

Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning: For Teachers & for Teachers of Teachers  
Dr. Edward D. Seely

While a student in seminary I interned as a youth minister in a nearby church. The Holy Spirit used that responsibility, together with some basic courses on Christian education in the church, to raise in my mind, and lead me to reflect on, some key questions. One was, “How does human learning occur?” A second was, “How can we best curricularize the learning experiences that will most help children, young people, and adults develop the knowledge of and love for God and his Word and the motivation and ability to serve him accordingly?” Specifically, I saw Ephesians 4 and 5 as one of the main Biblical bases of a church education ministry, in particular these words:

to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-15 NIV)

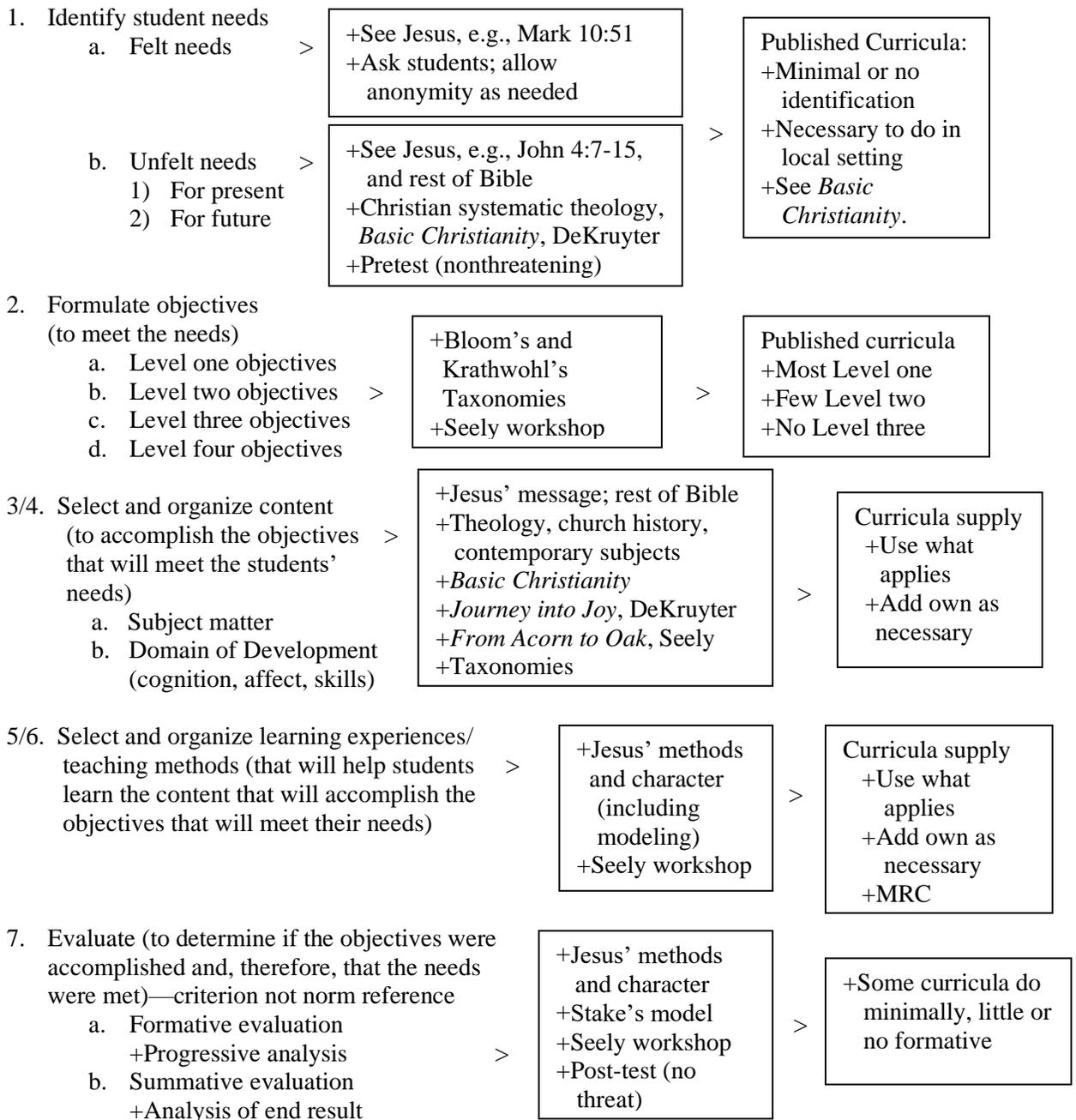
To obtain the answers to these and related questions, I participated in many learning opportunities including a Ph.D. program at Michigan State University. There, Dr. Ted Ward and other outstanding educators introduced me to the finest of research in the field of education in the areas of human learning, curriculum, teaching, and communication.

I engaged my studies in education in the light of historic Christian systematic theology, which has for millennia taught God’s revelation as being of two types: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is God’s disclosure of some aspects of his being, that all people on earth can and must observe, which disclosure is sufficient for coming to some knowledge of God, enough to render all without excuse for not believing in him. (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-32) As important and useful as is general revelation, it’s insufficient for salvation, for which belief in God’s special revelation is necessary. Special revelation comes to us in God’s Word in the revelation of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. (Psalm 19:7-11; John 14:6; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

General revelation includes all that can be seen, including careful scientific research. However, we must be discerning. Many studies in the field of education are poorly done and in conflict with the Bible. However, there is a considerable amount of those studies that yield valuable answers to the questions above. The following is the essence of a workshop I teach often on this subject. I’ve summarized below key findings in several of the studies, incorporated them into the broader schema of curriculum development that has been produced by the distinguished educator, Hilda Taba, and shown how these insights from careful research help us to teach God’s Word more effectively.

*Schema of Models and Methods for Teaching in Christian Education*  
 An Adaptation of Hilda Taba's Model of Curriculum and Unit Development

NOTE: This schema is based on and is an adaptation of Hilda Taba's seven step model of curriculum development and unit planning. Curriculum is here used in its broadest sense of all that is planned which takes place in the classroom. Integrated within her seven steps is information drawn from much other research in the field. Boxes in the center column designate information sources; boxes in right column indicate how published church education curricula typically include the subject matter in that step. It can also be used in other areas of church ministry as indicated in the pages below.



