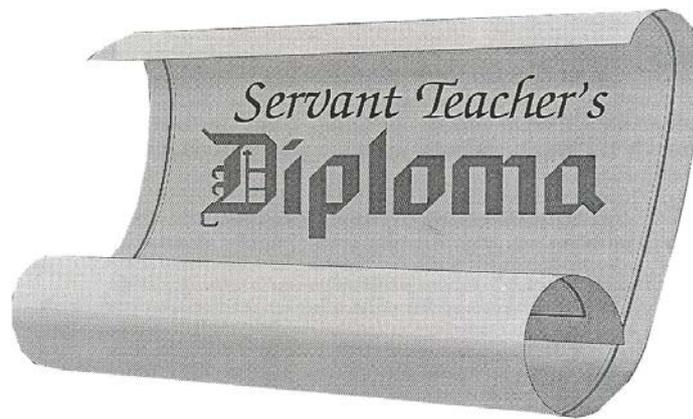


# Starting Well

- Preparing the Environment -



A Teacher's Guide to Sowing  
Seeds into Prepared Ground

Rosalie A. Pedder

**This booklet is dedicated to Alison Neill, who has kept my feet on the ground, made me laugh, and encouraged my involvement in my home region of the Pacific. Thank you for every reminder that life is more than work.**

Also by Rosalie A. Pedder

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Many educators and their teachings, both published and unpublished have influenced my thinking for this booklet, especially the works and practices of Howard Gardner, Thomas Armstrong, David Lazear, Stephanie Burns, Robin Fogarty, Edward de Bono, Tony Buzan, Julia Harper and many others. My own classroom experiences with both high school and university students over more than 30 years have convinced me that we need to give deliberate training to develop the kind of thinkers needed to not merely reproduce but to develop what we teach.

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## INTRODUCTION

This third title in the **Well** series offers you resources and understanding that you can draw from to ensure your classes have a good basis on which to develop learning. None of the **Well** booklets sets out to be a comprehensive coverage of its topic, but to provide basic information to help course and group leaders expand their range of teaching and learning strategies.

**Starting Well** offers some valuable teaching on issues that can seriously affect how well students can learn. Some of the hindrances are heart issues which come out of our learning histories. Some involve the degree of influence we are prepared to allow the Lord to have in our classrooms. Some are about our own efforts to make learning more effective.

And adult student's ability to learn is more in his own hands than a child's is, but both groups are deeply influenced by preparation activities—either by their presence or their absence. It's easy to throw all responsibility onto the students or to spiritualize a student's performance. How easy it is to assume a dozing student is not interested, or that a student who doesn't answer our rapid-fire questions is not paying attention or is resistant. I don't think James' admonition, "*Let not many of you become teachers*" is just about teachers of spiritual things. His warning, "*knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgement*" encompasses the classroom teacher too. Our power and influence is quite extraordinary, and we will be answerable for the way we carry out our responsibilities. How do we bring the dozing student alive? How can we ask questions that honour every type of learner?

This booklet gives you some very simple strategies for keeping interest alive and for ensuring that new portions of information fall into good soil. I encourage you to try out some of these ideas. If you find yourself unwilling to have a go because you and your class are too busy, you're right—you are too busy, and probably aiming for too much content and too little processing. Exercises for creative processing of your content are available in my second booklet, **Learning Well** (1997). In this book, I am more concerned with the ways we prepare our students' minds for learning.

As with **Teaching Well** and **Learning Well**, **Thinking Well** attempts to respond to school leaders' and teachers' most frequently asked questions. May you draw successfully from this Well and feel more confident and more competent as you continue to train an effective army of world changers.

Rosalie Pedder  
Auckland  
New Zealand  
2000

## **Bringing Back The Glory of God**

I had been seriously provoked by Tom Bloomer's message on the leaven in our thinking that he gave at the University of the Nations Workshop in Korea in 1997. I had asked the Lord for some revelation early in 1997 that would help my teaching by deepening my understanding of learning. I expected insight about the brain and learning, something technical. But true to His character, God showed me Himself, and that deeply impacted my understanding of the brain and learning. It was spiritual, not technical insight. God is wonderfully faithful and He answered my prayer dramatically. Not only did it completely revolutionize the spiritual climate of my classroom, but it proved to have a major impact on learning. Acting on my revelation put flesh on Tom's challenge to check the roots of our teaching.

I came across a short study of John Dawson's which said, "*When we confront spiritual strongholds [in a nation] it is not testimony to the presence of a large demon but to an absence of the glory of God.*" He urged that we find out what sin drove it away and to re-establish His presence by bringing back righteousness. If this is true in nations, I assumed it would also be true in institutions where there are indeed some big demons. My ability in spiritual warfare is certainly not up to taking on those demons, and yet there had to be a way I could weaken their hold on my students.

If there was an absence of the glory of God in our classrooms where students still struggled unnecessarily, what were the things that drove it away? I realized all institutions and arenas are ultimately under the Lordship of Christ and yet He had absented His active self from many of them. Areas of life that were clearly under His influence several centuries ago are now freely manipulated by the devil. What happened, especially in education? I realized all kinds of ungodly thinking had been suggested by "experts" and received gladly by unthinking crowds, eager for "new", "better", "easier" strategies for coping with educational issues. So what had caused the glory of God to leave most educational arenas including many YWAM classes? It wasn't that we weren't godly or didn't pray about our schools, though I know we can do much better. It was that we were focusing our efforts in the wrong direction. Many of us were chasing demons, attributing educational problems to the power of the devil, instead of to the absence of the glory of God.

Because we were sometimes impressed with Satan and only aware of God, instead of the other way around, we had tried to battle an enemy whose identity was a bit of a mystery. Was this student affected by a spirit of rebellion? Or was it a spirit of confusion in his life that made listening in school difficult? Were this student's memories of school abuse clothed in a spirit of rejection? Or was it the spirit of discouragement? The devil was getting some great publicity amongst those who were trying to help students, and the students were relieved to be able to lay their woes at the devil's door too.

Unfortunately, that was quite the wrong track. What had made the Lord withdraw His presence from many classrooms? We know sin and God's glory cannot dwell together. Could students and teachers have been party to sin in our schools? Surely not? Oh yes, they could. Some of that sin was unwitting in that a generation of students had been indoctrinated through teachers and programmes in humanistic thinking—and many of those teachers were Christian, but they had not reinterpreted their training for Biblical consistency. That kind of thinking is hard to root out in a single course, and was only part of the problem. It was not an appropriate track for my particular group who were struggling with some more basic skills. What other kinds of sin could they relate to that could have driven God from the classroom? On the first night we met we made a list together of the common sins of students and the common sins of teachers:

**STUDENTS**

disrespect  
laziness  
competition  
backbiting  
cheating  
plagiarism  
tardiness  
lying  
self-interest  
giving up  
fear of failure  
sloppy work

**TEACHERS**

sarcasm  
power  
favoritism  
ridicule  
inequality in assessment  
control  
pride  
inadequate preparation  
self-interest  
too high expectations  
maintaining mystery  
creating fear

This was just a selection of what happens in school, but the Learning Restoration Course of Nov-Dec 1997 (aka Equivalency School) made a commitment to make room again for the glory of God to return to us by aggressively going after these things and putting a decisive end to them. We committed to do all in our power to avoid those sins, and to be quick to repent should we fall through habit or design. In other words, we committed to live a holy life as a student or as a teacher.

A chart was put on the classroom wall showing an empty room coloured in light grey to represent the devil's presence and the absence of the glory of God. We headed it Bringing Back the Glory of God, aware that only we could make that classroom a place that God would be able to inhabit. Now I know that sometimes God simply chooses to show up, but mostly His presence will be found in places that provide the kind of environment of righteousness in which He can feel comfortable. Our plan in the Learning Restoration Course was to make our classroom a suitable place for the glory and presence of the Lord to dwell. We filled in our chart in gold, starting at the top, whenever we made a deliberate choice as teachers or students to act in a manner that would invite the presence of God to be there.

We filled the chart from top to bottom, acknowledging that the foundation of the classroom was not yet in God's hands. The chart filled up with notes indicating prayer preparation, an effort to tune into something that had been difficult in the

past, a choice to declare as lies things that went through our heads hindering learning. Confessions of unacceptable attitudes, a moment of pride, of competition, of disrespect, or laziness, of unpreparedness and so on were added. We kept very short accounts with one another, and watched as startling things began to happen in the classroom.

