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Difficult Subjects Made Interesting: Academic Teaching Demystified

I. Theology of Teaching

A. Knowledge and the mission of God (Matthew 28:18-20)

1. Discipleship requires more than transferring information
2. We are also to equip others to go out and teach in other contexts and at other levels. (2 Tim. 2:2)
3. Truth matters supremely (Ephesians 4:15)

B. Survey of Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12)

1. 2 Tim 2:2
2. James 3: 1-3
3. Titus 2:7-8
4. Malachi 2:7-8
5. Eccl. 12:9-12

C. The plight of educational mediocrity

1. Anyone with a willing spirit is too often good enough for teaching

2. “If you think you have the gift of teaching, you need to find people with the gift of listening to you.” – Howard Hendricks

3. Teaching is often either too simplistic or too complicated

a. Be concerned if the only thing people have to say to you is, “you are so smart!”

b. Christians of all people should care the most about clarity

4. Learn from successful teachers, and learn from poor teachers

D. Teaching vs Presenting

E. Keep learning: Continue to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18)

II. The Thermostat of the Classroom

A. Don't assume your students come in interested and ready to learn

B. PowerPoint or no PowerPoint?

C. Ethos of the teacher

1. The teacher must know why this matters!

2. The teacher must care about the material.

3. The teacher must care about the students—and show it!

4. The teacher must be confident, but sensitive

5. Aim slightly over the students' heads so they have somewhere to reach!

6. Preparation is essential

III. Classroom Materials

- A. Choosing textbooks, course materials

- B. Handouts
 1. Outlines

 2. Other note-taking aids

IV. Student Interaction

- A. Creating and using examples

- B. Generating discussion
 1. In a small class

 2. In a large class

 3. In a quiet class

- C. How to deal with monopolizers

D. Guarding against getting off track

E. How to make sure the class gets the point

1. Become familiar with the “gist” of the matter, and weave it in as often as possible
2. “Check in” regularly to ascertain if the students are learning
3. Leave room for questions and comments

V. Teach!

A. Extend the mission of God through teaching

B. Teach what matters so that it sticks and spreads

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