## **Step 1: Identify Student Needs**

As indicated in the schema, effective teaching begins with identifying the needs of the learners. In the general education literature, needs consist of two types: felt needs and unfelt needs.

*Felt needs* are the information and ability gaps the learners are aware they have. They don't have to be told they lack certain requirements. They're aware of some of the subject matter content they yet need to learn. Regarding some required subject matters, they're aware that they don't fully comprehend all they need to know. They know they must develop certain skills that they don't have and further develop other skills they possess but only in a rudimentary and elementary form in order to function most effectively.

How can we identify the students' felt needs? Ask them! Notice how often Jesus, the greatest teacher ever, used questions to teach, including in a felt needs assessment (to which he already knew the answer), e.g., Mark 10:51. Elementary age children may need some help such as being given a picture of a wheel with subjects of interest to that age range listed, one on each spoke. The children color the spokes with the subjects they would most like to study in their class. Teen-agers and adults can be given a blank 3 x 5 card and asked to list the subjects they'd most like to study and/or the questions they'd most like answered in the upcoming class, course, seminar, or retreat. Other tools to obtain such information are also available.

It's essential that felt needs are included first in both the planning stage and in the classroom phase of curriculum development, including lesson planning. Instructional value exists in even asking the question. First of all it shows students the teacher cares about them. Including felt needs also taps into the internal and deeply seated motivations of the learners. Students who see that their most important felt needs are incorporated into the lesson plans of a class, course, seminar, retreat, or other learning experience are more highly motivated to attend and to engage in the instructional activities. They see the learning opportunity as relevant to their lives, useful to accomplishing their personal goals, and worthwhile attending. The process also produces elementary teacher education, since teachers tend to teach as they've been taught. The identification of student felt needs leads to the identification of the unfelt needs.

*Unfelt needs* are those knowledge and ability gaps the learners have of which they are unaware but that others, especially their teachers or supervisors, see they have. The instructor and administrator can surmise the prerequisite and subsequent subject matters that must be taught and skills developed in order to most effectively facilitate the learning in each area of the felt needs. The inclusion of the unfelt needs takes the learners' competency to the next higher level.

Where do you find information as to your students' unfelt needs? Some of the most helpful sources include the following: The Bible; historic Christian systematic theology,

especially the book, *Basic Christianity* by Arthur DeKruyter (described below), the curriculum your church uses, and your own experience.

From these sources it is useful to construct a brief (ca. 10-12 questions) pretest that can be given where the students can put a code number on the sheet instead of their name. The test should contain questions dealing only with the most important information you will be presenting in the class, and no trick questions, which are invalid as they don't measure development on the subject matter taught. (The only way trick questions could be valid is if you were teaching a course on how to answer trick questions.) The same test can be given at the end of the course as a post-test, the answers to which can be compared and contrasted with the pre-test which will help the students and you to evaluate how much they've learned. By following the procedures below, the results should be encouraging for both your students and you: concrete evidence that intended learning has occurred! Not including names but matching by code number should eliminate any anxiety posed by testing. Using creativity in developing the test will further reduce if not entirely eliminate the threat of tests.<sup>1</sup>

As you come to know your students over time you will discover other needs they have. It would be good to include as many of those needs as you can in class, at least in group discussion. For those needs that are vitally important to their lives and affect their service for the Lord, do take time to write objectives to help them learn to also meet those needs.

Be sure to remember a key principle in teaching regarding the curriculum you have: *use curriculum, don't let curriculum use you*. Of course it is imperative that you teach the main doctrines your church wants you to teach. However, even the best curriculum writers, who are doing their work hundreds or thousands of miles away from you, can't know all the needs of your students. They do the best they can with their knowledge of the human life cycle and the normal developmental stages where at each period of life people grapple with new questions of life pertaining to that stage. Nevertheless, family, friends and acquaintances, school, and other factors impacting the lives of your students individually and in groups where you live cause needs to emerge of which curriculum writers are unaware. Include them as needed as well.

---

<sup>1</sup> If all the students answer a question correctly, you may be able to eliminate that subject, or that part of the subject, from the class and make room for another or further discussion of the topics you plan to teach. Some research on tests and measurements will also be helpful. Limit your test to the most important questions, since it's difficult to construct a test question that is both valid (measures what is actually taught in the class) and reliable (the meaning of the words interpreted in the same way by each member of the class). In multiple choice questions, use just two "distractors" (i.e., wrong answers), three alternatives total. Careful studies show a third distractor has an insignificant effect on the answer, and since it's usually difficult to come up one that could be thought of as possibly true, the third distractor is typically silly. Ask the students to sit in the same seat for the post-test that they used in each session of the class; they'll usually do better on the test. One of the main reasons is due to learning by association, e.g., linking subject matter learned with what was being viewed during that discussion in class.

## Step 2: Formulate Objectives

The next step in curriculum development or lesson planning is writing objectives. The accomplishment of the objectives will meet the students' needs.

In the education literature four levels of objectives are distinguished; they range from the most general (Level One) to the most specific (Level Four). The following is a composite of many writings and authors on this subject.

*Level One Objectives:* consist of broad statements of intent that are aims or goals expressed in terms of what the teacher plans to do regarding lesson subject matter. For example: "In this class I will teach how to witness effectively for Christ." Such objectives are good for giving students, teachers, administrators, and others a brief overview of the subject matter that will be presented, but these goals do not inform anyone as to whether the students have in fact learned the subject matter that has been taught. In particular, the teacher cannot be certain that what was taught was in fact understood and, more importantly, whether it is being applied in life by the students. Nevertheless, these statements are very useful for a succinct listing of what the learning opportunity (e.g., course, class, seminar, retreat) will focus on and that the teacher can use as a base for the development of objectives that will be more helpful for both the students and the teacher.

Level Two through Four Objectives are statements of intent that are expressed in terms of what the student will do. Therefore, they are typically called performance objectives.

*Level Two Objectives* state in general terms what the students will be able to do as a result of the teacher's instruction. For example: "The students will be able to witness for Christ." Such objectives offer helpful indications as to the subject matter of the class and what the students will be able to do, but these objectives do not sufficiently specify what the students will be doing to demonstrate that they have developed the desired competency to function as well as necessary as a result of the instruction. As such the teacher has no certainty that the students have learned and comprehended what he or she taught, nor can he or she be certain the students are in fact doing it in their daily lives.

