

## Ideas For Teaching Religion

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For this Teacher Talk article, I present a few reflections from my own teaching that you may find helpful.

1. Do you want to see an inspirational teacher video? Look into this site: <http://www.thecanadianteacher.com/rankingsystem/topsites.html> Most of the videos listed are quite inspirational, though, as with all things from Hollywood, there are limitations and drawbacks. The ones to especially treasure are those based on true stories.
2. For worship time, if you want your students to see the amazing relevance of scripture, try going through some of the thoughts found in the book of Proverbs. We have been doing this with our Grade 9 Religion class, and often only cover a few verses a day because there is so much to note about them. As a student of the Word, I am intrigued with the fresh perspectives I have personally gained.
3. I believe that one of the most important skills a student can learn is to simply be organized. To aid in this objective, I ask the student to keep a classroom journal. This is not a journal where they merely write something each day; it is a journal that reflects what happens in the class each day. The components of the journal include: a cover or title page of the student's design; a table of contents page featuring one line summaries for each day; day pages for the recording of lecture notes, daily written activities; and handouts of significance to the curriculum. Students are encouraged to effectively highlight their notes. Some students find this task quite a challenge, yet it seems that once they develop the habit of organization, it will serve them well for the rest of their lives.
4. In religion class, good discussions seem to be the favorite activity for students. I believe that the teacher also should value them as well and he or she should be flexible to allow for spontaneous times where issues on the hearts of students can be discussed. Often, while giving class notes in a lecture format, a student will pose a question worthy of discussion. I have developed the pattern of having the students include the discussion question in their notes and then to place two asterisks at the side of the question noted. Then we enter into the discussion. The rule is that only one student should talk at a time, and that the whole class must be quiet and attentive before the student makes their point. The reason given, of course, is that a class discussion can only be such if the class knows what is being said. When a discussion is really moving, students want to talk quickly to each other, so I will often allow such chatter and then bring everyone back to order to further the ideas. Sometimes, at the end of the discussion, I will pose a summary question, asking the students to state their views on paper and to keep them in their classroom journal.
5. The Grade 9 and 10 Seventh-day Adventist North American Division curriculum covers some important Bible stories. It is essential that students be led to their Bibles so they can get the original flavour of the story and see the fascinating way the Bible writers describe the circumstances. Each story offers tremendous opportunity for thought. Issues relevant to our day, matters of faith, unique wording, and various levels of meaning all make for challenging and rewarding study. Some examples: The story of Jacob's ladder illustrates that God takes the first steps to promise his love to us and then we respond to that love with our own promises or determination. The story of Jacob wrestling with the angel illustrates the wrestling that we all

must do to find peace with God, especially those living in the last days. The story of Moses illustrates a vast number of issues including leadership, loyalty, meeting trials, God's willingness to modify his ways to meet us. The story of Samson shows how God loves the wayward soul, works with him, though He allows the consequences of his actions to come upon him, He will not forsake him. Each story is full of such lessons. Some of the most powerful stories are those obscure, often overlooked ones.

6. There are some very effective videos that can be used to help students visualize the Bible stories. A word of caution, though. All dramatic videos of the Bible rely heavily on the imagination of the producers and need teacher guidance. A teacher, who knows the Bible story well, can use the mistakes in a dramatic video to teach, by contrast, the truths of scripture. For example, the video entitled 'Moses' is profoundly done, except the producers mixed up the order of the plagues and the various rebellions described in scripture seem to be lumped together into one major rebellion. If one is to use these videos in class, it is essential to capitalize on even the errors to teach the truth.
7. Nature, as God's second book, speaks directly to the soul. I have, usually once a semester, taken students to a quiet spot outdoors surrounded by God's creation, instructed them to find a quiet spot alone, but where I can easily see them, and to have them do something to show their sensing these impressions. Art, poetry, prose, all are effective means of letting the impressions of nature become known.

In all teacher activities, the purpose is to further the education, the essential development of the person. We have an unseen heavenly host helping us. If we prepare thoughtfully, knowing what we intend to accomplish, the LORD will assist us in our endeavors and our students will begin to sense His influence in their studies.