

TEE (Part 2) and the Traditional Seminary

by Ernst H. Wendland

[A paper presented at the Missionaries' Conference of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa in February 1973 and at the 1974 World Mission Seminary Conference, Tsuchiura, Japan.]

At our November 1972 Conference enough interest was shown in an evaluation of Theological Education by Extension to encourage a continued investigation of the possibilities of this relatively new program. In the original presentation we looked at the history and basic concept of TEE, heard about some other reactions to it, and came to some general conclusions of our own. It was the consensus of our Conference that we should consider more specifically how a program of this kind would affect our overall program, and what practical steps would be necessary to begin with to implement a project of this kind. To this end a committee was appointed to propose possible steps for further action on the part of the Conference itself.

Subsequently other materials have arrived which shed a bit more light on the program itself. *An Extension Seminary Primer*, written by Ralph R. Covell and C. Peter Wagner was received, as well as a book dealing specifically with *Programmed Instruction for Theological Education by Extension*, written by Ted and Margaret Ward. We have also been able to obtain a few copies of programmed text materials, produced both in Latin America and in Africa for purposes of TEE. Unfortunately we have to date received but one reaction to the seven copies of the original paper sent overseas to various school heads and committees of our Synod. This is understandable in view of the great distances separating us. Incidentally, the one reaction received was positive, but also raised a number of questions.

On the basis of the above as well as further thoughts of our own the following questions seem to form the present center of interest:

- A. Does commitment to TEE mean that we are rethinking the form which the Christian ministry in Africa may take?
- B. How would TEE affect our own ministry as expatriate missionaries?
- C. What would TEE mean as far as our present Bible Institute-Seminary program is concerned?
- D. What kind of materials would TEE require? Would this mean producing our own programmed instruction materials? What would this involve in terms of manpower, printing facilities, money, etc.?

It will be our purpose in this follow-up paper to look at these questions more closely.

A. Does commitment to TEE mean that we are rethinking the form which the Christian ministry in Africa may take?

Ambivalent answers like "Yes and No" to the same question always sound like straddling the fence. If one thinks in terms of a sudden and radical change in the form of the Christian ministry in our work, the answer is "No." If one thinks, however, in terms of gradual modifications and hopefully to improvements to our present arrangement, the answer is "Yes."

One could not think in terms of sudden changes for the simple reason that the development and implementation of a TEE program alone would take several years to put into effect even on a modest basis. And then it would take some years more to ascertain just how successfully the program is working out. Taking initial steps now, in other words, wouldn't necessarily show itself until years later.

It is also self-evident that we shall have to continue to insist on pastoral standards fully as high, if not higher, than those we have set for ourselves at present. If we want an independent ministry in Africa eventually to take on all the functions presently taken care of by missionary-pastors, we couldn't possibly think in any

other terms than a full-time, professionally paid, and highly trained ministry, at least as far as part of the future working force is concerned. Regardless of what some of the more radical proponents of TEE may claim for their program, we feel that this kind of ministry can only be trained in an institutional set-up. In fact, only a very few extremists of TEE persuasion argue that one can dispense entirely with institutionalism and professionalism in the holy ministry in this our day.

Our experience in Africa, born out also by the experience of others, has taught us, however, that in some respects we cannot carry on the work here as we do in America. In Africa it would seem that we're going to have to think of the ministerial working force in terms of two levels: pastors, and pastoral assistants. By pastors we mean fully trained, full-time workers, supported by the church. By pastoral assistants we mean part-time, perhaps partially supported, or possibly volunteer lay leaders. There are social, cultural, and economic reasons as to why we shall have to think in such terms. Especially for someone unacquainted with the African situation it will be necessary to explain what is meant.

Much of our African work is done in rural areas, and this will continue to be true for many years to come. The pattern in these rural areas is to organize many relatively small congregations, each separated by several miles. It would be fine to say that three or four smaller congregations ought to combine to form one large congregation. Because of transportation difficulties—possibly none of our village members has a car of his own—as well as certain other factors typical of Africa, this just doesn't work. We're simply going to have to deal with many smaller congregations, whether we like it or not.

