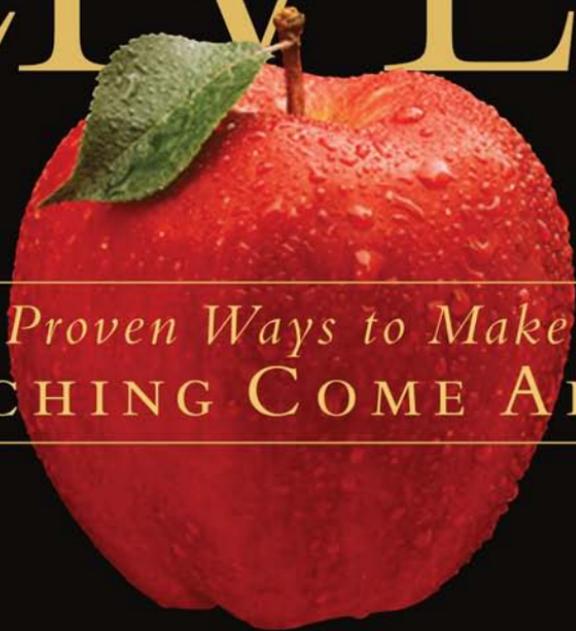


TEACHING
to CHANGE
LIVES



Seven Proven Ways to Make Your
TEACHING COME ALIVE

DR. HOWARD
HENDRICKS

TEACHING
to CHANGE
LIVES

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Multnomah Books

TEACHING TO CHANGE LIVES

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To My Students
my most inquisitive teachers,
my most persistent challenge,
my most enduring fulfillment.



*We continually remember
before our God and Father
your work produced by faith,
your labor prompted by love,
and your endurance inspired by
hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 THESSALONIANS 1:3

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	9
<i>Introduction: A Passion to Communicate</i>	13
1. The Law of the Teacher	17
2. The Law of Education	39
3. The Law of Activity	55
4. The Law of Communication	69
5. The Law of the Heart	85
6. The Law of Encouragement	99
7. The Law of Readiness	115
<i>Conclusion: Making the Investment</i>	129
<i>Application: Lesson Plans</i>	131

FOREWORD

Howard Hendricks.

Within evangelical educational circles, the very name means “Christian Education.” Not only has Dr. Hendricks been in the forefront of the modern Christian education movement, but he is a forceful and dynamic Bible teacher whose messages result in changed lives. But more than that for me personally, he’s a great friend and challenging mentor.

Our relationship began when I was a student in seminary, and I was captured by the dynamic learning experiences in his classes. Frankly, I “majored” in Howard Hendricks!

Why did I and so many, many other students take every class we possibly could from this one man? Because he cared. He cared about each one of us as individuals and as future communicators. He cared about the truths we would learn in his classes. He cared about the whole process of excellent communication. Yes, he cared about us, and it showed in every word he spoke and every movement he made. The fact is, he was not so much teaching a course as he was ministering to his students.

That’s why, when I did my master’s thesis on using revolutionary teaching methods in presenting an overview of the Old Testament, I relied on Dr. Hendricks as my adviser. You see, every class Dr. Hendricks taught in my four years in seminary was so motivating and helpful that we students used to think that, by the time we were seniors, just maybe once he would be boring. “Maybe today he’ll lay an egg,” we’d josh with one another. Well, we’re still waiting.

Toward the end of my final year in seminary, I decided to test

Prof Hendricks. I came into the classroom, sat in the back row, and determined not to pay attention. I just looked out the window into the parking lot. I was going to time him to see how long he could cope with a student who wasn't with him.

Well, Prof had a routine in starting every class. He sat behind his desk, and you could watch his leg start bouncing about three minutes before the class started, as if he were getting wound up and ready to go. At the stroke of the hour, he would open his mouth and start speaking. And we were off. And he'd sit there for about eight minutes, teaching. At that point, he'd get up from his chair, go to the board, and draw a great chart. Then he'd tell a pertinent joke and go on with his outline.

This day, I just looked out the window. And he was out from behind his desk in under one minute. He was drawing terrific charts on the board, and I was doing my best not to copy them down. Then he started telling jokes. Lots of jokes. And I tried my hardest to keep from laughing. Then he moved to the corner of the room, directly in my path, gesturing wildly. But still I stared out the window.

At the three-minute-thirty-seven-second mark, he was running down the aisle toward me, screaming, "Wilkinson! What on earth are you looking at?" So I apologized and started paying attention. And I didn't tell him about my little experiment until years later.

You see, Dr. Hendricks was so committed to seeing his students learn that it drove him to distraction if he was failing in that commitment. And he would do whatever it took to get that one student back on track in the learning process. That's dedication. No, that's *teaching*. But, frankly, it's a kind of teaching we don't see much of these days.

