

## DISCIPLINE WITH LOVE

by Charles Hill

(Taken from Religion Teachers Journal - September 1979)

It has been my experience that most discipline problems have occurred at one of three times: 1) the lesson is too hard and over the head of the student, 2) the lesson is too simple or one that has been given many times before, or 3) the teacher is unprepared or has misplaced something.

In these three cases, it is absurd to use disciplinary measures when the teacher is creating the problem. Be very sure your students know the theological terms you are using. Ask questions frequently, at least once every two minutes, so you will know when you have lost the class. Involve the students in doing rather than listening. Remember that religion is a very abstract topic and some cannot handle abstractions. Learn how to make religious concepts real, concrete, and applicable to the everyday life of the student. With students who have been in religious training for most of their lives, word hard at finding the novel and the unusual.

Finally, over-prepare. Be sure have all materials laid out before class starts. Have a spare lesson in case the one you are teaching fizzles. The very best teacher will "lay an egg" on occasion. The teacher who hurriedly slings together a lesson the night or hour before class will have many discipline problems and no bag of tricks or gimmicks will bail him/her out.

### CREATE A PROPER ENVIRONMENT

Some children, about 10 percent of the normal population, have central nervous system problems which interfere with their ability to pay attention or to filter out unimportant sounds and sights. This impairment has nothing to do with intelligence. These children react to every event in their environment. There is no way, other than an elaborate neurological examination, of identifying these children. Certain environmental changes will assist these children, as well as others, to pay attention.

- 1) Remove all unused and distracting pictures, maps, or equipment from the room. Close the door and pull the blinds. The room of a disruptive class must be sterile.
- 2) Once you get started, don't let anybody interrupt for any reason.
- 3) Remove all unneeded Bibles, papers, purses, etc., before class starts. Have a shelf by the door where these things can be placed.
- 4) Teach standing on your feet and moving around.

(over)

- 5) Use a semicircle chair arrangement whenever possible. Traditional rows create problems because they provide hiding places and inhibit eye-contact.
- 6) Don't start teaching until you have 100 percent attention. Don't try to talk "over" someone's whisper. Most teachers are in too great a hurry and should wait until the class settles down.
- 7) Of course, the most important environmental factor is the teacher. A loving attitude and genuine concern for each student will accomplish wonders. Students sense when you respect them and love them. Don't be afraid to offer them large doses of positive acceptance and affirmation.

St. Paul instructed us to, "Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others." Philippians 4:8. One key to discipline which lasts a lifetime is to nurture within yourself a positive attitude toward every student you teach.

\* \* \*