Before the school, I had specifically asked the Lord to place some big angels at the doors of the building charged with refusing admission to any spiritual forces responsible for rehearsing lies in our students' heads about their inadequacy and their supposed lack of intellect, or about any other area that then rendered them incapable of fulfilling their destiny. As the school progressed, something amazing began to happen. As we purposefully tried to make the classroom a place the Lord would choose to dwell in because we were choosing righteousness, suddenly lies were being exposed. People who had thought for years that they couldn't achieve in a particular area, suddenly found that they could and that their previous beliefs were quite false. Areas like public speaking—a fear-filled activity for many people—would suddenly produce tears of terror. And then, when the lie was exposed, the student would go on to swift and stunning success. Exposure of the lie was quickly followed by deep healing and vastly increasing confidence.

As the presence of the Lord filled our classroom because we made a suitable home for Him by our choice to live righteously down to the smallest detail, we realized that the first thing to succumb to His power were the lies. As our minds were safely wrapped in His glory, the enemy was made too uncomfortable to stay, and truth suddenly and easily made more sense than the lies. As the glory deepened, touching the heart next, healing became simply part and parcel of the classroom experience. It was without fanfare for the most part, and came instead in small victories, surprising confidence and a wholeness that allowed for further growth in other areas.

As His presence deepened even further over those 5 weeks, and the head lived life out in truth, and the heart was healed from the unjust and unnecessary pain of the past, then the feet were able to walk out the new lifestyle. The enemy was too uncomfortable to remain in the room and could no longer affect our direction.

One 42 year-old who had always believed herself too dumb to do math, and who had always left any technological things at home to her husband and son because she thought she couldn't do it, discovered she was not only capable, but good at it. Her healing from some very unkind words in her childhood was complete—no fireworks, no long prayer session, but power in the presence of the Lord. Another student, the same age, burst into tears when I asked her to read aloud. But with determination, she faced the fear and conquered a demon from the past.

A 36-year old mother of 4 who felt her children were much smarter than she was, found she could not only help them with their school work, but could wisely challenge the lies already presenting themselves to their young minds. She

changed her son's comment of, "I can't," to the more useful, "I don't know if I can."

Many leaders were released from that course. Two of the six women wanted to pursue U of N degrees, and another to finish an accountancy course she had given up. The four men stood taller and straighter and were filled with confidence that the things they couldn't do were only a matter of being shown the skills.

Life in all its aspects was improved for everyone since the righteousness touched every area. Families began to operate on the principle of restoring the glory of God; parents shared with children and spouses the principles of good learning that they themselves were understanding in the classroom. The glory of God fell in that room so much that I became almost scared to pray—before the school day I'd ask the Lord for some particular life-changing thing for one of the students and within 30 minutes sometimes, we'd see it happen. As we walked in the glory, we began to understand more of how to think God's thoughts in the classroom. The ideologies and theories that didn't fit in with the integrity of God sounded a flat note and we found them easier to discard. We didn't articulate everything we grasped in the spirit, but we all left the course deeply enriched intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Isaiah 4 is a short chapter which describes a day when there is only 1 man to 7 women (a bit like the teaching profession!), and also describes what happens after God deals with sin, presumably after the people's repentance. And I believe this same picture in verses 4-6 is equally available for us in our classrooms when we choose repentance and live holy lives in everything from personal relations to diligence in our studies:

**"And the Lord will create over the whole site, over every dwelling place of Mount Zion and over her assemblies [or over every class room of YWAM/Body of Christ], a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all, the glory shall be a canopy (a defence of divine love and protection). And there shall be a pavilion for shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge and shelter from storm and from rain." [Amplified Bible, italics mine]**

Under the canopy of the Lord's presence, the lower we can bring it down, the more uncomfortable the enemy is and the less he wants to be there. And when his influence is minimized, God's power simply does what it does best—brings room for exposure of lies, healing of wounds and huge growth in ability and confidence. Bringing back the glory of God to the classroom is a combined effort of both teachers and students—it's an act of unity and that in itself brings the glory down. By the end of our school, our entire poster had been filled with gold and notes of all the things we had done to deliberately make a place for the Lord to dwell. Our efforts to build a temple in our midst for the Lord were as committed and as costly and as joyful as David's report of building the temple in 1 Chronicles 29.

Eccles. 9:18 says, **"Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good."** It was this principle that produced the amazing fruit of

this school—just one person amongst the 10 students and 2 staff could hinder the active presence of God for the rest, and *everyone* took responsibility for it. No one missed class. Everyone showed up early—just to see what would happen next. The power of the spiritual aspect of learning was astounding. If students with difficult learning experiences (but good, if uneducated, minds) could enjoy such phenomenal success, what intellectual-spiritual heights are possible for those whose experience has been more successful and whose minds are trained to cut through the subterfuge of warped thinking? My mind boggles at what Christian universities could produce if we taught this simple principle at the beginning of each course and had people committed to it. What if we dared to suspend or release students during a course, not on the basis of their academic performance, but on the basis of their hindering of the activity of God's presence? What if we actually required students to have their spiritual selves more active than their academic selves? We had room in our course for mistakes and sin, but not for apathy about them. If we fell, we confessed, not always publicly, but always quickly.

The second Learning Restoration Course was just as exciting as we operated by this principle again. This time the gains were not so much in the intellectual realm, as in growth of personal self-worth that allowed students to accept their destiny with hope. There were huge leaps of ambition, from "I'll just be support staff" to "I'm going to university." God did amazing things, just to show individuals how valuable they were.

In the third school, disaster struck. Week 1 passed with no evidence of the operation of the glory of God. Week 2 followed suit. Week 3. Week 4. Finally, a delegation of students confronted me with the issue of the injustice of allowing one student, who was evidently not committed to the process, to remain in the class and so rob them of what they knew could be theirs if only God were free to operate. Eleven of us were working hard at creating an atmosphere for the glory of God to dwell and one was single-handedly pushing it back. I had given grace—he appeared to repent. I had brought correction—he would have a wonderful day. But outside of my hearing (and sometimes within it), he would criticize the mission, the leaders, the program and other students. He was a perpetual victim, rehearsing injuries from childhood on, and never allowing God to heal.

Although it was the last week of school, I finally took him his books on Monday night and dismissed him from the school. Of course, to him it was just another undeserved injury. But for the rest of us the next day, after a wonderful time of processing the event followed by worship, the Spirit of God fell and the last 4 days of the school were as amazing as the first two schools had been. Ecclesiastes 9:18 had been clearly demonstrated in both the positive and the negative. We had been taught a powerful lesson—God was serious about this. If we would prepare a place for Him to dwell, He would achieve more than an army of educators and counselors could manage. But if sin were allowed to reign in just one person, He would withhold His activity. I wished I had acted on my own beliefs sooner, but the experience persuaded me that we have barely touched the possibilities of the classroom.

Try it yourself—prove Him! (And let me know what happens!)

***- ISSUES OF THE HEART -***

***THE STUMBLING BLOCKS  
OF LEARNING***

## Educational Wounding

Just as an athlete cannot expect to perform well if he is physically injured, neither can a student perform well if he is wounded in mind, heart or spirit. In the course of my travels and teaching in 25 countries, I have discovered wounding and disease in a multitude of students. I am always surprised and ashamed by the stories I hear of injury inflicted by teachers, and I'm sobered to remember that before God got hold of me, I was capable of some of these things too. Almost always the hurt has been caused by teachers who have fallen under the influence of the ruling spiritual forces over the institution of education—pride, power, and control.

Students report instances of brutal beatings for minor infractions, destroying their ability to trust teachers. This abuse of **power** was not unusual in the Islands, or in Africa, or Asia, or for many of our older students. Forced compliance with the wishes of authority does not create a trusting atmosphere for learning. Other abuses of power include stories of molestation, rape, and worse. I am constantly amazed by how many of our students and staff have suffered some form of abuse at school. Words have tremendous power, and as Proverbs 18:21 says, they have the power of life and death. So many students carry putrefying wounds in their spirits caused by words of death:

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| You're stupid!                        | What is the matter with you?                       |
| You're dumb!                          | What's wrong with you?                             |
| How could you be so idiotic!          | You're hopeless!                                   |
| It's a waste of my time teaching you! | Are you brain-dead?                                |
| You'll never amount to anything!      | Get out of my sight!                               |
| You're just a waste of space!         | You're all brawn and no brain!                     |
|                                       | You're pathetic!                                   |
|                                       | You'll be lucky to get a job sweeping the streets! |

Offences against students through **control** take the form of sarcasm, humiliation, dictating whether or not a student may study a particular subject, ignoring them or regularly sending them from the room. It shows up when teachers force students to do things their way, not allowing for any individuality. It's there when a teacher tells a student he'll probably fail an exam. It's there when a YWAM or church leader names as a spiritual issue what is really a learning issue. "Your assignment still isn't done? This is clearly rebellion." In fact, perhaps the student has not been given the skills to get the task done. It's there when we refuse to allow the slightest deviation from the guidelines. Such control limits a student's ability to develop his particular representation of the image of God.

