

TEACHING AND TRAINING

I am indebted to J. Warner Wallace for the following insight. He noted that there is a difference between “teaching” a prize fighter and “training” one. Teaching is cerebral, but training is practical. Once a contract has been signed a change takes place in the mind of the man who will climb into the ring and fight a real opponent. Sadly, many Christians never “train” because they have no plans to do anything with the “teaching” they receive.

J. Warner Wallace is a homicide detective in Los Angeles, California. His specialty is cold cases that are typically over 30 years old. Invariably they are murder cases as these are without a statute of limitation. He has had six high profile convictions and has never lost a case in court. He has never used anything other than circumstantial evidence to obtain these convictions.

Wallace was an atheist until he was 35 years old. At that time he began to apply the same rules of evidence to the story of Jesus that he used in solving cold case murders. Touche! Now he is not only a Christian but is an internationally known defender of the Christian faith. He insists that we don't need any more million dollar apologists to defend the teachings of Jesus, instead he thinks we need a million one dollar apologists. That's where training comes in. If you plan to dialogue with your grandchild next week about some atheistic influence they are facing you will listen differently to the lectures Wallace delivers. You might even take notes.

Stuart Briscoe once told me that he promoted a slogan in his church that read: “Anything that is worth doing is worth doing poorly”. I think he may have borrowed the idea from G. K. Chesterton. At any rate he felt that it was better for the common Christian to deliver a Bible lesson poorly than it was to have a video taped lesson presented by a professional. Someone has quipped that the best way to learn a subject is to teach it. Bingo! What you never expect to use, you lose.

This truth has a wide variety of applications. Raw recruits are not rejected by the army because they shoot poorly. Every sharp shooter was once a raw recruit who shot poorly. The “training” is especially effective in time of war. During W.W. II a man in the infantry could be on the front lines with a mere 6 weeks of “training”. Both Germany and England put pilots into combat with as little as 150 hours in the cockpit. The whole “training” program is accelerated by the certainty of combat. Sadly, many Christians have never been in combat. When confronted by the “enemy” they reach for the phone instead of the Bible. They have heard a thousand lessons on the Bible but often cannot explain even the most basic truths of the Gospel to their own children.

The late Gil Contreras was a missionary to Mexico for over 50 years. Once while teaching a missions class for Harvey Bacus at the Ozark Christian College he noted that in Mexico they teach two books to all new converts.- Romans and Hebrews. Harvey turned to me and said “we sometimes wait until Graduate School to do that!” While teaching in a congregation in the U.S. Gil called on a man to pray who had been a deacon for many years. After an embarrassing silence the man whispered “I don't pray in public”. How sad! Gil observed that such a thing would never be tolerated in Mexico. Over the years Bro. Contreras “trained” hundreds of disciples, many of who were from indigenous people groups who could not even speak Spanish. Over 200 congregations reflect some of the results of “training” disciples to be soldiers of Christ.

Lawson Gregory wrote a book about missionary Frank Labauch (Man of Faith). In that book he relates that when the Depression hit in 1929, Labauch could no longer hire teachers for his literacy program. A native chieftain saved the day by saying: “I'll make everybody who knows how to read teach somebody else or I'll kill him”. Fortunately everybody taught and nobody died. Today 60 million people in 103 countries are literate as the result of each one teaching one. The greatest journey begins with a single step. Choose someone now and get some on the job training!