

USING ANDRAGOGY TO INTEGRATE ASSIMILATION AND BIBLE INFORMATION COURSE

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## ABSTRACT

In Bible Information Course (BIC), non-Christians interested in Christianity are met head on with the gospel. In the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), most congregations implement a 10-20 lesson BIC. This considerable period gives the instructor ample time to both teach the student and grow a relationship between instructor and student. It is necessary to think deeply about the methods used in BIC so that instructors achieve both objectives in the best way possible. Once a prospect completes BIC, congregations hope to assimilate the new member into the church family. However, many pastors experience difficulty here. If the time spent in BIC were used to teach the truths of Christianity while also intentionally assimilating the prospect into the church family, assimilation might happen more naturally. This paper argues that by introducing andragogic teaching methods, assimilation can occur effectively during the specific time spent in BIC.

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## INTRODUCTION: THE UNIQUE CHRISTIAN

Meet Dexter. Dexter spent the first eighteen years of his life in Tai'an, China. Tai'an, a city of 5.5 million people, is located nearly 500 miles south of Beijing. The constitution of the People's Republic of China provides freedom of religion, although that freedom is limited. Citizens of the People's Republic can practice religion if it is within "normal religious activity."<sup>1</sup> For the People's Republic, normal religious activity takes place within any one of five government-sanctioned religious organizations.<sup>2</sup> However, if a Chinese citizen wishes to become a member of the Communist Party of China, they must have no religious affiliation.<sup>3</sup> Dexter's father was a member of the Communist Party and therefore did not associate with any religion. Naturally neither did Dexter. This is how Dexter grew up. These are the societal and familial factors that shaped Dexter's way of thinking. In the eighteen formative years he spent in China, Dexter formulated his worldview. For his education, he studied at two universities in Halifax, Canada. For his home, he now lives in New York City. For his religion, he opens the Bible and reads about Christ crucified.

Dexter's story is unique among many Christians who, against every odd, came to faith. Despite growing up in an irreligious nation and a non-Christian home, the Holy Spirit worked faith in Dexter's heart, and now he rejoices that he has "a lot of knowledge about [the] Bible and Jesus."<sup>4</sup> While Dexter's story is unique, it is not atypical. Against every odd, a baby who is fully consumed by sin comes to faith through water and the Word. Against every odd, the fallen away Christian comes back to faith after remembering the gospel preached to them in the past. Against every odd, faithful Christians remain in the faith through the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

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<sup>1</sup>China, *The Constitution of the People's Republic of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982), Chapter II, Article 36, accessed November 9, 2016, [http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node\\_2825.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm).

<sup>2</sup>USA, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *Congressional-Executive Commission on China Annual Report 2011* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 94, 2011, accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.cecc.gov/publications/annual-reports/2011-annual-report>. The five government sanctioned religious organizations are: 1. Buddhism. 2. Catholicism. 3. Islam. 4. Protestantism. 5. Taoism.

<sup>3</sup>Karen Lee, "Religion Still Has No Role to Play in Communist Politics," *South China Morning Post*, July 16, 2013, accessed November 9, 2016, <http://scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1283412/religion-still-has-no-role-play-communist-politics>.

<sup>4</sup> "Dexter," telephone interview by author, November 9, 2016.

The Holy Spirit brings non-believers to faith through the spoken Word, the written Word and the Word in the Sacraments. Lutherans rightly confess and believe that the Word of God works supernaturally. This means the Holy Spirit works through the Word to create faith in a way that cannot be fully understood or explained. Christians trust wholeheartedly in this truth as they go to make disciples of all nations. Yet the power of the Word does not end there. Lutherans also confess and believe that the Word of God works psychologically. This means that as people hear the Word it affects their emotion, intellect, and will. People are cut to the heart through the preaching of the law and healed through the gospel. People hear the Word and apply it to their worldview. People use their reason to evaluate spiritual questions and appropriate biblical truths. The job of Christians is to spread the Word of God while trusting it will work psychologically through human action. Both the supernatural and psychological working of the Word must be kept in balance as mindful Bible Information Course (BIC) instructors create and implement teaching methods to best achieve the goals of BIC.