Offences against students through **pride** occur when a teacher ungraciously withholds affirmation for a job well done, or insists on being correct no matter what the issue. It's there when a teacher holds up a particular student as an example no one else can reach (whether

the student is the one upheld or the one who fails to meet the exalted standard). It's there when a teacher advises a student against sitting external exams because it will reflect on the teacher's record. It's there when a teacher won't ask a student for his response in the presence of a visitor in case it reflects on his teaching.

Wounding, fear and self-doubt are also often rooted in the family—repeated put-downs, harsh words about a child's probable future, constant comparison with better-achieving siblings, references to family outcasts ("You're just like Uncle Joe! You'll never make anything of yourself"), all add to a student's inability to perform well in learning situations. Some are so afraid of failure and its repercussions, they do not dare to put themselves in its path again. I know—I've been there.

There's little point in beginning any new class you are leading without dealing with the issues of the heart that can hold your students back from the greatest level of success they could achieve. Take time to open the subject up, and to minister healing to your students. Never deny the power or the reality of the wounds—simply invite the healing power of God to restore and to re-establish the love of learning.

Above all, operate in humility, giving away **pride, power** and **control**. That doesn't mean the class makes all the rules and dictates all the class's direction, but it does mean making it a more co-operative venture. Keep alert to difficulties that are rooted in wounding rather than an imagined lack of intelligence and enjoy the delights of seeing students grow in both skill and confidence.



## Choosing to NOT LEARN ~ An infection ~

A few years ago, a friend sent me a book by Herbert Kohl with an intriguing title: "I Won't Learn From You" (Milkweed Editions, 1991) It tells the story of how Herbert, a young Jewish boy living in the United States, refused to learn to speak Yiddish because his grandmother would speak it to his father, effectively excluding his mother—who did not understand Yiddish—from the conversation. Refusing to learn anything that excluded his mother, Herbert developed some elaborate strategies to avoid understanding the language. He would think of other things, listen to bits of words instead of the whole meaning, and watch faces and bodies instead of listening to conversations.

When Herbert (now an educational researcher and writer) went to Harvard University, he found himself in the minority, amongst a majority of white American students. For relief and comfort, he occasionally gathered with the few other Jewish students only to find that they all spoke Yiddish. He realized that his earlier decision had produced a result he had not anticipated. Analysing his previous actions, Herbert Kohl went on to study the ways learners resist learning, and the effects such resistance can have.

Of course, there are occasions when our ability to NOT-LEARN serves us well. It's smart to NOT-LEARN negative things parents, teachers, and peers tell us about our minds. Comments such as, "You're stupid!" or "You'll never be more than a street sweeper!" are best NOT-LEARNED. Our ability to resist learning is a benefit when we are inundated with propaganda, or the lies of hell, but it short-changes us when we use it to express our displeasure with a teacher or our dislike of subject matter that may not appeal to us.

Choosing to NOT-LEARN, which is an act of the will and a decision of the heart, is not to be confused with the practical issues of choosing not to learn some things. For instance, when I went to high school, I had to make some choices and I chose not to learn typing or shorthand. I chose to learn Latin and French instead. My decision was one of practicality, not one of the heart.

In 1993, during the processing time in a course I was teaching, a young man came to me asking for prayer for reversing some decisions he had made in his school days. Part of a gang, he and his mates had decided schooling was not for them. Their belief was formalized by the release of a pop song which included the line

***We don't need no education. We don't want no mind control.***

The young man told me he and his mates had taken that line as their "anthem" and had resisted all learning. Thankfully, today that man is an effective leader who has rejected that earlier decision and has been a successful adult learner.

As I finished reading I Won't Learn From You, I was smugly thinking what a foolish decision Herbert Kohl had made, when an incident from my own life trickled back into my consciousness. When I was 13 and in my first year of high school, I missed a rare day of school. The previous day we had still been reviewing primary school arithmetic which I loved. Long multiplication and division problems were the delight of my life. After my single day of absence, I returned to my mathematics class to discover something weird had happened in my absence. This was in the early 60s at a convent school where talking out of turn was a major crime. So I sat in my assigned place at the back of a room of 36 girls trying desperately to make sense of Exercise 2. My seat companion was merrily doing something incomprehensible with something like this:  $a+b=?$  And  $x-y=?$  What had happened between Monday and Wednesday? What had happened to all the other letters of the alphabet?

I sat somewhat bewildered, frowning deeply, sighing heavily, and looking as confused as I could, hoping to attract the teacher's attention without actively asking for help. No luck. At the end of the class, in good convent school style, I stood demurely (an external attitude only!) in front of the nun as the class was dismissed and said, "Excuse me, Sister, I was away yesterday. Would you explain this to me, please?"

Looking at me hard in the eye, she said, "Rosalie Pedder, you're perfectly bright. Go home and work it out for yourself."

Now before you get too upset on my behalf, she was right. I had missed one 40-minute class and 10 minutes of homework. How much algebra could any teacher explain to a class of 36 on the day of its first introduction? However, the teacher had caught me off-guard and made me feel silly. Had she said, "I tell you what, Rosalie—you try it tonight and anything you don't understand, I'll explain tomorrow," there's no way I wouldn't have conquered it and returned proudly the next day to tell the teacher I didn't need her. But that didn't happen, and as I stood there, saying politely with my mouth, "Yes, Sister," in my heart I was blowing the biggest raspberry I could. I was offended. My ploy for attention had failed. I would NOT-LEARN this stupid stuff. My successful NOT-LEARNING was evident at the end of my second year of high school when my school report arrived in the mail. Imagine my parents' perplexity as they read my mathematics results: Arithmetic 100%, Geometry 100%, Algebra 0%. Do you think I could have learned Algebra? You bet I could, but I chose to NOT-LEARN.

Wherever I find this decision has been made, whether in my life or someone else's, I inevitably find some form of broken relationship. And always the decision to resist learning something profitable, of which we are quite capable, results in some form of loss. For me, a discovery at age 39 that I have more mathematical "smarts" (which I rarely use) than I have language ones (which I use all the time) was sad news to me. I am very like my mother—voice, mannerisms, physique, and nothing like my father. He died when I was 20, and apart from a mutual love of fast driving, we apparently had little in common. Guess what? He was very strong mathematically and we never had a chance to enjoy its delights together.

The more immediate fruit of my decision was obvious at the end of my third year of high school when my first national examination results showed 86% for English (a fine score in the NZ education system) but only 30% for Mathematics, which now was an integration of all three disciplines.

As a teacher, I have realized that giving oneself permission to NOT-LEARN as a form of revenge against a parent or teacher, or as a statement of unwillingness to compete against others, eventually becomes an infection in one's life. For teachers, trainers and parents it is particularly important to identify and reverse those decisions in our own lives or we have no authority to challenge those we influence to accept the challenges before them. In fact we pass on permission to resist learning. When I realized what intellectual strengths God had given me and how little return I had given Him on my mathematical abilities, I had to ask His forgiveness, and with trepidation asked Him if He wanted me to now redeem that area of my thinking. I wasn't looking forward to tackling mathematics again, but I was willing. However, I sensed that it wasn't necessary, as God showed me He was committed to blessing me in the arenas I had developed. I was relieved, but I was also sadly much aware that neither He nor I would ever see what might have been had I developed those strengths as well as my verbal skills.

For some, the decision to NOT-LEARN (an active decision of the heart to resist) reappears in adulthood when a situation arises similar to one which caused hurt in youth. For instance, if a grey-bearded uncle touched a child inappropriately and such offence is unresolved, that child as an adult may not be able to learn from a grey-bearded minister. If an art teacher ridiculed a child's work, causing paralysis in that field, a teacher in adult training who asks for something to be illustrated, may be very surprised by the adult student's strong passive resistance or outright refusal to cooperate. Families which produce three or four strong academic achievers may put undue pressure on another child whose interests lie elsewhere, causing him/her to choose to NOT-LEARN rather than face unfavorable comparisons.

