

Introduction to the Bible Class Teachers' Notes

The class notes that appear on this Internet site were prepared for the Wednesday night teenage class of the Crystal Lake, Illinois, Church of Christ. I taught that class for 28 of the 30 years that I was the preacher at Crystal Lake. I am now retired from that position, but continue to teach the class today.

The notes are based on what is called the Socratic Method of Teaching, which has several principles for the teacher to keep in mind:

1. Students learn best when they are involved in the class, not just being lectured to. Therefore, every attempt has been made to ask at least one question on every verse. On some verses that might not be possible, but on most passages it works well. The teacher can also involve the students by asking them to read the passages under discussion and by letting the male members of the class lead the prayers.
2. Most of these questions do not have a yes-no answer, but are asked to get the students to think about the subject being discussed. When the thinking process of the class members is stimulated and prodded, the students begin to learn.
3. The teacher should not answer his own questions. It is very tempting for a Bible class teacher to ask a question and then answer it if there is not a response from the class in the first 5 seconds. This destroys the method used in this kind of teaching. If the teacher gives the class time, maybe a minute or two, someone will eventually answer. From that point, others will answer, and the learning process will continue. Yes, it is hard to keep from speaking when there is total silence in the class. Most of us have grown up with constant noise around us, from the TV to the radio to cell phones and audio players and traffic noise and jet engines, but silence gives the students time to consider the question. If no one answers after a reasonable period of time, then the teacher should state the question in different words to make it easier to answer.

Our Lord frequently used thought-provoking questions to get his listeners to think deeply. In preparation for telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan, he responded to the lawyer with a thought question:

And a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And he said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" (Luke 10.25-26).

At the end of the parable, the Lord ended with another spectacular question:

"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" (Luke 10.36).

The Lord then waited until the lawyer answered the question.

The person who taught me the Socratic Method of Teaching was brother Thomas C. Whitfield. My wife and I graduated from David Lipscomb University in 1966 with teaching certificates. We had many courses under Dr. Whitfield and grew to respect his soft-spoken voice and the sermons he delivered as the minister for the Central Church of Christ in Nashville. He was the chairman of the Education Department and led the Teacher Education Program at Lipscomb to national fame. He was instrumental in gaining the program's first accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. At one point in brother Whitfield's work at Lipscomb, 40% of the students were enrolled in Teacher Education. His influence continues today around the world.

He was a true friend of students who were planning to become teachers, and the Whitfield Future Teacher Award is dedicated to his memory. His gentleness and faithfulness to Christ came from being a disciple of the Master Teacher.

I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to our church secretary Joanie De Vera, who took my handwritten and poorly typed notes and converted them into the digital format. Joanie is walking in the footsteps of Phoebe, about whom Paul said, *"She herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well"* (Romans 16.2).

My prayers will be with you as you use these notes for the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Raymond T. Exum, Crystal Lake, Illinois, October 5, 2013



Thomas C. Whitfield
(1913-1997)
Preacher, teacher, friend

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