The Holy Spirit worked in Dexter when he sat down and learned the truths of the Bible in BIC. He remembers this experience fondly. Reflecting on his time in BIC, he had this to say about the Christian faith:

[After taking the course], I know why I should believe that. I have heard that, but I was confused about that. Because [if] someone [just] persuaded me to believe in that, I can't do that because I was confused. But after this Bible study I knew a lot of information about that so I choose that I believe that. It was very good... The better thing I think you did is that you didn't persuade me to believe in God, you just told me about God first and led me to know about that. Then you made me and other people believe in that, so that's great... If people didn't believe in God before, and if you just persuaded them to believe in God, but they didn't know anything about God, it would make people, you know, hate that. But you didn't do that. You just told me about God - what is God, what is Jesus, what is Bible - and it made me understand the Bible. I think that's great, then I could believe in God.<sup>5</sup>

Dexter's thoughts express both the supernatural and psychological working of the Word. As the gospel was proclaimed to him, he began to see who God is and what God has done for him. He enjoyed his time in BIC as the Word worked on his intellect. He also found it an informative way to learn about Christianity. More importantly, against every odd he had faced in the sinful

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<sup>5</sup> "Dexter," telephone interview by author.

world, he became a Christian. The supernatural working of the Word resulted in faith worked in his heart.

Dexter was baptized and later confirmed as a member of the WELS church he attends. The BIC achieved its goal. It was an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work through the Word to create faith in his heart. The next step for Dexter was to continue worshipping at his church, grow in faith, grow in relationships with other Christians, and begin serving his Lord. It was time for him to assimilate into the congregation. Dexter walked out of BIC with relationships with four members of his church. Namely, he knew the friend who brought him to worship and he knew the three BIC instructors who taught him. While attending worship on Sundays, he would see 160 strange faces with whom he was in fellowship. It was time for him to meet them, grow his relationship with them, and assimilate into his church. Largely, his assimilation fell on his shoulders. It was up to him to reach out and meet new people. While in BIC, he had one hour of direct, one-on-one, contact with his instructors every week. Now in worship, he had one hour of indirect, 160 to one, contact with members of the same church. However, these members were strangers to him. Growing relationships and assimilating into the church in this way would take time. There is a way to speed up this process for future prospects who enroll in BIC. If a prospect can walk out of BIC with five, ten, or more relationships with current members, they will be in a much better position to take on the task of assimilation.

BIC instructors must be acutely aware of their objectives when creating and implementing a course. Many would agree that the goal of a BIC is to teach the truths of Christianity while also allowing the student to fulfill the requirements for membership. Part of becoming a member of the church involves knowing and interacting with the other members of the church. With these two goals in mind, instructors must think through questions like these: How will I present both the law and gospel in a way that removes as many human barriers as possible? How can I become a spiritual mentor and guide to this student? In what ways can I give this student the tools to continue in membership at this church? In short, the instructor will try hard to faithfully teach the truths of Christianity while allowing the course to be a way for the student to assimilate into the church. By introducing true andragogic teaching methods, BIC can achieve both goals. This paper argues for the implementation of specific andragogic teaching methods to aid the teaching of Christianity while using the actual BIC class time to assimilate the student into the church family.

## ANDRAGOGY AND PEDAGOGY

When beginning a study in andragogy, it is necessary to know the similarities and differences between andragogy and its counterpart, pedagogy. Each term focuses on specific aspects of teaching methodology. Education scholars have conducted many studies in andragogy and pedagogy. However, with continued research in education, the definitions of these terms continues to expand and change. This paper proposes the following definitions.

### **Defining Andragogy**

“Andragogy” is a synthesis of ἀνήρ and ἄγω (“to lead a man”). However, to simply define andragogy as the education of adults is too narrow. Ever since German high school teacher Alexander Kapp coined the term “andragogy” in 1833,<sup>6</sup> the term has taken on many definitions. Even today, scholars will define andragogy differently depending on which aspects of andragogy they find most beneficial. Jost Reischmann gives his definition for andragogy and outlines the challenge in using the term:

The term ‘andragogy’ has been employed in different times and countries with various connotations:

1. In many countries, there is a growing conception of ‘andragogy’ as the scholarly approach to the learning of adults. In this connotation, andragogy is the science of understanding (=theory) and supporting (=practice) lifelong and life wide education of adults.
2. Especially in the USA, ‘andragogy,’ in the tradition of Malcolm Knowles, labels a specific theoretical and practical approach, based on a humanistic conception of self-directed and autonomous learners and teachers as facilitators of learning.
3. Widely, an unclear use of andragogy can be found, with its meaning changing (even in the same publication) from ‘adult education practice’ or ‘desirable values’ or ‘specific teaching methods,’ to ‘reflections’ or ‘academic discipline’ and/or ‘opposite to childish pedagogy’, claiming to be ‘something better’ than just ‘Adult Education’.<sup>7</sup>

Reischmann hints at an important aspect of andragogy. More than a new way of learning or specifically how adults learn, andragogy defines the self-directedness and autonomous way people learn. Therefore, andragogy is not merely the way adults learn, but one way all people

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Henschke, “Beginnings of the History and Philosophy of Andragogy 1833-2000,” *Integrating Adult Learning and Technologies for Effective Education Strategic Approaches*: 3, accessed November 23, 2016, doi:10.4018/978-1-61520-694-0.ch001.

