

“Invaluable! To have a handbook that is this ministry-friendly and up-to-date is truly a gift to those who desire to lead church education programs that honor God. Many textbooks disappear when the class ends, but this one will become a dog-eared part of the practitioner’s library. Along with the expected topics, subjects like pornography, celibacy, infertility, and reductional stereotypes are covered. Additional resources are suggested. A unique extra: As students study the chapters by leaders in their fields, they become acquainted with these authors through glimpses into their lives and ministries. These stories help bring this textbook to life.”

—Marlene LeFever,  
Author of *Creative Teaching Methods*

“If you want to be increasingly effective in teaching the Scriptures, then this book is for you. Dr. Hillman and Dr. Edwards have assembled a dream team of great teachers, mentors, and coaches. If this doesn’t light your fire to improve as a teacher, then your wood is wet! This is a compelling invitation to become the teacher God created you to be.”

—Dr. Dennis Rainey,  
Cofounder of FamilyLife

“Nicely done! This introductory text on the church’s teaching ministry is written by scholar-practitioners who are passionate about helping others grow spiritually. Their love for people, and for helping them learn and apply Scripture to their lives, shines through in what they share. I love the scope of the book, including chapters on ministry with people of all ages and stages of life, those with disabilities, and seekers. The book addresses a range of ministry models and approaches, helping readers think more creatively about a variety of ways available to help people learn and grow. This book will stretch your vision. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter are a helpful addition both for teaching and reflecting on together with colleagues in ministry.”

—Dr. Kevin E. Lawson,  
Professor of Educational Studies,  
Talbot School of Theology of Biola University

“What a delight to recommend this fresh look at the educational ministry of the church. Using this book as a guide guarantees that biblical education will no longer be just about the transfer of information or an exercise in increasing biblical literacy. This book will empower teachers to honor the goal of Scripture as a resource for life transformation! A big thanks to Dr. Edwards and Dr. Hillman for putting into writing the exciting principles that they have taught to students in the classroom. ‘Go to school’ on this book and enjoy the rich reward of watching those you teach accelerate their journey of faith.”

—Dr. Joe Stowell,  
President of Cornerstone University

“Having a broad—even thorough—knowledge of the Bible is not that big of a deal. The second chapter of James reminds us that even the demons have that. They’re still demons! What matters is when the Bible becomes the tool God uses to grab hold of a person’s heart and transform it into one that’s much more like his. This is more likely to happen when the person teaching the Bible is not only passionate about its content, but also compassionate towards the people on the receiving end of their teaching. *Invitation to Educational Ministry* is all about the what, who, and how of this passionate/compassionate kind of Bible teaching—teaching that truly transforms.”

—Dr. Tim Kimmel,  
Author of *Grace-Based Parenting* and *Grace Filled Marriage*

“As a young man, my heart was lit ablaze with a passion for Jesus through teachers who had a firm grip on the Word of God and a finger on the pulse of modern times. Truly transformational ministers must have both. I chose to attend Dallas Theological Seminary because it produced leaders like this. I am thrilled that Dr. Hillman and Dr. Edwards have taken insights from this great institution and locked them away in a resource for us all!”

—Ben Stuart,  
Pastor of Passion City Church, Washington D.C.  
and Author of *Single, Dating, Engaged, Married*

“While we are watching a staggering decline in basic biblical knowledge, Dr. Edwards and Dr. Hillman choose to joust the dragon. For us who aspire to teach or lead, education is an ongoing exercise; we will never be out of work unless we quit. In honor of our beloved “Prof,” now more than in previous decades, we need a re-calibration of how to teach, how to train, and how to reproduce lifelong learners. Don’t add this book to your shelf; keep it on your desk, close at hand. Refer to it often and become the tireless trainer of a generation that needs to know God and his word.”