Now, one might say, can't one man possibly serve quite a number of smaller congregations on the same day if he operates on a tight schedule? Anyone who speaks of "operating on a tight schedule" simply hasn't lived very long in Africa. People are not time-conscious. They are notoriously lackadaisical about time schedules. You can threaten them, brow-beat them, plead with them, cajole them—all in vain. Sometimes a service will start as much as an hour late and there still will be latecomers, nonchalantly walking in as though nothing were wrong. All of which means that one man is lucky, indeed, if he can arrange to serve more than two places on the same day. His prolonged presence at each place is all the more urgent because in many places he is the only one capable of also teaching Sunday School.

Can two or three smaller congregations like this support a full-time worker? Here various factors come into play. Perhaps they could, but it's going to be a long, long time before they will support him at the level which he expects.

In Africa people are status-conscious. A man who has left the village for the purpose of receiving a number of years of higher education, whether that be a government secondary, technical training, or Bible school, has departed from the illiterate or primary school level into a higher bracket. Why? It just is that way. You can argue about this as vehemently as you like, your words are not going to change things. Neither will a few lessons on stewardship principles make a great impact. We once thought, perhaps, that providing a man with an education largely **at our expense** would lead him to be so grateful that he would be willing to go out and serve the Lord for whatever he could get from the people. By virtue of the education which we have supplied, however, we have simply placed this man into a higher income bracket.

We emphasize in our pastoral theology courses that a religious worker should have the same living standards as the people whom he serves. Everyone tacitly agrees. In examinations one invariably receives the expected answer. In actual fact, however, the full-time religious worker who has been institutionally trained for his job is no longer satisfied to live at a subsistence level. Neither are the material assets of his people, which are usually in the form of land or cattle, something to give him a certain economic stability. The offerings in kind or in cash which he would have to depend on are certainly a far cry from what he would expect in order to carry on even a modest existence. The social and economic pattern of African life isn't as yet at a point where several smaller congregations are going to think realistically in terms of supporting a full-time worker as he undoubtedly deserves to be supported. We may argue, "Yes, the people can do it if they have learned to appreciate the Gospel!" We may hope for better things to come as the people grow in numbers and in their level of sanctification. Past and present experience, however, indicates that the American pattern of support is going to be a long time in coming. Indeed.

We are by no means censuring the mission subsidy program which we have adopted and which we are presently following. We had to start somewhere in order to plant congregations. We are thankful for the precious gifts of men willing to work for the Lord, as well as the generous gifts received from overseas so that this program can be carried out. Our efforts toward stewardship education have also not been entirely without fruit. We must realize, however, that we cannot indefinitely continue to train full-time workers as our only working force and have them serve a few smaller groups of Christians here and there at a high rate of subsidy.

We are not alone in this experience. Other church bodies face the same problem. They call this "training by extraction." They point to the fact that depending exclusively upon full-time workers, institutionally trained, creates a ministry which is naturally going to have to rely upon the mission indefinitely for subsidy. They also point to the fact that the men trained in this manner are not always going to be accepted as leaders by the people to whom they are sent. Although they may measure up academically, they do not always possess the mature qualities of leadership in the community, which is so important in African rural society.

All this points to another source of local congregational assistance which will have to be considered seriously if the African church is to experience a more natural and healthy growth. This source is the mature, dedicated lay leader.

Here we do not have to point alone to the experience of other church bodies which have emphasized this pattern of congregational leadership for some years. Neither do we have to say that this method is characteristic only of the rapidly proliferating independent church movements in Africa. In more recent years we have had our own experiences with this kind of ministry. Consider the situation with Mr. Edson at Nanseta village, Malawi. He is an established leader in his community, accepted as such by the people. On Sundays he conducts services for two hundred people in a church built entirely by the members. He needs guidance for sermon materials and help with instruction classes. He does not administer the sacraments. But with the help of pastoral guidance he is able to serve as a valuable assistant. For various reasons one questions the advisability of taking a man like this out of his environment and sending him to the Bible Institute. At the same time one would like to offer him more opportunity for increasing his effectiveness as a church leader.