*Level Three Objectives* will be the focus of the rest of this section, which in the author's mind and experience are those statements of intent that are most informative and helpful to a teacher for indicating the likelihood that his or her students have learned what was taught and is being applied in the students' lives. I ask teachers, "After having put a lot of time into your preparation and teaching, do you ever wonder whether your students have (1) clearly understood your lesson and (2) are applying what you taught in their daily lives?" All usually respond "Yes." Most importantly, it is this life application that God requires. See, e.g., Matthew 7:16-29; John 15:8; Ephesians 2:8-10; 4-6; James 1:22-25; 2:14-26. In the Greek of James 1:22, "Be doers of the Word," the verb is in the imperative mood; i.e., it is a command. In church education contexts, Level Three objectives usually suffice to facilitate the desired student competency and learning

transfer to life situations in addition to providing the assurance to the teacher that the learning has occurred and is being used. We will return to them shortly.

*Level Four Objectives* are the most specific indications of the teacher's expectations. Where mentioned at all, typically they are expressed in terms of test questions or very precise definitions within objectives.

*Level Three Objectives* contain three observable and measurable components: (1) the students' *terminal, or observable, behavior*; (2) *condition(s)* under which the terminal activity is to be done; and (3) *how well* the activity is to be accomplished by the students, to assure the teacher that the students have developed the intended competencies. In addition to the examples that immediately follow in explaining each of these terms, see below the examples given of Level three objectives for each of the three domains of human development. These objectives, as well as the rest of this model, can and should be used for all ages, children, teen-agers, and adults. Of course the subject matter content and expected performance will vary according to the age range of the participants.

*Terminal behavior* refers to the observable and measurable actions the learners are to be able to perform at the end of the period of instruction in order to assure the teacher that what has been taught has been understood and the requisite skills developed in order to function accordingly. Examples of terminal behavior include such actions as being able to recite, define, explain, apply, compare and contrast, evaluate.<sup>2</sup>

The *conditions* are the specific contextual details within which the terminal behavior is to occur. Examples of conditions include the timeframe in which the behavior is to be performed (e.g., by the end of the class or within one week), resources to be used (e.g., a specific part of the Bible, in writing, using a role play), location in which the behavior is to take place (e.g., in the classroom, in the mall, at school, or out under a tree), and/or any other people involved.

The specification of *how well* the terminal behavior is to be done is a crucial component of the objective both for determining the degree to which the objective has been accomplished in the student's learning and also for evaluating the results of your teaching and the education program.<sup>3</sup> Examples of how well the behavior is to be accomplished include reciting every statement in the Apostles' Creed in order and without error;

---

<sup>2</sup> Educators have written books called taxonomies that are orderly, hierarchical, classifications of the performance objectives in this discussion. These taxonomies identify many key words that will help in writing these objectives. The most essential information in the books by Bloom and Krathwohl and others cited in the footnotes of this essay are now online and are included in the citations below. Be sure to include as needed all levels of objectives in your objective writing, from the basic levels to the higher order levels of competency. For further information: Robert F. Mager, *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (Palo Alto, California: Fearon Publishers, 1962). Benjamin S. Bloom, Editor, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay, Inc., 1956).

<sup>3</sup> See Step 7 below and my essay, "Effective Evaluation in Christian Education: Robert Stake's Discrepancy Assessment Model."

identifying at least<sup>4</sup> three reasons why we believe Jesus rose physically from the dead; and listing at least one application in your life for each of the Ten Commandments in order of their appearance in Exodus 20:1-17.

### *Level Three Objectives for Each Domain of Human Development*

Three main domains or categories of human learning and development are referred to in the field of education. The description of Level Three objectives that follows will occur in the context of these three standard domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor or behavioral, i. e., action and performance in life, including first of all obedience to the Lord. In theological terms what we're trying to do as teachers is to help our students develop in higher stages of progressive sanctification, the process of becoming oaks of righteousness for glorifying God (Isaiah 61:3) by maturing in Christ-likeness. (Ephesians 4:13)

These three categories are referred to throughout the whole Bible. All three are very important. The psychomotor category refers to behavior and herein will be primarily referred to as behavioral. God clearly teaches that while he requires us to know certain information, he expects us to act in obedience to his will in his revealed Word.

While the use of these three domains, and Level Three objectives within each domain, will focus on education in this essay, their use will be helpful in all areas of church ministry, e.g., not only teaching but also pastoral care, sermon preparation, worship, youth ministry, camp ministry, and small group ministry to name some.<sup>5</sup> To be sure in each area of ministry adaptations will need to be made concerning the subject matter, and the applications will be unique to each ministry area, but the model will be a helpful guide for teachers, pastors, youth directors, and other church leaders to insure the coverage of all aspects of the relevant learning, including skill development, and their comprehension and use that is required for maturity in Christ, in the gifts he has given, and in their most effective employment in the Lord's service. A couple of examples of a Level Three objective will be given for each domain.

1. **Cognitive** Objectives (These objectives measure mental capabilities, *factual knowledge*.) **HEAD** {Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 4, 6; Proverbs 10:14; Matthew 22:29}
  - a. For a lesson on love: Each student will be able to identify in writing at least three components of the Apostle Paul's definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

---

<sup>4</sup> Whenever you write an objective that has a number of desired responses, I suggest you add the words, "at least," preceding the number of responses you require. Otherwise, the maximum number you will receive usually will be the number you specify. On the other hand, if you add "at least," you'll many times receive more than the required number; the students keep thinking!

<sup>5</sup> For more on this subject see my essay, "Teaching-Learning Methods for Ministry in the Church: Faith and Works—Principles for Church Leaders to Help People Glorify God," accessible on my Web site at [www.fromacorn12.com](http://www.fromacorn12.com).

- b. For a lesson on witness: Following the viewing of a witnessing scenario on a DVD, each student will be able to evaluate<sup>6</sup> in writing the effectiveness of the communication for Christ, comparing and contrasting what was done with at least two Bible texts, and including at least one suggestion for improvement for any miscue that was made.
2. **Affective Objectives** (These objectives state instructional intentions pertaining to outcomes that *reveal the students' subjective emotional orientation*, including feelings, values, motivations, attitudes, and related emotive expressions toward the subject being taught. This domain of human learning is crucial. If we teach our students all they need to know about a subject cognitively, but they don't care or have any enthusiasm about it, are not moved by it, and are not inspired to use their knowledge, that knowledge will be of little or no use to God's Kingdom and his purposes; the students won't have the incentive to use what they've learned. That knowledge will thus be wasted.