—Michael Easley,  
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Moody Bible Institute

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*In dedication to Dr. Howard Hendricks,  
affectionately known for decades on the DTS campus as “Prof”  
for his investment in a generation of Christian educators  
and for his personal belief in each of us.  
We could all recount endless stories of how Prof  
gave us a chance in our young careers  
as professors in the department he started  
and made the “outsider” feel welcome.  
Your legacy lives on.*



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# FOREWORD

**IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE** a more highly gifted and capable team of Christian educators than those who have assembled at Dallas Theological Seminary. For decades, this illustrious group of men and women have shaped the field of Christian education. In one way or another, the faculty at Dallas Theological Seminary have addressed how church educational ministries should be conducted.

Now, at long last, they have assembled together to create the quintessential primer on educational ministries for the local church. Taking on the challenge of preparing an introductory text in any academic discipline is not for the faint of heart. It requires the assemblage of a respectable team of educators who know both theory and practice. *Invitation to Educational Ministry* will become the desired text for those who aspire to disciple the nations through the local church. This text is exhaustive and comprehensive. There is something here for every reader. Whether a Sunday school teacher, first-year undergraduate student, or seasoned ministry professional, this book will help advance your understanding of both educational theories and praxis. I highly recommend this for every dedicated believer who desires to make disciples of all the nations.

**DR. MICHAEL J. ANTHONY** served as Professor of Christian Education at Talbot School of Theology for twenty-seven years, and is the author/editor of thirteen books in the field of Christian education. He currently serves as the COO & CFO at Dream Centers in Colorado Springs. In addition, he is a guest lecturer at several institutions around the world including Dallas Theological Seminary.





# INTRODUCTIONS



# WHY I LOVE TO TEACH

*Sue Edwards*

**I** **DISTINCTLY REMEMBER THE** first time I stood before a group to teach God’s Word. I’d only been a Christian for four years. Being completely ill-equipped and knowing it, I spent several months preparing. I bathed the process in prayer. I studied the text like a detective. I read every commentary I could find. I used my Journalism degree to tighten up my word choice. I scoured good books for related illustrations.

When the day came for me to stand before the Bible study leader’s group and teach the assigned passage, my voice trembled throughout the introduction. Thankfully, I’d practically memorized it, fearful I would forget otherwise, so I was able to get the words out. Regardless of the shaky start, the women put down what they were doing and our eyes locked. We opened the Bible and dissected its beauty. That moment remains etched in my mind.

Suddenly I forgot myself and my nervousness and the Holy Spirit took over. They listened intently. They learned. Their eyes sparkled with understanding and conviction. Heads nodded. Their faces beamed a desire to live out God’s direction and the pictures painted. God’s truth that had transformed me as I prepared was now transforming them. My spirit soared to be part of God’s work in them, and I was hooked. Today, I tell my students it was like “Christian cocaine”—not that I’ve

ever experienced cocaine, but the comparison seems to work.

I’ve taught the Bible hundreds of times since, and now I teach seminary students to teach it. Whether I’m in front of a group of church women or a mixed classroom at the seminary where I initially trained, the thrill continues. I love to find creative ways to introduce a topic or explain a deep and difficult idea clearly. I love to ask provocative questions that jump start a thoughtful, challenging discussion. I love to watch students tackle a related activity, another approach that helps learning stick. I love watching uncertain students forget what others think and dive into the issues, eager to understand or to share what God has taught them. I love when a learning community emerges from a group of former strangers who find they have much in common and much to learn from one another. I love to see discovery in their eyes. I love when they surprise themselves with serendipitous answers or comments. I love to encourage and witness their spiritual awakenings. I simply love to teach. God wired me that way, but I’ve learned that it’s really not about me. I’m the conduit—and my gracious heavenly Father, in his kindness, allows me great joy in his work.

As much as I love to teach, I’ve come to deeply enjoy passing on this love of teaching to others just as much—maybe more. I surmise that since you have chosen to read this book that the “love of

teaching” bug may have bitten you too. Or you’ve had a taste and you’re seeking to discover whether God wants to use you in his teaching ministry too. If that’s you, keep reading.

