

the reception of truth, but gifts teachers to relate that truth in a digestible form.

The focus of the gift of teaching generally impacts the learners more than the teacher. Paul indicates that the goal of teaching God's Word is to impact dramatically the maturity of believers (Col. 1:28). Paul uses descriptions of this process, such as conformity to the image of Christ and attaining to the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). While the gift of teaching may be expressed in a variety of settings, this critical function in the church requires tangible expressions of love if it is to be credible and effective (1 Cor. 12:1-3). The function of this gift is often seen in conjunction with the character qualities of spiritual leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-13). The emphasis of New Testament writers is always on the function of the gift of teaching. The idea of this gift focusing on the creation of an official office for a person is nowhere emphasized in the New Testament. The biblical emphasis is on people gifted to function in a strategic role of spearheading a strategic plan to bring to maturity a specific group of believers.

While teaching in the church does go on and must continue in a variety of situations, does everyone who is involved in the teaching ministry of the church have the gift of teaching? There is no doubt a linkage exists between natural propensities and spiritual gifting (including teaching) that is keyed to establishing the local church and maintaining its ongoing growth. Whether a ministry of teaching actually is a "gifted" ministry really finds its root in prayer, which is indicative of obedient reliance on the Spirit as the source for this ministry. There must also be concerted effort in study, developed from an ever-growing desire for in-depth study of God's Word. Motivation to be committed to the ongoing development of a teaching ministry is confirmed by ability and accompanied by blessing. As with all spiritual giftings, ongoing training and use of the gift is a reasonable response of human obedience to God's sovereign gifting. In addition, there must be cooperation with basic principles of learning and the developmental realities that can maximize the impact of the gift of teaching that the Holy Spirit has bestowed. Having the spiritual gift of teaching the Word of God need not be limited solely to the teaching of adults. The Holy Spirit is fully capable of gifting teachers for all age-level ministries in keeping with the function delineated in Ephesians 4:11-13. It is best to assume that the gift is not restricted to any one age level but rather refers to the process of instruction than the audience of it.

One of the most poignant personal examples in the New Testament of the importance of the gift and ministry of teaching is Paul's relationship with Timothy. False teachers are the scourge of this period and yet Paul wants to see truth passed

on to future generations. The negative impact of these false teachers, if not countered with the Spirit-gifted teachers, is described in 1 Timothy 4:1. Paul believes the key is solid teaching to faithful believers who will in turn teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul challenges Timothy to stir up the teaching gift God has sovereignly bestowed him with so as to counteract the negative impact of these false teachers. In 2 Timothy 1:13-14 Paul even goes so far as to link the sacred trust of the gospel with a protective stance that is to be demonstrated by an ongoing establishing of believers through the Spirit-empowered teaching ministry of the church. Paul also suggests that the gift can/should be fanned into flame when it is exercised or used. Contemporary expression of "fanning the flame" would include teaching others, observing other effective teachers, regular training on better principles, and having other teachers make helpful evaluations on your teaching.

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See also HOLY SPIRIT; SPIRITUAL GIFTS; TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

**Teaching Environment.** See Classroom Setting.

**Teaching-Learning Process.** Intentional, dynamic encounter between teachers and students, consisting of complex, multidimensional interactions, primarily to promote progress toward wholeness and maturity, often taking place within a group setting. Although God's nature and attributes are unchanging, humans come into this life as immature creatures who have been designed to change through supernatural transformation, human development, and human learning—and in this final aspect we have the most participation and influence. Essential to entering fully into the promise of abundant living is God's grace and our effort to learn. "Grace . . . is opposed to *earning*, not to *effort*" (Willard, 1997, 12). So we must learn to become wise, loving, forgiving, just, industrious, and skillful. Learning is necessary for human flourishing.

Although learning regularly takes place without any purposeful instruction—and at times without any awareness (e.g., acquiring our mother language as a child)—this article focuses on learning associated with teaching, distinctively, Christian teaching and learning.