Think of how especially important this reality is for teaching the Word of God. We can help people cognitively understand passages of the Bible, and even their application to daily life, but if we don't help them develop a love for God and his Word, how likely are they to read it, and on a regular basis, and be motivated to apply it in their lives each day? Affective objectives address the vital dimension of human learning that involves emotion and feeling leading to a desire to approach rather than avoid the subject and motivation to put into action what is learned.)<sup>7</sup> **HEART** {Deuteronomy 6:2, 4-6; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 4:23}

---

<sup>6</sup> This objective also illustrates a higher order of learning in the cognitive sphere of teaching. Educators have identified six levels of cognitive functioning. The levels are hierarchically integrated, meaning that the most basic, elementary, form must precede the next higher capability which builds upon and provides the competency for moving to the next higher level of mental functioning. From the most basic to the highest, the six levels of cognitive competency are the following: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. More recent tweaking of this taxonomy by educators has made some modifications, such as switching evaluation and synthesis, but I prefer the list here presented for several reasons including my observation that the synthesis itself should be evaluated not once but continually and always in the light of God's Word, the Holy Bible. Be sure to include all six levels in your teaching and in the performance objectives you write—from the most basic level of understanding, such as rote memorization of relevant Bible passages, to evaluative skills.

<sup>7</sup> For more on this vital domain, see Edward D. Seely, "A Select Glossary of and Commentary on Educational Terminology for Christian Education," available at [www.fromacorntoak12.com](http://www.fromacorntoak12.com). Again proceeding from the lowest level of learning outcomes to the highest in the affective domain: receiving (student's indication of approaching and engaging rather than avoiding learning opportunities. Example for a lesson on Christian witness: Student listens carefully and attentively to instruction from the Bible on Jesus' commissioning of us to be his witnesses.); responding (student actively participates in class activities. Witnessing examples: Student participates in class discussion. Student volunteers to give a presentation.); valuing (student chooses to rate highly certain concepts, experiences, and behaviors; student internalizes specific values and expresses indicators of those values through behaviors. Witnessing example: Student shows concern for those who don't believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.); organizing (student constructs a value system that includes diverse and disparate values but finds a way to resolve conflicting values within the system. Witnessing example: Student accepts and explains Biblical teaching that God loves the whole world and wants all people to be saved [1 Timothy 2:4], but recognizing that many won't be saved [Matthew 7:13-14], he or she accepts responsibility to do all he or she can to be prepared to witness for Christ when the opportunity occurs [1 Peter 3:15].); characterizing by values

- a. For all lessons: No one will drop out of the class, and at least three new students will begin attending before Christmas.
  - b. For a lesson on growth in Christ-likeness (sanctification): In next week's class session at least 10 students in this course will report to me verbally that they have begun to read their Bible and pray at least once a day.
3. **Behavioral or Psychomotor Objectives**: (These objectives measure *action on the subject in life settings*, application of knowledge, attitudes, and skills being learned to life.<sup>8</sup> How do you want your students to act in their lives as a result of your teaching, and how will you know for sure if they do? This very important

---

(student has demonstrated over time that he or she functions consistently according to the guidance of his or her values such that he or she is known by that lifestyle. Witnessing example: Student has a reputation for loving all types of people and engages them in conversations about Christ and their relationship to him.). For further information see David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals Handbook II: Affective Domain* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1973). Robert F. Mager, *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* (Belmont, California: Fearon Publishers, 1968). For more including key words to use in affective objective writing an excellent resource is Norman E. Gronland, *Stating Behavioral Objectives for Classroom Instruction* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 20-23. See also <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>. (Accessed 05/16/2014)

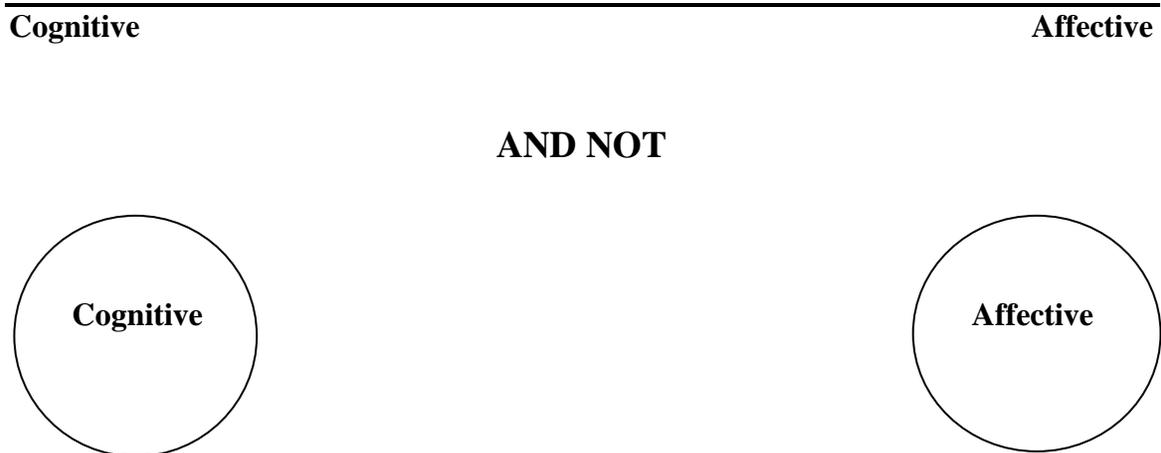
<sup>8</sup> The subcategories within the psychomotor/behavioral domain also proceed from the simplest to the most complex. There are seven, and they include: perception/awareness (the ability to sense cues from the environment and respond appropriately. Witnessing example: Role playing talking to someone about Jesus after observing an instructor's demonstration.); set development (the readiness to act according to mental, emotional, and physical dispositions that guide the learner's response to situations he or she encounters. Witnessing example: Being ready and demonstrating ability [1 Peter 3:15] to give an account of the hope that is within when the opportunity arises.); guided response (ability to learn a complex skill by imitation and trial and error where increased competency occurs through practice. Witness example: Willing and able to use principles learned to engage in conversation about the Gospel of Christ Jesus, not worrying about the presentation being smooth and perfect.); mechanism/basic proficiency (the next stage of skill development where performance is becoming "second nature" and done habitually with some confidence, predictability, and proficiency. Witness example: Feeling comfortable explaining the Gospel of Christ to a non-believer and sensing that the conversation went as well as possible.); complex overt response/expertise (skillful performance of complex behavioral patterns done without hesitation, almost automatically, and highly coordinated. Witness example: very confident and competent explanation of the Gospel message of Christ, capably and adequately answering all the questions of the non-believer and/or skeptic.); adaptation (skills are well developed and can be modified to competently address related but significantly different situations. Witnessing example: able to make changes in his or her usual explanation in order to more adequately address and answer skeptics' questions, including those intended to trap or embarrass, while still "speaking the truth in love." [Ephesians 4:15]); origination (developing new patterns of functioning, using highly developed skills, in order to more adequately address and resolve a situation. Witness example: able to design and implement a new way to more effectively explain God's plan of salvation for a unique and unfamiliar setting.) For more information on the three domains and other subjects considered in this essay, see my writings and the document, "A Select Glossary of and Commentary on Educational Terminology for Christian Education," available on my Web site at [www.fromacornitoak12.com](http://www.fromacornitoak12.com). The above psychomotor taxonomy has been based on that of E. J. Simpson (1972). E. J. Simpson *The Classification of Educational Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain* (Washington, DC: Gryphon House, 1972). See <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html#sthash.hme5yjaP.dpuf>. (Accessed 05/16/2014) Others exist but Simpson's is more complete, covers what the others include, and is more directly applicable to church education. See <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>. (Accessed