The regular practice of metacognition (thinking about their own thinking) helps students understand why they respond or react as they do, freeing them to make new deliberate choices to learn and to redeem lost areas of development. Because I grew up in a home with a very strong woman at the helm, and because our relationship was very much the leader and the led, I still struggle to be an active learner when the teacher is a strong woman. I tend to protect myself, thinking that to submit to the teaching is to lose my identity. But I know what is happening in my head and heart and can choose to listen and look for the words of life that might come from that new strong woman. That's a sign of both my health and my maturity, and all our adult students need to be helped to reach that place.

As leader, you can help that process by sharing these stories, or better yet, sharing your own experiences, and leading your students to their own health and maturity.

***- ISSUES OF STYLE -***

***DIFFERENT REFLECTIONS  
OF ONE CREATOR***

## **ISSUES OF STYLE**

### **Different Reflections of One Creator**

If all the minds in one of our classrooms could be blended together, we might have some vague idea of the amazing complexity of the mind of God. What is tragic to me is the deeply rooted belief in the West that the way we learn and teach is the way all cultures ought to learn and teach. I know—I too have had to allow the Lord to change my thinking. In the past, if I had a student with a Ph.D. in my class I would be intimidated and threatened.

Then a few years ago during a three-week seminar, two participants wanted prayer for the pain of being treated differently in school because they were “gifted”. I was shocked—neither of them had appeared gifted in the context of the seminar. In fact, they appeared somewhat limited because their strengths were in such narrow fields. Another participant, who had left school at 15 and taken on many different jobs and roles in which she always succeeded, was multi-talented, and smart in all the intelligences. Now *she* was gifted! I realized that at last I was more impressed by wide-ranging demonstrations of intelligence than by degrees in a single discipline. Don’t get me wrong, I applaud those who undertake higher studies—we need them. But I applaud even more those who have developed a wider repertoire of learning and processing strengths.

With such a mobile population these days, it’s most unusual for a class to be made up of a single culture and impossible that all the individuals learn the same way. I believe the continued insistence I see on delivering material in a manner that suits only those we would typically direct to narrow fields of study dishonors God. He has created all people in His image. So who decided that left-brained, logical, language or mathematics oriented students who learn through listening and looking are a better reflection of God than the rest of us?

Our creative students, who need movement and activity, who don’t learn well through listening but are artistic, athletic, musical or people-people are not flawed. They too are created in His image and it is in our best interest to honour and develop the strength God has chosen to display in each person. To limit people to one style of thinking and learning is to say that God has some less desirable characteristics. Hmmm. That’s not something I want Him to ask *me* about when I arrive in heaven!

It concerns me that despite our hearing teaching about the variety of ways people learn, we give mental assent but make little change in our courses. I see it over and over again—from entry level courses to leadership training. Africans and Islanders are as capable of becoming brain surgeons as Americans or Germans, but if the basic knowledge is all delivered by lecture, few of them will succeed, and the perception that they are lacking intelligence persists. Material delivered in ways that coincide with their God-given learning strengths will be easily absorbed.

## **Different Reflections – One Delighted Creator**

All kinds of things affect the learning process. Our motivational gifts affect how we receive teaching, our personality affects it, our mood, our home situation, our expectations of ourselves. Whether the room is warm or cool, whether food is allowed or music is played, whether the lights are fluorescent or whether the chairs are uncomfortable all affect us.

### **MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES**

More manageable is designing teaching that allows students to operate in their strengths more often. Howard Gardner, author of Intelligence Reframed (see book list), maintains that there are at least 8 and perhaps 10 ways of being smart – not just the two that school trains and rewards: **Linguistic** (using language well) and **Math-Logical** intelligence (using numbers and logic). While students learn using these other intelligences, they also enjoy showing off what they know through them. Just ask your class how many really prefer giving back their understanding in an orderly essay! If they had a choice they might well prefer one of these other intelligences which are also reflections of the mind of God:

**Musical:** Using this intelligence students can create their own words to familiar melodies, or write their own music as well, to summarize their learning. Music gives real meaning to content.

**Visual-Spatial:** This intelligence allows people to create illustrations, topical greeting card sets, comic strips, graphs, videos, charts, mind-maps, murals, storyboards and collages, computer slide shows and animations, or to find video clips to support their explanations.

**Bodily-Kinesthetic:** Stretch this intelligence with invitations to create skits, dramas, mimes, living tableaux, 3-D models, collages, clay models, dioramas, raps and exercise routines with topical rhythmic chants.

**Naturalist:** Students use this intelligence to define differences in a group of like things, and to categorize and classify. Ask them to make charts and statistics, groupings and comparisons, contrasts and relationships to other material. Display the material visually, using appropriate descriptive words. If the material can be likened to some cycle or force or element of nature, so much the better.

**Interpersonal:** This intelligence is demonstrated in group and co-operative projects, interviews, role plays, skits, and opportunities to share findings.

**Intrapersonal:** Opportunities to work alone, to do research, to observe others, to create responses of their own choosing, to draw on their own internal resources, and to be creative in their own individual style, will develop this intelligence.

*Your efforts to see your students use every reflection of God that is within them will bless both. Be a blessing!*

## **Different Reflections...One Creator**

### **STORING AND RETRIEVING INFORMATION**

Some learners have a virtual filing cabinet in their brain. They tend to be left-brain learners, the kind who fly through our school system, pass exams and head for tertiary study. When they hear information they drop it into their file drawer and when they hear related material later, they quickly retrieve what they previously heard and add the new information to it.

Right-brain learners, who tend to be the majority of our YWAM/University of the Nations students, do not have filing-cabinet brains. Theirs have been well-described as being more like a Western teenager's wardrobe! All their learning is hurled in there unprocessed at the end of each session because we don't allow sufficient processing time, if any. When related material is presented later, the learner is aware of a vague familiarity with it, and wanders off in search of it in his mental house. His journey may well include a detour to see if the dog is home, and perhaps a quick mental phone call to a friend about next week's concert. Eventually arriving at the wardrobe, it takes him a moment or two to remember why he's there. Then the search begins for this vaguely familiar stuff, but other interesting things in the wardrobe take his attention. Some bear no relationship to the matter at hand, but others have a possible connection and as he stands there fingering each thing, a new understanding develops of how two seemingly unrelated pieces of information actually do relate. Our hero then takes his unique and insightful thought back to the conversation, only to discover that the conversation has turned to some totally new subject. Back to the wardrobe...

After several experiences of these fruitless trips to the wardrobe, many of our right-brain learners stop taking the trip altogether, and in early high school if not before, they have given up making the effort to think things through. Their left-brain classmates can retrieve their information (facts and figures and remembered words) quickly and are applauded by teachers who put high value on speed. The truth is, though, that it's the right-brain student's mental processes that are more likely to produce new thoughts and new solutions. Left-brain learners tend to give back what they received, while right-brain learners link the information to other things they know, and then think creatively and productively about them.

To hear these world-changing ideas, we must be committed to giving right-brain learners time to talk and think about things (while keeping left-brain learners quiet!) before they answer. An investment in a timer for your classroom will win the hearts of your right-brain students. With the timer set for a minute before anyone is allowed to respond, left-brain learners who find answers quickly, have time to improve them and to think more widely, and right-brain learners have time to access their mental wardrobe and think things through a little. Both groups will have quality answers. Don't just point a finger or call on someone by name to respond first – ask who is ready. That gives those still in the wardrobe time to return.

## **Different Reflections...One Creator**

Our role is not usually to train brain surgeons, but knowing that that calibre of mind is regularly in our classrooms should encourage us to serve them well. Once the issues of the heart are dealt with, and the students are ready to learn, we don't want to be the cause of further pain. Now I do not for a minute subscribe to either of these two widely-held beliefs in modern education: *All learning should be fun* and *Every learner should have material delivered to his personal strength*.

All learning is **not** fun. Most of it is very hard work, but it does not also have to be unpleasant. Gardening in spring is delightful – it's hard work, but pleasant. Only a fool would try to carry out the same activities in winter. Why add unpleasantness to something already difficult? But we do that in learning all the time. Something hard but satisfying often unnecessarily becomes something both hard *and* pleasant.

Neither do I believe that a teacher needs to create individualized programs for every student. On the other hand, if a teacher includes in every unit of work (say over a week) a variety of activities and delivery styles, then everyone will work at some time in his strength, at some time in his weakness, and in everything in between. If everything is geared to Western left-brained learners, those few will work always in their strength while the rest work always in their weakness. Guess who passes? Guess who fails? Another effect of this type of classroom is that left-brained learners can learn a baseless pride in their style of learning, and can develop one or two intellectual strengths to the detriment of their other intellectual equipment. If we can design lessons that use a wide variety of approaches, then everyone enjoys their strength periodically, but also develops all the weaker areas so that every learner may give the Lord a fair return on His investment in their minds.

