



Teaching with Style

Youth are always into style. They want to be “in-style”, meaning they want to be whatever they think is current so they can connect to others they may look up to. As teachers we need to be concerned about style as well. I am not talking about how we dress, but how we teach. When I say how we teach, I am not talking about putting on a show, or trying to be cool or stylish in our teaching. It is good to be funny and to be relevant but it is always **important that the participants/youth walk away impressed with God, not impressed with you the teacher/preacher.**

When I mention style, I am referring to the art and science of understanding that there are **different learning styles** that people have. The youth you teach learn in different ways, these different ways of learning are called learning styles. Allow me to do some review from the trainings you may have received from GYMN on Teaching Methods, then we will connect that to the learning styles as well. You may recall that as teachers it is key to remember that **true teaching is student focused, not teacher focused.** It is not about me as a teacher, how well I did, but the **true measurement of teaching is what life-change occurred in the students.** Therefore, true teaching is student based, not teacher based.

With that in mind, as you begin to teach or preach at any level, you need to begin with asking, **“What is my target, aim or objective?”** Or stated this way, “The student will..... (what?)”. (You fill in the end of the sentence). They will know what? Do what? Etc... note that you should list what they will **“know” AND “do” (discipleship = knowledge + experience).** This statement becomes your lesson aim(s) or its targeted outcome.

Now that you know the target or the aim, you need to now take a close look at the students. You have to know your students in order to be able to move them to the target. One key way of knowing them is to understand that in any group there are different learning styles spread across the group. **If the students have different learning styles, what does that mean for you as a teacher?** What that means is that you have to offer the content and experience in all the styles that can connect the students to the truth. Let us take a look at the basic learning styles and even list some methods to engage those styles in your teaching.

Most would agree that there are **three basic learning styles** we will work with those.

1. Visual – learning through seeing. These students/youth learn through sight. Visual cues help them learn. Anything from facial expressions, pictures, videos and handout sheets helps these learners.

2. Auditory – learn through sound. Verbal lectures, group discussions, tone and other audio devices help these learners (written material does not help these learners as much as hearing material read).

3. Tactile/Kinesthetic – learn through moving, doing and touching. Hands on work, projects, object lessons and movement helps these learners.

Now that you see the three different styles. This shows you who your students are in regards to how they learn.

We talked about first setting your teaching aim/target, then we said you need to understand the learning styles of students.

*Remember that
true discipleship =
knowledge
+ experience.*

Now you have to figure out how to connect the two. **How do you lead the students with different learning styles to the one target?** The bridge that must be crossed is called offering different learning activities and methods that are all aimed toward your target.

For example let us list the learning styles and add in some specific methods or actions you can use to capture a student of each style.

Visual: Usage of graphs, pictures, charts, handouts, drawings, videos, dramas or anything that can be experienced more with the eyes is best for these learners. They are better at grasping the reading of materials than the auditory learner.

Auditory: Anything dealing with sound. Music, voice, small groups (where they hear from others), audio recordings of teachings and other methods will be very helpful for these learning types.

Tactile/Kinesthetic: Hands on projects, using objects that can not just be seen but passed around and touched as well as active learning using games, activities, drawing, etc... will greatly enhance the outcome of great learning for this style of learner. →

Now that you have understood the three basic learning styles and have seen some specific examples of the styles, you need to be able to look at your lesson aim and **find ways to connect your teaching elements to the aim.** You need to think about your aim and see what elements (or method of instruction) will help you connect to all types. This will probably mean **you need a variety of elements to insure you capture everyone involved.** You have to realize that you do not know what learning style each person has, so you have to offer options for all and in this way everyone will connect to the aim at some point.

As you outline your lesson, beginning with the aim and working down through the actions you want to take, **it is essential to include all types of learning styles as you go.** For example, you may want to have pictures, videos or handouts for the visual learners. Use music, your verbal teaching and small groups for the auditory learners. For the tactile/kinesthetic learners utilize the small groups as well as an involved project or building of objects and group movement, activities or dramas. Once you have some ideas then you have an outline for a lesson that meets. Putting these ideas into action will lead the students to that aim through teaching methods that meet them where they are (their learning style).

All of the above is incredible and very practical to know as a teacher and it works for all kinds of teaching. **But, in**

the ministry of Jesus Christ we have to have the power of God through His Holy Spirit as our guide. Though we end this article with this section, it should be your first thought in teaching. In fact, the Holy Spirit along with Christ are to be the center part of our teachings. If we do not keep them as front and center then all of the above is temporary earthly knowledge. Jesus promised all believers that, **“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper (Counselor), that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth...” (John 14:16-17a, NASB)**

As you teach to groups of any size keep these elements in mind regarding the learning styles of others. You will find that God will give you creative ways to engage people into the lessons. **Even as you read Scripture take note of the different ways that God taught His people and how Jesus Himself taught. Jesus Himself was the master teacher and He taught with style, now go and do likewise!**

Chris Davis
Executive Director – Global Youth Ministry Network

Reflection and Action Items:

1. Work with your leadership team to evaluate your youth ministry meetings teaching times. Would you all agree that you are utilizing the three learning styles into your teachings?
2. Take time as a team to list out as

many teaching methods as you can.

3. Take the list from above and mark how they would work best for which learning style.
4. Consider typing this as a list for each teacher leader to keep in their Bible or somewhere they prepare lessons.
5. Take time as a team or individual to create a lesson.
 - a. Begin with the aim...the student will.....?
 - b. List your teaching methods in order, like an outline.
 - c. Review the lesson to see if it is covering all of the 3 learning styles.
6. Create your own evaluation sheet for teaching of lessons.
 - a. Use the evaluation form for studying and reviewing your groups teaching times.
 - b. Use the evaluation form for studying other pastors, teachers, etc...
7. For more help on youth ministry leadership, contact us on our website www.global-youth.com and connect to our blogs at gymnintl.wordpress.com, gymnafrica.wordpress.com and gymn-asia.net.

“ I am a Pastor and a teacher in Bible School. I had no training in youth ministry like this before. This training had changed my mind a lot. And I learned how to do youth ministry more effectively. I believe that I can help more youth to know Christ as their personal Lord than before by using GYMN methods.”

D Khang Phang
Yangon, Myanmar
Level 1, October 2009

“ I learned how to lead the youth of this times through strategy.”

Erwin Odino
Malaybalay, Philippines
Level 1, November 2009

“It encouraged me to go on. It gave me love for youth ministry.”

Jundrel Signocan
Malaybalay, Philippines
Level 1, November 2009



Blessed Christmas and Fruitful 2010!