aspect of learning is what educators refer to as transfer of learning—what I sometimes call going “from text to turf.”) **HANDS** {Deuteronomy 6:1, 3, 7; John 15:8; Ephesians 2:10; James 1:22; 2:26; 1 John 5:2}

- a. For lessons on love and hospitality: By the end of October I will hear no mean statements being made to any other member of the class during class sessions or at any other church activity.
- b. For a lesson on hospitality: At every class session at least three students will talk with every visitor to the class and at no time will a visitor be left alone.

The symbols (head, heart, and hands) must be recognized as simple heuristic and mnemonic aids. Obviously, they are all centered, though distinguished, in the brain. Input from the environment (e.g., the classroom) is processed cognitively by the left hemisphere of the cerebrum. The right hemisphere processes feelings, emotions, attitudes, visual and spatial functioning, and relationships. These two hemispheres don't operate independently of each other but interact across the 200,000,000 nerve fibers in the corpus callosum, the conduit, which connects both parts of the cerebrum. The resultant interaction engages the student's actions (symbolized by the hands).

This observation is one of the main reasons why the relationship between the cognitive and affective domains is understood as functioning on a continuum, not as discrete categories. While they are distinct entities they are intrinsically connected. Thus, we can graphically portray them as with this diagram:



---

05/16/2014) For a helpful chart that lists all three taxonomies, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, together with suggested instructional strategies to teach the taxonomies, see <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/strategy.html>. (Accessed 05/16/2014)

The concept of the continuum indicates that nothing one conceives cognitively is entirely intellectual, rational, factual, logical, and conceptual. The human being not only thinks about a certain aspect of reality, he or she has varying degrees of affective, emotive, feelings about the subject concerning which the mental activity is focused. For example, when a bachelor meets a woman who is a possible marriage partner, he is sensing more than the facts that she is five feet four inches tall, has blonde hair, and attends the same philosophy course he does. He has feelings about her that motivate him to want to develop a relationship with her, or that indicate she is a nice person but not for him, or a range of emotions, some stronger some lesser, in between. Moreover, these feelings can change, and the feelings themselves are consciously cognitively formulated; the man can articulate his feelings. The same is true for the woman, though with varying degrees of different capabilities due to the female ability to function more easily across the corpus callosum.

Very few if any phenomena that are cognitively reflected upon are conceptualized without any affective sensibility. Mental operations contain varying degrees of cognitive and affective intensity, and thus are best understood as lying along a continuum connecting them rather than as separated, discrete, categories. This conceptualization helps us understand the link with behavior. It also fits better with and helps us understand the Biblical teaching of human nature as being essentially holistic.

Some may ask, “Why don’t you include ‘spiritual’ as a fourth domain, and as such the first and most important of the four?” I reply that Biblical anthropology teaches a view of mankind as being created in the image of God. An essential part of that doctrine presents humans as holistic beings early in Scripture as connoted by the Hebrew word, *nephesh*, often translated “soul” but meaning the whole person to the core of his or her being.<sup>9</sup> This holistic understanding of human nature includes the body. The Old Testament Hebrew concept of the human being never separates body and soul/spirit, which concept carries through the New Testament, rejecting the Greek mentality (which did separate body and soul, disparaging the material) in Hellenistic (Greek) thinking, and providing the basis for the understanding of the resurrection of the body, which was affirmed and confirmed in Jesus’ Resurrection. Since the Biblical doctrine of man is thus an holistic understanding, we see throughout God’s Word the teaching of spirituality as including all three domains of development.

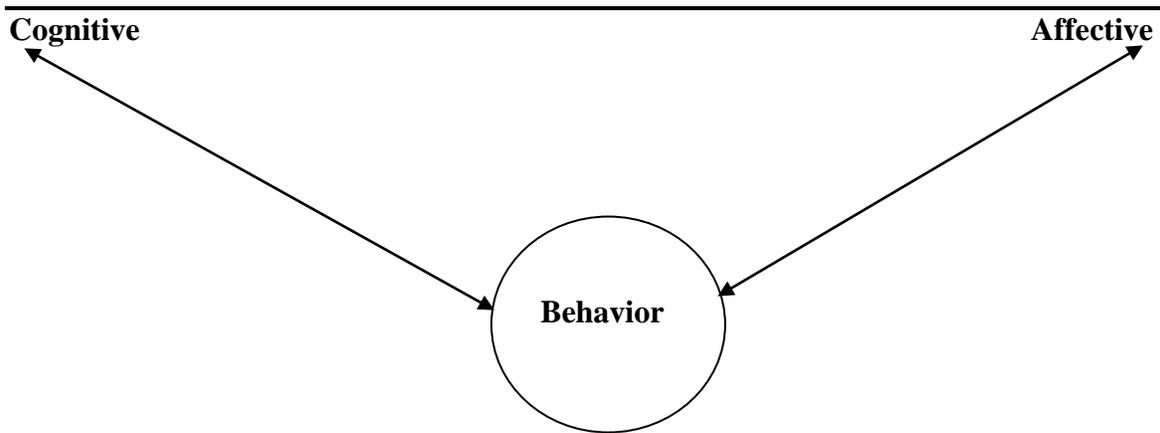
Again, all three domains are present in Scripture throughout the whole Bible. To further illustrate using Deuteronomy 6, we see all three in one verse (24): “The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today.” “Obey” activates the psychomotor/behavior domain; “these decrees” refer to the information base in the cognitive domain; and “to fear the LORD our God” engages the affective domain. Further, notice also how doing God’s will always produces good results for us: “so that