Perhaps Mr. Edson's case is exceptional. In Chipata, Kitwe, and possibly several other places, however, we have congregational lay leaders carrying out similar duties. In fact in Chipata the lay worker seems to be much more accepted by the people than the evangelist who once served there. In all cases mentioned above the men receive no subsidy from the mission for their service.

In retrospect we may wonder, perhaps, if it was the wise thing to extract some of our older and mature congregational leaders out of their surrounding, and expect them to take two years of institutional training. The thought may be academic, since then as well as now there wasn't much of an alternative. We can anticipate, however, that we shall continue to be confronted with situations like this, and that TEE can offer us an alternative which will be more in keeping with the situation as we find it in Africa.

Somewhere we read that the old, established church bodies, including the Lutherans, have a more difficult time adapting themselves to any sort of concept like TEE. They are too steeped in their traditions, it was maintained, too fixed in their concept of the form which the ministry must take in every case. If any church should resent such implications it is the Lutheran Church of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod as well as any mission connected with this body. Prof. John Schaller gave expression to our position on the office of the New Testament ministry in 1913, in his introduction to his "Pastorale." Taking strong exception to the legalistic, romanizing tendencies of 17th century theologians in Germany, Prof. Schaller states:

The concept of the *Pfarramt* (the Pastorate) is historically a flexible entity, even as all ecclesiastical regulations have experienced many changes in the course of the centuries. Only such a person will see a weakness in this, who consciously or unknowingly in romanizing fashion considers outward ordinances, particularly those relating to ecclesiastical regulations, to be a *nota ecclesiae*. Since God in the Holy Scriptures, other than the apostolate, prescribed no specific forms in which the public ministry of the Word must be proclaimed in His congregations, it has always been left to the church to set up such forms, that is to say, to arrange

and to distribute the functions which serve the church's edification and preservation in such a way as fit the situations in which it exists at a certain time.

After applying this to the American scene Prof. Schaller continues:

The pastorate as such is not a biblical, but in every case a concept arising out of history; in other words, the pastorate is at every time and in every place that, which the church has so designated. One dare not identify the New Testament office of preaching (*Predigtamt*), as the Scriptures describe it, with the pastorate (*Pfarramt*). The New Testament office of preaching is the service of each and everyone, who occupies himself with New Testament preaching and wherever this service is rendered by Christians.

Prof. Schaller goes on to distinguish between that preaching which is done by every Christian in the exercise of the universal priesthood of believers, and that which is proclaimed publicly in the name of the congregation. Under the latter he includes the service of pastors, teachers, teaching deacons, professors and so on. In each case the functions are prescribed according to the office and by virtue of the call received.

Our point is simply this: our biblical concept of the ministry nowhere binds us to insist that those who proclaim the Word must necessarily have received a prescribed number of formal years of training. The church, both congregationally and synodically, will want to guard against the proclaiming of false doctrine. It will want the sermons to be scriptural and edifying. If doing this in some cases through supervised lay assistants best serves the needs of the church because of social and economic circumstances, it would seem to be wise to encourage that kind of service in every possible way.

Coming back to our original question: "Does commitment to TEE mean that we are rethinking the form which the Christian ministry may take here in Africa?" It should be obvious that we do have in mind the use of this training method as a means of encouraging the use of more lay leaders in the service of preaching. It would hardly seem, however, that this constitutes any kind of radical change in form. It is rather a matter of strongly encouraging one of the forms which we have already been using.

B. How would TEE affect our own ministry as expatriate missionaries?

To begin with not much at all. We are already as missionaries working in the pattern of missionary-pastors. We servo congregations. They are out pastoral responsibility. But except for the administration of the sacraments and official acts such as weddings and funerals, we stay pretty much in the background. We function largely through other called workers. They do the preaching, the teaching, the instructing, the visiting. Gradually they should also take on more of the management of the affairs of the congregation, as many as they are capable of doing.

