

Evaluate Yourself & Become a Better Teacher

Topic: Helping teachers improve by learning to evaluate themselves

By Lorella Rouster

Mary slumped in her chair as she faced her pastor. “How I hate these evaluations!” she thought.

“I can see you’ve put time into your lesson preparation,” the pastoral evaluation wasn’t bad . . .

“In general, I’m pleased with your teaching,” the pastor continued. “However, you still have a few weaknesses. The thing that bothers me most is that many of our teachers seem to exhibit the same weaknesses week after week.”

Mary sighed. “I really want to be a better teacher. But improvement is a big job. I hardly know where to begin.”

I Work at Improving

As a Sunday school teacher who wants to be better, I have discovered one way to correct my weaknesses and capitalize on my strengths. I’m still not all I want to be as a teacher, but I have found that regular improvement is possible. Each week I work toward improvement with a self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation is based on the principle Paul lays down in 1 Corinthians 11:32 that if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

This is how I do it – as soon after class as possible, preferably on Sunday afternoon when the lesson is still fresh in mind, I evaluate my own teaching on a 3 x 5 card. This card becomes a part of my permanent lesson files so that if I should teach the same or a similar lesson again I can immediately recall the results. I note when and where I taught the lesson, the age level and number of pupils present at the top of the card. Then I record the name of the lesson and the scripture portion so I will recall the precise lesson.

In a Word . . .Next, I ask myself for an honest overall reaction to my own teaching and express it in one word. Was I lousy? Weak? Fair? Good? Strong? No one else sees the evaluation, so I can afford to be totally honest. Sometimes the best I can give myself is a “weak” or “fair” several weeks in a row! Then I am prodded to examine my teaching – and my life!

I divide the card with a line. On the left, I write weaknesses” and on the right,”how to correct.” Then I take a closer look at the lesson. If it was lousy, why? Was I poorly prepared? Upset? Did I have sin in my own life? Forget my notes? Use too much

lecture? Get the flannelgraph figures mixed up? Plan my time poorly? Was my lesson aim made clear? Did I choose a good carryover activity? Did I make the invitation for salvation clear? Did I show interest in my class?

The Reckoning

When I feel I have pinpointed all the weaknesses of the lesson, I go over to the “how to correct” column. Knowing what I did wrong is of little value unless I can come up with some concrete ideas for correcting and profiting from my mistakes.

On one evaluation I decided that my visual aids were too cluttered and not well planned. I decided to plan them in detail on paper for the next week and to make a large pocket chart on the wall to hold them as I gave the lesson. Also, I located an eraser and kept it handy. After that my visual presentations went much more smoothly.

In another evaluation I recalled that my notes in my Bible notes were so cluttered that I lost my place and had difficulty getting them out of the way to read short Bible portions. I decided that I could greatly reduce my notes if I prepared more thoroughly and practiced the lesson once ahead of time. This proved so helpful that I have made “Maximum study – Minimum notes” a cardinal rule ever since. Also, I now clip a 3 x 5 card of notes to my Bible with a paper clip. No more flying notes!

Now...How About My Pupils?

The final notes I make deal with pupil response. When I first started using this system I had 4 students. It was easy to evaluate their responses and changes. Now I have up to 40 students and it is difficult to evaluate each response -- nervousness, possible conviction of sin, decisions, commitments, questions, good verbal responses, or a puzzled look betraying an obvious lack of understanding. This helps me know my pupils better and to evaluate how much of my teaching is being translated into action in their lives.

I'm sure the teacher who will honestly evaluate his or her own teaching will find plenty of room for improvement. No matter how many years one teaches, improvement is always possible. Are you willing to evaluate yourself so that you can become a better teacher?