

The Teacher and His Lecture

“These are the words of the Teacher...” (Ecclesiastes 1:1, NLT).

“The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly” (Ecclesiastes 12:10, NLT).

“If you are a teacher, teach well” (Romans 12:7, NLT).

Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the participant will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Arrange an effective lecture with a high standard of excellence.
2. State five advantages of the lecture.
3. Identify three disadvantages of the lecture teaching method.
4. Demonstrate ability to compliment the lecture with other teaching methods.
5. Submit four components which go into the lecture as identified by Diane Birnbaumer.
6. State the four points involved in the anatomy of a lecture as provided by Shirley Farrar.

Introduction

The lecture is only one of the many tools available in a teacher’s trusty toolbox. It is amazing that many teachers treat it like it is the only tool available. Not only is the lecture the oldest teaching method, it is still the one that is most widely and often used. The lecture is here to stay. Every effort should be made to make it the best possible.

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Leroy Ford in *A Curriculum Design Manual for Theological Education* states, “In seminaries...professors usually assume that all students learn in the same way and at the same rate—by listening to a lecture once! One learner in seven has some sort of learning disability.” We should be able to recognize this, understand the differences, and react accordingly.

Leroy Ford also advises, “the teaching lecture tolerates, even encourages student interaction....Teachers can improve the lecture by combining it with other simple methods.”

Klaus Issler and Ronald Habermas in *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher’s Guide to Educational Psychology* explains that there are several erroneous beliefs when it comes to teaching. One such mistake is to believe that “to teach is to tell.” This wrong thinking provides for “the dependence on the lecture method for information distribution.” Historically, the lecture method was one of the best ways to provide the transfer of knowledge. That was before the printing press, photocopiers, visual media, and computer technology. Now, “we can communicate information in a more efficient and permanent manner than we could using the lecture method.” Another misconception is “to tell is to know.” This is assuming that just because students are taught or have heard a lecture they will fully understand it. This also leads to the third misconception, “to know is to do.” This assumes that the student will automatically adjust behavior once they acquire new information. That is every teacher’s dream of what will happen.

Advantages of the lecture:

1. Material can easily be presented in a clear, concise, consistent, straightforward, systematic manner.
2. Instructors can control the content and the classroom because they are the sole source of information.
3. Students that are auditory learners find that lectures appeal to their particular learning style.
4. It is easier to create than other teaching methods.
5. It is familiar to most teachers because it was traditionally the way that they were taught. (Points two to five are adapted or taken from “Lecture Pros and Cons” by Melissa Kelly in her About.com guide.)
6. It is useful in big classes or in areas where printed materials is not readily available.
7. It works well if the presenter is a good public speaker, and has expertise in the subject area.
8. It transmits large amounts of knowledge in short periods of time. Transmitting knowledge, receiving knowledge, and maintaining knowledge may not all be the same.
9. It allows for material that has never been published or is difficult for the students to get their hands on, to be passed on to students orally.
10. It is a great foundational method, and can be very good if complemented with other teaching methods.

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Disadvantages of the lecture:

1. Students who are primarily other learning styles beyond auditory learning have a more difficult time being engaged by the lectures.
2. Students find lectures boring and lose interest.
3. Teachers may not get a real understanding of how much students understand because there is minimal time allocated to teacher/student exchanges during a lecture. (Points one to three adapted or taken from Melissa Kelley and “Lecture Pros and Cons.”)
4. Students become passive learners and listeners.
5. It doesn’t work well with the goals of adult education which is learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. Adults want to be actively involved in learning.

Keep in mind the following points derived from the chapter entitled “Lecture” by Shirley J. Farrah found in *Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction*:

1. Focus on the needs of the learners.
2. Know essential points to be covered. Develop an outline.
3. Make sure core content is covered.
4. Keep within the time frame allotted.
5. Prepare sufficiently.
6. Be self-confident.
7. Provide an outline or place it on the board for students to copy. Memorable lectures are “seen” and “heard.”
8. Limit the amount of information to be covered to six or seven major points.
9. Don’t try to teach everything you know on the subject.
10. Use a conversational tone.
11. Look at your audience.
12. Keep moving, but don’t overdo it.
13. Complement the lecture with other teaching methods. Lecture for fifteen minutes and then switch to discussion or some other technique.
14. Summarize and highlight the important points.

Some other points:

15. Put something into each lecture that you are excited about. This increases enthusiasm.
16. Motivate your learners by explaining why the lecture is important to them.
17. Use a sense of humor.
18. Be yourself.

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19. Articulate well. Speak to be understood.
20. Vary your style and delivery.
21. Be interactive.
22. Be enthusiastic.
23. Leave time for questions. (Points sixteen to twenty-three from Diane Birnbaumer.)

Jesus used the lecture plus method. Many limitations of the lecture can be overcome by supplementing other teaching methods.

Diane M. Birnbaumer in her online article/outline entitled “Lecture Skills” provides four logistics or major components that go into the lecture (expanded here).

1. **Planning:** Who are your learners? How many? What are your goals and objectives? What background work and research needs to be done?
2. **Preparation:** What are the three to five major points to be covered in the lecture? What is the logical sequence? What are the examples? What other teaching methods can be used to assist in accomplishing the goals and objectives? How should the content be organized?
3. **Presentation:** How will you go about the lecture? Will you stand behind the podium or move around the room? How will you get their attention?
4. **Postmortem:** Immediately after the lecture, ask, what worked and what did not work? Where did you lose the audience? What changes need to be made for when this lecture is presented again?

I love the four major points emphasized in a lecture as proposed by Shirley Farrar. She calls this the “anatomy of a lecture.”

1. Say a lot about a little: Narrow the topic to three or four essential concepts. “Covering class material is not the same as learning class material.” Focus on what is of major concern to the learner, or what the learner needs to know. Repeat the critical points up to five times since “repetition increases retention.” Someone has said, “Tell them what you want them to know; tell them again; and then tell them what you told them.”
2. Use a lot of examples: Bring in your real-life experiences. Illustrate. Demonstrate.
3. Keep moving: enhances communication. Eye contact and conversational tone enhances “a sense of connectedness” with students.
4. Capitalize on variety. This helps to hold the students’ attention.

Lesson in Review

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1. State and explain five advantages of a lecture. _____

2. Identify three disadvantages of a lecture. _____

3. Submit four components which go into the lecture as identified by Diane Birnbaumer. _____

4. State the four points involved in the anatomy of a lecture as provided by Shirley Farrar. _____