---

<sup>9</sup> Early on Adam and Eve disobeyed and in so doing corrupted human nature. The image of God was tarnished but remained (except for true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, these three being restored only in Christ) as did the holistic entity of our total being.

we might always prosper and be kept alive....” All three domains are also present in other verses of the Bible, e.g., John 14:21 and Romans 10:9-10.<sup>10</sup>

Using the above graphic representation together with the description of the three domains, we can visualize the relationship among the three and their interconnection with the following diagram:



In the cognitive domain, we come to understand a particular subject. Accompanying and intertwined with that understanding are certain attitudes, emotions, which have varying degrees of feelings about that subject which motivate a behavioral response. As we teachers keep in mind these essential components of our students’ learning and development, we can help them make the needed modifications in the degree of their cognitive comprehension of the subject we’re trying to teach them ***and*** their affective emotions toward the subject, the combination of which will lead to an increasing motivation to make the behavioral response in obedience to the Lord’s Word and will. Being able to visualize the process helps us facilitate what the students need to do in order to develop and function, i.e., behave, with more and more Christ-like maturity.

Another crucial understanding with regard to the interconnectedness of the three domains needs to be mentioned at this point, concerning the impact of behavior on affect, emotions. Considerable evidence can be adduced to show that behavior strongly influences affect, especially over time, and not necessarily a long time. For example, consider John 3:19-21. Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said

<sup>19</sup>This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

<sup>21</sup>But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Edward D. Seely, “A Select Glossary of and Commentary on Educational Terminology for Christian Education,” p. 7, which is on the Church Education page at [www.fromacorntoak12.com](http://www.fromacorntoak12.com).

Notice Jesus' explanation of why men loved darkness instead of light: *because* their deeds were evil. What is clear in the original Greek verb that Jesus used, that isn't obvious in the English, is that this doing of evil deeds was done over time. It wasn't a one-time mistake. The Greek verb, "were," is in the imperfect tense, which denotes continuous action in past time. Further, the verb is in the active voice, which asserts that the subject (the men who loved darkness) were actively involved in the evil doing; they were not passively submitting to some exterior action of others. In using the word, "because," Jesus is explaining cause and effect: i.e., the continuous doing of evil deeds, the repetition of sinful behavior over time, caused these men to develop a love for the darkness of these evil deeds.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Jesus is not just making an explanation; when teaching this text, we should call it as he does: the κρίσις (*krisis*), which means the judgment, the primary meaning of the word, and in the Greek, it is in the first part of the sentence for emphasis. The word also means damnation, decision, verdict, justice; it is a strong word; what these men have done is very serious, jeopardizing their eternal well-being. The NIV rendering of verdict, while being true, is too soft (unless clearly seen as a legal decision); in common parlance verdict is often heard as indicating an opinion as to a preference between two options, e.g., "Well, here's my verdict on the decision about where we should go." We must not be afraid in this post-modern, relativistic, permissive age in which we live to "call a spade a spade." We must not water down the truth. To be sure, we must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), i.e., patiently, kindly, not arrogantly, and not rudely (1 Corinthians 13:4-5), but we must speak the truth as we are called by God to do as teachers of his Word.

The converse is also true when it comes to doing good deeds. When we do what is good, especially over time, we can develop a love for that behavior. One of the world's outstanding educators, Dr. Ted Ward, who Providentially became my major professor in my Ph.D. program at Michigan State University, told his graduate students the story of how a neighbor came to him one day and said he was going on a three-week trip. He asked Ted if he would take care of his goldfish while he was gone. Ted said, "I didn't even like goldfish, and the thought of having to regularly feed them and clean their tank was unpleasant to say the least, but since this fellow was my neighbor, and I wanted to help him, I said, 'Yes; I'll take care of your goldfish while you're away.'" Then, over the course of the three weeks of caring for the goldfish, Ted's attitude and affect toward the fish changed. When the owner returned from his trip to retrieve his goldfish, Ted was sorry to see them go; he had developed an affection for the goldfish! His daily caring for them had positively affected his feelings about the little animals.

Most objectives for classroom learning are designed for evaluating learning in the cognitive domain. Nevertheless, for each class, to facilitate the spiritual growth and

---

<sup>11</sup> Compare what Paul says in Colossians 1:21. People are alienated from God and enemies in their minds because (ἐν, *en*, meaning by, by means of, or, as translated in the NIV, because of) their evil behavior. As they act, they shape their thinking accordingly.

development of each person, it is valuable for the teacher and the students to include at least one objective each for the affective and psychomotor/behavioral domains.

Learning to write Level Three objectives is sometimes challenging, but in my experience as a teacher of students and as a teacher of teachers, I find that by keeping at it, one soon becomes able to write such objectives very naturally. Furthermore, after a period of time using these objectives, they become “second nature” in lesson planning; the teacher thinks in these specific terms while preparing his or her instruction. It isn’t necessary to write an objective for everything you teach in the class, but objectives for the most important subjects are essential. It is especially helpful and productive for the students to give them at least some of the objectives at the beginning of the course and all of the objectives for a particular lesson at the start of the class.

### **Steps 3/4: Select and Organize Session Content**

The next step is to select and then organize the content, the subject matter you want to teach in your course, class, or other learning opportunity. The content will provide the required information that will enable the students to accomplish the objectives that will meet their felt and unmet needs.

