

“Can YOU Minister To Others?”

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Introduction:

Preparation takes more time than performance. Ask any group who have worked hard over many months to prepare for a cantata. They will tell you that countless hours were involved in rehearsal and the performance went by quickly. At times people spend many, many hours preparing for a test given in college that took only an hour to finish.

It is said that it takes up to twenty hours of preparation for a good sermon of 30 to 40 minutes. Three months of preparation takes place for a lovely church wedding and reception that may last only a few hours.

John the Baptist spent many months preaching, *“Prepare ye the way of the Lord,”* for the moment when Jesus Christ would be introduced as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Jesus Christ prepared for thirty years for a ministry of three years.

All this is evidence that you can't succeed without preparation. Excellence in performance demands extraordinary preparation, and that takes time. The successful Sunday School teacher is no exception nor anyone else who ministers spiritually to others. If one expects to do well in ministry then he will need to be well prepared.

A church tells the story of having tried many times to have a good college-age class. Many had tried, but failed. They had tried different locations for the class meeting, and many different teachers had tried but with little success. A young sailor who had just come home from the Navy asked if he could teach in the Sunday School. He was told of the class and the special problems, but he was glad to accept it for he was happy for the opportunity. Whereas the church had been able to get only five or six students in the class, he was able to get more than twenty within two months. Everyone was curious as to how he succeeded when all else had failed. The Sunday School superintendent tried to find out from him how he had succeeded, but he was very modest, and would have little to say. He just said that he was thankful that God had blessed him, and there was no doubt about that. Leaders were still interested in his manner of teaching that made such a difference in the response of the class. After patient inquiry he said *“That he spent eight hours a week preparing for his class.”* That was the decisive factor. He had a lot to offer his class because he put a lot into it.

What is it that compels a teacher to buckle down and really prepare for a Sunday School class? What factors causes a teacher to give his or her all and have that *“outstanding class?”*

I THERE MUST BE A MOVING MOTIVATION:

1. Such teachers have a strong conviction about their relationship to the Lord. This must be true for all who minister for the Lord in the local Church.

2. They have an awareness of God's presence and of their responsibility to Him.

3. Their inspiration comes from heaven and not from the earthly things about them. Paul expressed it this way when he said... *“I have come to you serving the Lord.”* *Ye know... after what manner I have been with you in all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many fears... And how I kept back nothing that was*

profitable unto you. And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.” (Acts 20:18-20)

4. A dedicated Christian ought to have this kind of motivation. The person who truly loves the Lord and knows the Lord’s purpose for his life will be highly motivated. To talk to the Lord about our ministry (as the young sailor did about his class) and about individual’s needs and then to prepare to meet those needs is what ministry is all about. The Holy Spirit’s power and ministry flowing through us are the resources that only the person who walks close to the Lord will know about.

II. THEY HAVE A DEEP CONCERN:

It is observed that teachers who do their very best because they love the Lord are also inclined to have a deep concern about teaching their students. Teachers who find it easy to prepare are those who find it natural and inspiring to think upon their students’ relationship to Christ.

1. They have a concern that goes beyond the ordinary. (Read Matt. 9:36-38)
This kind of burden for others ought to characterize the life of all who serve.

2. They look at their students as people who have unlimited potentials if God gets hold of them. (Phil. 2:13; Gal. 4:19; I Thess. 5:24)

3. They look at others through the eyes of Christ and the Word of God as they consider the need of others. They see people with an unlimited future with expectation as to what they will **become in Christ**. (I Thess. 3:8-13; II Thess. 3:3-5)

4. They feel the heart beat of others, their everyday burdens, troubles, and problems, and realize that only God can lift these burdens and turn them into blessings. (I Thess. 5:23, 24)

III. THEY BUILD GOOD RELATIONSHIPS:

Teachers who find it easier to be well prepared are those who relate well to the whole Sunday School organization. There is a sense of loyalty that grips a spiritually minded person who is in right relationship with his fellow teachers and workers. He knows if he fails he contributes to the failure of the whole group and if he succeeds, he helps the whole group.

The servant who is well prepared in whatever he does for God knows that all things come by the grace of God and he labors for the glory of God in all things.
(I Cor. 1:31)

IV. THEY HAVE A WHOLESOME ATTITUDE:

The image one has of himself has a far-reaching effect. If one thinks of himself as a useful person who is making a positive contribution to the welfare of the whole group... he will tend to want to be better prepared. If he feels rejected and unwanted he may become careless and indifferent.

The image we have of ourselves can be fashioned by the Spirit of God. A teacher, for example, who has a godly attitude must have a wholesome image of himself. This will be particularly true for the Christian who has a sense of God’s forgiveness and cleansing and is truly yielded to the will of God.

1. He will be inspired because he loves the Lord, likes people, and has a deep appreciation of who he is in Christ, and what he is doing. (Gal. 2:20)

2. That wholesome attitude comes first because of being saved. Having the Holy

Spirit within, abiding, overflowing (Jh. 7:37-39), being controlled. . . such a teacher or worker has the joy and the power of God upon his life.

Christ within made real by the Holy Spirit makes all the difference. Yet a teacher will constantly have problems (true of us all) being threatened by the cares of the world. The body works against the spirit, and the drudgery of everyday responsibilities works against the desire to do our best. If we will be nurtured, fed and built up (Acts 20:32; Col. 2:6-7) in our spiritual life and continue to feed upon the Word (Jh. 8:31) then we can be strong. The "*key that unlocks the door,*" is daily communion with Christ in His will. (Rom. 6:16). You and I become what we yield ourselves to obey. (Rom. 6:16-18)

V. THERE MUST BE SPIRITUAL DEPTH:

1. This comes from reading the Word of God for personal food, for application to our own lives, for growth, that we might be "*root and grounded,*" in the faith. (Col. 2:6-7; Jh. 8:31-32; Jh. 17:17; Jere. 15:16)

2. Meditation is an art of reflecting on what one reads. It is the spiritual process of thinking about the Scriptures as they apply to our lives, our relationships to God and to man. (Psa. 1:1-3; Josh. 1:8)

3. Complete obedience is what God requires and we are commanded to give it. (Jh. 14:21-24; 15:10-14) Christ spoke much of our obedience out of our love to Him. Paul could write... "*do as I do, follow me.*" (Phil. 4:9) He did not say this as an expression of an arrogant, self-assertive witness (or as a preacher/ teacher/ discipler/soul winner) but as one who had assurance before God that he was walking as a good example.

Conclusions:

1. There is a *price tag* to teaching, to ministry... it is preparation. This is not too high a price tag to make Christ known.

2. A spiritual Christian is one who is a master of techniques, and also he is mastered by the Holy Spirit in his own life. Methods of teaching are important, but ***it is methods of spiritual growth that we need to most.***

3. The teacher (servant) who is equipped week by week to be spiritually victorious will have won more than half the battle in preparation. The big difference in our lives comes from our attitude... our affections... our desires. (Rom. 6:16-18) Obedience from the heart is what makes a spiritual person. Such daily obedience has substance... it is obeying that form of doctrine ... the Word of God that was delivered unto us.

4. Too many Christian are trying to build a Christian life on aspiration, but it takes more than that. We become strong through the truth, and especially by obedience to that truth. The Christian is strong who spends much time reading, and meditating on the Word of God.... this brings a vibrant, winsome life.