How to Be an Effective Religious Education Teacher

RE Teachers: Always look for opportunities to give to the lives of others!

Our children are the future of the growth and development of the church. That is why we look for ways to nurture them in the words of God. And as we come up with creative and effective means to reach our children, we realize that the RE ministry is challenging work. Sometimes, it stretches us to the limit. But RE teachers are the vessels God uses to touch His young followers. We are the building blocks of the RE ministry. We have been given the task of bringing our students to know our Lord and to help them build a solid relationship with Him.

By improving the way we interact with and present ourselves to the students, we can build ourselves up to be a more effective RE teacher.

I. Genuinely Hear

As RE teachers, we often think of our job as imparting the words of God through Bible stories. While that is crucial, we also need to think about other ways we can reach out to our students. For example, can more be accomplished at a certain moment by lending a willing ear and connecting to a needy soul? In other words, do we take time to listen to our students? Do we take the time to genuinely hear their concerns and questions?

Sometimes, our students are searching for answers to a deeper need. And if we are faithful, God will give us the right words at the right time—healing words, or words of wisdom just when our students need it most. But in order for those moments to happen, we need to genuinely hear what our students are saying to us today. We can only accomplish this if we have a relationship with our students that goes beyond just lecturing them during class time.

We need to demonstrate our concern and care both inside and outside of class, whether it is through a casual conversation or through structured fellowships. And when any one of our students shares his thoughts and ideas with us, be ready to listen.

Practice Good Listening

1. Look at the person while he or she is speaking
2. Put your hands on your lap
3. Nod and smile to signal you’re listening
4. Do not interrupt

II. Set an example for the students by the quality of our speech

Wisdom is often measured in words. As teachers, we should be ready to listen, but we should also be ready to speak truthfully in love and choose our words wisely. Saying the right words is important. The right words can empower, redirect, and build up one’s soul.

The timing is also vital. We can say the right words but at the wrong time. Or we can say the wrong words, though the timing is right. Therefore, we need to ask God to help us
discern the right timing and the choice of words. And sometimes, it may be wise to not say anything at all but to just be there for our students and pray with them.

Proverbs 17:28 says, “Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.” More often than not, leaving things unsaid can be the wisest course of all.

“He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he” (Prov 16:20). The first half of this verse is about words in speech and the things we do. If we speak wisely and do wise things, we will find good. When we speak or act wisely, we are careful to consider all related circumstances before acting, judging, or deciding.

When we are careful—considering and pondering before we speak to our students or do things with them—then we will find the abidance of God. The truth is, acting wisely will make us draw closer to God. If we trust, have confidence, and are secure in the Lord, we will be happy and blessed.

As we teach in the coming weeks, listen to what comes out of our mouths. Are we speaking encouraging and uplifting words to others that are seasoned with the salt of God’s love and truth? Do our words have the capacity to direct our students towards Jesus? Let us remember the words of Paul: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col 4:6).

Although the work of an RE teacher is challenging, we can prepare ourselves by asking some reflective questions:

Do we spend enough time getting on our knees to pray?
Are we spiritually cultivating our lives?
What are we doing to prepare our lessons?
Are we doing visitations, making phone calls, or emailing our students in order to reach out to every child?
Is our servitude a sweet-smelling sacrifice to the Lord?