

The Teacher's Pet

Understanding Your Students

by Allen Webster

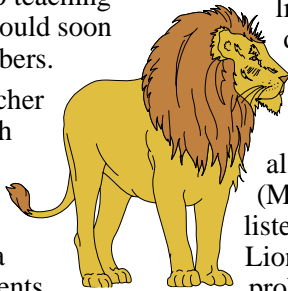
Your job as a teacher in the church is immeasurably important. Teaching is the basis of Christianity. If the church had no teaching program, it would soon have no members.

Being a teacher involves much more than just being willing to stand before a group of students.

A good teacher works at understanding what goes on in the minds of their students so they can put some new "stuff" in there. To do this, one needs to know about their students' personalities.

Be on the look-out for "Animal Behavior." Author and marriage counselor Gary Smalley divides people into four personality types, all based on an animal. It is interesting that Israel also compared his sons to various animals (a lion, a donkey, a deer, a wolf) as he predicted their futures (Genesis 49:1-28). Smalley believes that "even though most people will have traits from one or two types, each of us must be able to tap into all four to build strong relationships."

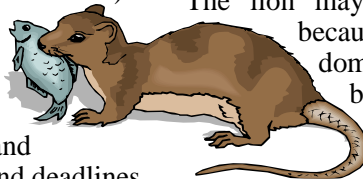
L = Lions. Some most resemble lions because



they are "king of the jungle" types. They are leaders. These folks are not observers, watchers, or listeners. They are doers. The Bible, of course, commends "doers" in James 1:25, but there is also a time to watch (Mark 13:37) and listen (James 1:19). Lions love to solve problems;

unfortunately, if they don't learn how to tone down their aggressiveness, they can become the problem (cf. 3 John 9). Their natural dominating traits can cause conflict with others. Lions need to learn patience and understanding others (Philippians 2:3, 4).

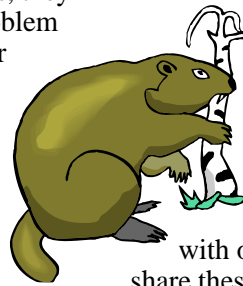
O = Otters. Otters are excitable; they love to talk! They are usually loving and encouraging, but if pressured, they tend to use their verbal skills to attack. Paul warned of "biting and devouring one another" (Galatians 5:15). Otters must learn to be serious during serious times and respect rules and deadlines.



G = Golden Retrievers. Loyal is the word that best describes these people. They can have great difficulty being assertive when needed. Timothy may have been of this breed (cf. 2 Timothy 1:6, 7). Golden Retrievers should avoid being so supportive of others that they support problems as well.



B = Beavers. Beavers have a strong need to do things right. They are "by the book" types. Because rules, consistency, and high standards are important to beavers, they're often frustrated with others who don't share these characteristics. Beavers need to accept that it's all right to make mistakes and that it's healthy to call for help when they're struggling (Galatians 6:2).



You'll likely see some "animal behavior" in your class on Sunday. Recognize the strengths of each student. The "lion" may be frustrating because he tries to dominate, but he'll be an asset when the class is dragging and

you throw out a question to liven it up. The "beaver" will want to understand everything you are doing and why. That's okay, too. The little "otter" will hinder you from finishing your lesson plan, because she'll go on and on about her Aunt Mary's fish that died, and they had to bury it, and then they got another one but it was a different color and the... But class wouldn't be the same without her in the mix. The sweet little "golden retrievers" are a joy to teach, but their faith will need fortifying before they go out to where the serpent lurks (cf. Matthew 4:1-10).

Recognizing and then molding personality is important. The future success of your students as people will be determined as much by their personality as by their education, intelligence, physical appearance, or social standing.

Be thankful that your students' parents care enough about their spiritual training to bring them to your class. (Thirty-seven million American children don't have parents who take them.)

-via Inspire



In each edition of the Teacher's Pet, we like to recognize one of our hard working teachers and share ideas from their classroom. This month we focus on Angie Boyer. To get to know Angie a little better, below are some of the answers to questions I posed to her in an interview:

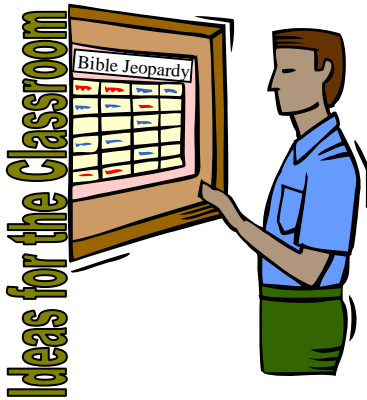
How many years have you been teaching Bible classes? Angie: It has been 8 years now; almost 9! I began teaching the two year old class when my daughter, Ellie, started. Before I began teaching, I helped Nancy Ritter in her classroom and I got many teaching ideas and learned lots of songs. After that, I felt much more prepared to take on my own classroom.

Why did you become a Bible class teacher? Angie: I thought that was one of the greatest gifts that I could give to my children and other children; to teach them from God's Word. I benefited as well, though. I was a new convert at the time, and I know that one of the best ways to learn the Bible is to teach it. It helped me tremendously!

From your teaching experiences, relay a humorous story. Angie: When my daughter, Ellie, was very little, we would sing "The B-I-B-L-E" in class. She felt pretty special because her name was in that song (L-E). She didn't understand that we were spelling a word. She always felt bad that the other kids didn't get their names in the song, so at home she would sing, " The B-I-B-Marisa" or "The B-I-B-Tori"....

What age group was the most difficult for you to teach and why? Angie: Some of the lessons used to be very difficult for the 2's and 3's. The new curriculum has made a huge difference, though, by taking out some of those that are more difficult for them to grasp and focusing some of the lessons that are easier for that age.

Give me some positive feedback about the teachers and teaching program at Brownsburg. Angie: We are truly blessed to have so many wonderful, talented teachers here who really understand the importance of teaching God's Word to our little ones. So many teachers put in lots of time and energy to make their classes great, and that really shows in the excitement our kids have for class and the knowledge that they have. We are also very fortunate to have such a good curriculum and resources that keep getting better every year.



The students in the older classes love to play Bible Jeopardy after a lesson. It is great to review, and always encouraging to see how much they remember!

My students also love the activity that I use to illustrate priorities in our life, or putting God first. In a Mason jar, we put in 4 golf balls representing the IMPORTANT THINGS: God, prayer, church, family. Then we filled the jar the rest of the way with unpopped popcorn representing the little things: sports, friends, hobbies, television, work, school, toys, etc... If you put the important things in first, then all of the little things will fill in around them. If you put all the little things in first, the golf balls (the important things) don't all fit!



A Teacher's Prayer

Dear LORD, I do not ask that Thou should give me some high work of Thine, Some noble calling, or some wondrous task. Give me a little child to point in the way, Over the strange, sweet path that leads to Thee.

Give me a little voice to teach and to pray; Give me two shining eyes Thy face to see. The only crown I ask, dear Lord, to wear Is this: that I may teach a little child. I only ask that softly, hand in hand, A child and I may enter at the gate.

