachers-in-training than you can give personal attention to. My observation is that the Lord usually takes care of the numbers.

“How long should I mentor someone?”

I have been teaching more than twenty five years and still consult with my mentor occasionally! You can expect to mentor someone intensely for 6 to 18 months on the basics before they’ll be ready for major teaching assignments on their own. Even then, continue to be an encourager and a resource to help them. You’ll find great joy in the process of working with them! (Don’t be at all surprised when God uses them to teach you something you didn’t know!)

“How do I know when someone is ready to teach without me?”

The simple answer is, “You’ll know, and it’s probably sooner than they are comfortable.”

I recommend you look for signs that they can independently study the Word and handle it well. They should be quick to pray and eager to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit, with signs of faith in the Lord to carry their teaching forward. They should be able to create simple, straightforward lessons that are effective. And they should be able to handle teaching situations in spite of their fears and discomfort with some situations.

“What can I do to help launch new teachers?”

If you’ve been publicly teaching with someone, you will have already helped them develop credibility and authority with groups. You may need to help new teachers find teaching assignments initially.

It is ok for someone to continue to look to you for guidance and help – in fact, it’s expected! I recommend you release them in a formal way, with a blessing. Create a celebration and milestone event that they can look back on and say, “I was ready to teach on my own.”

“This sounds like a lot of work! Isn’t there an easier way?”

Mentoring is a significant investment of time and love – an investment that honors the Lord and develops people as teachers of His Word. You will experience rewards in the process, both here and in heaven.

What Mentoring Means for the Kingdom

I want you to see my God-sized dream for His kingdom. If we’re going to teach 1 billion people, we’ll need at least 400,000 Bible teachers. And the only way to develop that many Bible teachers in a short time is to multiply the ministry.

Let’s say we begin with 2,500 Bible teachers. If each will mentor three more Bible teachers over the next three years, and then everyone repeats the cycle, we’ll quickly expand the number of Bible teachers available. Even with a 50% failure rate, we can develop more than 400,000 new Bible teachers in 10-12 years.

Are you willing to come along on this journey with us, dear teacher? It’s wonderful that your own teaching ministry becomes more effective, but it’s not enough. So I urge you to take up our mentoring challenge! You’ll find much to rejoice over.

About the author

Glenn Brooke has been teaching the Bible for more than twenty-five year, and since 2004 has been coaching thousands of Bible teachers worldwide through distribution of digital books, audio lessons, and videos. Glenn is the husband of one wife (and he married 'up', way up!) and the father of two children. He is learning how to exercise his gifts every day as he walks with Christ and ministers in His name. Glenn's family calls the Johnston Evangelical Free Church (Johnston, Iowa) home.

Glenn's statement of faith agrees with the twelve points of doctrine from the Evangelical Free Church of America (<http://www.efca.org>). Contact Glenn at info@teachtochangelives.com if you have questions.

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You can subscribe to an weekly teaching tips for Bible teachers at <http://www.teachtochangelives.com/optin.htm> . You won't be disappointed in the encouraging and practical content you'll receive. Please encourage your friends and church leaders to subscribe, also.

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Teach To Change Lives -- at <http://www.teachtochangelives.blogspot.com> -- to encourage Bible teachers

Be Bold, Be Gentle -- at <http://www.boldandgentle.blogspot.com> -- to encourage Christian husbands and fathers

Contact Glenn at info@teachtochangelives.com for information about other writing projects. We're very interesting to learn what information you would find helpful for your ministry.