

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR TEACHING MINISTRY

An outline of presentation by Stephen Adei at the African Association of Bible Schools conference Accra, 20th June, 2012

Text: John 15:1-17; 2 Tim 2:15; 2:2

I. INTRODUCTION

- Teaching is at the core of the calling of the church and its leaders. It is implied in the biblical mandate to make disciple of all nation and to present every man matured in Christ (Matt 28:18-20; Col 1:28)
- Effective teaching involves the following dimensions
 - Goals/ objectives
 - The teacher
 - The subject/ content
 - Pedagogy/ teaching methods and approaches
 - Motivation of learners and
 - Monitoring and evaluation system

II. THREE GOALS OF TEACHING

The purpose of teaching is very important. For example most circular institutions focus on transfer of knowledge and equipment of candidate to pass examinations or at best to prepare them for the job market. Even though there is an implied worldview and transformation involved, it is to conform them to the world's standard.

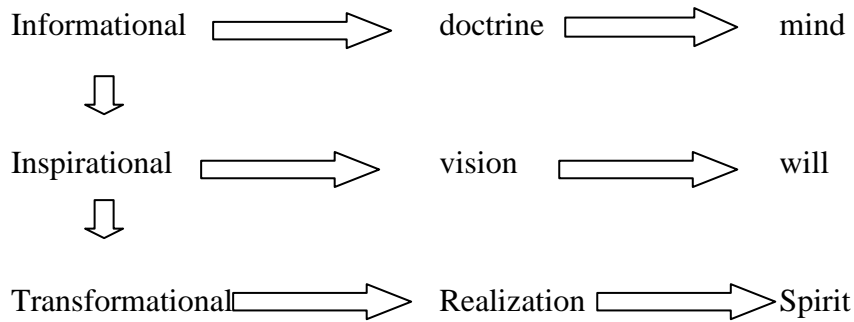
The first step in Christian teaching ministry is to be clear of the fundamental purpose of one's endeavours which may be summarised as

- To bring people to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and Spirit controlled (even in a Bible school that should not be taken for granted)
- To disciple them to conform to the image of Christ (personal spirituality and transformation)
- To equip them for ministry a la 2 Tim 2:2
- To strengthen them to fight the good fight of faith enduring hardship as a servant of God.

Dr. John Mannion's schema of presenting what makes for good preaching below is an excellent way of depicting the goals of teaching the word of God:

- a. To inform doctrine
- b. To inspire
- c. To transform

What makes for good preaching and teaching



Source: practical ministry mobilization of teachers through the multiplication of teachers by Dr. John Mannion

III. TEACHER

In John 15:1-17, Jesus provided the queues to effective ministry including teaching:

- The vine-branch abiding principle
- The word abiding in the teacher
- The motivation of love
- The commitment to fruit bearing

In the Christian ministry of teaching the most important element is the teacher being opened to Jesus through the Holy Spirit and soaking oneself at the mercy seat in the word and prayer not primarily to teach but to abide in Christ and to allow Christ to abide in us.

In the words of an African- American spiritual teacher, his three ways in preparing to preach/teach are captured in the following words: “I read myself full, I think myself clear and I let myself go”.

One of my greatest surprises is the low level of personal spirituality among many so called full ministers of the gospel and Bible school teachers and students.

The quality of the life of the teacher- character, competence, care and love for Jesus and his sheep makes all the difference in effective teaching ministry. They are prior to knowing the content and how to deliver it.

Jesus said in John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...”

IV. CONTENT

In 2 Tim 4:2 Paul admonishes Timothy to preach the word". In the ministry of teaching the focus is the word of God at the centre of which is "Christ and him crucified". It cannot be overemphasized that the purpose of the ministry of teaching exposition of the Word of God. I always tell my hearers that" *the Holy Spirit takes the word of God to form Christ in men*".