In schools, churches, sanctuaries, seminars—whatever the teaching situation may be, the name of the game these days seems not to be teaching, but covering material. And as a result, we see unmotivated students who, rather than be engrossed by the lesson

and enjoy it, merely endure it...at best. Students who couldn't care less about how the truths they've been exposed to can change their lives.

Because you've picked up this book, that tells me you're the kind of teacher who wants to continue growing in order to see the lives of your students blossom and flourish as God intended.

If that's true, then you've picked up the right book. Because for the first time, Dr. Hendricks has distilled his decades of expertise on the subject of communication into seven practical laws—"The Seven Laws of the Teacher." They're designed just for you—to help you generate even greater impact in the lives of those you teach.

Dr. Hendricks's seven laws have been captured on videotape just as he presented them before an audience of hundreds of teachers from around the country—people just like you who wanted to improve their teaching skills.

These videotapes, which also feature dramatic vignettes, are available for purchase by your church or school group from Walk Thru the Bible Ministries. Along with this book, a colorful course notebook is also available to help you record your notes and insights as you view the videos, as well as encourage you through practical exercises to put the laws you learn to work in your own teaching situations. A leader's guide for group facilitation can also be used to get maximum benefit from this series.

You can use Dr. Hendricks's video series on your own, or as part of a teacher training program in your church or school. Watch each session once a week for seven weeks, or schedule a weekend teachers' retreat. Be sure to use the workbook materials to help you understand the law personally and apply it to your own teaching. This book can then serve as a refresher to Dr. Hendricks's video lessons—a source you can turn to time and time again to nail down these exciting biblical truths in your own life.

Let me assure you, when you start practicing the seven laws, you'll find your teaching to be far more exciting and fulfilling than you ever thought possible, because you'll see life-change in your students.

That's what happened to me as I sat under the teaching of this man in a seminary classroom. And it can happen to you too as you turn the page, or flip on your video monitor, and listen to Dr. Hendricks share his insights with you. The result, my friend, will be truly revolutionary.

Bruce H. Wilkinson

Founder

Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, Inc.

A PASSION TO COMMUNICATE

With the kind of start I had in life, I'm sure I could have soon died and gone to hell and nobody would have particularly cared. I was born into a broken home, my parents having separated before I was born. The only time I ever saw them together was eighteen years later when I was called to testify in a divorce court.

As a boy I lived in a neighborhood in north Philadelphia in which they said an evangelical church could never be planted. But God has a fantastic sense of humor whenever anyone decides what can't be done. He led a small group of Christians to band together, buy a little house there, and start a church.

One man in the church was named Walt. He had only a sixth-grade education. One day Walt told the Sunday school superintendent he wanted to start a Sunday school class. "That's great, Walt," he was told, "but we don't have an opening for you." Walt insisted, however, so the superintendent said, "Good. Go out and get a class. Anybody you find is yours."

Then Walt came into my community. The first time we met I was playing marbles out on the concrete. "Son," he said, "how would you like to go to Sunday school?"

I wasn't interested. Anything with school in it had to be bad news.

So he said, “How about a game of marbles?”

That was different. So we shot marbles and had a great time, though he whipped me in every single game. (Now you know: I lost my marbles early in life.) By then I would have followed him anywhere.

Walt picked up a total of thirteen boys in that community for his Sunday school class, of whom nine were from broken homes. Eleven of the thirteen are now in full-time vocational Christian work.

Actually, I can’t tell you much of what Walt said to us, but I can tell you everything about him...because he loved me for Christ’s sake. He loved me more than my parents did.

He used to take us hiking, and I’ll never forget those times. I’m sure we made his bad heart worse, but he’d run all over those woods with us because he cared.

He was not the most scintillating person in the world, but he was for real. I knew it, and so did everyone else in that class.

So you see, my interest in teaching is much more than professional. It’s also intensely personal—and, in fact, a passion—because the only reason I have a ministry today is that God brought along my path a committed teacher.

This book is about seven strategic concepts in teaching, and you’ll notice we’re calling them “laws”—principles, rules.

- The Law of the **T**eacher
- The Law of **E**ducation
- The Law of **A**ctivity
- The Law of **C**ommunication
- The Law of the **H**earth
- The Law of **E**ncouragement
- The Law of **R**eadiness

If you boil them all down, these seven laws essentially call *for a passion to communicate*.

Years ago I took part in a Sunday school convention at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. During a lunch break, three of us who were teaching at the convention walked across the street to a little hamburger shop. The place was filled, but soon a table for four opened up. We saw an elderly lady whom we knew was attending the convention because of the bag she was carrying, and we asked her to join us.

