

Do You Understand?

“Understandest thou what thou readest?
And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?”
(Acts 8:30-31).

It is said in Asia, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” The Ethiopian eunuch was traveling along, reading from the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah. Through a series of events, God sent a teacher named Philip to the right place at the right time. He came into the life of the student and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

“A son will be what he was taught.”
(Swahili Proverb)

The man replied, “How can I unless someone is willing to teach me?” Actually, *the King James Version* says, “guide.” What a tremendous opportunity we have as teachers. We “guide” the future direction of our students. The Ethiopian was saying, “I don’t have a teacher. I want to know. I want to be able to understand.”

Teaching involves taking someone from where they are to where they need to be. It is taking someone from the known to the unknown. That is exactly what Philip did. He took this man from where he was reading and brought him to where he needed to be. As a result he was baptized.

The *Dirt on Learning* is an interesting book by Thom and Joani Schultz. This book is instrumental in the formation of this lesson. They say, “His Word is not a collection of facts to be memorized. His Word is a guide for how we should live today . . . Look also at the learning approach used by Jesus. His lessons emphasized life application at every turn.”

Genesis 2:15 reveals that farming is the world’s oldest profession. God took Adam and placed him in the garden. He was asked to take care of it.

In Matthew 13:1-23 we read the story of a farmer that went out to sow. This story is a good one for all who spread the Word. If you teach, this is your story.

-  Some of the seeds fell along the path. These heard the Word but did not understand it. The devil snatched away what had been sown in their hearts. What was the problem in this situation? The devil was not the problem. The birds that came were not the problem. The problem was a lack of understanding.
-  Some seeds fell on the rocky ground. These people received the message but could not stand the persecution.

-  Some of the seeds fell among thorns. These heard the message, but worries, riches, and a desire for other things choked it out.
-  Some seeds fell on good soil. They heard the message, understood it, and produced abundant fruit.

Jesus emphasized the results of sowing. His focus was not on the sower. It was not even on the seed. Both are very important. However, His focus was on the ground and the results.

Without understanding, the seed does not produce. Jesus was interested in understanding. The seed that fell along the path was destroyed because of lack of understanding.

The seed that was sown in the good soil succeeded because the person heard the message and understood it.

Paul outlines different responses to the gospel. Some believe and some do not (Acts 28:24). He said, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand . . . For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they . . . hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted" (Acts 28:26-27).

Satan's desire is to keep people from understanding the Word of God. Satan "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Some hearts do not receive the Word. They are "hardened." Through continuous witness, prayer, preaching, and the operation of the Spirit, the heart softens. Understanding comes as the person opens his heart to God.

The success of the crop (in this story) depended on the condition of the soil and the seed producing fruit. It was not a matter of just sowing seeds without any thought to the results. We seem to rarely notice if people are learning or not.

The fundamental product of a school is not teaching but learning. The focus should be on the learner.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalms 119:11). It is interesting to note that the Psalmist then asked the Lord to "teach him" the statutes.

A Word from Paul

Paul was an educated man trained by some of the best teachers of his day. He was very intelligent. Yet, he was able to get down to the level of his students. He spoke "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom" (2 Corinthians 1:12). Why did he speak so simply? He wanted all to understand.

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Corinthians 3:12).

Paul warns that the devil will try to rob you from “the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

The truth contained in God’s Word should always be presented in a simplistic and understandable way. We want the hearers to understand and respond.

How do I know that you are a great teacher? From what your students have learned. Every good teacher knows that it is his responsibility to cause the student to learn.

“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”
(Hans Hoffman)

Many feel teaching is what the teacher says rather than what the student learns.

Often teachers feel that it is their duty to cover a large textbook of material. They race through the book and conclude that they are teaching. This is a wrong understanding.

As teachers, we are responsible for the students learning. It has been said, “No teacher has taught until the student has learned.”

Many times the teacher walks into the classroom and lectures. We confuse lectures with teaching. One of the problems is that we view ourselves as lecturers. Students are expected to listen. Teachers speak the words, and students just write down everything that is placed on the blackboard. Their minds have been placed in neutral. They just write without thinking about what they are doing.

The dictionary defines “teach” as to “cause to know the subject.” We have taught a subject well when the student learns the subject.

The important test of the teacher’s effectiveness is the student’s performance.

“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40, *New American Standard*).

Study Questions

1. What did Philip ask the Ethiopian eunuch? _____

2. What was the eunuch’s response? _____

3. What does teaching involve? _____

4. What is the world's oldest profession? _____

5. What happened to the seeds that fell on the rocky ground? _____

6. What happened to the seeds that fell on the good soil? _____

7. In the farming story where did Jesus put the emphasis? _____

8. Why did the seed sown on the good ground succeed? _____

9. Why did Paul speak with simplicity? _____

10. Why should the truth be presented in a simple way? _____

11. How can you know if someone is a good teacher? _____

12. What is the difference between teaching and lecturing? _____

13. What does the word "teach" mean? _____

14. What is an important test of the teacher's effectiveness? _____

15. A pupil that is fully trained will be like whom? _____
