

Charging the Outreach Batteries

I learned the hard way that getting the motor on my boat started is nearly impossible without properly charged batteries. Only Superman has the strength to get that thing started without the right power.

Yes, the motor has a pull rope, and in theory could be started that way, but getting enough power in my pull to turn the motor over enough just isn't going to happen. In fact, without the right charge, nothing in the boat works.

Reaching lost adults for Jesus and teaching them to grow spiritually is much the same without a properly "charged" teacher. Without the proper motivation, game plan and spiritual charge, many new classes spin their wheels without enough power to move. Teachers who succeed in leading an established class must rethink how they approach their work when they start a class for lost and unchurched adults.

Remember first that no one wants a teacher to succeed in leading a Bible study group that reaches lost adults more than God Himself. His Spirit is ready and able to empower the teacher—and other leaders and members for that matter—to succeed. Starting new classes or classes targeted to unchurched people is an uphill battle, but skilled and informed teachers can become God's instruments for reaching lost adults. Teachers need to develop several important characteristics and habits.

- **Adaptability**—No teacher can be effective in teaching lost adults without a high level of adaptability. Whether the class is held in the church or in someone's home, remember that participants are not familiar with how most classes usually function. Be ready for anything. If you plan to reach young adults, for example, be prepared to accept the way they dress and speak.
- **Commitment**—Reaching unchurched people requires a heart tuned to the true reality of being lost. Teachers who guide Bible study for lost adults must teach with dedication to assuring that each person will hear and see the gospel in clear and uncompromised ways. Teach the Bible with sensitivity to the person but also with a compelling commitment to presenting the gospel for each person each week.

- **Passion**—Body language and verbal expression both contribute to the message we hear. In fact, with appropriate passion expressed in our teaching, learners can feel the passion and concern we have. Develop the ability to teach with passion and excitement. Learn how to use good gestures and verbal techniques in teaching.
- **Creativity**—Not far from passion is the ability to use creative teaching methods that address each learner's preferred learning approach. Each of us prefers to process new information in different ways. Some like a verbal presentation while others like to learn through music. I prefer a visual method, but others prefer relational or group learning. Learn how participants prefer to process information—learn—and then develop skills that help you address those ways of learning.
- **Endurance**—Teaching lost adults and leading them to Christ cannot be programmed into a specific length of time. In fact, indicators that reflect what we might call "results" often are slower in coming with a group of unchurched people. Teachers who accept the challenge of leading lost adults in Bible study must see this as a long-term assignment and an open-ended commitment. Start the group with the intention that this group is likely to stay together for several months . . . or become an ongoing class in itself that becomes the parent of other new classes that target lost adults.
- **Team concept**—Many teachers start new classes by themselves and hope they can grow a large class quickly. Truthfully, classes started with only a teacher often struggle to survive, not because the teacher is not motivated, but because the teacher cannot do everything that is needed for a new class. Teachers need to start new classes with an experienced team of other leaders, including an outreach-evangelism leader, a ministry leader, a fellowship leader, a secretary, and one or two other persons as members. Newcomers seldom want to be the only other person in the group. Having others in the class minimizes the "sore thumb" syndrome.

God's plan is and has been that lost people will come to Him through the efforts of those who already know Him. Our task as Sunday School leaders is to see lost people with the eyes of Jesus. He approached the multitudes in ways different from the religious leaders of His day. We cannot reach lost people unless we rethink how we reach, teach and lead them.

.Richard E. Dodge