The content can be supplied by text books, handouts, DVDs, and other print and digital resources. Of course the Bible is the most important and should be the central source of the content of our teaching. It is also the standard for any other resource we use in our teaching. Every other curriculum book, DVD, activity, and other resource, including our own comments, must be consistent with God’s Word. Our most important task is to teach about Jesus in order to help each student learn more about him, believe in Christ as his or her Savior and Lord, and obey his teaching. *Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”* (John 10:27-30) How can Jesus’ sheep in our class learn to not only hear but to listen to his voice? By teaching his Word so well that they can easily discern what is from Jesus as distinguished from what messages are coming from false prophets and other false sources. When Jesus said about his sheep, “I know them,” he used a special Greek word, γινώσκω (*ginōskō*), a covenant word meaning a very intimate, relational, knowledge; he knows us thoroughly, because he has a relationship with us. Our calling as teachers is to help our students begin and/or develop their relationship with our Lord. That development involves learning his will and obeying it/him.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, learning the Bible, God’s Word, is essential and foundational. Yet we must teach both specific passages and the overview of the Bible so our students can put the texts they are studying in the context of the whole of God’s Word. To use an example, if all we teach is the book of Luke in the fall, Isaiah in the winter, and Psalms in the spring, at best (assuming fine leadership and study materials) the learners will have a very good

---

<sup>12</sup> Does this awareness of Jesus’ relationship with his sheep suggest how we might relate to our students to facilitate their relationship with our Lord and Savior?

understanding of a particular tree, but they won't have a clue as to where in the forest they're standing! They need to be able to see the whole picture in order to have the most complete comprehension of God's Word as well as the most accurate interpretation and the most helpful application to daily life. The overview of the Bible is accomplished in two main ways: (1) a study of the highlights of Genesis through Revelation, and (2) a study of historic Christian systematic theology. Several fine resources exist to accomplish the former.

Historic Christian systematic theology is a study of the six main themes of the Bible that have been identified many centuries ago by Biblical scholars and that Christianity has taught for millennia. To be sure, denominations add within those themes their specific doctrinal positions on those six subjects, but the historic church has agreed on the themes themselves and all the Biblical teaching in each that is necessary for salvation: God, mankind, Christ, salvation, the church, and the end times (our end as individuals and the end of history followed by the final judgment and eternity). In systematic theology each of the six themes presents all the Bible teaches on that particular doctrine, e.g., the first one dealing with all that the Bible teaches about God. The term "systematic theology" refers to the logic of the sequential presentation of these six main themes or doctrines of the Bible that shows the progression of God's plan of salvation throughout Scripture and how each of the themes fits together with the others around it. I emphasize the word, "historic," for periodically, and especially in contemporary times, some individuals and groups have come up with their own brand of Biblical interpretation that is opposed to the theology of most of Christianity through the centuries.

It is important to discern which theologies are true to Scripture and which depart at crucial points. One additional difficulty with much systematic theology is that over the centuries theologians have written more and more obtusely, engaging in deeper and deeper thoughts about the six doctrines, so much so that what they have written is more oriented to fellow theologians, professors and other teachers, pastors, and other church leaders. The result is that even theologians have to read many paragraphs several times before they can understand what the scholar was trying to communicate. Thus, sadly, the books are largely ignored by and unusable for the average member of a church.

But now good news! Dr. Arthur DeKruyter, a pastor well educated in historic Christian systematic theology, has written a summary of this treasure trove of traditional Christian theology, titled *Basic Christianity*, for the layman and laywoman, the average member of the church. It is unique in this way, and also it is true to God's Word and is interdenominational. All churches can use it for teaching, sermon preparation, and witnessing (the six themes are easy to learn and use as a guide in explaining the Gospel of Christ to skeptics and other unbelievers). It has many other uses as well.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Dr. DeKruyter taught *Basic Christianity* as a small group course when he started the church he was called to serve in Chicago's western suburb of Oak Brook. When he began, the church consisted of five families. It grew into a church of over 5,000 members, and he said that, humanly speaking (for he readily acknowledged that the Holy Spirit was the key agent in the church's growth), the *Basic Christianity* course was the main tool the Spirit used as a catalyst of that development.

A related resource that I'm writing as a companion to *Basic Christianity* is called *From Acorn to Oak*, the title Dr. DeKruyter suggested I use for this writing when it was first begun as a series of articles. While Dr. DeKruyter's book is easy to read and relate to, and is quite practical, *From Acorn to Oak* looks in more detail at the many practical implications and applications of each of the six basic themes or doctrines. For example, regarding the doctrine of God, in the section on God's being unchangeable (e.g., James 1:17), we see that we never have to be afraid of waking up some morning and finding that God had a bad night and now has it in for us, like the false gods of many religions of the world. What peace and joy this gives us! *From Acorn to Oak* is a resource you can also consult in your lesson preparation as you select and organize its content. *From Acorn to Oak* is planned to be a book and is currently a work in progress, but as segments are completed they are added to my Web site at [www.fromacorntooak12.com](http://www.fromacorntooak12.com). (Twelve is the Biblical number symbolizing the church.)

Regarding the affective domain a good resource for content is another of Dr. DeKruyter's books, *Journey into Joy*. This is an easy to read explanation of the main spiritual practices that have characterized Christian affective maturity for millennia. Historically called spiritual disciplines, they include prayer, meditation, solitude, simplicity, fasting, faith, love, joy, healing, worship, and others.

Remember also the principle presented in Step 1 above: use curriculum, don't let curriculum use you. Be sure to teach the main doctrinal points in each lesson that God and your church want you to teach. But make room for any needs that emerge in your awareness that your students have of which curriculum writers far away are unaware. As one authorized by a church of Jesus Christ to teach his Word, you can supplement the curriculum to include Biblical teaching that meets the needs of your students.

Also be alert to any statements in the curriculum that may be inaccurate and aren't congruent with Scripture. I wish I could say that all curricula are consistent with the Bible and theologically accurate, and I hope your church has given you a well-written curriculum that is Biblically and theologically sound, but some curricula are not. Be watchful, using the Bible as your criterion, your standard, and teach the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15)

### **Steps 5/6: Select and Organize Learning Experiences**

The next step in lesson planning and curriculum development is selecting and then organizing teaching activities and learning experiences that will be employed in the classroom or other setting. These activities will engage the learners and enable them to understand the subject matter, the content, and develop the skills that will help them accomplish the objectives that will meet their felt as well as unfelt needs. Such activities are chosen according to their design and effectiveness in facilitating the desired cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies required to accomplish the objectives.

