

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Even for complicated topics and texts, speak in vocabulary, concepts, and ways that are as simple as possible. Don't use a Bible lesson as an opportunity to show how smart you are. Some wisdom about acting applies here. If you're watching a movie and think to yourself, "He's a fantastic actor!" then he's not a fantastic actor. If you're watching a movie and think "That character is so evil! I hate him!" That is a good actor. Same for teaching. Help your students to be in awe of the ideas and stories about Jesus, not you.

MAKE IT INTERESTING

Pick a topic, perspective, angle, or approach that is novel. Most Christians have heard all the cliches, books, and lessons already. Give them something new. Find a way to make Bible lessons fresh and relatable. God may show you something in your early days on the field that maybe something to incorporate.

PREWRITE THREE Q&A PROMPTS

Try not to end lessons with "Any questions?" and then wait in silence. What questions should I be asking? Could you take the lead? As a teacher, lead discussion, not by asking "Any questions?" but by asking your students a question: "What came to mind when Jesus did this ...?" "How did you feel when David ...?" "Why do you think Paul said this and not that?" By coming up with questions, you are engaging your audience's imagination throughout the lesson, giving them less time and opportunity to space out.

FIRST WRITE ONE PAGE

We already mentioned that you should write a one-page for your lesson. But more importantly, you should write your one page before you do anything else. Establish overall conceptual coherence and flow first. If you don't do this, you will simply be writing a stream-of-consciousness treatise. It is extremely hard to create coherence and flow from a stream-of-consciousness manuscript. Create order first. Builders don't put up the drywall, hang the lighting fixtures, and paint the house before they build the frame. That would be ridiculous. Frame first.



Tips for teaching on the mission field

Based on Paul Maxwell's article dated June 11, 2020



ENGAGE (AND KNOW) YOUR AUDIENCE

No matter your audience, you need to be engaging. The burden is on you to be engaging, not on your audience to be attentive. Once you've decided to take the responsibility to be engaging, you need to ask yourself: Engaging for whom? Children? Adolescents? Late teens? Adults? Then, adjust accordingly. **Children want to be physically engaged.** Get them acting physically in unison. Think Controlled chaos. Pick one point, and spend the whole time illustrating that point with physical participation. **Keep it to one point.** **Pre-teens want to be humorously engaged.** Do you want to hear a joke backward? You do? Very good, start laughing. Ha. ... But seriously. If you can make them laugh, you can make them cry. No joke—come with at least 10 jokes. Seriously. This is not a joke. Keep it to one point. **Late teens want to be engaged existentially.** They want to know how things apply to real life. They're going to assume that anything you say is just as boring and irrelevant as biology class. Start where they are, then move on from there. **Keep it to one point.** **Adults want to be engaged intellectually.** This is the one audience who can track with you for *more than one point*. However, don't just give them a firehose of information. The best way to get adults interested in what you're saying is to ask an intriguing question.

CHOOSE A TOPIC OR A TEXT

Don't complicate things. Are you teaching on a topic or a text? What do a topic and a text have in common? They both contain ideas. No matter what, you'll be trying to communicate what preachers call "The Main Idea." But don't try to use a text as a platform for some hobby topic, or use a topic as an excuse to talk about theology without any application. Both will require biblical reflection. Both will require conceptual unpacking and application. But narrow down very specifically: Am I teaching on a topic or a text? Then: What topic or text am I teaching on? Pick only one.



MAKE NO MORE THAN 3 POINTS

We have already said that you should keep it to one point. More than that—one claim. However, it's fine to break that point down into multiple sub-points. Often, the very nature of teaching is breaking down a simple concept into multiple more nuanced concepts. This is fine. Just make sure that you are always explaining how your sub-points relate back to your main point.

ILLUSTRATE EVERY POINT

If you can't illustrate it, you probably don't get it. This puts you back again to your preparation. None of us could illustrate every idea we understand on the spot. But with some prep time, I could probably come up with an illustration for every concept I truly understand. Do your students the same courtesy. If the lesson is too abstract, it won't stick with them. People don't remember abstract concepts. People remember pictures, smells, sounds, and stories. Use those elements as the prime matter of your lesson.