<sup>7</sup> Jost Reischmann, “Andragogy. History, Meaning, Context, Function,” *Andragogy*, 2004, 1, accessed November 23, 2016, <http://andragogy.net/>.

learn.<sup>8</sup> Although an oversimplification, one way to think about the way things are learned by andragogic methods is the colloquial term, “street smarts.” Children learn by andragogic methods during recess when they find out it is not a good idea to jump off the top of the swing set. Adults learn by andragogic methods when they begin working and realize they must show up on time or suffer consequences. Andragogic learning is natural.

While andragogic learning happens through life experiences, it is considered a teaching method because it is connected with classroom learning. Reischmann calls an andragogic teacher a “facilitator of learning.”<sup>9</sup> Andragogic learning becomes part of a classroom when the instructor connects life experiences to content. The instructor must teach through life experiences of the student in order to use andragogic methods and becomes a facilitator of learning.

Learning activities,<sup>10</sup> the flipped classroom,<sup>11</sup> and dialogue learning,<sup>12</sup> are some of the ways facilitators bring andragogy into the classroom. These methods hope to personalize learning, make learning self-directed, and cater to the natural way people learn. However, there are times when an andragogic-minded teacher will still use pedagogical techniques to assign quizzes, tests, or memorization. Because the nature of the classroom is indoors, behind a desk, and utilizes both teacher and student, andragogy cannot happen in its purest form in a classroom. In its purest form, andragogy happens as life happens. This does not mean that the teacher

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Knowles. "Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy." *Religious Education* 72, no. 2 (1977): 206-207. Accessed November 13, 2016. doi:10.1080/0034408770720210., “The big difference between a pure andragogue and a pure pedagogue is this: the pedagogue not only is willing to accept dependency, but feels so much more comfortable teaching dependent personalities that the teacher will tend to do everything one can to maintain dependency on the part of the learner, whereas the andragogue, while able to accept dependency at a given time and moment, or time with a given person, has a built-in sense of obligation to do everything one can to help that person move from dependency toward increasing self-directiveness. In other words, the andragogue has a value system that places self-directiveness on a much higher level than dependency and so will do everything one can to help a learner become increasingly self-directive in his or her learning. This is the most critical differentiating set of assumptions between pedagogy and andragogy and is the one that makes the most difference in what teachers of adults do.”

<sup>9</sup> Reischmann, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Jane Vella outlines learning tasks in her book, *Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Alison King’s work in 1993 in *From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side* is often cited as the work that began the flipped classroom. In 2004 Salman Kahn began introducing the flipped classroom as we see it today. You can sample the results of his work at <https://www.khanacademy.org/>.

<sup>12</sup> Jane Vella outlines dialogue learning in her book, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.



discards any attempt to bring andragogy into the classroom. This does mean that the teacher will be frank about the drawbacks to andragogic learning in the classroom, but work to implement ways to become a facilitator of learning.

Aspiring facilitators “must learn from the highly personalized teaching approaches of our Creator and utilize the full range of methodological and grouping possibilities.”<sup>13</sup> Facilitators do well to model their teaching after that done by the greatest teacher, Jesus. Jesus’ teaching was true andragogy. It occurred in the real world. He used events, struggles, and illustrations to allow his disciples to learn through a self-directed, inquiry style of learning. Jesus’ teaching is explored further in an examination of teaching techniques of the New Testament later in this paper. If teachers can become facilitators, even on a limited scale, students will benefit. During the class, students will acquire tools to become life-long learners and use those instruments to aid andragogic learning. Students will be able to take the tools learned in the classroom and apply them when they encounter learning moments in life.

For this paper, andragogic teaching is defined as: *Techniques used by facilitators to allow learning to be self-directed, inquiry-based, and experiential.*

### **Defining Pedagogy**

Learners are well-versed in andragogy’s counterpart, pedagogy. Pedagogy, from παιδαγωγός (“leader of children”), is commonly used to refer to teaching methodology when teaching children. Generally, in grade schools, the teacher is just that—a teacher. They are the ones with all the knowledge. They work to communicate this understanding in the most efficient way possible using pedagogical techniques. Still, pedagogy happens at all ages. Students of all ages sit in classrooms and write quizzes, tests, and papers. Pedagogic learning allows the student to memorize facts and figures to complete the necessary requirements of the course. Teachers are found to be “good” or “bad” based on test results and grades given at the end of a course. Pedagogy allows for structured learning where a teacher can easily see how and how well the curriculum is taught. Although an oversimplification, one way to think about the way things are learned by pedagogic methods is the colloquial term, “book smarts.”

