



WHEN IS A TEACHER SUCCESSFUL?

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I have never met a teacher, or heard of a teacher, who didn't want to be successful as a teacher. Yet, it is obvious that many teachers aren't very successful in their teaching. This is true both in and out of the church. Why is this true? I think there are several reasons why many teachers aren't successful.

INACCURATE STANDARDS

Success is determined by a standard; a rule that documents if an objectives has been reached. The challenge of judging a teacher's success is determined by an honest standard used to evaluate the results of teaching. I think there are several standards that aren't accurate in evaluating the success of a teacher.

First, a long tenure doesn't guarantee success as a teacher. It was said of one teacher, "He has been teaching for 30 years duplicating his first year of teaching." Tenure is a plus for a teacher but it doesn't guarantee success. It's how the teacher has developed skills and teaching methods that affirm the value of tenure. Every student is a new challenge; every subject requires a fresh approach in the classroom.

Second, finishing a quarterly or lesson plan doesn't guarantee that the teacher has been successful in the classroom. We need good quarterlies and lesson plans but they



are ways to the end and not the end. One teacher said, “Well, I don’t know how I did it but I struggled through 13 more weeks again.”

Third, being given the title of “good teacher” or thought of as a good communicator doesn’t guarantee success in the classroom. While communication skills are an asset to a teacher, they don’t guarantee success as a teacher. Communication delivers content; it is not the content.

Fourth, being in control of a classroom doesn’t mean that the teacher has been successful in delivering relevant content. The management of the classroom is a must for successful teaching but it isn’t a guarantee that the teacher has taught successfully.

Fifth, while it is essential for teachers to develop great ideas and delivery techniques for each subject, it doesn’t prove that successful teaching has occurred in the classroom. They may enhance but never are the standards for successful teaching.

In no way am I trying to relegate some of these areas to the pile of unimportance. I am making a plea for a closer look at what, per say, may constitute successful teaching.

QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL TEACHER

As I have mentioned the success of a teacher is determined by a predetermined standard. Here are a few of these benchmarks:

First, in my opinion a major test of a teacher’s success is the performance of his students. Are they becoming more like Christ (Philippians 2:5-8)? Are students



becoming more “doers of the word” (James 1:21-23)? Is more and more of the “fruit of the Spirit” evident in their lives (Galatians 5:22-26)? Are students becoming contributors to the mission of the church (Matthew 28:18-20)? Actions speak louder than words!

Second, the behavior (character) of a teacher has a major impact on how students accept what he teaches. These old proverbs—“What you do speaks more loudly than what you say,” and “I don’t care how much you know until I know how much you care”—are true. When there is an inconsistency between words and actions, actions will always win over words. You can’t be a successful teacher without being a person of character. A teacher’s character will usually determine the content of his lessons, as well as the spirit in which he delivers it.

Third, most successful teachers are committed to being continual learners. We are living in the 90 day year. Knowledge that once took a year to acquire is now acquired in three months or less. This means that the successful teacher, as a disciple, will not stop learning; both the word and teaching methodologies. He, too, is a student!

Fourth, a successful Bible class teacher is firmly grounded in the in the Scripture. All lessons begin, continue and culminate with the word of God. The successful teachers believes that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:15-17). He spends time not only studying his lessons but also in studying and reading the word for more in-depth knowledge.



Fifth, a successful teacher is committed to causing learning to occur in the life of students. This is not through force or coercion but through well prepared and presented lessons. This requires the previous four points as well as hard work, prayer and knowing the needs of the students. Each teacher must answer this question: How am I causing learning to take place?

Every teacher should imagine attending a reunion with his former students 20 years from now. How would you want to be remembered? How would you like to hear them finish this statement: "What I remember most about your class is _____." Personally, I would like to hear, "You helped me want to be more like Christ." What could be a greater mark of a successful teacher?