Some examples of such teaching methods and learning activities include various types of role play, concept attainment exercises, watching and critiquing a DVD, simulation

games, and field trips. Many resources exist that identify and explain how to use specific learning activities. As always some are much better than others. To quickly find some of the finest, the Ministry Resource Center (MRC) at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary contains an annotated listing. The MRC can be accessed at <http://libguides.calvin.edu/mrc>. Other resources are available on the Internet, but as always, be very discerning what you select. This is the reason the MRC was begun, to provide a carefully constructed site for the finest, i.e., consistent with the Bible, resources for Christian ministries, including teaching.

Be sure to take into account two other matters pertaining to teaching-learning activities. Always consider age appropriateness before deciding to use a game or other exercise. The activity must not require cognitive capabilities or physical attributes that transcend the development of your students.

Further, always use teaching activities to help students learn and apply God's Word in their daily lives. Don't use such activities as time filler, and never use them without helping your students see the connection between what they are doing and what they are supposed to be learning. We have such precious and small amounts of time with our students; let us not waste any of it by failing to teach God's Scriptures.

Remember your high and holy calling as a teacher of the Word of God. Today Biblical illiteracy is rampant; ignorance of the Bible is widespread. Let no opportunity pass without reading and discussing a passage of Scripture. Especially in each class one or more texts of the Bible should be the focus of that session.

Consider these two texts. Notice that all three domains of human learning and development are present: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Regarding the affective dimension, how can you help your students develop this love for God's Word? What applications can you help them identify and incorporate into their lives?

**Psalm 19:7-14 (NIV)**

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

<sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

**Psalm 119:97-105 (NIV)**

<sup>97</sup> Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

<sup>98</sup> Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.

<sup>99</sup> I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

<sup>100</sup> I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

<sup>101</sup> I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

<sup>102</sup> I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.

<sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

<sup>104</sup> I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

**Step 7: Evaluation**

Evaluation must be done to determine if the students' have accomplished the objectives that will meet their needs. Careful evaluation encourages both the teacher and the students. In the literature *two types of evaluation* are required for the most effective teaching.

*Formative Evaluation* is the continual comparing and contrasting of what is occurring during the process of instruction with a preset standard, specifically the objectives and any enabling objectives (statements, or at least presuppositions, of what needs to occur in order to accomplish the objectives). For example, as a teacher is presenting information by explanation (such as a lecture), if he or she sees 75% of the students nodding off, or even asleep, a decision has to be made. The teacher has to discontinue, at least for a few minutes, the presentation and say, "O. K., let's stand up for a minute and take a stretch break. Move around. Have a drink of water or grab a cup of coffee." Or, move to the next step in the lesson plan or to a Plan B (an alternative plan to accomplish the objectives).

*Summative Evaluation* is what most people think of as evaluation. This type of appraisal is done at the end of a learning experience such as a lesson, course, seminar, or retreat and constitutes an examination of all that occurred, i.e., the sum total of what took place. The summation includes a look at the Level One objectives but focuses on a review of the Level Three objectives and the record of how well students did in accomplishing the objectives.

Evaluation is a very important part of the teaching-learning process, and yet it is often omitted or not done carefully. To be sure, as the church has done for centuries, we can and should rely on the Holy Spirit to use the faithful teaching of the Word of God to operate in the minds and hearts of his people to help them mature in Christ-likeness in the sanctification process. However, in his general revelation God has enabled scholars in the field of education to develop tools to facilitate cognitive, affective, and behavioral

learning and development, and means which can evaluate the accomplishment of that learning and development.

Educators distinguish ***two standards of evaluation***: criterion reference and norm reference.

*Criterion reference* involves the establishment of a standard that the teacher holds up and helps all students to reach, as the good shepherd who wants all 100 of his or her sheep to be in the fold and makes a special effort to rescue the one who isn't up to speed with all the others. The Level Three objectives provide such a standard. For example, if an objective calls for each student to be able to recite each word of the Apostles' Creed in the correct order with 100% accuracy, each student's recitation will have to exactly match that criterion. If a student leaves out part of the creed, or even makes it all the way to the end of the creed but transposes a couple of sentences or skips five words, the teacher and the student readily observe that the student has not accomplished the objective and needs remedial help until he or she is able to recite it perfectly as called for by the objective when a criterion reference is being used for evaluation of performance.

*Norm reference* means allowing the modal response of the whole group or class to become the standard to which the teacher will compare the work of the students, and they'll have to match that modal standard in order for the teacher to be satisfied. Everyone is familiar with this standard of evaluation: it's called "grading on the curve." Thus, for example, instead of holding to the criterion in an objective where every student is able to recite the Apostles' Creed verbatim with 100% accuracy, using a norm reference the teacher will settle for a lesser number of students reciting the creed in its entirety and with a lower degree of accuracy. If only 75% of the students can recite the creed all the way through and with 10 or less mistakes, that norm becomes the standard that the teacher requires the whole class to reach.

Some refer to norm referencing as "dumbing down." Indeed, that's the outcome. How mature in Christ will these students be, and how effective will they be in a witness for Christ when someone asks them what they believe about Jesus and what do Christians believe? See also what the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:12, "We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."

Always use a criterion reference. God does.<sup>14</sup>

Especially since we want to serve the Lord most effectively; since such evaluation gives the teacher assurance, certainty, and the accompanying pleasure that he or she has helped the students to accomplish the objectives (or if not it shows teacher and student the areas needed for improvement); and since the student finds encouragement, pleasure, and satisfaction in the assurance of having accomplished the objectives that clearly demonstrate achievement of the desired learning and skill development including growing in Christ-likeness, shouldn't we engage in the evaluation processes identified

---

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Matthew 18:12; John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18.

and explained in this model? Evaluation, to be well done and yield the most helpful information, should follow carefully developed procedures.

Much fine work in the field of education has produced helpful tools for conducting evaluation. One of these tools that is especially useful for Christian education, and relates well to Taba's model, is the discrepancy assessment model of Robert E. Stake, which I've adapted for teaching in the church. See my essay, "Effective Evaluation in Christian Education: Robert Stake's Discrepancy Assessment Model," and other essays on evaluation at [www.fromacorntoak12.com](http://www.fromacorntoak12.com).