Teaching Methods

A happy community, a happy church and a happy family are all made up of healthy people. A healthy person:

- is happier,
- can earn more,
- can produce more,
- can help others more,
- can understand God’s love better, and
- can share God’s love better.

A healthful lifestyle is the beginning of a healthy person. The fact that you are reading this book shows that you are interested in health, not only for yourself, but for others as well.

Many years ago Jesus came to this earth to save us and to show us a better way of life. He also wanted us to be healthy and happy. ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they [you] may have life, and have it abundantly.’ John 10:10

Jesus came from the purity, holiness and beauty of heaven to teach a message that was strange to His hearers. The love of God was to be shown by His being by His being a servant and caring for others, not by His becoming a king. His message of love included family and friends, but it also included neighbours, strangers, and enemies. How did this master teacher teach these strange ideas? What method did He use?

1. Lectures (sermons) - Matthew 5,6 & 7 is a great example of His using the lecture method.
3. Stories - The numerous parables in the gospels show the importance Jesus placed on this method of teaching. Everyone loves a story. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), the Lost Sheep (Matt. 18:12-14), the Talents (Matt. 25:14-29), show word pictures of Jesus’ teachings.
4. Personal interviews - The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:6-26), Nicodemus (John 3:1-21).
5. Personal association - In the daily associations of life Jesus taught His disciples and friends. One example is in the home of Martha (Luke 10:38-42).

A study of Jesus’ life shows that He:

- Taught in simple, clear language given in sympathy, tenderness and earnestness.
- Used illustrations that were appropriate and associations that were familiar.
- Was practical.
- Used repetition.
- Respected everyone.
- Worked for all classes of people.
- Presented a better way of life.

Jesus, as the Master Teacher, used a variety of teaching methods chosen for the situation and to meet the needs of His hearers. People are very different. Some learn only by reading,
others by lecture, others by illustration, while still others prefer to listen and discuss. Few are as capable as Jesus in effectively using a variety of teaching methods. The teaching method must also be chosen according to the ability and resources of the teacher. The teacher will be more successful using the methods with which he is comfortable. There are advantages and disadvantages of each method. Following are some of the advantages and disadvantages.

Lectures

Advantages
- Can be prepared word for word and read or memorized.
- May be given to large audiences.
- For the person beginning teaching, a lecture may be the easiest since it can be read.

Disadvantages:
- Without discussion, the teacher doesn’t know if audience has understood.
- No opportunity for the audience to get answers to questions.
- Teacher is seen as the giver of all knowledge, the audience gives none.
- Decisions reached individually.

Discussion

Advantages:
- Person is not embarrassed by asking questions which others may see as foolish. The person has an opportunity to ask questions.
- May discuss personal concerns.
- Teacher may see if the person understands.
- Can put teaching in individual setting.

Disadvantages
- Takes a lot of time.
- No opportunity for comparing own situation to others.

Storytelling

Stories may be part of a lecture or stories may be the total class. It is a most effective teaching method because everyone loves a story. Stories gain attention, suggest, inspire, create desire, or encourage others to change a viewpoint. Stories present a viewpoint in a non-threatening way. Stories lead to discussion and group decisions.

Storytelling is one of the most powerful teaching tools. Lectures that become boring may be made to come alive by using stories, or stories may be the primary teaching too.

In teaching a healthful lifestyle the experience of someone similar to the audience may be told. The group can discuss possible solutions to the health problems. The storyteller has the information needed to lead the group to an end which will teach the desired lesson.

Another method is to include in the story one possible solution to the problem, then lead the group in a discussion of the results of following that solution.

A very effective use of storytelling is for the leader to tell a story (including the solution to the situation), then ask for a volunteer to tell the story. This is followed by discussion and a group decision on the best solution to a common problem.
Another variation of storytelling is a short play. This may be even more effective than storytelling because the audience can actually see what is being told about by a story.

Several of the classes outlined in Part II of this manual suggest some of these teaching methods.

Spaulding and Hare in the book, *Christian Storytelling*, share some of the steps in good storytelling:

1. Have an aim, a goal, in telling the story and emphasize that aspect of the story.
2. Select your story with that aim in mind.
3. Know your story well. Outline it and analyse it in your mind. ‘Oh, I forgot to tell you that …’ ruins a story.
4. Tell the story simply. Have one plot, one hero. Come to the point. Be expressive - use your voice, eyes, lips, hands, or whole body if appropriate. Make your gestures natural.
5. Live the story and forget yourself.
6. Live the story in your imagination.
7. Make sure there is a high point or climax in the story.
8. Adapt the story to your audience.
9. Practice telling the story.
10. Tell stories often - the more you tell them the more comfortable you will be.

Puppets may be used to add interest to a story. In many cultures stories are told in song. A song sung frequently is long remembered. Have your group make up songs if they can or make up new words to already existing songs. In some cultures, people enjoy playing games and often make up of their own. This is a fun way of learning. Use games if they are a part of the culture.

Reference