

Teaching Tip of the Month Archives

September 2015:

In a lesson, provide a moderate level of content. Don't throw in everything; be selective about what you will cover.

October 2015:

"You are more than a dispenser of information. In your role as group leader, you cooperate with God in the formation of faith and in the transformation of lives. You are the lead learner, modeling a way that faith seeks understanding. You are not trying to cover a lesson, but to uncover truth."

-Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding

November 2015:

Quaker author, educator, and speaker Parker Palmer writes, "*good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher*. In every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood—and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning."

As you prepare for teaching or leading a class at FPC, spend some time noticing how the material you're presenting connects with your life. The time you spend making these connections will help you help the class make those connections in their own lives as well.

December 2015:

Norma Everist, author of *The Church as Learning Community* wrote "sending each other forth is part of the lesson plan. Nourished on the Word, people are strengthened not only for service but to interpret the worlds to which they return. The curriculum lasts all week. Their places of mission begin next week's lessons. Teaching and learning in the parish learning community is cyclical and all-encompassing."

Reflect on these questions:

- How is the Holy Spirit empowering people for mission in the classes that you are leading?
- In your context, how many people have a concept that the learning and the mission that they engage in daily life are connected? What are the barriers to all adults welcoming ongoing learning? What are the barriers to children and youth seeing themselves as fully engaged in the work of mission and ministry?
- How might you more directly and specifically prepare participants to be the church at work in the world?

January 2016

John Medina, author of the book Brain Rules lists 12 Rules we need to keep in mind as we teach and learn. One that ties directly to the work we do in the classroom is: "Vision trumps all other senses." While smell, touch, taste, and hearing play a key role in class members learning, what they see has a tremendous impact.

So...print out your quote, project artwork, write out your questions on the board, show a video clip, use maps to locate cities/countries, have class members act out a scene or scenario, bring in an actual sample of subject (ex: mustard seed)...and have fun!

February 2016

Part of what made Jesus' message so compelling was that he used everyday objects and examples in his teachings. Water, bread, a mustard seed, sheep, a gate - Jesus made connections between what he was teaching and the things that were most familiar in people's lives.

Sometimes, we're tempted to make things more complicated than they are. The next time you feel stuck trying to figure out how to teach a concept, consider whether you can offer a simple, everyday example as an illustration.

March 2016

"The work of "learning" is to make MEANING of our experiences. And guess how that happens? Through thinking, dialogue, talking it out, and theological reflection. The pedagogical formula is: Experience (or Concepts) + Dialogue = Meaning.

Given how many teachers misapply "experiential learning" it may matter very little that someone is participating in a kinesthetic, "creative" experience if we do not follow through on the process by helping them make theological meaning of the experience through reflection and dialogical learning. Any experiential learning activity disconnected from the learning outcome intended can be just as ineffective and detrimental to the learning process as any boring lecture." Israel Galindo

April 2016

Eight Qualities of an Effective Learning Experience

1. A moderate level of content.
2. A balance between affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning.
3. A variety of learning approaches.
4. Opportunities for group participation
5. Encouraging participants to share their expertise.
6. Recycling concepts and skills learned earlier.
7. Advocating real-life problem solving.
8. Allowing time for re-entry.

<http://www.ctsnet.edu/columbia-connections/2014/12/22/eight-qualities-of-an-effective-learning-experience/>

June 2016

“Our heritage of witnessing as storytellers, faith-sharers, and God-sharers goes back for centuries and centuries. Think about the persons who went before us as witnesses to the story, a part of our heritage.” (Delia Halverson, *32 Ways to Become a Great Sunday School Teacher*, p. 56)

As teachers we sometimes get into patterns and forget to think about how we approach our classes. In telling and re-telling the biblical story we are people who testify to the truth, power, and inspiration of the scriptures. Take a moment to think about someone who helped shape your understanding of scripture. What were 2-3 key traits of their teaching? Was one of them central to your grasping the Word of God? Pause for a moment of prayer thanking God for that person and the effect of their witness. Ask for such a quality that your sharing would be strengthened.