**Relationship Between Teaching and Learning.** The relationship between teaching and learning is a complicated one. How one views this relation-

ship has implications for educational research programs as well as teacher planning, since it delimits the role of the learner in the T-L process. Should it be comparable to coaching athletes, or machining a tool on a lathe? Is the relationship directly causal—so that a specific method always yields a specific result? Such a causal model is appropriate to the natural sciences investigating solely physical entities—of bombarding atoms and chemical reactions—but people are more than material objects. At the heart of the T-L process is a relationship among willing persons with a common purpose, that is, a *relationship of consensus*—a relationship among causal agents—implying some expression of free will.

As with any relationship involving persons, no specific action by one person (“teaching”) can automatically guarantee a predetermined response by another person (“learning”). Each student is ultimately responsible for his or her own learning (Gowin, 1981). This explains why learning can occur without teaching (students learn on their own) and teaching can take place without learning (Mark 8:14–21).

Teachers intend to promote learning in students, and are often effective. Dewey (1933) suggested an analogy from retail sales. “There is the same exact equation between teaching and learning that there is between selling and buying” (36). Teachers engage in plans and activities to offer students opportunities for learning. Students expend their effort to learn, under the care of teachers, with the prospect of becoming, in some way, better persons. Although some learning may occur without willing students, human learning thrives best where human dignity and freedom are respected.

Yet, despite no direct causal relationship, teachers are not without any idea of how best to facilitate learning. Knowledge gleaned from research and reflective experience enables teachers to plan for instruction that will *likely* or *probably* facilitate student learning, given students who are willing and able (Shuell, 1996, Table 22–6). Teachers are accountable for faithfully carrying through with good intentions in their teaching, and for some measure of positive results in students. If a good number of students aren’t “buying,” we wonder if any legitimate “selling” is going on.

**Is There Christian T-L Process?** What is distinctive about the T-L process that is uniquely Christian? In many ways, as Lee (1996/1982) argues, teaching and learning about religious content within a religious setting is similar to teaching and learning about anything in any other place. To do it well, we must attend to the study and practice of these normal processes that are similar for believer and unbeliever alike. What offers the potential for a distinctively “Christian” T-L process is primarily the dynamic participation of a supernatural Being. When teachers and

learners are genuinely walking with the Spirit of God, the divine, transforming power that becomes available goes well beyond normal human capacities (Gal. 3:3; Eph. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:29). Even studying the Word of God by itself cannot guarantee any *unique* effects—nonbelievers can make sense of much of the Bible—unless learners listen to the Spirit, who makes the Bible’s words on a page become living and active in their hearts and minds (1 Cor. 2:10–16; Heb. 4:12). When participants are *filled*—not just indwelt—by the Spirit and are sustaining a dynamic supernatural relationship, then a distinctively Christian teaching and learning experience can unfold. In addition, the T-L process is carried out under the authority of God (Pazmino, 1994), and with God’s commitment to supervise the process (Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 10:13), and ultimately to see the process to completion (Phil. 1:6; Eph. 4:11–16).

**Goals of the T-L Process.** Beyond its intrinsic worth, the T-L encounter has instrumental value. Each encounter has an end: the promotion of student learning. Ultimately, the task of Christian education revolves around sustaining believers’ efforts, individually and corporately, to seek, love, and enjoy God with all of their being (Matt. 11:28–30; 22:37–38; 28:19–20; John 17:3) and to love others as themselves (Matt. 22:39–40). Maturity must lead to living abundantly. A car, computer, chair, or shopping mall fulfills its primary design when it functions properly. So, we fulfill God’s purpose for us when we relate well with God and others, when we think and feel our faith deeply, when we engage in life’s opportunities in a godly manner. As our Lord proclaimed, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10 NRSV). The more we progress in maturity, the more we are able to experience abundant living.

