

Standard LESSON™

Teaching a Bible Lesson: Part 2 Lead a Tour—Teaching Bible Content

The preceding article compared an introduction of a Bible lesson to a lifeguard pulling a struggling swimmer to shore. Our job as teacher is to jump into our students' world rather than offer advice from a distance.

Let's continue to explore that analogy. Once someone is rescued from the deep and is led to the solid ground of Scripture, it is time to allow the student to become acquainted with a culture driven by Bible principles. As a lesson moves from introduction to Bible study, the teacher switches roles from lifeguard to tour guide!

Review the itinerary. Before spending one day in Rome, you might first sit down with a guide. That guide would trace the planned route for the day—from the Colosseum to the Roman Forum to Capitoline Hill to the Pantheon to Trevi Fountain . . . ending the day at the Spanish steps. With that overview in mind, you would start your event-filled day.

It is helpful for a Bible lesson to have a similar “itinerary.” That way the Bible study is a guided tour, not a disconnected series of Scripture attractions. On the second page of every Standard Lesson, that type of itinerary is printed. The Scripture of that lesson is briefly outlined.

A teacher may lead another type of Roman tour—a study of key passages in the book of Romans. When teaching the theologically rich third chapter of the book, a teacher might outline three main points in this way: Humanity's Problem (3:9); Scripture's Declarations (vv. 10-18); Law's Result (vv. 19, 20). The hopeful passage of Romans 8:28-39 could be previewed simply as: No Chaos (vv. 28-30); No Separation (vv. 31-36); No Defeat (vv. 37-39).

A teacher might write the outline on the board or give a handout that includes it. Regardless of how it is presented, a look at the itinerary helps the learner get off on the right foot in his or her tour through a Bible passage.

Explain the culture. A trip to an unfamiliar city requires a short orientation before a tour begins. A guide in Rome might point out a few useful Italian words that could appear on signs. The guide might tell you that in most public restrooms a usage fee is expected, encouraging you to have some change in your pocket. You may be told that citizens of your host city have different expectations about “personal space,” so you may expect to be crowded and jostled around a bit!

Before touring any part of the book of Romans, a teacher might tell the class that Paul had never visited Rome, so he tried to introduce himself and his teaching in this letter. Paul knew that Jews and Gentiles had an uneasy relationship in the Roman

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church, so he took opportunities to subtly address that conflict. Every Standard Lesson contains a few paragraphs of “Lesson Background.” Consider it a valuable part of leading your tour!

Stay on the main roads. A Roman tour guide no doubt has a favorite restaurant. But he would not be an effective guide if his entire tour consisted of a visit to it!

A Bible tour guide can make a similar mistake when teaching a passage of Scripture. A teacher may get sidetracked when teaching Romans 1:18-32. The condemnation of same-sex relationships in vv. 26, 27 might inspire the teacher to take a detour through Genesis 19, Leviticus 18, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1. By the time the class is over, the actual topic of the lesson was left virtually untouched.

The verse-by-verse commentary in Standard Lesson products helps to keep this from happening. While legitimate side trips and additional supporting Scriptures will be noted, the teacher is encouraged to move on, helping the student to understand a passage as a whole. Side trips are fine . . . but they really deserve a lesson all their own.

Rome is a big city. The Bible is a big book. In both cases, a tour guide with a limited amount of time must plan to use the time efficiently. Using the tools in Standard Lesson to begin with an overview and an exposition of the background, a teacher is given a clear verse-by-verse trail to see that the ground is covered in an engaging and satisfying way.