



Is Your ABF Teaching Preparation Package or Percolated? - May 04

You all know the cuisine choices. On one hand, a pre-packaged frozen dinner to be quickly zapped in a microwave. On the other hand, a pot roast that cooks slowly in the crockpot all day. You all know which tastes better.

Have you ever found yourself in this situation? "I must teach tomorrow morning and I've left my preparation until tonight...Why did I put off preparing?...Whatever the reason, I'm stuck."

So, you teachers, when do you start your weekly ABF or other Bible Study lesson? You start it sometime between the same day you teach to the night before, or in really desperate straits, hours before you teach. We all know where on this spectrum we are located. Many times, our wavering diligence and even our culture (and even our Christian subculture) conspire to put off the preparation. Read the following ad for teachers found in a well-known Christian periodical: "It's 9:15 Saturday night and you're teaching in the morning. No problem! Create Bible Studies in minutes with the 'Lesson Maker.'" Sounds a little like the frozen dinner!

The "When" of preparing a lesson is an issue of time management, but also an issue of quality. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:15 and 16, "Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time..." Joe Bayly, in his classic booklet, "I Love Sunday School", suggests that teachers start preparing on Sunday after teaching for next Sunday's lesson. He writes: "Ten minutes each day is a lot better than sixty minutes on Saturday night or Sunday morning." He encourages teachers during that seven day period to daily (1) read the Bible passage to gain understanding, (2) review your materials to tailor them to your unique class and (3) pray for the lesson, you the teacher and your class members.

So what goes on during my seven days of preparation? At least two major things always happen. First, there is something going on inside of me which I call "the percolating of the lesson". Boiling water repeatedly passes through coffee grounds to produce a great blend of coffee. Webster in part defines percolation as "to spread throughout, permeate, to become active." Are you allowing time for your lesson to percolate in you? Second, there is something going on around you. If you're watching and listening, God seems to drop insights, large and small, throughout the week, which have an impact on your lesson.

It never fails to happen-my lessons are refined and improved over time. New ideas occur; material is focused, changed or discarded; creativity blossoms!

It also never fails to happen from time to time that my Saturday night and/or Sunday morning "blow up" in my face with the unexpected, which is part of all of our lives. In such cases, starting to prepare "sooner rather than later" is a wonderful hedge against such challenges.

So, when will you start next week's lesson?

Brent Amato, Coordinator of Teaching Ministry at Medinah Baptist Church in Medinah, Illinois (near Chicago).

Brent Amato, is a Lawyer Monday thru Friday and on weekends is the teacher of the Harvesters Adult Bible Fellowship at Medinah Baptist Church in the Chicago area. Brent has been teaching weekly for 22+ years and is a co-author of the ABF Teaching Course developed while we served together at Medinah Baptist Church. Brent has been training teachers for years in local church training formats and Christian Education conferences. He will be presenting three seminars at the

2004 ABF Conference in Cincinnati in November. He will be addressing the topic above with the title "The Seven Days in a Bible Study Lesson." If you are looking for someone to come to your church and passionately invest into your teachers I would highly encourage you to contact Brent at bamato@rppmalaw.com. What I love about having Brent address teachers is he working in a full-time secular career and still invests the time to be an effective teacher and communicator of God's Word, so he comes from a laity perspective when discussing lesson prep time. Churches have also brought Brent and I (Steve Lizzio) together to teach the ABF Teaching Course in a weekend format. If interested contact one of us.