

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Bible study Teachers' training Manual Part 2

CONQUERING THE BARRIERS

Communication is at the heart of everything we do about the Bible. It has to do with meanings, with understandings, with feelings, with desires, with needs, and with ideas. When teaching the Bible, many barriers can be anticipated and sometimes it is possible to remove them in advance. Some barriers are impenetrable; however here are some factors to consider in advance.

Prayer: - "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God". - Philippians 4:6. A Bible teacher who failed to pray when preparing for his lesson and again before the classes commenced is like a farmer who has got much to do in his farm, but without the necessary farm-tools. We must answer satanic attacks not with our intelligence or our feelings, but with prayer.

Personal: - Bible teaching may proceed as expected on the basis of our past experiences and present moods. It may simply confirm what we know already, verifying our beliefs or doubts, our assumptions or prejudices. We have to be watchful of this for it would certainly have tremendous effect on the students.

Talking: - A fast-paced speech full of witty colloquialisms would have forfeited the attention of a significant proportion of your students. (Avoid the use of words like 'you see; Guys; you get it etc). So it is necessary for you to develop a strategy. Speak slowly and distinctly. Adopt a calm, unhurried pace. You're there to impart understanding. Put yourself in your audience's place. Be aware that your audience consists of individuals with differing interest and attitudes and different degrees of familiarity with the Bible.

Noises: - When you're speaking, your voice should be the loudest sound in the room. If other noises compete, you'll struggle to retain the student's attention.

Physical layout: - The size and shape of the hall or room can be critical factors in the success of your teaching. If the hall is so large than the number of your students, do not allow them to move to the rear of the hall. This created a distance between you and them. A room that is too small can be as bad. When people are crowded into a small space, they feel packed in and it's hard for them to give you their full attention.

Faulty equipment: - In most cases, you're at the mercy of the public address system when it comes to conveying your words to the students. So arrive early and check it out. Take care of any problems before you begin your teaching. Talk to the people who will be operating the equipment. Make sure they understand your needs and wishes.

Visual distraction: - Maybe you think what you have to say is more interesting than anything that could possibly be going on around you. So if you have any influence over

the setting, get a room with no competing views to contend with. You may have to deal with other types of distractions.

Resistance: - This takes the form of an emotional resistance or personal belief of some individuals in the class. The best way to confront such barriers is to give other scriptures that confirm the scripture in question. But if the person involved tends to be difficult and the time is not in your favour, politely ask the person to see you after the lesson for further explanation.

Monitor your students: - When you're teaching, keep a close watch on everything your students do. Be alert for signs that you're losing their attention or that they're having trouble following you. Are the people in the back rows straining to hear you? If the students start out alert and attentive but later start to be restless and slumping in their chairs, it usually means that something is wrong. Find out why, and take care of the problem before you proceed.

Diagnose your students' response: - If you look and listen carefully, their response will tell you whether you are encountering any kind of resistance. One technique for testing the degree to which you're getting through to them is to ask a question periodically that can be answered with one word. If they shout back the answer, you know you've connected. If only a few respond, you need to find out why you're losing their concentration.

Get the students physically involved with you: - Another technique is to get your students physically involved with you. You can do this with any number of simple devices that don't require intense mental effort. Strategies that you can apply here vary according to the situation. *(You can simply involve an individual from among them and saying a word of commendation thereafter can be an effective way of catching the attention of everyone. Not by asking them to praise the Lord every second).* When you use such exercise to involve the audience, keep it simple and make it short.

Eye contact: - Establish good eye contact at the outset. Effective teachers don't speak to the audience. They speak to the individuals in the audience. Don't look at the back of the room and don't let your gaze wander vaguely over the audience. Look individuals in the eyes. Look for people who return your look with friendly, interested expressions. Maintain eye contact long enough to achieve mutual understanding, and then move on to the next person.

Lost of concentration: - If you should go blank, don't panic. It happens to everybody. The ideas and words you want are in your brain; you just need to take a moment to find them. So pause for a moment. A little silence never hurt anyone. Forget the audience, forget your anxiety, and just concentrate on remembering. Retrace your train of thought, one thought at a time. It'll come.