

Reformed University Fellowship

The Learning Process

- I. People grow and mature through a process of learning.
 - A. “Learning is a divinely ordained process by which a person comes to understand and commit himself to the truth in a unique and personal way.” Paul Kooistra.
 - 1. Maturity is not *infused* by preaching, reading the Bible, the sacraments, etc.
 - 2. Maturity does not come through *special experiences* such as second blessings or reformed conferences.
 - 3. Maturity develops over *time* by a *process* of learning.
 - 4. Learning was not added as an accommodation to the fall.
 - 5. God made man so that he grows from infancy to maturity, and this involves a specific process called learning.
 - 6. Jesus matured through the learning process (Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8-9).
 - B. Elements of Learning.
 - 1. **Knowledge**: facts, information.
 - 2. **Interaction** with knowledge: discussion, thought.
 - 3. **Use** of knowledge: incorporating into life events.
 - C. Process of Learning.
 - 1. **Receiving** knowledge: lecture, reading.
 - 2. **Interacting** with knowledge: discussing, workshop, role play, worksheets, assignments.
 - 3. **Doing** something with knowledge: trying out the new knowledge in everyday life.
 - 4. Learning occurs when we interact with knowledge and join it to experience.
 - D. Goal of Learning: transformed lives.
 - 1. Not merely knowledge.
 - 2. Not merely enthusiasm.
 - 3. Not merely different behavior.
 - 4. But completely transformed lives (Romans 12:2).
 - 5. Renewing of the mind comes first.
 - 6. Moving from knowledge to assent to trust.
 - 7. A changed mind changes the will, body (behavior), emotions, and conscience.
 - 8. Interaction: changes in the will affect the behavior, emotions, and conscience – etc.
 - 9. Feedback loop: changes in will, behavior, emotions, and conscience promote further changes in knowledge and belief.
 - F. Defective Learning.
 - 1. Overemphasis on knowledge (too much teaching) creates people who know a lot of information, don’t know how it should affect their lives, and don’t use it profitably.
 - 2. Overemphasis on interaction (too much discussion) creates people who think they know something when they don’t, and are accomplishing something when they aren’t.
 - 3. Overemphasis on doing (too much application) creates people who don’t know much, and are busy doing things which may not really serve God.

- G. Spiritual growth requires learning in three spheres.
 - 1. The foundation of knowledge.
 - 2. How to have peace with God.
 - 3. How to live with God.
 - 4. These are answered by our three principles: the Bible, justification, sanctification.

- H. Essence of Teaching.
 - 1. Know the material.
 - 2. Know your students.
 - 3. Connect the students and the material in a systematic way.

- I. Elements of Teaching
 - 1. Teacher.
 - 2. Student.
 - 3. Content.
 - 4. Curriculum.
 - 5. Motivation.
 - 6. Learning Process.

- J. Effective ministry will accommodate the learning process.

II. Elements of Teaching.

A. Teacher.

- 1. The quality of a teacher is determined by his understanding of his subject and his enthusiasm for it.
 - a. Enthusiasm springs from mastery of the subject.
 - b. Mastery and enthusiasm give students confidence and eagerness for the subject.
 - c. How well do you know God? the Bible?
 - d. How excited are you about God, the gospel, the scriptures?
- 2. The quality of a teacher is determined by his understanding of his students and his love for them.
 - a. Your students are not like you – everyone is unique.
 - b. Love for students is a gift from God – pray for it!
 - c. Love for students arises from serving them – “do not grow weary in well-doing”.
 - d. Love motivates students to work hard and excel.
 - e. How well do you understand your students?
 - f. How deeply do you love them?
- 3. The quality of a teacher is determined by his ability to communicate with his students.
 - a. Preach to the milkmaid and the stable hand – Martin Luther.
 - b. Avoid professional (theological) jargon.
- 4. The teacher is also a student – a disciple.
 - a. Humility.
 - b. Teachable attitude.
 - c. Always learning.
- 5. The teacher comes with a word from scripture.
 - a. Let God speak!
 - b. Scripture will convince skeptics, silence opponents, comfort the hurting, instruct the ignorant. Can your words do all that?
- 6. The teacher comes with the expectation that God is already at work in the lives of the students.