We learned she was eighty-three and from a town in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. In a church with a Sunday school of only sixty-five people, she taught a class of thirteen junior-high boys. She had traveled by Greyhound bus all the way to Chicago the night before the convention. Why? In her words, "To learn something that would make me a better teacher."

I thought at the time, *Most people who had a class of thirteen junior-high boys in a Sunday school of only sixty-five would be breaking their arms to pat themselves on the back: "Who, me? Go to a Sunday school convention? I could teach it myself!"* But not this woman.

Eighty-four boys who sat under her teaching are now young men in full-time vocational ministry. Twenty-two are graduates of the seminary where I teach.

If you were to ask me the secret to this woman's impact, I'd give you a totally different answer today from what I would have said thirty years ago. Back then I'd have credited her methodology.

Now I believe it was because of her passion to communicate.

My heart's concern for you is that God will give you a passion like that...and never let it die.

And I hope you never get over the thrill that someone will actually listen to you and learn from you.

*The teacher must know that which he would teach...
Imperfect knowing must be reflected in imperfect teaching.*

JOHN MILTON GREGORY

The Law of the Teacher

The effective teacher always teaches from the overflow of a full life.

The Law of the Teacher, simply stated, is this: *If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.*

Neither personality nor methodology can substitute for this principle. You cannot communicate out of a vacuum. You cannot impart what you do not possess. If you don't know it—truly know it—you can't give it.

This law embraces the philosophy that I, as a teacher, am primarily a learner, a student among students. I am perpetuating the learning process; I am still en route. And by becoming a student again, I as a teacher will look at the education process through a radically new—and uniquely personal—set of eyes.

I must keep growing and changing. The Word of God, of course, does not change, but my understanding of it does change because I am a developing individual. This is why Peter could tell us at the end of his second epistle, “*Grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Such a philosophy requires a certain attitude—the attitude that you have not yet “arrived.” A person who applies this principle of teaching is always asking, “How can I improve?”

Think of it this way: As long as you live, you learn; and as long as you learn, you live.

When I was a college student—back before the earth’s crust hardened—I worked in the college dining hall, and on my way to work at 5:30 every morning I walked past the home of one of my professors. Through a window I could see the light on at his desk, morning after morning.

At night I stayed late at the library to take advantage of evening study hours, and returning home at 10:30 or 11 o’clock, I would again see his desk light on. He was always poring over his books.

One day he invited me home for lunch, and after the meal I said to him, “Would you mind if I asked you a question?”

“Of course not.”

“What keeps you studying? You never seem to stop.”

His answer, I learned later, was in the words of another—but they had become his own: “Son, I would rather have my students drink from a running stream than a stagnant pool.”

He was one of the best professors I ever had—a man who marked me permanently.

How about those you teach? From what are they drinking?

Let me challenge you with a statement in Luke 6, from the last part of verse 40: “Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

People tell me they can’t believe Jesus said that. In all the years they’ve been reading the gospels, they never noticed it. But now it motivates them to ask God to change their lives by his grace—and to change it drastically. How about you? Does that principle in Luke 6:40 represent an exciting prospect to you—or a frightening one?

No matter how it makes you feel, if you want to minister to others, ask God first of all to minister to you. He wants to work through you, but he can’t until he works *in* you. He’ll use you as

his instrument, but he wants to sharpen and cleanse that instrument so it becomes a more effective tool in his hands.

All this is true because *human personality* is the vehicle of effective teaching.

Don't ask me to explain that. I'm just thankful to God I can experience it. I've long been convinced God could have used far more efficient instruments than you or me to get this job done; nevertheless, he's chosen to work through us. Most of us can accept that only by faith. But it's true. The miracle of the ministry is that God handpicked us to be his representatives to this generation. He wants to bring about change, and in doing it, *you* will be one of his critical instruments. How does that grab you?

So if you want to strengthen your teaching—and that's obviously why you're reading this book—then do everything in your power to strengthen the teacher—yourself.

I want to help you do that.

THE SEARCH FOR TEACHERS

Years ago, a cartoon showed two frames, each with a Mr. Brown talking with a young woman in his office.

In the first frame he's a public school superintendent, and he says, "I'm awfully sorry, Miss Smith, but after reviewing your application for a teaching position, we've decided we can't use you. We must have someone with at least five years' experience in teaching and preferably with a master's degree in education."

In the second frame Mr. Brown is a Sunday school superintendent, and he says, "You'd make a *wonderful* teacher, Miss Smith. I realize you haven't been a Christian very long, and you feel you don't know much about the Bible—but there's no finer way to learn the Bible than to teach it. And you say you have no experience working with kids in this age group—but I'm convinced you'll grow to understand and love them. Really, Miss Smith, all we're looking for is a willing heart."