**Components of the T-L Process.** Any T-L case or episode incorporates at least seven commonplaces: teacher, learner, subject matter, milieu or circumstances, purposes, activity, and result (Dillon, 1988). This framework can be used to analyze and diagnose what is happening. For example, consider a brief episode from Mark 13:1–4. The teacher is Jesus and his disciples are the learners. A few moments before, Jesus is sitting opposite the treasury in the temple area [circumstances], observing the donations offered by the multitudes. He makes a comment about the poor widow’s sacrificial gift [activity], but no response is recorded for the disciples [results]. As the group leaves the temple area [circumstance], a disciple [learner] makes a statement to Jesus, praising the temple buildings themselves [subject matter]. In response, Jesus [teacher] announces provocatively that these buildings will all be destroyed [subject matter, activity]. No immediate comment is forthcoming from the disciples [results], but later, as they sit on the Mount of

Olives, opposite the temple, four disciples begin questioning Jesus “privately,” wondering when this destruction will take place [result]. Jesus answers their inquiry [activity] as recorded in the rest of the chapter. Since we don’t have Jesus’ lesson plans, we can only infer what his purposes might have been that prompted such a provocative statement (v. 2), but the results imply his desire to teach about particulars of the future [subject matter].

Further questions can be asked about each commonplace as the analysis goes deeper into this T-L encounter. For instance, assuming all twelve disciples were with Jesus, note that only Peter, James, John, and Andrew pursued this private teaching session with Jesus. This initial review illustrates what kind of a tool the seven components can be for evaluating past T-L experiences or for planning future teaching opportunities (Habermas and Issler, 1992, chaps. 9–10).

**Improving Practice.** As mentioned, learners have a responsibility for their own learning. Since we have been created to learn, adopting a lifelong learning commitment and practice is fitting. As learners, we must become aware of conditions and channels that foster learning. These include association (operant and classical conditioning), example (observational learning), the cognitive channels that promote problem solving, and meaningful presentations (Issler and Habermas, 1994). Learners also develop preferences for learning and can gain insight from the various learning style theories that abound.

Teachers can support students in their learning quest by using teaching methods that promote learning and student motivation to learn. Methods may vary according to teaching purposes, learner need, interest, motivation, developmental level, and givens of the circumstance. Jesus’ challenge in Luke 6:40—that a student becomes like the teacher—moves us beyond an exclusive emphasis on effective methods of teaching and learning to a focus also on the person and character of the teacher. Since loving God and others is central to our teaching purposes, teachers must embody a loving manner. Thus teachers must also pursue “virtuous” teaching—acquiring the habits, the virtues of the excellent teacher (Issler, 1996). The high calling and accountability for Christian teaching demands this pursuit of excellence (James 3:1).

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**Teaching Methods.** See Bible Study Methods.

**Teaching Plan.** See Curriculum; Lesson Plan.

**Teaching Scripture to Children.** God commanded that his Word be taught to children. Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (NASB) states, “And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” According to these verses, teaching was to be done by talking to children, by relating the truths to the activities of life, and also through using visual symbols. The use of the senses of hearing, moving, and seeing in this way is educationally referred to as using learning modalities. Children who learn best by hearing are referred to as *auditory learners*. Those who learn best through seeing are called *visual learners*. Children who prefer to move around are referred to as *tactile/kinesthetic learners* (tactile for the sense of touch and kinesthetic for need for large body movements). God intended that children be taught through all learning modalities.

All young children are tactile/kinesthetic learners. They learn best by moving and touching. Scripture is taught effectively to them by the use of active methods (interactive Bible stories, play acting, crafts, action songs, etc.). Some early elementary age children switch to a visual learning preference. These children learn best when they can see biblical truth illustrated (pictures, flannelgraph, videos, drama, objects, etc.). At about ages 10 to 12 some children’s learning preferences switch to audio methods. They learn best by hearing biblical truths explained. Girls tend to prefer audio methods, while boys often prefer tactile/kinesthetic methods. Research varies on the percentage of children who prefer each learning modality. Teachers who use teaching methods in all learning modalities will be the most effective in teaching Scripture to a group of children.

# EVANGELICAL DICTIONARY *of* CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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