

Teachers are a Living Curriculum

by Carol Boyd

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Jesus is our example of a Master Teacher. He lived out God's "curriculum," His blueprint for relationship with mankind. He walked in humility, yet with unmistakable authority. He wept over Jerusalem. He healed the sick, profaned man's religious traditions, spoke in culturally appropriate parables, fed crowds of people, and communed with His Father without ceasing. He was a Living Curriculum. How he lived and related with others provided meaningful learning experiences and an example for those who observed and followed.

What actually *is* Living Curriculum? First, it is *not* merely the printed page or a set of how-to's. It is not a list of instructions written down and then "parroted" word for word. Nor is it total reliance on those special moments of inspiration that come to a teacher. Rather, Living Curriculum is instruction that comes from thoughtfully receiving and applying biblical truth to one's own life *first*, before passing it on to children. It is instruction born out of prayer and intercession, when God has daily opportunity to tailor our prepared lessons to suit the particular children in our care.

May I speak from personal experience? In the process of preparing lessons on a biblical principle, God very faithfully prepares *me*. If I am preparing a lesson regarding obedience, I will undoubtedly be faced with an issue of obedience to the Lord in my own life. I need to respond to what God is speaking to me before I can expect to impact children with how they are to obey God our Father. Then while preparing my lesson, I can confidently ask the Lord how to present and apply the topic of obedience in an appropriate way for my specific children.

Sometimes the whole staff of a school will go through "God's training process." I heard about a group of teachers preparing to teach a unit on facing temptation. Each one of them struggled with irritations, frustrations, and relationship difficulties for a period of a few days. They were faced with subtle temptations to withdraw, retaliate, give in to wrong thoughts about their colleagues, and take short-cuts on their preparations. When they finally shared these struggles with one another, they realized the issue: they were being given the opportunity to learn afresh what it means to

face temptations without yielding. They made their relationships right with one another, and were able to teach with insight and renewed joy in the Lord. It was a lesson well-learnt!

God knows how important teaching principles are. Yet we cannot teach these principles without digesting them first. For every principle applicable to a young child, there is a truth that is relevant to you as the teacher. Have you internalized the truth that God is your Father, and you are His child? Are you aware of your value to Him? Do you practise listening to what He wants to say to you? Are you childlike in your trust?

You can best impress young children with God's ways as you allow His "curriculum" to touch your own life. Words alone don't change people's lives. One's life touching another changes lives. Impart who you are by what you live. There is no authority in what you teach if you are not being a matching example at the same time. An old saying says, "Her actions speak so loud, I can't hear what she is saying!" What do your actions say? As you apply God's truth to your own life, let that become effective in the lives of your children.

Addendum...

How can we make our curriculum come alive? What are some ways that we can be like Jesus in our teaching style? Here are eight steps for creating a framework for Living Curriculum:

1. To effectively teach biblical curriculum, you must internalize the truth yourself. You cannot teach with authority that which you have not taken to heart or applied yourself.
2. In prayer, ask for a view of the children as God sees them. And don't be surprised at how He answers your prayer!
3. The way you learn is through life experiences. Understand, then, the importance of using a child's life experience to add to or enhance her learning.
4. Take into consideration individual learning styles. For example, does this child seem to learn best when shown, when told, when given opportunity to do by himself, or a combination of these?
5. Take time to plan. Internalize what you want to teach. And then integrate it into lessons and instruction appropriate to young children.
6. Be flexible, adaptable, sensitive to cultural needs of children.
7. Be an authentic teacher. Be real. Be a teacher that they can learn from. You cannot separate what you know and believe from who you are. *Model* what you are wanting children to learn.
8. Finally, become involved personally in the lives of the young children whom you disciple, as Jesus did. ■

Early Childhood Myth Number 2

Our attitudes and interaction with children have little effect on their self-worth and esteem. After all, they are just children and need to be put in their place.

The truth is, we can shape a child's sense of worth by the amount of encouragement, or lack of it, that we offer him/her. Children are people, too, with impressions and feelings and ideas being formed about themselves and their world. We must be sensitive to each of the children and their needs in order to cultivate their special God-given gifts and unique personalities.

Note: See page 3 for information on author.