B. Student.

1. Made in God's image.
 - a. Inherent dignity and intelligence, massive potential.
 - b. Treat with respect.
2. A fallen creature.
 - a. Prone to sin, catastrophic weaknesses.
 - b. Expect points of failure.
3. Late adolescent.
 - a. Able to act like an adult, often acts like a child.
 - b. Challenge him to think and act like an adult.
 - c. Do not be surprised or reject him when he acts like a child.
4. Enormous potential, massive obstacles.
 - a. Intelligence, energy, idealism, time, etc.
 - b. Family problems, sinful habits, peer pressure, dislocated from family and church, etc.
 - c. See notes on Presupposition: The Individual.
5. Comes with needs.
 - a. Felt needs – some real, some imaginary.
 - b. Real needs – some felt, some unfelt.
 - c. Address felt needs while meeting real needs.

C. Content.

1. Scripture.
2. Doctrine.
3. How to grow spiritually.
 - a. Scripture.
 - b. Justification.
 - c. Sanctification.
4. Direction of life.
 - a. Knowing God.
 - b. Fellowship and serving other believers.
 - c. Evangelism and serving unbelievers.
 - d. Christian worldview.

D. Curriculum.

1. This is where you put together the previous elements.
2. Combine teacher, student, and content into a specific plan.
3. What content will be taught, to whom, by whom, when, and where?
4. Teachers: campus minister, interns, "stage 5" students, other RUF ministers and interns, other pastors, etc.
5. Students: undergrads, grads, minorities, athletes, internationals, etc.
6. Content: Old Testament, gospels, epistles, doctrine, devotional, life issues, etc.
7. Avenues of ministry: large groups, small groups, one-to-ones.
8. Ideal: a four-year plan for student growth, which specifies the content of the large group meeting, Bible studies, one-to-ones, conferences, etc. (See Appendix A.)

E. Motivation.

1. The teacher must tap into the motivations for learning which may be resident in his students' hearts: love of knowledge itself, the need to solve a problem, desire for a career, pursuit of prestige.

2. "Like a skilful engineer who knows the power of his engine, he chooses to stand and watch the play of the splendid machine and marvel at the ease and vigor of it's movements. It is only the unskilled teacher who prefers to hear his own voice in endless talk rather than to watch and direct the course of the thoughts of his pupils."
3. "The explanation that settles everything and ends all questions, usually ends all thinking also."
4. Wrong motivators.
 - a. Cheap rewards.
 - b. Guilt.
 - c. Deceit.
5. Right motivators.
 - a. God's blessings.
 - b. Creating felt need from real need.
 - c. Structured training environment.
 - d. Personal involvement: the beneficiary is the only one who finds reading a will interesting.
 - e. Different people are motivated differently.
 - f. Be creative in motivating people.

F. Learning Process.

1. Learning is thinking into one's own understanding a new idea or truth or working into habit a new art or skill.
2. The Learning Process is the process in which the curriculum is worked into the lives of the students by the teachers.
3. This process takes time.
 - a. Learning is not an event, but a process.
 - b. Repetition and review is essential. Learning will fail or be shallow without repetition and review.
4. Phases of learning.
 - a. Remembering the lesson. "What does the lesson say?"
 - b. Understanding the concept of the lesson. "What is the meaning of the lesson?"
 - c. Translating the concept into his own words while preserving the meaning. "How can I express this meaning in my own language?"
 - d. Seeking the reasons behind the truth in the lesson. "Do I believe what the lesson tells me, and why?"
 - e. Understanding the use in daily life of the truth in the lesson. "What is the good of it – how may I apply and use the knowledge which it gives?"

III. Applying the Learning Process in campus ministry.

- A. The leaders (ministers, staff, interns, stage 5 students) must be working toward the qualities of an effective teacher.
- B. The leaders must understand their campus and the particular students God has brought to them.
- C. The leaders must develop a curriculum which encompasses all the content which must be taught.
- D. The leaders must seek to connect with the students in meaningful ways.
- E. The leaders must implement the curriculum over a long period of time.