We have often discussed the question as to how much supervising a missionary-pastor must still do. It's very difficult to pin down any fixed answers on this because so much in this regard lies in the ability of the pastoral assistant. How much confidence do the people have in him? To what extent does he do his own sound thinking? How dependable is he? There is always the danger of too much supervision, as there is also the danger of not enough. So much also depends upon our own judgment of the situation, our own conscience as to what the care of souls entails, our own zeal or sometimes lack of it in doing the Lord's work, not to forget also the amount of time our work load allows us to devote to what goes on in our individual congregations. In our present crisis a man tells me that he has eighteen congregations under his supervision, some of which lie over five hundred miles away. I feel for him! One would hesitate to pass judgment upon the working ministry of a brother in Africa just as one would not care to do the same in America. One missionary-pastor may feel that in a certain situation he needs to make calls with his evangelist, personally conduct the congregational meetings, tidy up the records which are still handed down to him in a state of confusion, or haul cement blocks for the

congregation when it cannot seem to find its own means of transport. Another man may have been able to have reached the point where many of these details can be taken care of quite well without his personal involvement.

One matter of supervision, however, is never an adiaphoron. That has to do with whether or not the Gospel is proclaimed in its truth and purity and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. It would seem to be of extreme urgency that right here is where the chief burden of our supervisory work lies. What kind of sermons is the man preaching? How clearly and thoroughly is he doing his work of instructing? What comfort and admonition is being received by those in special need of spiritual care? We maintain that it is far more important to sit down with an evangelist or religious worker and faithfully and regularly go over such matters with him than to become involved in too many extraneous details. As much as possible let him be the point of contact with the people, so that they learn to look to him more and more for leadership. The same principle follows whether the assistant be a Bible Institute graduate or a voluntary lay leader. We cannot take for granted just because a man has spent two years in Lusaka that he now knows all the answers or that he can proceed on his own as far as all sermons and lesson materials are concerned.

As the work of spiritual supervision through our assistants thus continues to be the chief pastoral concern of our work as expatriate missionaries, involving also those who teach at our Bible Institute and Seminary, perhaps we can appreciate how a program like TEE can supply a greater need in years to come. The weekly or bimonthly session with our assistants lies at the heart of our work. We must make the most of it. Is our lay assistant in need of more basic instruction? Does our evangelist or vicar require more spiritual growth? Certainly our briefing session with these men should include a systematic study program, which TEE could supply. To begin with we would want to concentrate such efforts on lay leaders. As the program develops we would want to do more intensive follow-up work with our evangelists. Every one of our missionaries would thus become an extension of the work which is being carried on at our central institution. Bearing this in mind it can hardly be said, as detractors have sometimes argued, that TEE would result in a downgrading of our basic requirements for carrying on the work of the pastoral ministry.

We realize, of course, that much more time and effort would have to go into the planning and implementation of a program of this kind. This should suffice, however, to indicate where the possibilities lie, also bringing us to our next question.

C. What Would TEE mean as far as our present Bible Institute-Seminary program is concerned?

We hope that in Part I of this TEE presentation we have put to rest any fears that our present institutional program would be discontinued. It is the considered consensus of practically all church bodies which have worked with TEE that extension and residence training are complementary, not contradictory methods of theological education. "Extension, not extermination," is the general watchword. But extension also means what it says: extending ourselves physically, geographically, culturally, academically and economically.

The Extension Seminary Primer emphasizes the fact that one must begin with an institution as a base of operations. The authors add by way of comment, "Whether you can operate without it remains to be seen. I have not heard of it being done." Those who teach at the residence school, of course, will be extending themselves in various ways, not only cooperating in the preparation of extension materials, using gifted students to help with translations of materials, testing them out with the beginning students, but also going to other places, if possible, where extension centers can be set up.

The word "extension center" should not frighten us, as though this were some large outside operation in itself. This is not the case at all. The emphasis must be on quality, not quantity. Those who seem to know what extension is all about stress this. A man in Singapore says that he intentionally limits enrollment in order to create the lowest possible teacher-student ratio. Others have made the mistake of using extension courses as a sort of glorified Bible class, hustling up many students, experiencing many drop-outs, and ending up really nowhere as far as building up a ministry is concerned. We can think of an extension center as some village church, where the missionary-pastor meets with a few evangelists and lay leaders every week in order to carry out planned lesson study in addition to regular sermon and Sunday School lesson study for the week.