We’ve gathered a group of stellar teachers and ministers to guide you. We are a seasoned team of men and women; most have served students at Dallas Theological Seminary for many years. We’ve created curriculum together, brainstormed ways to improve our courses and our teaching, and often teamed up or taught in one another’s classrooms.

We worship in different denominations. We specialize in teaching different demographics. Many of us write in those disciplines and lead or participate in professional organizations related to our fields. We rub shoulders with colleagues from other seminaries. We all serve or teach in the trenches, bringing practical expertise to our classrooms. Despite our varied gifts, backgrounds, and areas of expertise, we share a love of teaching and equipping men and women

for ministry. And we’ve come together to create a resource for you that is deep and wide, biblical and practical, whether you volunteer in a ministry in the local church or parachurch, you are on a teaching ministry staff, or you desire to serve in a school or the academy. Teaching is teaching and most of this book will apply in all these contexts.

You’ll also find specialized chapters by experts in those fields that I encourage you to read even if you don’t see yourself serving there. We end up where God wants us to be, often to our bewildered surprise and delight. And we support and lead our teams better when we understand their assignments and passions. Keep your mind and heart open as you digest these chapters.

We earnestly pray and hope that our words will help you discover God’s place for you in his teaching ministry or strengthen your insight and skills if you are already there. May this project serve to pass on our love of teaching for your joy and God’s glory.

# IT'S ALL EDUCATION

*George Hillman*

**M**Y JOURNEY TO CHRIST began in a preschool classroom in a local Baptist church one block from my house. While I do not have memories today of anything specific from preschool, that humble preschool ministry had eternal significance in my life and the life of my family. It was in that preschool classroom where a teacher introduced me to Jesus Christ at a level I could understand. Some of the friends I made in that preschool class became lifelong friends as we grew up in church together. Plus my parents (who were not attending church at the time) became active members of that church as a result of the connections from that preschool ministry.

While I may not remember much from preschool, I have vivid memories of children's Sunday school, children's choir, vacation Bible school, and summer day camp at that same church as a child. I still have the children's illustrated Living Bible I carried to church each week. I still have the church hymnal with my attendance stickers in it from choir. Furthermore I can still recite the King James Version of 1 John 4:7-8 because of a song I learned at church as a child ("Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."). My faith grew through the Bible stories I heard, the crafts projects I made, the silly

songs with the hand motions I learned, and the fun games I played.

As I became a teenager at that same church, I dearly recall summer youth camps and Monday night Bible studies at my youth minister's house. I remember an early Wednesday morning discipleship group that met before school each week, marking up my Bible as we studied the book of Daniel and the Pastoral Epistles. I remember mission trips to Mexico where I served through using my spiritual gifts. Plus I remember preaching my first sermon during a Youth Sunday at my church (where the youth of the church "took over" the various roles of the church for a Sunday) as a senior in high school.

There is a point in my trip down memory lane. All of these things I just described are educational ministries in a local church—a weekday preschool ministry, vacation Bible school, summer day camps, outdoor retreat centers, Sunday school classes, home Bible studies, and mission trips. I am a huge believer in educational ministry because I have personally benefited from it. I came to Christ and was matured in the faith through the various expressions of educational ministry.

More than the educational programs though, it was the people at the church who impacted my life. Programs don't just lead themselves. The vast majority of the individuals who

had the biggest impact on my life were ordinary people with ordinary jobs who volunteered at the church—a local realtor, a clerk at the old downtown hardware store, an owner of the toy store at the mall, a traveling salesman, and a college student. These were ordinary people who had an eternal impact on my life.

We wrote this book to help ordinary people have an eternal impact on the lives of others. Through educational ministries, these ordinary people teach the Christian story and help others to live their faith out in daily life. We want this to be a book that anyone can pick up and immediately apply as you serve in any of the various expressions of educational ministry. We had both the professional minister and the lay leader in mind as we wrote.

We are very excited about the book you have in your hands. May God richly bless the reading of this book and its application. As you embark on this journey, may I offer a prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*:

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom: Enlighten by your Holy Spirit those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship you and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for Education from  
*The Book of Common Prayer*