What a sad but true commentary on our low regard for the teaching of God's Word. To teach children that two plus two equals four, you need a minimum of four years of higher education. To teach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, anything is good enough...and that's why it too often degenerates into a ministry of mediocrity.

In the search for good teachers, I always look for FAT people—those who are Faithful, Available, and Teachable.

What they know in their heads is not the determining factor. But are they faithful in what they have done? Are they available to teach—without arm-twisting? And are they willing to learn?

In many of our Sunday schools we're discovering that we get the largest number of committed teachers simply by getting them gradually involved in the process. Then they get hooked. They come to look in on the programs for high schoolers, for example. And hanging around those teenagers really sells them on the idea that (1) they can have a ministry in these kids' lives, and (2) it's a very rewarding investment.

Most adults are initially afraid to become involved because their confidence level is so low. Our task is to build them up, and with a little time and involvement, it can be done.

In passing, I'll also say that if I were responsible for selecting a Sunday school teaching staff, I would immediately eliminate three things:

First, all public announcements of this sort: "*Beloved!* Won't you PLEASE teach in our Sunday school? We've been trying for WEEKS to get more teachers and NO ONE will help!"

Second, all arm-twisting. "Change your mind and teach for us, whaddya say? Takes no time at all. We've got a quarterly teacher's guide. You can read, can't you? If you can read it, you can teach it, so give it a try, okay?"

Third, all last-minute appointments. The panicky Sunday school superintendent rushes into the adult class on the first

Sunday morning of the quarter, grabs the closest guy sitting on the end of the row, and sentences him for life to teach in the junior department. The moral of which is, Don't sit on the end of the row.

MAKING CHANGE

If you would, please grab a pen and write down somewhere in the margins on this page your answer to this question: How have you changed...*lately*? In the last week? Or the last month? The last year?

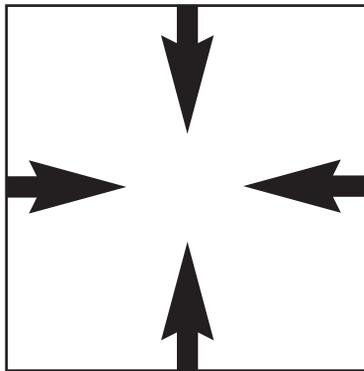
Can you be *very specific*? Or must your answer be incredibly vague?

You say you're growing. Okay...how? "Well," you say, "in all kinds of ways." Great! Name *one*.

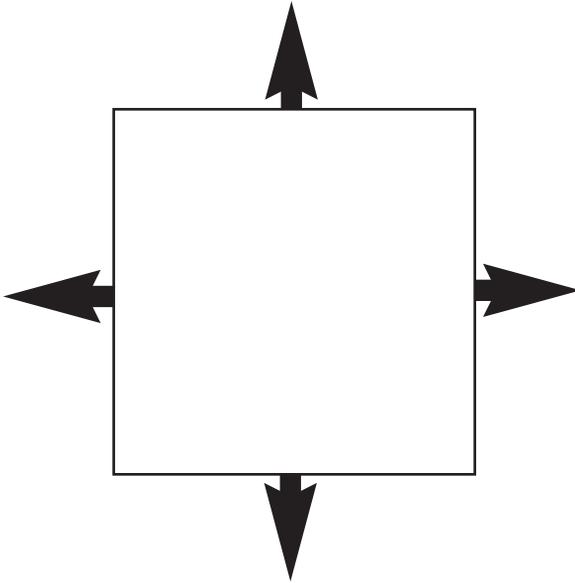
You see, effective teaching comes only through a changed person. The more you change, the more you become an instrument of change in the lives of others.

If you want to become a change agent, *you* also must change.

Allow me to draw your life. If the arrows of your life—your frontiers, your questions, your interests, your mental energies—move this way...



you are in the process of dying. But if the arrows in your life are moving in these directions...



then you're developing.

This has nothing to do with your age, incidentally—and everything to do with your attitude.

I'm so tired of running into people who say, "Well, Brother Hendricks, I'm just getting too old."

"How old is too old?" I ask. "Have you died?"

"Oh, no, no, I'm still alive."

"Good. Then learn—or else you will slowly die mentally. And then you may as well lie down and we'll put you in the box."

Older people can be excellent learners, but frequently they are conditioned against learning. Somewhere along the line they were infected with the idea that you can't teach an old dog new tricks—which is true, if you're teaching dogs, and if you're teaching tricks.