It could be that in time one would wish to reevaluate the residence program in the light of experience with the extension program. As an example we mention again the approach of the Baptists in Zambia, who have decided to replace their first year of study requirements at their residence school with an extension program. One would want to proceed cautiously on something like this, however, and test the results first.

One thing we ought to know by this time. It isn't possible to project all sorts of detailed plans in Africa. One takes it a step at a time and sees what comes of it. If anyone had asked us ten years ago precisely what form our program of theological education would take, we couldn't have answered this in detail. What we have now took nearly ten years to develop. When the Bible Institute program was in progress, we took the next logical step of adding a Seminary program. Now we're thinking about adding an extension program.

D. What kind of materials would TEE require? Would this mean producing our own? What about programmed lesson materials? What would all this involve in terms of manpower, printing facilities, money, etc.?

Those who have worked with TEE for some time at various levels advise strongly not to try starting with a multi-level program, but to begin with one of the lower levels. The most popular level, also the one best suited to our basic needs, is called the "diploma level," geared to the needs of those who have completed their primary education or have achieved the equivalent of this. Whether or not it would be necessary to translate all materials into the various vernaculars would depend on our manpower situation. One can do just so much. Judging from experiences with our older students at the Bible Institute it would be most helpful to have vernacular materials. Unfortunately we are not in the same position as churches which have only one national language to worry about other than English.

Some basic courses, geared to diploma level students, would be the following: A General Introduction into the Bible, The Chief Doctrines of the Bible, Old Testament History, New Testament History, Basic Principles of Preaching and Teaching, The Life of Paul, Luther and the Reformation, The Confessions of the Lutheran Church, How to Use Luther's Small Catechism, Evangelism and Stewardship. Follow-up courses would be mostly exegetical in nature, concentrating on studies of individual books of the Bible. Most of the above courses have already been developed to a greater or lesser degree at our Bible Institute and in Short Course work. It would be a matter of putting this material into proper form for extension use.

A question may arise as to whether or not materials already produced by other church bodies for extension purposes could be used by us. Although some of the work which we have seen has been excellently done, our answer would have to be in the negative. Both doctrine as well as practical methods of doing church work are not our own. There are many good things that can be learned from these existing materials, however, as to the technique of presenting lessons through programmed materials.

This last statement anticipates the use of programmed materials. We see no other way, much as our flesh would like to avoid all the extra work involved in producing such materials. They are simply made to order for extension work. Most individual programmed courses consist of 50 lessons. For extension use this would cover ten weeks at five lessons per week. The final week of five lessons is usually in the form of a review of the entire course. Fifty lessons would be the equivalent of about one term's work in our Bible Institute of those courses which are taught daily, since we have approximately 50 teaching days in both first and second terms.

A careful study of Ted and Margaret Ward's book on *Programmed Instruction for Theological Education by Extension* indicates much to command the orderly development of programmed materials. Each lesson must have a precise identification of its objective. By means of a step-by-step series of tasks (technically called "frames") each lesson proceeds to achieve this objective. There is nothing vague or sloppy, in other words, about the material.

It is important to understand that programmed lesson materials are not simply "workbooks" in the sense of helping to locate information or providing extra homework for a given presentation of material. Programmed Instruction directs the learning process. It's an alternate form of teaching. It proceeds like a good teacher in a classroom, from the known to the unknown, adding bits of information gradually and providing cues to

answers, then drawing out of the student by means of a direct question a response which leads him another step toward the goal. It's a matter of give and take between the teacher (in this case the programmed lesson material) and the pupil. By means of a partially concealed answer (printed upside down in the lesson or out of numbered sequence) the student can check for himself as to whether or not his answer is correct before proceeding to the next frame. The student is expected to do this self-checking as he goes along. It's one of the essentials of programming.

The basic idea of this entire method is certainly commendable. It's not a matter of rote or repetitive learning, the bane of African education. Neither does it make the pedagogical mistake found all too often in a classroom, where the teacher drones on and on and never elicits any response from the student as he goes along. Each frame, in other words, **contains new information**, provides a **cue** or hint to help the learner think of a correct response, states the **problem** in the form of a question, to which the learner must give his **response** in writing, and finally supplies a **feedback**, which is simply the correct answer, partly concealed, so that the learner can check immediately on the rightness or wrongness of his response before proceeding to the next frame. There are of course variations to this basic pattern of a frame, but the above describes all the components of a model kind.

