

## 4.2 How can we adapt Bible teaching to different learning styles?

### Why don't all children of the same age level learn alike?

God designed people to be alike, and yet to be different in many ways. There is an immense variety built into most of God's creation. Just as scientists seek to understand the many varieties of form and function in the material universe, so educational specialists seek to understand the many ways in which people learn. Many believe there is not just one thing known as intelligence, but actually many kinds or forms of human intelligence. This is sometimes called the theory of Multiple Intelligence. Based on our observations and experience, we believe there is a lot of truth in this idea. Some of the kinds of intelligence that have been recognized by educators are (in no particular order, certainly not in order of importance):

- **Visual or Spatial Intelligence**

Individuals in whom this intelligence is dominant have ability to perceive and understand visual images. They tend to think in pictures, and often create images, sketches or diagrams in an effort to understand and remember information. They respond well to visuals like maps, charts, pictures, videos, and diagrams.

- **Verbal or Linguistic Intelligence**

Individuals in whom this intelligence is dominant have outstanding ability to use and understand words and language. Often their auditory skills are highly developed. They can be great speakers and writers. They enjoy reading, and they notice nuances about how words are used. They think in words rather than in pictures.

- **Logical or Mathematical Intelligence**

When this intelligence is dominant, people show an outstanding ability to use reason, logic, and numbers. They notice patterns and make logical connections between pieces of information. They are curious, like to learn about the world around them, ask lots of questions, and like to do experiments to test ideas and find out new things.

- **Bodily or Kinesthetic Intelligence**

People having this kind of intelligence show remarkable ability to control body movements, handle objects skillfully, express themselves through movement. Their sense of balance and of eye to hand coordination is highly developed. They remember and process information by building or making things or doing activities.

- **Musical or Rhythmic Intelligence**

This intelligence involves the ability to appreciate, understand, and produce music. Musically inclined learners think in sounds, rhythms and patterns. They are very responsive to music, although not always in a positive way, and can be very sensitive to environmental and other sounds around them.

- **Interpersonal Intelligence**

This is the ability to understand and relate well to others. Interpersonal learners tend to see things easily from the viewpoint of other people. They easily sense the feelings, intentions, moods, and motivations of others. They can be great organizers of people, although unless tempered by God's Spirit, they can tend

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toward manipulation. In groups they tend to be peacemakers, and compromisers, encouraging group cooperation.

• **Intrapersonal Intelligence**

This is the ability to reflect on one’s own motivations, feelings and state of mind. Intrapersonal learners are concerned with understanding their inner feelings, dreams, relationships with others, strengths and weaknesses. They are able to reason well and often do research or become involved in developing and evaluating theories and philosophies.

**Intelligences overlap**

People usually have more than one intelligence, but one or two tend to be dominant. People learn best and are happiest and most fulfilled when using their dominant intelligences. On the other hand, some people may be very low in at least one intelligence. When they are forced to try to learn only in their weak intelligence, they experience great difficulty.

**LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

**Think about it**

What application does this have to learning and teaching? What do you think?

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What intelligence is addressed in most of the teaching in your culture? How do you know?

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What would happen to a student in your class if you taught only to one intelligence, yet the student was very low in that area of intelligence?

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How could you use this knowledge in your teaching?

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**Learning Styles**

Based on these observations, many educators have identified corresponding learning styles.

**Visual learners.....learn through seeing.**

**Auditory learners.....learn through listening.**

**Tactile/Kinesthetic learners.....learn through moving, doing, touching.**

**Musical learners.....learn through singing or music.**

To connect with every student in the fullest possible way, the teacher needs to plan for activities that touch many different kinds of intelligence and appeal to many different kinds of learners.

**LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**



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Think about a common Bible story. Plan at least one activity related to the lesson to appeal to each of the different learning styles.

##### **Visual learners**

##### **Auditory learners**

##### **Kinesthetic learners**

##### **Musical learners**

##### **A problem area**

One of the problem areas concerns tactile or kinesthetic learners. If a teacher just talks and requires students to sit still and listen, what happens to the kinesthetic learner?

First, he cannot learn, because he is not oriented to verbal presentation, and no other option is being offered. It is equivalent to insisting that a child read in Chinese when he understands only Twi.

Second, he is going to be in trouble all the time, because kinesthetic learners find it nearly impossible to sit still for long. God has created them with a need and desire to move, to explore. Trying to thwart that is like insisting that an adult walk on his head or eat through his foot. He can't, not because he is evil, but because he was not designed that way. Kinesthetic learners in a "fold your hands in your lap, shut up and sit still" class get frustrated and usually end up being behavior problems.

##### **The solution to the problem**

The problem can be easily solved by planning in the class time opportunities to learn by doing and making things, acting, and active doing.