

# Standard LESSON™

## Teaching a Bible Lesson: Part 3 Naturalized Citizens—Applying Bible Content

The preceding articles compare an introduction of a Bible lesson to a lifeguard pulling a struggling swimmer to shore, and the teaching the Bible lesson as leading a tour in an unfamiliar land. Let's continue to explore those analogies.

Some popular tourist locations post signs saying, "If you lived here, you would be home by now!" A visit to some places inspires a desire to become a permanent resident.

Turning "visitors" into "naturalized citizens" is also the goal of the final step in a good Bible lesson. Once students acknowledge the winds and waves that batter them, and tour the landscape of the kingdom of God, the next step is for them to affirm and reaffirm their citizenship there.

Note that there are no native-born citizens of God's kingdom. Each of us is born with a bent toward sin that makes us citizens of this world. We all need to constantly affirm that we seek a higher status—that of being a naturalized citizen of the kingdom of Heaven.

**Principles.** Before becoming a naturalized citizen of the United States, a citizen of another nation needs to be familiar with American civics. The basic values of this country, the contents of our most precious documents, and a grasp of how the government works are essential.

The application portion of a lesson is distinct from the Bible study itself. Some Bible teachers ask the wrong question—"What does this passage mean *to you*?" The Bible cannot mean today what it did not mean to the original readers. In Bible study, the teacher leads students in understanding that intended meaning.

The correct question to ask in the application section of a lesson is this—"What does this passage mean *for you*?" While there is one meaning of Bible passages, the Holy Spirit leads teachers and students to find how that passage is best lived out in each student's life. While the old proverb "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime" is true, it misses a point. Jesus' call to feed the hungry (Matthew 25:31-46) may move the Christian grocer to *give* a man a fish and the Christian sportsman to *teach* a man to fish!

Within every Standard Lesson are five "What Do You Think?" questions. These do not ask the students what the Bible means. They ask students to take the principles of the kingdom of Heaven and live them out.

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**Patriots.** A person applying for citizenship also needs to know about some of the great heroes of that nation. We learn by example, and examining the lives of great citizens shows us how to be great citizens.

The same is true when teaching how to apply the principles of the Bible to life. Not only are the notable figures of the Bible and in church history to be considered however. Bible principles can be demonstrated in the lives of the renown and the lives of the obscure. Every Standard Lesson includes verbal illustrations. Each simple story is a kind of case study showing how Bible standards look when they are accepted or rejected.

**Path.** The goal of someone seeking citizenship is to get to the day when he or she takes the oath of citizenship. That is the first step in the path of a new life as a naturalized citizen.

Every Bible lesson needs to administer a similar “oath of citizenship.” At the end of the application section of a lesson, a good teacher challenges each student individually to demonstrate something learned, in a concrete way. A closing prayer can be more than a formality—it can be a sincere pledge to make some small life change. Simple object lessons or quiet periods of self-evaluation and reflection can also accomplish this important step.

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Teaching is much more than telling. Getting students involved in the learning process is quite an undertaking, but it is one that can yield great results. By following the three-step plan in this series of articles, a teacher can help students resist the culture in which they live, learn great Bible truths, and put those truths into practice daily.