But you and I are not in the business of either one. We're teaching people, and we're teaching truth.

Some of the most exciting and fulfilled people you'll ever meet are older people who have decided *not* to stop learning. I

know students in their twenties who are dead in the head. Yet I have friends who are sixty-five or seventy-five or eighty-five and very much alive.

I brought one into my seminary class a while ago, a man ninety-three who had been saved and serving Christ for eighty-four of those years. He told the students, “As far as I’m concerned, my only regret is that I have only one life to give in service to Jesus Christ.” The class gave him a six-minute standing ovation.

Some time ago I lost one of my best friends, a woman eighty-six years old, the most exciting lay teacher I’ve ever been exposed to.

The last time I saw her on planet Earth was at one of those aseptic Christian parties. We were sitting there on eggshells, looking pious, when she walked in and said, “Well, Hendricks, I haven’t seen you for a long time. What are the five best books you’ve read in the past year?”

She had a way of changing a group’s dynamics. Her philosophy was, Let’s not bore each other with each other; let’s get into a discussion, and if we can’t find anything to discuss, let’s get into an argument.

She was eighty-three on her last trip to the Holy Land. She went there with a group of NFL football players. One of my most vivid memories of her is seeing her out front yelling back to them, “Come on, men, get with it!”

She died in her sleep at her daughter’s home in Dallas. Her daughter told me that just before she died, she had written out her goals for the next ten years.

May her tribe increase!

The apostle Paul is another example. Near the end of his life, at a time when most people are looking for rocking chairs, he said, “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, *I press on* toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14, italics mine).

Look at that passage carefully, and you'll see that Paul was properly related to the past—neither enamored of his successes nor defeated by his failures. You learn from the past, but you don't live in it.

He was also properly related to the future. Here lay his goal, his hope.

And he was just as properly related to the present. Here and now, he said, "I press on." He was grabbing the challenge.

How many people in our churches, at an age when they ought to be tearing the world apart, are instead sliding home?

Of course, as you get older like me, it can get harder to remember things you're learning because you get ants in your attic. Jeanne and I have been memorizing Psalms. Sometimes I'll ask her, "Can you give me Psalm 40?" She repeats it, and I'll say, "Wonderful, Sweetheart, but you forgot verse seven."

Then she'll have me say it, and when I'm through, she responds, "Howie, you're making tremendous progress. But you forgot verses four to sixteen."

GROWTH: THE LARGER PICTURE

The most exciting thing about working with some of the new converts I've known is that the moment they understand something from God's Word, they rush out the door to put it into practice.

You see, they haven't been around long enough to learn all the games we older Christians play. We have so many ways to waltz around the truth. When we run into something over which we do not care to change our lives, we explain it away. Such as, "Well, that refers to the Jews." It's amazing how much we dump on those dear people.

To strengthen your own commitment to change and development, remember that growing is something even the Lord Jesus did. Luke 2:52 explains the developmental process in his

life: “Jesus *grew*,” we are told, in four areas:

He grew “in wisdom”—intellectual development.

He grew “in stature”—physical development.

He grew “in favor with God”—spiritual development.

And he grew “in favor with men”—social and emotional development.

Please note that spiritual development is *a part of the larger process*. It can't be our sole concern. Spiritual growth should not be compartmentalized, but integrated with every other aspect of life.

This is where we've been missing it.

As a professor at a theological seminary, I teach some of the most sincerely and highly motivated students in all the world— young men and women climbing the heights with commitment. They are not in the business of playing games.

Yet strangely enough, many of them have never been helped to understand that they cannot fully develop spiritually unless they develop in life's other areas as well—intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. You cannot neglect one of these areas without endangering your growth in all of them. Likewise, you cannot grow in any one of these areas without also having an effect on all the others.

So don't limit Jesus Christ to some religious compartment and say, “A chapter a day keeps the devil away.” Wake up to the realization that each day you can give the Lord of your life even greater control over every aspect of your being. This is what makes the Christian life dynamic and not static. This is what keeps your fizz from going flat.

But please note at the outset that this is a highly individualized process. We all come from different backgrounds and are in different stages of development in our Christian life. That's why comparison is carnality. Don't spend your time comparing yourself with him or with her, because you're not them. You are *you*.

So go back to the drawing board, and for each major area of your life ask, “Lord, how am I doing?”

In some of these battlefields of growth you’ll show up very well, and you’re demonstrating giant steps of improvement. In others you’re going to show up rather poorly, and you have a long way to go.

You’ll discover that some of your values and habits need to be *retained*.

Some of them need to be *refined*.

And some of them need to be *rejected* outright.

But we’re all in the same boat, because we’re all *in process*.