What factors should be considered once heart issues are dealt with? Our learning brains, while each is unique, all have a combination of the same elements, so meeting the needs of all is not possible.

### **INPUT**

God has given each of us several ways to take information in. Some prefer to use their auditory strength and they enjoy the spoken word—both the teacher's and their own! Lectures, tapes and radio are a delight to them. But while they are carefully tuning in their favourite stations, others are rapidly tuning out. Words are a burden to them when they are not accompanied by pictures, videos, graphs, diagrams or word pictures. I know—I'm one of them. Others make little connection with what's being presented unless they can get their hands on it, do it, build it, play around with it, see its emotional significance, or role play it all. Still more need to move while listening or looking, and to touch things while learning. If there are no material pieces they can touch, they'll enjoy handling a koosh ball during the teaching. A koosh ball or walking around during class simply helps them glean more from their weaker areas—it is not a substitute for genuine learning activity that meets their first strength.

## **Different Reflections...Still One Creator**

### **PROBLEM-SOLVING PREFERENCES**

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone approached things the same way? (Actually, if you looked into most classrooms, it's obvious a lot of teachers believe we do!) But when it comes to learning and problem-solving, we are quite different. One group – the convergent thinkers – is focused, following the sequence, committed to following the rules of the issue they're dealing with, and thinking in conventional, expected and approved terms. These people, having to fix a broken window for the first time, will find out how it is supposed to be done, and will invest their energies in doing just that.

Convergent thinkers help get vision established, they are orderly, predictable people we can count on. Civic government depends on them. Policy writers depend on them. Systems like universities and hospitals depend on them. Visionaries depend on them. They are not boring – they are making the rest of us look good!

Roughly 86% of Western and Asian populations are more convergent than they are divergent. Like brain dominance where we prefer the functions of one side of the brain over the other, or can use both equally well, convergence and divergence are in all of us in varying measure. Some are strongly convergent and much less divergent, some strongly both, some very divergent and not so convergent – and some are everything in between! It's the balance that makes life interesting.

Divergent thinkers are risk-takers, out-of-the-box thinkers, visionaries, innovators and inventors. They don't like to stay focused on any one topic for long but to explore all its possibilities. To tell them there is just one way to complete a task is to challenge their possibility-thinking. In classrooms, these students, on hearing the day's topic is STARS, are inventing space suits within seconds! Unfortunately, while they are doing that, the rest of the group is learning the pieces of information necessary to understand the full scope of the topic. On test day the divergent thinker, who has an impressive array of space suits, space craft and alien languages crowding his brain, often has no idea of the difference between stars and planets required for the test.

From a young age these students, whose teachers rarely know how to harness this creative gift, are isolated as weird, inattentive, lazy or dumb. They frustrate teachers who know there is more intelligence there than they are seeing used, and who resort to comments like, "what is *wrong* with you?" "what is the *matter* with you?" and regularly invite the class to laugh at them. I know. I did it too. Not surprisingly, these students often abandon education early, believing they are stupid. Yet the truth is that they carry the gift of God's creativity within their brains, and have the ability to be world changers. These students can focus as well as I can, but in short bursts. Focus shifts and creative assignments are life-savers for them. Because they are capable of having ideas that will change the world, I believe hell has sought them out early to render them ineffective. YWAM attracts many divergent learners because this mission is divergent. Welcome and restore them!

# **STARTING STRATEGIES**

**Creative Analogies**

**Focus Shifts**

**Separators**

## **Adding Life to Learning**

When students gather for a class, it is difficult to tell their general mood, emotional state or learning readiness. To move straight into the teaching can exclude some from the learning process. Often, by using one of the questions in the following sections, I have uncovered issues and problems that a student needs opportunity to express or to deal with before effective learning can take place. At other times, the questions can give opportunity for a student to celebrate something important to him. Hearing their circumstances and feelings can lead to appropriate ministry.

Another advantage of using these opening questions is that through them both students and teachers have an opportunity to get to know each other better. Since the questions allow the participants to choose the level of openness and vulnerability they will use, an atmosphere of trust is developed. It's important that the leader does not try to force a deeper level than the student is offering, or learning could be aborted for the whole session. When the students' decisions are consistently honored, greater depth will soon follow. It is never wise to ask controversial questions during this time as the goal is unity not division.

Since most classroom activity involves heavy use of the left brain, these creative analogies prompted by the pictures and objects you provide, promote the activity of the right brain. When both are stimulated, the left brain deals more easily with the demands of the classroom. For people who are right-brained dominant this is very good news, since the classroom often drains an inordinate amount of energy from them as they attempt to follow the logic of the lesson. Using focus shifts periodically throughout the day's teaching also gives the right-brain learner opportunity to relax and regroup before a new onslaught of material.

Regularly using creative questions also helps the less verbal students to articulate complete ideas. Many of our right-brain learners make intuitive leaps in their thinking and speak out merely the headlines, expecting that others will make the same leaps with the same connections and the same outcomes. By encouraging the full articulation of creative analogies, we can help these students express their visions and their reasoning, and help diminish some of the frustration they both feel and cause with their incomplete verbal expression. Rather than grilling the student about what he really means, a simple hand movement indicating you want more detail usually suffices.

A teacher or class leader who uses this introductory time wisely, can expect the reward of more attentive and alert students. Enjoy!

## CREATIVE ANALOGIES

**Pictures and objects are a good way to provoke creative analogies or other thinking activities. You can use expensive ones or collect them quite cheaply.**

### **Good sources:**

|                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| photographs                     | Happy Families game cards    |
| newspaper photos                | Old Maid game cards          |
| magazine pictures               | phonics cards                |
| advertisements                  | language vocabulary cards    |
| children's picture dictionaries | children's wall charts       |
| preschool books                 | stickers                     |
| clip art                        | children's sequence cards    |
| garage sales                    | cheap toy stores and markets |

### **Tips and Hints:**

- \* trim the words from the cards
- \* keep the words separately to use for verbal analogies
- \* paste paper pictures/stickers on to light card if you'll use them often
- \* laminate your best pictures if you can
- \* don't try to match a picture or object with a person—random use is best
- \* don't edit the choice of pictures or objects too heavily—others will make analogies from pictures you'd throw out!
- \* use only one question at a time for the whole group
- \* don't add to an analogy a student has made—it's HIS idea, not yours
- \* forbid the class to make comments on another's card—either before or after he shares
- \* don't allow people to change their card for an "easier" one
- \* use open-ended questions
- \* give at least a minute's quiet thinking before inviting any sharing
- \* gather objects and toys from home, garage sales, anywhere!
- \* make sure objects and toys are well cleaned before using them
- \* explain to the class what you are expecting of them....

### **Here's an example:**

Suppose John has been given a card with a rope pictured on it, and has been asked how the card represents something about his family. Here are some possible responses—

- \* This reminds me of my three-fold relationships with my parents because....
- \* This reminds me of all the times I had to walk my sister's dog because...
- \* This reminds me of how bound I felt when....
- \* This is the rope I forgot to use on the dinghy. Boy was Dad mad!

## **CREATIVE ANALOGIES**

### **(Using cards and pictures)**

#### **Pictures of Objects—Sample questions:**

How does this represent you?  
How is your spiritual life like this object?  
Why would this object be an excellent symbol for your family/course/ministry?  
What characteristics of this object are like some of God's characteristics?  
Use the positive characteristics of this object to pray into the life of a partner.

#### **Pictures of Groups of People—Sample questions:**

Which person in the picture is you—why?  
Which person represents something you want to become?  
Which person represents something you have left behind as you've matured?  
Which person reminds you of some aspect of the character of God?

#### **Pictures of Scenes—Sample questions:**

Suppose this is an accurate picture of your spiritual/academic/family life—  
Explain why it is accurate.  
What in this picture represents how you feel today?  
How is this picture representative of your current study topic?

#### **Pictures of Action—Sample questions:**

How does this picture explain yesterday for you?  
What does this picture say about your relationships in your family/group?  
Why is this picture a good description of your life right now?  
Explain what in this picture represents something you are growing towards.

#### **Pictures of Occupations—Sample questions:**

When was God last like this for you? (medic, plumber, postman, banker, etc)  
When do you have to take (or need) this role in your family/group/class?  
What attributes of God's character are apparent in a good ..... ?  
What weaknesses would make this a difficult career choice for you?  
What strengths do you already have that would make this occupation a possible (not necessarily desired!) career for you?

