

Ten Attributes Of A Great Teacher

God's way has always been a way of learning. It is a way of seeking to understand His laws and His will for our lives. In the attempt to influence others for righteousness, God commanded the communication or teaching of His word (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 31:9-11). For this purpose God has placed teachers in the New Testament church (Ephesians 4:11-12).

There are several passages that you need to carefully study concerning teachers and teaching which are of extreme importance (Hebrews 5:12; 1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2; 24-26). These passages emphasize at least two things: (1) the importance of teaching itself and (2) the need for men and women of faith and ability to become good teachers! It is with this need for good teachers in mind that I want to talk with you about the characteristics of a good teacher. I think there are at least ten attributes we can observe.

Prepared

Some teachers only prepare their Sunday classes on Saturday night. They give a cursory reading to their teacher's manual and their Bible. They think, "I have taught this lesson before. I remember it pretty well. I will just refresh my memory." Such teachers usually have poor results in their classrooms. It has been said, "By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail." It is just plain common sense that the more you perspire before your lesson, the less you perspire during your lesson. To be a great teacher, you have to spend time preparing your lesson. Begin planning as soon as you are given your teaching assignment. Always be on the lookout for illustrations and teaching aids. Give your ideas time to incubate. Then, when you present your lesson, you teach out of the overflow of knowledge on your subject. Preparation is the key to a great class. Most parents would reel in horror if their children's teachers in public school prepared as little as some the teachers to which the parents entrust spiritual training.

Enthusiastic

Consider the following two illustrations. One teacher comes in and says, "Good morning, boys and girls! Today we are going to study an exciting incident in the life of Jesus — the time He raised Lazarus from the dead! Let's read the account in John 11 ..." The other teacher comes in and says, "Everybody get quiet now. Let's see. Where did we leave off last week? Oh yes, today we study about Jesus raising a dead man. Be quiet as I read this to you ..." Which class would you rather be in? Someone once told me about

my preaching, "Jim, you either put fire in your sermons or put your sermons in the fire." I believe the same is true regarding our teaching. It is not too much for our students to ask us to put a little enthusiasm in what we do.

Personal

Great teachers get to know their students. Take time to talk with your students before and after class. Ask your students about their week, their activities, their families, etc. Great teachers let their students share personal experiences in class. Ask for examples and illustrations from your class members. Great teachers use their student's names in class. For example, a teacher might say, "Good answer, Bobby. Sue, would you read the next verse?" Great teachers share experiences from their own lives with their students. This helps the student realize that the gospel is real. A teacher might tell their students, "Let me tell about when I decided to become a Christian" or "I remember a few days ago when God answered my prayer ...". Great teachers get to know their students outside of class. Visit in your student's homes. Go to activities of which your students are a part. Plan activities for the students to do outside of class. Extra curricular events help students come to know one another and their teacher better. These activities can build friendships that last a lifetime.

Sensitive

Teachers need to be sensitive to their students' feelings. Ignoring particular students, making fun or criticizing a student for a wrong answer, getting mad in class at students ... all of these things hurt the student. Good teachers have no "teacher's pets" that they call on to the exclusion of others. They try to find the good in every comment a student makes. Great teachers are good listeners. Encourage your students to participate in class. Really listen to what your students say. If you see that someone is troubled, make a point of speaking to that student when the class is over.

Visionary

Great teachers look for the good in their students. It is easy to be critical of some students, to only see the misbehavior, the disruption, and the infrequency of attendance. But we have to look through the outer layer of our students into their hearts and souls. Remember, you have very little if any control of what goes on in the lives of your students outside the classroom. So you must use the little time that you have to do as much as you can in the lives of the people you touch in the classroom. If you focus only on the bad, you will be able to construct little good. God teachers also

see the potential for good in their class as a whole. They are constantly thinking, praying, and talking about how their class can grow.

Prompt

Good teachers will get to their rooms early enough to be set up when their pupils arrive. There need be no last minute scurrying around to move chairs and find materials. Be there to welcome your students in a relaxed manner as they arrive. When you are constantly late for teaching your own class it says volumes about your interest in the class ... and people see!

Responsible

Great teachers are responsible individuals. Contact your substitutes, or the one responsible for finding a substitute, if you cannot be in class. Prepare your lessons well. A good teacher should not have to be goaded to contact their absentees and visitors, to visit the homes of their students, or to plan special activities for their classes.

Creative

All of us have a tendency to teach in the same manner by which we were taught. If our teachers primarily lectured, we lecture. If they primarily used class discussion, we use class discussion. Great teachers are creative ... they use a variety of methods. Their thinking is not stifled by, "This is the way I was taught. If it were good enough for me (and I turned out all right) then it is good enough for my students." Great teachers look upon each class period as a piece of art. They blend truths from the scriptures, different methods of teaching, their personality, and the personalities of their students to try and create a masterpiece. Every teacher should want their students to go away saying, "Now that was a good class! It was interesting and I learned something." And it can happen when you use your ability and are creative.

Teachable

A good teacher takes advantage of every opportunity he has to learn. A good teacher is a continuous student of the Bible. A good teacher is also always on the prowl for new ideas and methods of teaching. As a teacher we need to spend time reading the Bible, religious periodicals, and good books written by sound brethren. You need to go to gospel meetings at other churches, look at their classrooms, and attend their Vacation Bible Schools. Absorb as much as you can and then use that knowledge in relating the word of God to your students. Not content with mediocrity, a good teacher

will strive for excellence in every class, no matter what age group is being taught.

Loving

Think back on the teachers who made an impact on you. What was it about them that you remember? You probably remember very little of what they specifically said, but you remember well the special interest they showed in you and the love they had for you. Great teachers love their students and their students perceive this attitude. They see God's love flowing through their teacher and this makes an impact on them ... an impact which can last eternally.

This is why it is so important to be a teacher. We do not seek to be just a teacher, but a good teacher. Our business is about molding lives. Our business is about helping people live right and go to Heaven. There is no greater or more noble task on the face of the earth. May God bless each and every teacher of His word. We need teachers. We need you to be a teacher. We need you to be interested in the teaching program of this congregation. Paul exhorted in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

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