Here we could get involved in all sorts of technicalities concerning programming, which we prefer not to do at this point. Although good programming demands precision, simplicity, clarity, and definite goals of learning, and is certainly nothing that one would want to shake out of his sleeve, it's not as involved as it may seem. The *Extension Primer* states that anyone who has a good grasp of his subject and an average pedagogical attitude can begin programming simply by following carefully the instructions of a book such as the one put out by Ted Ward. (For purposes of illustration we have outlined a course of 50 lessons and worked out one of those lessons in sample form to give some idea of what is meant. Those are attached.)

What all this would involve in terms of manpower, printing facilities, money etc. depends upon how thoroughly one would want to go into extension training. Right now our shortage of expatriate staff would almost forbid us to think of a new venture of this kind. Incidentally, the opinion has been expressed that expatriates should step aside and let nationals produce the materials which the church is going to be using. The thought is intriguing, but upon further searching it was found that in all extension programs developed thus far, nationals may have collaborated, but invariably expatriates still have taken the lead. As with any project like this, the production of materials would depend chiefly on how important the existing staff would consider this program to be in the light of the many other duties to which it is already committed, and then the amount of sacrifices it would be willing to make if considered important enough to do so. Those who got this all started in Guatamala refer nostalgically to the midnight oil, the sacrificial help of wives who did most of the typing, the many misgivings, frustrations, and even opposition of nationals who viewed TEE as a threat to their status, and the untold hours spent in testing the practicability of materials. To some extent this same thing is true, however, of every one of our own instruction courses and publication efforts produced thus far. We've managed to put out what we have, not because time was ever really available, but because we took the time to do so at the expense of something else.

Someone, of course, would have to serve as a central coordinating and editing agent. He should have opportunity for getting better acquainted with programming methods. He would outline courses and assign them to volunteer writers. He should be able to draw on secretarial help to type stencils, receiving help also from the publications' department in the printing of materials. He would have to be relieved of some of his other duties in order to give attention to the entire project. Our language coordinator would be expected to devote a good share of his time for translating materials. The cost in terms of money would at first be minimal. Time would be the biggest factor, something which right now is at a premium. We expect that the approval and blessing of the Executive Committee would be needed. Above all the cooperation of the entire staff would be vital, particularly in the writing, testing and implementation of the program itself. These are but preliminary suggestions, pending the favorable or unfavorable reaction of all concerned.

In conclusion it may be well to repeat a warning expressed in *An Extension Primer* which reads as follows: “Extension training is the ‘in’ thing. Everyone wants to get on the bandwagon. Any kind of an effort, as long as it tips its hat to the name ‘extension’, is seen as a panacea for every ill of the church.”

We surely wouldn’t want to make the same mistake. We wouldn’t want to put forth some half-hearted gesture and then expect miracles to happen overnight. With our present manpower situation it would be almost sensible to look at a venture like this as an enthusiastic idea which may have some merit, but which is unrealistic in the light of hard, cold facts. Behind all this lies a gnawing conviction on the part of the writer, at least, that we have reached a point in our theological training program where certain changes will have to be seriously considered if we want to avoid mounting subsidies in order to promote continued growth. We can go on as we are and hope that the whole business of a paid evangelist for every few little congregations will right itself somehow. Or we can put forth an effort now toward a program which seems to be more in keeping with social and economic conditions as we find them here in Africa, realizing that this isn’t going to be easy, no matter how we look at it.