## **CREATIVE ANALOGIES**

### **(Using objects)**

Collect several small plastic or wooden shapes (house, car, fish, etc.), hand them out and ask the group to tell a continuing story one by one, basing each addition on the item in hand.

\*

Allow 3 minutes for students to find something in the room or in the immediate environs that they can use to summarize the last section of teaching, the week's material, or a whole course.

\*

Put a pile of random objects at the front of the room (e.g. shoe, kitchen scraper, pen, towel, etc). Have about 5 more objects than you have people. Ask the class to choose one each that describes some person, place or thing that you designate. It could be the base leader, their church, their oldest child, their father, sports, a library, fasting, Africa. Use your imagination! Let them know before they pick their object what it is they are to describe. Have everyone explain their choice briefly.

\*

A collection of fridge magnets or small toys makes a good basis for creative analogies. Hand them out and ask each how the item can be related to the topic.

\*

Cut out newspaper pictures (take out all captions and headings). Give them out and ask each person to explain how their picture relates to their teenage years.

\*

Set out a large number of items and ask students to choose one object that describes what the topic/course is and one that describes what it is not.

\*

Raid the toy box, or go to garage sales or buy a good selection of small toys (or use the real thing) and ask students to express their learning or goals or experiences in terms of the item. Here are some good choices:

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| types of fruits      | grocery items       |
| playground equipment | medical equipment   |
| kitchen utensils     | bedroom items       |
| bathroom fittings    | toiletries          |
| traffic signs        | musical instruments |
| vehicles             | types of buildings  |
| tools                | clothing            |
| crockery/cutlery     | animals             |

## **FOCUS SHIFTS and SEPARATORS**

A key part of starting well in the classroom, in the small group, or in the large public gathering is being ready to give the class short periods of relief from long sessions of teaching. Good teachers also use them between topics or portions of a topic. The short break, especially if it doesn't involve intensive listening, revives energy and attention for the new material.

Educational research—and my own experience—clearly demonstrate that in a normal 50-minute class, the strong learning that takes place in the first 10 minutes is followed by about a 35-minute period of minimal learning, and a last 5-minutes of active intake as class draws (thankfully!) to an end. Research also shows that the more parts of our brain are involved in the learning experience, the more we'll retain.

So...if we would just halve the content and double the processing, our students would learn far more than they do when we push content at the expense of processing. Until that wonderful day arrives, we can at least improve the learning readiness of our students for each major portion of a day's learning. Focus shifts and separators are both a student's life-line, and part of a teacher's arsenal of effective strategies.

**Focus shifts** are short activities conducted in the classroom and taking 1-5 minutes. They give the students a chance to relax for a few minutes, mentally file the last portion of teaching, and re-energize for the next portion. On the whole, it's better to use activities that don't use learning material—keep related activities for learning starters or review exercises.

**Separators** may take up to 10 minutes for a group of 20, or less time if you break the group into smaller units. When the class leaves for a break or a meal, everyone's brain has been focused on the material at hand. When they return, their brains are not at all focused. Students have spent their break time in a variety of ways, activities and conversations. A few minutes spent separating the group from those activities is time very well spent, and readies the class to learn.

## **FOCUS SHIFTS/SEPARATORS**

### **(Using physical activity)**

Remember—one of the easiest and most effective things you can do to ensure that students (or staff) keep their thinking skills alert is to break long periods of talk with one of these quick focus shifts. They take just a few minutes and leave people feeling refreshed. I use them about every 30 minutes no matter how riveting my teaching! It's important for staff as well as students. I use the slightly longer activities as separators. Have fun!

Have group(s) get into order of age without speaking or writing.

\*

Have group(s) of 10-15 get into alphabetical order of hometown. Talking is OK.

\*

Have groups of 10-15 get into order of birthdates (day & month) without talking.

\*

**4-Square:** this is a great ball game the whole class can play in 10 minutes in a reasonable small area. Paint, chalk or mark with masking tape a 3m X 3m square divided into four 1.5m X 1.5m squares. Number the squares 1-4. The aim is to get to #4 by returning the ball bounced in your square by another player. (A soccer or basketball is best). The person in square #4 begins each play by bouncing the ball in his own square and then into the square of another player who hits it with the palms of his hands with the fingers pointing to the floor. Play continues until someone misses the ball, hits it on a line or outside the square, or is hit by the ball before it bounces. Whoever makes a mistake, goes out, the others move around to fill the gap, and a new person comes in at square #1. Encourage good players to play to stay *in*, rather than to put weaker players out.

\*

Stand pairs of same height together facing each other. One is the mover and the other mirrors every action for 1 minute.

\*

Ask each person in a group of about 7 to put that group on paper in order of height without standing up or talking. Then let them check out their efforts. Divide into as many groups as you need.

\*

Gather some children's building blocks, give some to each person and ask them to make something recognizable (other than a box or square) in 2-3 minutes.

\*

Have the group stand in front of their chairs. Tell them to sit when exactly 21 seconds have passed. Let them see or hear when the timing begins, but not cheat by hovering over their chairs. They must sit straight down when they think time is up. Use a timer that beeps if possible.

## **FOCUS SHIFTS/SEPARATORS** **(Miscellaneous activities)**

Create a set of 40+ questions on individual cards that students can ask one another to get to know them better. (E.g. What did you dream of being as a child? Who is your favorite relative and why?) Share in pairs or threes for 3 minutes.

\*

Ask one student to name a type of room (e.g. bathroom/office/laundry) and another to name a letter of the alphabet (e.g. "S"). Give everyone 2 minutes to write down as many items as they can beginning with that letter to be *normally* found in that room. Have the one with the most share, then let others add more.

\*

Make up a set of 30 people relevant to your group (bible characters or people in the class or base, perhaps). Cut up your list and shuffle them well. Give students a card each with three names at random from the master list. Every half hour or so, turn over individual cards from your master set and read out 3 of the names. Award a small prize (candy) for the first to have all 3 names on his card read out. To make it more difficult, give a clear clue about the person instead of the name.

\*

Ask for a one word description of the last session OR ask for words that begin with the same letter of the alphabet OR give out foam or wooden letters and ask for a word beginning with the assigned letter.

\*

In pairs in 1 minute, jot down as many reasons as possible for saving the fluff and lint from the clothes drier (or for saving the hair from each haircut).

\*

Have pairs interview each other for some significant event in their life at age 15—report back.

\*

Think about this for 1 minute and then share: What strengths do you see in yourself that are directly related to your cultural/ethnic heritage. (I have a good deal of the hard-working German in me, and a dose of the Irish quirky sense of humour!)

\*

Assign each a body part—what life lesson have you learnt through that part? E.g. a broken leg might have taught compassion or serving.

\*

Ask: Which book of the Bible would you keep if you were allowed only one of them by government decree? Why?



## **FOCUS SHIFTS/SEPARATORS (Con't)**

Buy some plastic stencils and give each student one. Give them 1 minute (timed) to create a picture someone else recognizes.

\*

Play a short portion of a well-known classical melody. Have group hum as much of the rest of it as they can without faltering. Then play it all to them.

\*

Ask each to share a particular like and a dislike that are in different categories (i.e. not two foods). Halfway through, ask someone to recall what another person already said. Train them to listen to and expect to learn from each other. Ask again when all have shared.

\*

Create a list of 20 completely random items and choose a letter of the alphabet. Use any 10 of your list for a focus shift. (Use another mixed 10 next time). Have class write the numbers 1-10 down the page, and call out your random items quite quickly. Don't repeat any. Each answer should begin with the same letter you chose earlier. E.g. something using a battery, a country, a type of soup, something flexible, etc.

\*

Hide half the class (or about 10 people) behind a curtain, blanket or sheet. Each of the hidden participants puts the left hand—without watches—to poke out under the covering. The rest of the class should not be able to see whose hands they are looking at. Those not hidden now guess who owns each hand and writes their guess beside the number of each. You can write numbers on the hands or simply number from the left. When time is up, reveal those hidden. You can add difficulty by adding the watches and rings to the wrong hands!

\*

Tell group to open their bibles and find the 10th-last word on page XXXX (teacher chooses). Each stand up and call it out when they find it.

\*

Decide a winner for any random competition (Best dressed, Best eater, Best talker, Most likely to change the world, Most likely to stay out of jail, etc.) with an arm-wrestling competition.

