

The Teacher and the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Classroom

Key Verses

As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (I Corinthians 2:9-12)

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Recognize need of the Holy Ghost's empowerment in teaching
- Acknowledge that Holy Ghost is the real Teacher
- Understand the purpose of Christian education
- Know the difference between immoral and amoral

Introduction

Christian education is unique because of:

- Its subject matter is the Bible, which is God's written revelation.
- Its goals are spiritual transformation.
- Its dynamics is the work of the Holy Spirit.

I. The Holy Spirit as a Revealer

The Greco-Egyptian scientist, astronomer, and mathematician Ptolomey studied the heavens for years. He calculated the maximum number of stars in the heavens to be 3,000. If he had only studied the Scriptures he would have discovered the futility of counting the stars: "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured" (Jeremiah 33:22). Today scientists using more powerful telescopes have discovered billions of stars, realizing there are even more beyond the reach of modern telescopes.

A. God Conceals

It is not unusual for treasures to be concealed, and it is the nature of God to conceal some mysteries. Perhaps this indicates how He values them. Solomon wrote, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).

B. God Reveals

Solomon wrote, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). Often, God gradually reveals His mysteries to those who search for them. It is like coming out of a dark tunnel; you see a bit of light, and it grows brighter as you get closer and closer.

An example of this in the New Testament is seen in Acts 18:24–28: And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Through the teaching of Aquila and his wife Priscilla, Apollos came to a greater revelation of truth.

God gave clear statements of truth in His Word. But in order to have proper understanding of God's truth, we need His Spirit leading and guiding us (I Corinthians 2:10-12).

Jesus' use of parables illuminated truth for His followers but hid it from those who refused to accept and believe on Him.

Spiritual truth is discerned only by the Spirit.

It was necessary for the Ethiopian eunuch to hear the Word of God to be saved; however, he also needed someone to help him understand it. (See Acts 8:30-35.)

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Romans 10:14-15)

II. The Holy Spirit as a Gift Giver

Although all people are commanded to teach, certain people are spiritually gifted to teach. *What does it mean to be "spiritually gifted" to teach? Write a definition of the spiritual gift of teaching.*

Teachers: Allow each student to have time to write a short definition of what they believe the spiritual gift of teaching is, then have each student read their answers without criticism.

Definition of the gift of teaching: The supernatural ability to lead people to Christ-likeness through the transmission of spiritual truth through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Natural Ability	Spiritual Ability (as a gift)
Effectively transfers information	Effectively transfers spiritual truth
Assimilates information into the mind	Applies spiritual truth to in real life circumstances
Imparts knowledge	Imparts wisdom
Intellectual in nature	Spiritual in nature
Changes minds	Changes the lives
Effectively educates, persuades, and changes circumstances in the world, through intellectual channels	Effectively educates, persuades, and changes lives in the church through the power of the Holy Spirit
Self-confident	Confident in God

How does one know if he or she has been given the gift of teaching?

- Is there an *unusual* thirst to learn spiritual things?
- Is there an *unusual* ability to understand spiritual things?
- Is there an *unusual* desire to teach (Jeremiah 20:9)?
- Is there a natural ability to teach?
- Do people benefit spiritually from your teaching?

The key word in the first three is obvious: “unusual.” Many people have a thirst for spiritual things, have an ability to understand them, and want to communicate them to others, but do they have these qualities in an unusual or extraordinary measure?

Although not all of these will be equally evident in each person, these are characteristics or general principles one should look for:

- Teaching is a joint venture. (I Corinthians 3:6, NIV) “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.”
- Just because you have the gift of teaching does not mean that you do not need to be diligent in your preparation. (II Timothy 2:15) “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

- How to develop the gift of teaching (Roy Zuck):
 - Exercise the gift (I Timothy 4:14).
 - Observe others who are effective.
 - Get training in the principles of teaching.
 - Have someone observe your teaching and make helpful suggestions.

III. The Holy Spirit as a Persuader

Teachers: Read I Corinthians 2:1–16. Ask the student to discuss what this passage has to do with teaching. Give them time to discuss for there are many jewels here that will add to the students' theological understanding of spiritual pedagogy.

The primary principle that needs to be extracted is that people cannot accept biblical spiritual truths without the Holy Spirit's intervention into the heart of men and women. The teacher might be able to give the student information, and the student might have an intellectual grasp of the information, but he or she cannot accept (or spiritually understand) the information without the power of the Holy Spirit. As one man said, "I can prove something to someone, but I cannot persuade them." While we do all we can to persuade people of spiritual truth through our teaching, this is ultimately the job of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, prayer is a major priority of teaching biblical truth.

Christian education is a cooperative process, a venture involving both the human and the divine. Human teachers communicate and exemplify truth; the Holy Spirit seeks to provide guidance, power, illumination, and insight to the teachers. – Roy Zuck

IV. The Holy Spirit's Relationship to the Teachers and Students

A. The Role of the Teacher in Teaching

1. *Discipline.* (II Timothy 2:15).
2. *Creativity.* Christ's Example: Conflict, parables, sermons, dilemma, illustrative, and expository.

3. *Passion.* This is the “sacrifice-it-all” attitude that you bring with you to a lesson that tells your students that you believe what you are stating. This is evident in the way you stand, speak, move, what you say, and how you live. While passion is difficult to define and impossible to imitate, it will never be missed.

B. Reasons for the Spirit’s Role in Teaching

1. The Christian teacher needs divine enabling.
Only by the Holy Spirit can the teachers be guided and enabled to teach the Bible and related subjects effectively.