IV. Implementing the Learning Process in training.

A. TDOEE summarizes the training process.

1. **Teach.**
 - a. Give knowledge of the responsibility.
 - b. E.g. how to lead a Bible study.
 - c. The trainer must know the task thoroughly.
2. **Demonstrate.**
 - a. Show the responsibility being performed satisfactorily.
 - b. E.g. lead an effective Bible study in the presence of the trainee.
 - c. The trainer must be a good model of the task.
3. **Observe.**
 - a. Watch the trainee attempt to perform the responsibility.
 - b. E.g. Have him lead a Bible study with you present.
 - c. The trainer must be able to notice strengths and weaknesses in performance.
4. **Evaluate.**
 - a. Criticize his performance.
 - b. Give both positive and negative comments.
 - c. Tell him how to build on his strengths and correct his weaknesses.
5. **Encourage.**
 - a. Cultivate the conviction that success is possible and progress is occurring.

B. TDOEE assumes a context in which the trainer and trainee are involved in *doing* ministry *together*.

1. Teaching is not training. Teaching is only one part of training. Lecturing to your core group is not training, and will not develop leaders.
2. Training must intentionally make use of all aspects of ministry. E.g. there must be opportunities for students to watch you minister, and for you to watch them minister.
3. Training takes time. It is a process – a specific type of learning process – not an event.
4. The Ministry Team (Core Group) is the primary arena for developing leaders – as long as you do not use Core Group to lecture on the Philosophy of Ministry, etc.
5. RUF has overemphasized teaching and neglected DOEE.

Appendix A: Sample Curriculum

Curriculum for Lehigh University 2006							
	LGM	Fall Conf.	Jan. Conf.	Bible St.	Men S.G.	CM 1-1	BSL 1-1
OT				Jonah, Ruth			
Gospels	Mt. 5-7;						
Epistles	Romans		Acts	Philippians			
Doctrine		Mission	Evangelism				
Devotion						Prayer, B.S., Church;	Prayer, B.S.
Issues		Missions	Evangelism		Sex, Dating, Masculinity	Relationship	

Appendix B: Principles of Teaching

- I. Expectation.
 - A. Expect the best.
 - B. “‘What is honored in a country is cultivated there.’ [Plato] So what do you honor in those you teach?”
- II. Tension.
 - A. “Tension is absolutely indispensable to the process...too little tension produces apathy.”
 - B. “Do you keep the people in your class feeling comfortable? Or do you let their equilibrium be disturbed so they realize *I’ve got to study God’s word more, and think more; I’ve got to try this out in real life?*”
 - C. “Studies have shown...that there’s a direct correlation between *predictability* and *impact*. The higher your predictability, the lower your impact.”
 - D. “It’s like what the bishop from England said, ‘You know, wherever the apostle Paul went, they had a riot or a revival. Wherever I go, they serve tea.’”
- III. Goals.
 - A. Have clear cut objectives for your teaching.
 - B. Teach people how to think.
 - C. Teach people how to learn.
 - D. Teach people how to work.
- IV. Failure: “Failure is a necessary part of the learning process.”
- V. Communication.
 - A. The language used as a medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.
 - B. “Use the simplest and fewest words that will express your meaning.”
 - C. “Use short sentences, of the simplest construction.”
 - D. “Help the meaning of the words by illustrations....Take illustrations from the children’s own experiences whenever possible.”
 - E. The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in the terms of truth already known by the learner – the unknown must be explained by means of the known.
 - F. “The act of knowing is in part an act of comparing and judging – of finding something in past experience that will explain and make meaningful the new experience.”
 - G. “Find out what your pupils know of the subject you wish to teach to them; this is your starting point.”
 - H. “Relate every lesson as much as possible to former lessons...”
- VI. Activity.
 - A. “If teaching were only telling, my children would be incredibly brilliant; I’ve told them everything they need to know.”
 - B. “...maximum learning is always the result of maximum involvement....with one condition: the activity...must be meaningful.”
 - 1. Activity that provides direction without dictatorship.
 - 2. Activity that stresses function and application.
 - 3. Activity with a planned purpose....You achieve that for which you aim.
 - 4. Activity that is concerned with the process as well as the product – so students not only know WHAT they believe, but WHY.
 - 5. Realistic activity that includes problem-solving situations.

- C. Structured training environment.
 - 1. Telling.
 - 2. Showing.
 - 3. Doing – controlled environment.
 - 4. Doing – real life situations.
 - a. “I’ve never heard of a correspondence course in swimming....You’ve got to get wet.”
 - b. Trial lawyer professor: “I’d rather have my students lose in here and win out there than to win in here and lose out there.”
 - 5. Accountability.