\*

Form pairs and with 2 minutes' practice sing a familiar song word-about, keeping both the timing and the melody. Singing syllables and phrases is out!

**(Con't...)**

## **FOCUS SHIFTS/SEPARATORS (Con't)**

Magnetised words are common now—make up random sets of 15 or so words and have students race against the clock to alphabetize them, or to put them in order of number of letters, or to choose their own way to arrange them that a partner must figure out.

\*

Give two random words to each person. Begin a story, then pass off to the next person who must incorporate one word in his story. Go round the group again for second word. The rest can guess the random word if you like. Don't use words people may not know. Adding to the story will add all the difficulty you need! (If you have name-tents on the desk, you could write the words inside where students can't see them ahead of time.

\*

Gather and copy several cartoons on a single page, shrinking the size if necessary. Cut out or cover up the captions. Give each person a copy of the page and allow 5 minutes for them to write in their own captions making them topical.

\*

Go quickly around the group having everyone name different examples of a chosen category until they run dry—square things, types of car, round things, etc.

\*

Topical telegrams: choose single words (such as discipline, economics, popularity) and use each letter in sequence to create a telegram or sentence related to your topic. For example, if the topic is budgeting, ECONOMICS could become Every Citizen Owes No Outstanding Money If Consistently Saving.

\*

Use a game like Headbands or create your own cards with the names of people (historical and contemporary), places and things. Put the card in a headband or somewhere the person cannot see it, but the partner can. The person assigned the card must ask his partner yes/no questions to discover who or what he "is" within 20 questions.

\*

Have each tell where they were and what they were doing in this month 10, 5 and 1 year ago. After several have shared, ask for a volunteer to recall what specific people already said. Continue with rest of group, and ask again.

\*

Copy a page of 5 tic-tac-toe (noughts and crosses) frames or let them draw their own, and give the group 2 minutes to play all 5 games in pairs.

\*

Stand pairs together back to back with pen and paper. Without looking back, jot down what the other person is wearing. (Of course, you don't warn them what the activity entails!)

**(Con't...)**

## **FOCUS SHIFTS/SEPARATORS (Con't)**

Have a pile of old newspapers in the room. Everyone needs a pair of scissors. (A class set is always a good idea.) As a last resort, ripping the paper is possible! Print and cut out the first names of everyone in the room. Hand them out randomly but make sure no one gets their own name. Now allow 1-minute for the class to look quickly through a few pages of newspaper to find a picture or headline that can be used to describe positively the person whose name they were given. Allow a few minutes for explanation.

\*

In 30-seconds, one person tells a partner at least 5 good things about himself. Then the partner shares.

\*

Have a few good one-liners everyone can copy down as a poster about the topic.

\*

Get or make a tape of about 40 everyday sounds. (You can get a lot from TV ads—just eliminate the words. Each sound need last only a few seconds.) Then make a card for each person with 3 of the sounds randomly pictured or simply written down. At every change of topic, play 3 sounds. Award a small prize (piece of candy) for the first to hear their 3 sounds.

\*

Copy some simple children's Spot the Difference pictures and set a 1-2 minute time limit for each person to find all the differences.

\*

Form groups of three—give three minutes for them to talk fast and find three things they have in common that are uncommon. For all to have brown eyes is not uncommon, but for all to still have both sets of grandparents alive is uncommon. Let the group decide if the things chose are uncommon. Report back—some surprising things can be discovered under pressure!

\*

Have each write down 5 African countries and their second grade school teacher in 15 seconds. Set your timer before giving the instructions so you can start it quickly.

\*

Ask everyone to share the meaning of their name, and why their parents chose that name.

\*

Ask: Who is a person who was important to you 5 years ago? Why?

**(Con't...)**

## **FOCUS SHIFTS/SEPARATORS (Con't)**

Get everyone ready with pen and paper, and give them 30 seconds to draw a recognizable pelican (or sparrow, or motor-bike).

\*

Make a list of 25 activities and copy them for each person. (Use things like Walking the dog, or Paying the bills). Then ask each to choose and explain one that best describes the past month.

\*

Give the group 10 minutes to interview you about yourself.

\*

Find a 10-20 piece jigsaw puzzle with a picture that has some relevance to the class or to a point you want to make. Give each person a piece, and let group assemble the puzzle. Add your point!

\*

As above—but give copies of the same puzzle to two or three groups, and make completing the puzzle a competition.

\*

Collect pictures, photos, clip art or stickers showing different emotions. Distribute to class and ask when and for what reason each last experienced the emotion his card depicts.

\*

Buy small balloons and before blowing them up (one for each member of the group) put impromptu-speaking topics in each balloon. For light relief between teaching sections, someone pops a balloon, reads the topic and begins speaking on the topic within 1 minute, and tries to speak for 2 minutes.

\*

Write a course song to a popular tune, allowing time to write, practice and sing a new verse each week that summarises the teaching. Keep singing the early verses too.

\*

Find a children's version of Pictionary or make up lists of four fairly basic words (e.g. plate, smile, limp, bedroom). Give each person a different list and set the timer for two minutes. Each one then must draw their four words so that their partner says them accurately without any verbal prompting or clues. When all four of the first person's words have been guessed, the second person draws his words. Both people should finish within the two minutes allowed.



## **MORE STARTING STRATEGIES**

**MIND-MAPPING**

**TIMING**

**SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

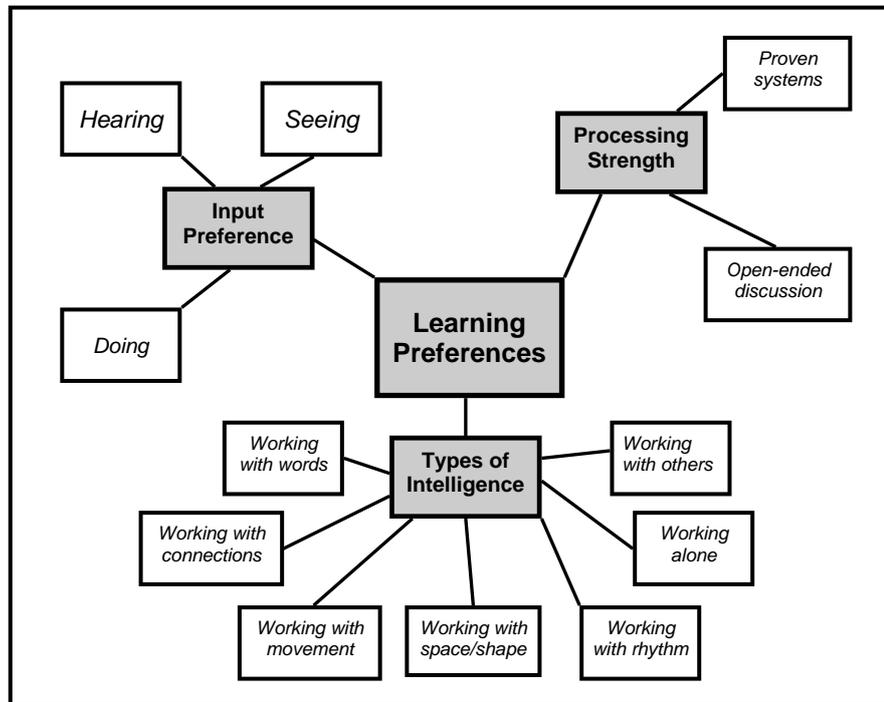
**PROFESSIONAL READING**

# MIND MAPPING TO RECORD

Mind-mapping, the brain child of Tony Buzan who has written many books on the brain (see booklist at back), is a great relief to those who find it frustrating to take written notes of a lecture or sermon. For those who love words and who are visual learners, writing notes is a simple task. For the kinesthetic learner, who often doesn't spell well either, trying to record useful notes at speed is an uncomfortable stress. For these students, and also for those who love to capture ideas in pictures, or who learn best when the big picture is evident, mind-mapping is a real boon. Later, when the pressure of keeping up is off, a student can translate his mind-map into written notes or put them on the computer. If his connections and layout in his mind-map are already effective, there's no need to create them again in a longer form. (I can hear all the artistic and kinesthetic learners saying a hearty, "Amen!")

This form of record can also be used to track a book using one map per chapter, or even as a method of book report, provided the question can be responded to in this format, and if markers let students talk through their thinking before it's graded.

Here's a mind-map that modifies some things I learned years ago, and is easy to track. I could easily add further knowledge to any part of it.