A Bible scholar is encouraged to study the original languages, church history, doctrine, (systematic or otherwise), the text of old and new testaments etc. When it comes to approaches to the study of the Word, as Bible scholars, I will be taking coal to Newcastle to take you through the various approaches to the study of the Word of God such as thematic, historical and literary analysis. Some of you are Professors of hermeneutics but let me say upfront that I am biased in favour of expository preaching.. All other approaches must help us to understand the Word of God. In the end there is no substitute to expository preaching as the centrepiece of the ministry of teaching. We are called upon to teach the whole council of God.

Every effective teacher must be a master of the content of their subjects and as Paul will put it our core subject is to "study the word" (2Tim 2:15).

I love all the subjects you teach in Bible school as they aid in understanding the Bible, but anything distracts from the study of the word of God is not worth it. I therefore believe that whether you are a church historian, biblical archaeologist, Hebrew and Greek scholar, etc. As a teacher you have two things to master by way of content: First is the word of God, the Bible. The second is your area of specialty.

But for the purpose of this lecture all that I want to emphasize is that mastery of content is the fundamental to effective teaching.

V. METHODOLOGY/PEDAGOGY

The process or means of delivering the content is equally important to effective teaching. For example, I have come to the point whereby I have almost stopped using the power point as teaching tool. If anything at all I do give outline with headings, because it has been discovered that learners do not listen to the teacher when power points are projected. A simple outline such as the one below often helps to focus student's attention on the major issues

Session title: Facilitator:

Objectives: To gain insight into (not more than 3 objectives)

1

2

Key points (To be covered in the delivery)

1

2

Key bibliography (Must read articles/books up to maximum of 5)

1

2

3

4

The technology explosion especially the internet has however widened the possibilities of transmitting knowledge combining face to face teaching and distance learning. Access to electronic data bases for which students must be acquainted with and be given the capacity to use them are important here.

The biggest transformation in teaching is the move from conventional pedagogy i.e. “Teaching is telling; knowledge is facts, learning is recall” (David Cohen) to new frontiers – “Participant Centered Learning, creating the future together”. Today good:

- “Teaching consists of getting students involved in the active construction of knowledge”
- “Teaching as social act: Thus new frontiers emphasis social interactions than what the traditional universities emphasis on – “individual cognition over social interaction, abstract manipulation of symbols over concrete application in practical settings and generalized learning over applications in specific social contexts”

Old pedagogy concentrated power in teacher. New frontier involves sharing of power between facilitator and learners. Thus there is shared responsibility between lecturer and students for learning outcomes.

“The improvement of teaching and learning in universities is an important matter. Its purpose is not only to provide students with more pleasant and rewarding experience but also to prepare them to take charge of their own learning and to participate in a society in which

learning is a cooperative more than a competitive act.”(Above notes based on Education for Judgment by C.R. Christenson, D.A. Garvin, and A. Sweet)

VI. MOTIVATION OF LEARNERS

If you have had to teach a class in the afternoon in the African sun after students have taken a heavy starch based typical African lunch at 2pm, no one will tell you how important student-learner motivation is in teaching outcomes. Students must be motivated and inspired if teaching is to be effective, while that’s a shared responsibility between the student and the teacher, the teacher’s role is very important. Students are motivated by the factors such as:

- ❖ The perceived integrity of the teacher
- ❖ Mastery of content
- ❖ Appropriate and effective methodology
- ❖ Participatory approaches
- ❖ Variety (drama, play acting, illustration etc.)

Jesus was a master in that.

In our part of the world, so much emphasis is put on passing examination that the other goals of teaching namely:

- ❖ Inspiration and
- ❖ Transformation

are sacrificed.

Above all any teaching that does not equip learners to continue to teach themselves is a failure.

VII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Examinations were meant to be tools of assessment of effective teaching but unfortunately they have become an end in themselves in our part of the world. One however needs purpose linked monitoring and evaluation system in order to ensure effectiveness of teaching. This day and age various instruments exist to do that including.

- ❖ Student assessment
- ❖ Peer review
- ❖ One-to-one teacher- supervisor
- ❖ Appraisal based upon work plan

No effective teaching is complete without assessment of the degree of achievement of teaching objectives of information, inspiration and transformation

VIII. CONCLUSION

In order to improve one’s teaching one must be intentional and disciplined. Above all you need the Holy Spirit to impact spiritual truths.