And in that process, how wonderful it is to ask, “Am I doing the right things?” One of the greatest fears I have for my students after graduation is not that they will fail, but that they will succeed at doing the wrong things—that they’ll reach the end of the line and discover that this isn’t the destination they wanted, and it can’t fulfill them.

I’ve been involved in a ministry to professional athletes, and something each one of them must face up to is that he can make a mountain of money and have tremendous influence and women throwing themselves at his feet—and yet never come to grips with who he really is. Is there life after football? Or do you just end up with a nice collection of trophies and a drawer full of sports-page clippings? There’s nothing staler than an old athlete.

YOUR INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION

Let me give you three suggestions for growing in the intellectual dimension of your life.

1. *Maintain a consistent study and reading program. Understand that leaders are readers, and readers are leaders.*

But I find a lot of people who say, “You know, Dr. Hendricks, I’m reading a lot of things, but frankly I’m not finding that it changes

my life or contributes that much.”

Here’s a way out: If you have an hour set apart to read, try reading the first half-hour and use the second half-hour to *reflect* on what you read. Watch the difference it makes. You’re reading too much if you reflect on it too little.

And get involved not only in reading books, but in reading people as well. The two factors that will influence you the most in the years ahead are the books you read and the people you’re around.

People are stimulating—and you’ll find it easier to get involved with them as you experience more of the sheer fascination of it.

One of the greatest lessons my father taught me was this: Whenever you’re around a significant person, keep your mouth shut except to ask penetrating questions. If you’re with those who know more than you know, pick their brains and take advantage of what they have. Let them do the talking and tell you everything they know.

I never cease to be amazed how seldom we make the best use of a resource individual. I’ve been flown all across America and paid a consultant’s fee, only to sit with a group who spend the bulk of their time arguing with each other.

2. *Enroll in continuing education courses—courses that will improve not only your content, but also your skill. Today there are more good opportunities of this kind to enrich your mind and develop your gifts than ever before.*

But the most important course is your own personal Bible study program. In all my years I’ve never found a layperson with a significant spiritual ministry who does not also have a strong personal intake of God’s Word.

Many of us who are “under” the Word of God are not “in” it for ourselves—getting into it and letting it get into us. A woman

once told me, “Dr. Hendricks, I’ve been through the Bible twenty-nine times.” “Wonderful, Madam,” I answered. “And how many times has the Bible been through you?”

When the word of God is at the heart of a teaching ministry, no one alive can fully imagine the impact it can have. Paul gives us refreshing insight into this in 2 Timothy 2:2. He’s telling Timothy, “I communicated to you the body of truth I received by revelation, and with it I built truth into your life. Now I’m charging you to take that same truth and deposit it into the lives of other reliable individuals, teaching them in such a way that they’ll be equipped to teach others...who’ll teach others...who’ll teach others.”

It’s a ministry of *multiplication*. Every time you teach you launch a process that ideally will never end, generation after generation.

3. *Get to know your students. Become an authority on the needs and general characteristics of their age group. But go beyond that; get to your students individually. Find out as much about them as you possibly can.*

Years ago in a church in Dallas we were having trouble finding a teacher for a junior-high boys class. The list of prospects had only one name—and when they told me who it was, I said, “You’ve got to be kidding.” But I couldn’t have been more wrong about that young man. He took the class and revolutionized it.

I was so impressed I invited him to my home for lunch and asked him the secret of his success. He pulled out a little black book. On each page he had a small picture of one of the boys, and under the boy’s name were comments like “having trouble in arithmetic,” or “comes to church against parents’ wishes,” or “would like to be a missionary someday but doesn’t think he has what it takes.”

“I pray over those pages every day,” he said, “and I can hardly

wait to come to church each Sunday to see what God has been doing in their lives.”

I challenge you to pray over your students this way—whether they’re nursery kids or senior citizens. But let me give you a warning that comes from too much experience: As we work with people, always remember that labels are libel. So often we label our students—“she never talks,” “he’s the troublemaker,” and so on. Never hang a label like that around someone’s neck.

In the fifth grade in public school I had a teacher named Miss Simon. I’ll never forget Miss Simon...and I doubt Miss Simon ever forgot me. When I told her my name on the first day of class, she said, “Oh—Howard Hendricks. I’ve heard a lot about you. I understand you’re the worst kid in this school.”

What a challenge, I thought. If she thinks I’m the worst kid in the school, I guarantee I’ll never slip into second place! And I didn’t disappoint her.