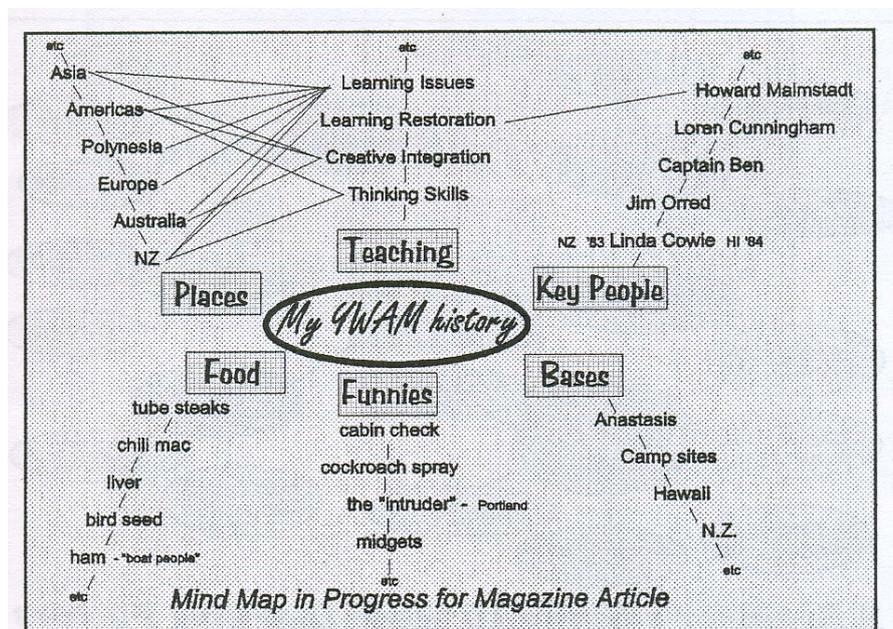


## MIND MAPPING TO EXPLORE

Here's another use of Mind-Mapping—it can be used successfully to explore a topic. Once, on a day's retreat with the Lord, and driven there by the sense of being completely overwhelmed by life at the time, I drew out a mind-map showing all I was involved in. As I looked at the big-picture I had created, I realized why life felt so out of control. Once I understood, I was able to make some changes and to allow the Lord to show me what to do.

Use at least an A4 or letter-sized page. Use colours, sketches, linking lines, and clear printing. Explore an idea and when you run dry, move on to another track. If a fresh idea about an earlier track comes to you, you can easily move back to add it. The finished product becomes a big-picture, not a list of ideas in the order you have them. Not all of us order our thoughts in perfect sequence, but a finished mind-map shows no evidence of the order in which we added items.

I often use mind-mapping to help me work out what I should include in a workshop or an address. It's a form of brainstorming for me. I put down all the things I have to choose from, expand them and then determine what I should use. It might end up that I use only a single track from my larger map, but then I put that key word in the centre of a new page and develop that important idea. Here's a mind map I've used to explore my YWAM history. It doesn't have to make perfect sense to you but to *me*.



## Timing Makes the Difference

Probably the single most useless thing we do as teachers, or allow teachers to do to us or our classes, is to present far too much content with too little processing. A typical attitude of experts is that they feel they must pour all their knowledge on the class in one enormous explosion. It's a little like trying to teach kindergarten students about other nations and then burying them in details of the world wars, changing national boundaries, political philosophies and economic history. We act as though this is the only opportunity these students will ever have to hear this topic. We forget God's ability to put people in the way of deeper understanding on another occasion should they need to know more.

Edgar Dale's research into the degree of retention—given how students are involved in the learning—shows clearly that material that is merely read or heard will produce 10%-20% retention. What a waste of good time and energy. Learning that involves the student in hearing, seeing, saying and doing all together, rather than *robbing* us by requiring time that might have been used for speaking, actually produces about 90% retention. Why do we believe and act as if research about learning applies to everyone but us? Why do we teach as if we are immune from human reality and as if God should cut through principles He has established and give us excellent learning in return for mediocre teaching?

I am delighted every time I hear of a teacher or a school leader who is committed to creating time for processing, or who limits the speaking time of the teachers. We have some great teachers both in our midst and from other organizations. We just don't have enough of them. Too many take us at our word when we invite them to be our guest speakers, and they speak, and speak, and speak....

Other research shows that in any class or sermon, we learn a lot in the first ten minutes, very little from then until it is clear the teaching is about to end, and a little more in the last five minutes. As a simple experiment, try memorizing a list of twenty items in two minutes. You're sure to remember the first eight or so, and forget the rest except the last two or three. The principle is the same in the classroom. It's possible to counteract this lost learning though, by breaking up the teaching into short portions interspersed with focus shifts and breaks and review activities. Each new beginning allows larger portions of material to be absorbed, so the more beginnings, the more learning.

This kind of approach to delivering the content is best served by having a timed program for the session that clearly schedules focus shifts, separators, review and varied forms of content delivery. Give it a try!



# **A Safe Environment**

## **Relationship**

There are very few students who engage in optimum learning when they feel as if they are an anonymous face in a crowd of other anonymous faces. Many of our students come from cultures which hold relationship to be a major value. Our Western style of education focuses less on relationship and more on agendas and content. But without a commitment to relationship, many teachers may interpret silence and polite nods as evidence of learning rather than evidence of non-involvement. A simple first step to relationship is to produce a cover page for copied notes personalized for that group.

Time spent on the first morning getting to know students by name, allowing them to share something personal that they choose to share (see the Analogies section), and sharing something of yourself is never wasted time. Too often, teachers are introduced, and after a comment or two about how nice it is to be there, they launch into their material as though the class's eternal salvation hinges on their hearing every thought the speaker has ever had on the subject. Their view is that they can't afford the time to sacrifice their content to building relationship, but I have proven that if the agenda is put aside for as long as it takes on the first day to build real relationship, then I am able to deliver more content (interactively, of course!) that will be retained than if I simply use every moment to teach.

## **Classroom Setup**

If the class arrives to find chaos in the room as equipment is found or desks have to be arranged, their readiness for learning dissipates rapidly. Do all you can to have the room ready for class to begin, even if it means getting up early. Ask for name tents to be available to help you remember names—but you don't know the students until you can name individuals without the cards! If the class has fewer than 20, put chairs or tables in a U-shape so that there is no back row and everyone can see everyone else—great for relationship. If every wall is full of posters, signs and pictures, try to have the front wall cleared—graphics that compete with your message can dilute its effect.

## **Ready for Action?**

Part of your presentation for class will include your well-planned and timed program, all the items, overheads, notes, good whiteboard pens, and marked books that you'll need. Nothing is more frustrating than to hear a teacher promise to use or show some item and then have to admit they can't find it or didn't bring it. Be well prepared.

Of course, no preparation is complete without a good foundation of prayer. Having a strong sense of God's purpose for each group you teach helps you understand your part in the network of influencers they will face. Do your part well!

## **BOOK LIST**

### **- Some Recommended Resources -**

|  |                                |                                 |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Seven Ways of Knowing</b> ('90)                             | Hawker Brownlow(Aust)          | David Lazear                    |
| <b>Seven Ways of Teaching</b> ('91)                            | “ “                            | “ “                             |
| <b>Seven Pathways of Learning</b> ('94)                        | “ “                            | “ “                             |
| <b>The Learning Revolution</b> ('93)                           | Profile Books, NZ              | Gordon Dryden/<br>Jeanette Voss |
| <b>In Their Own Way</b> ('87)                                  | Jeremy P. Tarcher              | Thomas Armstrong                |
| <b>How to Maximise Your<br/>Child's Learning Ability</b> ('93) | Avery Pub. Gr.                 | Lauren Bradway/<br>Barbara Hill |
| <b>Frames of Mind</b> ('83)                                    | [The original academic theory] | Howard Gardner                  |
| <b>Intelligence Reframed</b> ('99)                             | Basic Books                    |                                 |
| <b>Great Lies We Live By</b> ('93)                             | Caminole Pty, Ltd              | Stephanie Burns                 |
| <b>The Book of Genius</b> ('94)                                | Stanley Paul, London           | Tony Buzan/<br>Raymond Keene    |
| <b>Make the Most of your Mind</b> ('77)                        | Pan                            | Tony Buzan                      |
| <b>The Open Mind</b> ('96)                                     | Tandem Press                   | Dawna Markova                   |
| <b>The Dominance Factor</b> ('97)                              | Great Ocean Publishers         | Carla Hannaford                 |

*Tony Buzan has written a lot about the mind, and there is an extensive bibliography of other resources in most of these books, including weird stuff.*

