



Let's Raise the Bar for our Teaching Ministry –March 09



James 3:1 says, *“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”* (NIV)

God places an extremely high value and expectation on teachers (*and teaching*) yet, it amazes me concerning the lack of emphasis of teachers and the teaching ministry gets in churches. Too many churches have put the bar for equipping teachers of God's word so low that a jack hammer and shovel are needed to dig down deep enough to find it! We are teaching nothing less than the supernatural Word of God that changes lives, and yet most teachers are left on their own without much support or training. If we desire midsize groups that are encouraging “life transformation” then we must address those who are called to be teachers. Let's come along side those who are craving for help, those who don't realize they need help, and those who just want to be left alone! (Good luck! ☺)

I hear it regularly from church leaders in Texas to Arizona! And from Delaware to Oregon! “We have no system in place to train our teachers and it is frustrating.” Or, “Our teachers just lecture and some just read from a quarterly, what can we do?” These are common sentiments from frustrated church leaders who want to change a culture. So what can training teachers look like?

Following are some of the systems I have heard about or have used over the years:

1. A Teacher's Community format (*All teachers meet together weekly and go over the Bible lesson for the next week*)

Usually a pastor who has a heart for teachers and the teaching of God's word meets with the teachers weekly and teaches them the lesson for that next week. This format has many great advantages as it allows a skilled teacher to share his best practices, there is positive “modeling” happening, group participation allows many new insights to the text/topic, and teachers don't have to come up with a lesson on their own.

2. A Mentoring format

New, inexperienced or aspiring teachers are placed under the guidance of more accomplished teachers who can work with them in different scenarios from working through lessons together, spend time discussing a book or DVD on teaching, critiquing/observation sessions during live teaching, etc. This format encourages relational ministry which is awesome!

3. A Bible Institute format (*Several courses are a part of program*)

Several core courses are offered either in a Bible Institute the church sponsors or in an independent study format. This format provides all types of training skill opportunities.

4. A Basic Training format with periodic teaching electives

The church offers a basic training course for teachers that everyone who desires to teach regularly has to complete. The church then offers periodic training seminars designed to equip teachers and create opportunities for group discussion with other teachers.

These four systems can be form fitted to meet your church's needs. Of course some churches use a combination approach as they might have a Bible Institute format with a mentoring option.

I have personally embraced the fourth option. Several years ago I gathered some teachers together while serving at Medinah Baptist Church in the Chicago area and we spent a year working on a teaching course for adults. We originally searched for a book on teaching already published, but most were too cumbersome or too technical, attempting to reach seminary students preparing for the pastoral ministry. This course, ***The ABF Teaching Course***, gave our teachers a common framework and lingo for teaching the Scriptures, yet still allowed our different styles and personalities to shine through in our teaching ministries. The course covers the basics of teaching including Bible study principles, principles of presentation, the keys to designing lessons including the “big idea,” the four parts of a lesson, and teaching for “life transformation.” The course also encourages evaluation for further growth through group member feedback (Course Evaluations) and critiquing by more experienced teachers or mentors.

Currently, here at Hope Church in Mason, Ohio, where I serve as the pastor of adult ministries, we offer the *ABF Teaching Course* once a year (over 60 people have completed it) and then we offer periodic seminars on all aspects of teaching to further develop our teacher’s skills and to provide a forum dialogue. (We want to get much better in this area.)

So what system could work in your church culture? Could it be a combination approach? Making disciples of Jesus is a huge task and the spiritual gift of teaching plays a vital role. Let’s come along side our teachers and help them develop their skills.

Does your church have a system for developing teachers that is working? Email me a paragraph describing your system to slizzio@hope-church.org and allow me to share it with others.

The ABF Teaching Course was recently taught live by co-authors Steve Lizzio (www.abfresources.com) and Brent Amato (www.brentamato.com) and is now available on DVD in six one hour sessions on both of our websites.

Steve Lizzio is the Director of ABF Resources and the Pastor of Adult Ministries at Hope Church in Mason, Ohio. Steve coaches 10 and soon to be 11 midsize communities and their leadership teams. Leadership Teams consist of a community leader, teacher/teaching coordinator, plus other team positions for care/prayer, socials, serving opportunities, outreach, administration, etc.