VII. Engagement.

- A. Teaching is arousing and using the pupil’s mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art.
- B. “...knowledge cannot be passed from mind to mind like objects from one receptacle to another, but must in every case be recognized and rethought and relived by the receiving mind....If the pupil himself does not think, there are no results from thinking...”
- C. “Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing he can learn by himself.”
- D. “That teacher is a sympathizing guide whose knowledge of the subjects to be studied enables him properly to direct the efforts of the pupil, to save him from a waste of time and strength, from needless difficulties. But no aid of school or teacher can change the operations of the mind, or take from the pupil his need of knowing for himself.”
- E. “The pupil who is taught without doing any study for himself will be like the one who is fed without being given any exercise: he will lose both his appetite and his strength.
- F. Teaching: causing people to learn.
- G. Learning: change; in thinking, feeling, behavior. Rom. 8:29; 12:2.
- H. Having impact.
 - 1. Know your students.
 - 2. Establish a trust relationship.
- I. “All communication has three essential components: intellect, emotion, and volition – in other words, *thought*, *feeling*, and *action*. So whatever it is I want to communicate to another individual, it involves...something I know, something I feel, and something I’m doing. If I know something thoroughly, feel it deeply, and am doing it consistently, I have great potential for being an excellent communicator.”
- J. “Do people ever walk away from your teaching so thirsty they can hardly wait to drink in God’s word for themselves?”
- K. “The next step: I take that concept-feeling-action and translate it into *words*.”
- L. “Let’s review the process: We take concepts and feelings and actions, translate them into words, then communicate them through speech – which requires two things: *preparation* and *presentation*.”
- M. Deut. 6:4-6. “To the Hebrews, *heart* embraced the totality of human personality – one’s intellect, one’s emotions, one’s will.”
- N. “Socrates summarized the essence of communication with three fascinating concepts that he called *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. *Ethos* embraced character. *Pathos* embraced compassion. *Logos* embraced content.”
 - 1. *Ethos*: establishing the credibility of the teacher – people must trust you.
 - 2. *Pathos*: arousing the passions of your hearers.
 - 3. *Logos*: marshaling evidence, providing reasons.

- O. Encourage participation.
 - 1. Wait out the silence after you pose a question.
 - 2. Respond seriously to all questions.
 - 3. Respond with enthusiasm to all contributions.
 - 4. Show people how to find answers.
- P. Admit it if you don't know an answer.
- Q. Encourage note-taking.
- R. Eliminate distractions.
- S. "The mind attends to that which makes a powerful appeal to the senses."
- T. "Resort to artificial stimuli only as a last means to gain attention."
- U. Get feedback.

VIII. Readiness.

- A. "The teaching process will be most effective when both student and teacher are adequately prepared."
- B. Value of assignments.
 - 1. Precipitate thinking – "They preheat the mind so it's working before class time begins.
 - 2. Provide background – questions surface, curiosity rises.
 - 3. Develop habits of independent study.
- C. Characteristics of good assignments.
 - 1. Creative, not busy work – have a clear objective.
 - 2. Thought-provoking – raise more questions than answers.
 - 3. Doable – not an unrealistic load.

IX. Review.

- A. The test and proof of teaching done – the finishing and fastening process – must be a reviewing, rethinking, reknowing, reproducing, and applying of the material that has been taught, the knowledge and ideals and arts that have been communicated.
- B. Goals of review.
 - 1. Perfect knowledge.
 - 2. Confirm knowledge.
 - 3. Render knowledge ready and useful.
- C. "One must return again and again to a lesson if he would see all there is in it, and come to a true and vivid understanding of its meaning."
- D. The power of repetition: the three questions Jesus asked Peter at the end of John's gospel.
- E. "The repetitions of a review are not made the same hour....The lapse of time changes the point of view."
- F. "The lesson that is studied but once is likely learned only to be forgotten. That which is thoroughly and frequently reviewed is woven into the very fabric of our thoughts, and becomes a part of our equipment of knowledge."
- G. "The plastic power of truth in shaping conduct and molding character belongs only to the truths which have become familiar by repetitions."
- H. "Not to review is to leave the work half done....no successful teaching was ever done in which the review in some form...did not take place..."
- I. Begin and end each lesson with a review of recently covered material.
- J. Use written assignments to embed the material in the mind.

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