Sometimes I ask teachers, “Which kids in your class do you like the most?” And they’ll say, “Oh, there’s a pretty little girl with long curls, and she never peeps, never gives me any problems.” Well, she may still not be peeping twenty years from now. But the kid who’s climbing the walls today may become your pastor or a missionary tomorrow. Kids with enough creative energy to get into trouble can have enough drive to live highly significant lives for Jesus Christ later on. Sometimes they come into our Sunday school class so energetic and excited and curious, and what do we do? We whip it all out of them: “*Hey, cut that out! Don’t you know this is Sunday school?*”

YOUR PHYSICAL DIMENSION

Is there anything in the physical dimension of your life over which, in obedience to Christ, you do not have proper control?

Ouch! The physical dimension is often the area evangelical Christians neglect most consistently. The reason: We’re prone to

deny our humanity. So we're forever prostituting the body, even though there's as much hope for your body as there is for your soul. The Bible is so full of this teaching it's a wonder we escape it. (By the way, if you want to know the greatest areas of need in your Christian life, try looking sometime at passages you have *not* underlined in your Bible.)

We talk a lot about being filled by the Holy Spirit, so it's fascinating to see in what areas of our lives we tend to apply that concept—and what areas we consistently avoid.

Allow me to get personal. Is your money under control? Most Christian financial counselors will tell you firsthand we're out to lunch in this area. Did you know that 80 percent of all Americans owe more than their net worth? And yet an incredible amount of money passes through our hands. American Christians especially will have a lot to give an account for when they get to the judgment seat of Christ, because to whom much has been given, much will be required.

What about your material possessions? My wife, Jeanne, and I once dined with a rich man from a blue blood Boston family, and I asked him, "How in the world did you grow up in the midst of such wealth and not be consumed by materialism?"

His answer: "My parents taught us that everything in our home was either an idol or a tool."

So how do you view your possessions?

And how about your use of time? Do you have control there? Because if *you* don't control it, someone else will—someone who doesn't have your priority system. Everywhere I go I find people who have a wonderful plan for my life, and they're usually telling me it's God's plan as well.

Is your sex life under control, living as we are in a cesspool society? So many people have never let Jesus Christ invade their sex life. And when they sense something's wrong in that aspect of their marriage, they spend all their time looking for a new tech-

nique because they have neglected their relationship. They've never let Jesus Christ deliver them from themselves so they're free to flow into the life of their partner in the most intimate relationship on earth.

How does being a Christian relate to your thought life? Both at the seminary and as I travel I find young men and women who've filled their minds with garbage, and then they ask me, "How come I'm not holy?" Not long ago I said to a young man who has consistently read *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, "Do you really think that's going to make you a man of God?"

How about your diet? If I scheduled a seminar at your church and then walked in drunk, you'd dismiss me immediately. But if I walked in fifty pounds overweight, you'd feed me more, right? Sure—after all, you can't have a Christian gathering without food. Did you ever wonder how the early church made it without coffee and doughnuts? I'll tell you: They had something better to provide togetherness—persecution. That'll weld you together in a hurry. But maybe this is too convicting. On to something else.

How about exercise? Dr. Kenneth Cooper, who popularized the aerobics concept, has a solid Christian testimony. He told an audience of about three to four hundred students at our seminary that by a regular, systematic exercise program they could each add five to fifteen years to their ministry. Think of the implications!

You also need rest—and not just sleep, but a change of pace. I came across a simple but interesting grid that has helped me seek a balance in my life:

How much of my time do I spend with people?	How much of my time do I spend alone?
How much of my time do I spend at work?	How much of my time do I spend at play?

Most of us tend to be off balance in at least one of these areas.

I once visited one of my former students to join him for a week of ministry meetings. As soon as I arrived, his wife got me aside and said, “Will you please say something to my husband? He’s averaging only five hours of sleep a night and is headed for four, and . . . frankly, we can’t live with him. He’s driving the kids up a wall.”

Near the end of the week he and I were traveling in the car together, and as he drove, I said to him, “Hey, man, how come you don’t smoke?”

We almost went off the highway. “Prof,” he finally answered, “I never smoke.”

“Yes,” I said, “I noticed I hadn’t seen you light up a single time all week.”

By then he was giving me some rather strange looks, as if he thought I had squirrels crawling around in my steeple.

“Why don’t you smoke?” I asked.

“Prof,” he said, “my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

“Yeah,” I said, “that’s right. Fantastic. Good thinking.” Then I added, “Is that also the reason you’re averaging five hours of sleep a night, headed for four, and driving your family bonkers?”

I wouldn’t have jarred him as much if I had dropped a two-by-four on his head.

YOUR SOCIAL DIMENSION

How about the social dimension of your life? Who do you have in terms of friends?

Do you fellowship only with Baptists? (“After all, they’re God’s chosen people; the others are God’s frozen people.”)