A spiritual task, involving spiritual truths to meet spiritual needs, requires spiritual power.

2. The Christian teacher needs purity of life.
Students are not drawn to truths taught by a teacher who “mouths” them without modeling them. Inconsistency between the teacher’s “talk” and “walk” will only turn students away.
Purity of life, resulting from submission to the Spirit’s control, contributes greatly to effective teaching. But failure to model truth makes a teacher ineffective.
3. The Spirit makes the Word of God effectual in the student’s life.
While knowledge and understanding of the Bible are essential, they do not of themselves guarantee spiritual change and growth. Not all who hear the Word believe and respond (James 1:22–25).
- The Word sanctifies (John 17:17–19): So does the Spirit (II Thessalonians 2:13)
 - The Word enlightens (II Timothy 3:16): So does the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13).
 - The Word regenerates (I Peter 1:23): The Spirit removes spiritual blindness and gives eternal life (John 3:5–8).

Changed lives require both the Word and Spirit.

C. False Concepts of the Spirit's Role in Teaching

1. Some educators, consciously or not, neglect the work of the Holy Spirit. Some creative, well-meaning teachers tend to operate on natural abilities without the aid of the Spirit. It should be remembered that only the Spirit can accomplish the spiritual goals of Christian education.

Teaching is more than “dispensing the truth.” Just helping students understand Bible facts falls short of the spiritual dimension of Christian education. The goal is to help students come to know God and love Him, not just know about Him. It involves helping them walk in accord with His will, growing in spiritual maturity and Christlikeness – and this requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

2. Others stress the work of the Holy Spirit to the neglect of human teachers. They suggest that education is the enemy of spirituality, that education is a work of the flesh and conflicts with and opposes the work of the Spirit.

Human teachers, as instruments of the Holy Spirit, can stimulate and challenge students, guiding them into a proper understanding and application of God's Word.

Stressing the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching process does not suggest that teachers need not study and prepare. Only the teacher who is well prepared can do the most efficient task while at the same time relying on the Holy Spirit to work through him/her and his/her students. Teaching is a divine process. Preparation makes the teacher a better instrument, a sharper tool in God's hands. Depending on the Holy Spirit in one's teaching does not mean being unprepared and simply “letting the Holy Spirit flow.”

Unpreparedness is not a sign of being “more spiritual.” Paul's words in I Corinthians 3:6, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase,” make it clear that human effort is accompanied, not substituted, by the divine working of God Himself. Rather than an excuse for laziness or ignorance, the role of

the Spirit in the educational process provides a challenge to excellence.

Teachers should help the students see how the truth can be applied to their lives, and the Holy Spirit seeks to motivate and enable students to appropriate the truth.

Without the work of the Holy Spirit in the teaching/learning process, the educational goal of spiritual transformation cannot be accomplished.

To achieve maximum effectiveness, the teacher must exemplify the truth they teach, being a model of Christlikeness and growing in spiritual maturity. This requires

1. Obedience to the Word of God.
2. Dedication to the will of God.
3. Submission to the Spirit of God.

Teachers are also responsible to learn how God made people to learn, then to teach accordingly.

D. Two Errors of Modern Humanistic Educators

1. That truth can be known apart from God's perspective on life.
2. That truth can be known apart from living life by the Holy Spirit's power.

Scripture calls the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of truth" (John 16:13). It is He who guided the apostles into all truth. Clearly one can see from this that the Spirit is concerned about education. The Spirit is inextricably involved in the impartation of truth (which is more than knowledge).

If truth is not a central concern of Christian education, then what is?

True Christian education is education that is bound up with sanctification and spiritual growth. It is a moral, life-changing experience, not an amoral activity. This education is dependent on repentance and faith that leads to wisdom; it is an education that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritualizes all of life.

E. Moral vs. Amoral

Amoral is often confused with immoral. *Amoral* means not concerned with morality, the absence of, or avoiding the teaching of moral codes or rules. *Immoral* means the non-respect of, or violation of moral rules.

Christian education depends on the Spirit's illumination and application of His Book (the Bible), for the correct perception and relationship of every fact, and on His energizing power for living according to biblical truth in all aspects of life.

The Holy Spirit educates differently than humanistic teachers. His educational objective is not merely the acquisition of facts; it is not even the acquisition of truth. He has more in mind: He is concerned about what is done with the truth and what truth does. His objective is changed lives.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Obedient observance of Christ's commandments is the objective of the Holy Spirit's education. Truth in the Scriptures is never taught for its own sake; it is always taught for use.

Conclusion

So what should Christian educators strive to achieve?

The answer is simply godly living.

All truth that is taught should be so closely related to Jesus Christ that people are more godly because they have learned it. This will only happen when their learning is for doing.

Every fact that students acquire should be:

1. Oriented properly into his or her Christian stance toward life, placing God's interpretation on it.
2. Turned into life and ministry.

We can lead others only as far as we ourselves have traveled.

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Lesson in Review

Name: _____

Nation: _____ Date: _____

1. Why is the Holy Spirit necessary in the educational process?

2. What can the Holy Spirit bring to the teaching/learning process that the teacher/student cannot furnish?

3. Why is it not enough to place the Bible in the hands of Christian teachers, encouraging them to follow proper teaching/learning principles and the use appropriate methods and materials?

4. What does the "gift of teaching" look like?

5. What is the difference between natural ability and the gift of teaching?

6. What is the role of preparation in the classroom?