Know Your Bible
(A General Introduction to the Holy Scriptures)

Week I – The Greatest Book of All

1. The Book of Books (Introductory)
2. God’s Book to All People
3. A Collection of Many Books
4. Two Testaments
5. One Author and Message

Week II – Old Testament History

1. From Eden to Egypt (Genesis)
2. From Egypt to Canaan (Exodus to Deuteronomy)
3. God Rules His People (Joshua to Ruth)
4. The Rule of Kings (I and II Samuel, I Kings, I Chronicles)
5. Captivity and Return (II Kings, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah)

Week III – Old Testament Poetry

1. What is Hebrew Poetry?
2. A Trial of Faith (Job)
3. Old Testament Hymns (Psalms)
4. Wise Sayings (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)
5. Song of Solomon—Review

Week IV – Old Testament Prophecy

1. The Work of a Prophet
2. The Major Prophets (Isaiah to Daniel)
3. Hosea to Obadiah
4. Jonah to Habakkuk
5. Zephaniah to Malachi

Week V – New Testament Gospels

1. Four Gospels, One Story
2. Jesus, the Messiah (Matthew)
3. Jesus, the Strong Savior (Mark)
4. Jesus, the Savior of All (Luke)
5. Jesus, the Son of God (John)

Week VI – New Testament Church

1. The Early Church (Acts)
2. Letters to Congregations (Romans to Galatians)
3. Letters to Congregations (Ephesians to Thessalonians)
4. Letters to Persons (Timothy to Philemon)
5. The Coming Church (Revelation)

Week VII – Other New Testament Epistles

1. Our Great High Priest (Hebrews)
2. The Fruits of Faith (James)
3. Stand Fast! (I and II Peter)
4. Letters of Love (I, II, and III John)
5. Contend for the Faith! (Jude)

Week VIII – How the Bible Came to Us

1. Old Testament Canon
2. New Testament Canon
3. Old Manuscripts
4. Early Translations
5. Translations of Today

Week IX – How to Use the Bible

1. Where Do We Begin?
2. Reading in the Home
3. Searching the Scriptures
4. How to Bear Witness to the Truth
5. A Guide for Daily Living

Week X - Review

1. Weeks I and II
2. Weeks III and IV
3. Weeks V and VI
4. Weeks VII and VIII
5. Week IX, Final Test

Note: This is an example of a suggested outline for a one course series of 50 lessons. As one would work into a series of lessons of this kind, smaller changes or adjustments would no doubt have to be made here and there. An individual writer would have the freedom to make his own adjustments.

Part of a Sample Lesson

Thus the Bible was written by men. Yet we say it is the Word of God. How did this happen? The Apostle Peter explains this for us when he speaks about the Bible in these words:

So we are even more confident of the message proclaimed by the prophets. You will do well to pay attention to it, for it is like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the Day dawns, and the light of the morning star shines in your hearts. Above all else, however, remember this: no one can explain, by himself, a prophecy in the Scriptures. *For no prophetic message ever came just from the will of men, but men were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.* (II Peter 1:19-21)

8. Who gave these men the power to speak and write the message of God?

++++
There is a special word which we use for this work of the Holy Spirit as He gave power to the men who wrote the Bible. See if you can find this word in the following passage of the Bible:

For all Scripture is inspired by God. (II Timothy 3:16)

9. The Scripture is another word for the Bible. What word is used to show how God the Holy Spirit told the writers of the Bible what to write? _____

++++
The word inspire means to breathe in. In a wonderful way, a way which we cannot fully understand, God the Holy Spirit breathed into or gave the writers of the Bible the thoughts and the words to write. In the passage of the Bible which we just read we are told that **all** Scripture is inspired by God. Not just part of it. **All** of it—every book of the Bible, every sentence of the Bible, every word of the Bible.

10. Thus, whose word to all people is the Bible? _____

++++
Yes, the almighty God, the God who has all power and who made all things, the God who also gave you life, this God gave His word to us and to all people in the Bible.

11. Now let us come back to the important question with which we began this lesson for today: Why is the Bible the greatest book in the world? _____

++++
Now I want you to try something. In your own words write a short prayer in which you give thanks to God for giving us His Word. _____

++++

Answers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4. Thus says the Lord, your God. | 9. Inspired. |
| 2. Why is the Bible the greatest book in the world? | 7. Old Testament: Moses or David or Isaiah |
| 6. God's message. | New Testament: Matthew, John, Paul |
| 1. The Bible. | 11. Because it is the Word of God. |
| 3. No. | 10. God's Word. |
| 5. God. | 8. The Holy Spirit. |