Got any friends among the unsaved?

Our studies on effective relational evangelism show that the average person coming to Christ is good for only two years. After

that, he's dropped all of his lost friends. Or they have dropped him. Usually the former.

Do you know any lost people? You say, "Well, I'm a preacher." But that doesn't excuse you from being a Christian. Try being something other than what your position is, and don't let it get in the way. Try being a person for a while.

I don't know if your experience matches ours, but Jeanne and I have found that socially speaking, one of the most difficult things to get involved in constructively is a Christian group. Some of our groups are so inane that we insult each other's intelligence.

So I encourage you to do some creative thinking in regard to your friendships and acquaintances and see what God will do with it.

How about friends in different age groups? Do you know any little kids? I mean, really *know* them, so they call you Uncle Dan or whomever, and they think you're the greatest?

Know any teenagers? Most of us are scared to death of teenagers. When Jeanne and I had four of them at one time and invited guests over, I'd tell them beforehand, "Look, you need to understand that when you come, you're gonna have four pairs of teenage eyes staring down your throat. If that's threatening to you, you may want to bail out now."

"No, no, that's all right.... Do they bite?"

"I don't know. Come on over. We'll find out."

So enrich your circle of friends. And while we're on the subject, let me give you a true test of a close friend. A close friend is someone who

- ...knows everything about you, yet totally accepts you;
- ...will listen to your most heretical ideas without rejecting you;
- ...and knows how to criticize you in a way you'll listen.

It took me ten years before I let Jeanne become my best friend because I was scared to death to let her know what I was really like and what were my deep fears and anxieties. *If she ever finds out, I thought, she'll reject me.*

Then it finally dawned on me: She already knew!...yet totally accepted me. That freed me up.

HOW AM I DOING?

Finally, remember that the unexamined life is not worth living.

In our home we had what I suspect you have in yours if you're a parent—a growth chart to mark the kids' heights. Ours was on the back side of a closet door. In fact, when we sold the house, we took the door down, replaced it with a new one, and took the marked-up door with us.

Once when Bev, our second daughter, was quite small but quite interested in growth, she promised me she would grow while I was gone on a ministry trip for a couple of weeks. When I returned and stepped off the plane, she greeted me with “Daddy, come home quick! We gotta see how much I grewed!” So we went home to the closet door and measured.

It couldn't have been more than a few millimeters, but she jumped up and down. “Daddy, I told you, I did grow!”

Then we went into the living room for a special time of talking, and she asked me one of those questions you wish kids wouldn't ask: “Daddy, why do big people stop growing?”

I don't know what I told her, but I'm sure it was very superficial: “Well, you need to understand, Bev, they stop growing up but not out—you know, a nice dresser, but their middle drawer is sticking out.”

But long after she was gone, God was working me over with her words. *Why do big people stop growing? What is it with me? Why do seminary professors stop growing? They often do, you know, just like anyone else. Why?*

It's a danger for all teachers. I've had people say to me, "Brother Hendricks, I've been teaching in this department for twenty-three years." Well what does that necessarily prove? I'll tell you what: the grace of God, that's all. Long ago I learned that if you take zero and multiply it by any number, you've still got zero.

After all, experience does not necessarily make you better; in fact it tends to make you worse, unless it's *evaluated* experience.

The good teacher's greatest threat is satisfaction—the failure to keep asking, "How can I improve?" The greatest threat to your ministry is *your ministry*.

So don't be so busy doing things that you don't *become* someone significant. Don't hesitate to go back to the drawing board and ask, "Lord, how am I doing—in light of what *you* want me to be?"

As with all evaluation, any self-examination should be built on three questions: (1) What are my strengths? (2) What are my weaknesses? (3) What do I have to change?

And remember: The process of change is essentially the process of altering your habit patterns. If you do something once, you can do it twice. Do it twice, and you can do it three times. Do it three times, and you're beginning to make a habit of it.

EMPTY PEDESTALS

In a barber shop recently I struck up a conversation with a boy I'd seen there before. After a while I asked, "Who do you want to be like?"

"Mister," he said, "I ain't found nobody I want to be like."

And he's not an exception. If you're out there in the battle, you know what I'm talking about. Kids aren't looking for a perfect teacher, just an honest one, and a growing one. Yet for so many of them, the pedestals are empty.

Our land is covered over today with young people—and adults as well—who are broken at the wheel, who have no clue

why Jesus Christ came to visit our planet, who don't know the Bible has answers for their problems.

Their screaming need is to see men and women who know the living Word of God, who are constant students of that Book, and who allow it to grip them so they grow to hate what God hates and to love what God loves.

And as that truth—personally embraced—begins to transform them, they make an impact.