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<sup>13</sup> Gilbert A. Peterson, *The Christian Education of Adults* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 4.

Pedagogical techniques were not always the norm for teaching. Malcolm Knowles, a leader in teaching methodology in the USA, shows that the style of instruction of ancient teachers was not primarily pedagogical.

As I understand it, all of the early great teachers of history were teachers of adults. In ancient China, Confucius and Lao-Tze were teachers of adults. All of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus, all the great Greek teachers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, were teachers of adults. The Romans, Quintilian, Cicero, were teachers of adults and Euclid, in founding the Institute at Alexandria, limited admissions to those 10 and over.... So Confucius and Lao-Tze taught as the Hebrew prophets incidentally taught, by the case method. Socrates developed the Socratic Dialogue Method what was used predominantly by the Greek educators – engaging the learner in a process of dialogue, an active process of inquiry.<sup>14</sup>

Note that, at this point in Knowles' study, he was working with the definition of andragogy as strictly, "how adults learn" rather than the definition proposed in this paper. However, his main point still stands. The point that there is a disconnect between the teachers of old and the teachers of today. The teachers of old primarily taught adults and needed to use different methods than teachers who primarily teach children.

Knowles looks to the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the beginning of widespread use of pedagogy. In the years leading up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, teaching was not done in the style of ancient teachers. Rather, monastic schools used pedagogical techniques to train young boys with enough reading and writing skills to copy scrolls.<sup>15</sup> With the advent of secular schools in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, organizers of schools had a choice to make.

[They] had a choice at this point of organizing these secular schools on the assumptions that were described on the scrolls—that had been made by the ancient teachers—or organizing the secular schools on the model of the monastic schools, and the tragedy is they chose the latter. So the secular educational system that began evolving in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was indeed a pedagogical system. The set of assumptions that had been made by the monks had come to be described as pedagogy, and the secular schools were organized according to the pedagogical model rather than the ancient model which we have now come to call the andragogical model. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century on until our time, therefore, education has been based upon a set of pedagogical assumptions.<sup>16</sup>

The organizers of 12<sup>th</sup> century schools chose to implement the learning techniques necessary to gain skills for reading and writing. However, their students were schooled in more subjects than

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<sup>14</sup> Knowles, *Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy*, 202.

<sup>15</sup> Knowles, *Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy*, 203.

<sup>16</sup> Knowles, *Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy*, 203.

these. Note the style of teaching necessary to gain skills for reading and writing. It is a style that thrives on repetition and memorization. This was the method the organizers of 12<sup>th</sup> century schools chose to implement in their secular schools for all subjects. This became the norm for formal teaching in general.

For this paper, pedagogy is defined as: *Techniques used by teachers to allow for the communication of information from teacher to student by lecture, memorization, or repetition.*

### **Andragogy Versus Pedagogy**

Knowles views the choice of pedagogy over andragogy as “one of the tragic events, one of the tragic choices, in our educational history.”<sup>17</sup> This indicates that he favors andragogy over pedagogy. However, in his book *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* he states,

I am at the point now of seeing that andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumption as to their ‘fit’ with particular situations. Furthermore, the models are probably most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption in a given situation falling in between the two ends.<sup>18</sup>

Note that, at this point in Knowles’ study, his definition of andragogy is closer to what is proposed in this paper. The reality is that both andragogy and pedagogy work well. It was not a tragedy that pedagogy became the teaching method of choice. However, it is a tragedy that pedagogy became the method of instruction to the neglect of andragogy.

Learning occurs best when there is a balance between andragogy and pedagogy. The literal meaning of andragogy and pedagogy specify implementing each methodology for a specific age group. However, it is best to use both methods for all ages. Choosing which methodology to use depends on how the learner learns rather than their age. In this matter, an important truth must be noted: most often children can gain more from pedagogy with some andragogy implemented; the opposite is true for adults. Still, instructors can implement both methods in varying frequency depending on their learners. In learning, there ought not to be a battle between pedagogy and andragogy, but a healthy balance between the two.

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<sup>17</sup> Knowles, *Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy*, 203.

<sup>18</sup> Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Wilton, CT; Association Press, 1980), 43, accessed November 25, 2016, [http://www.umsl.edu/~henschkej/articles/a\\_The\\_Modern\\_Practice\\_of\\_Adult\\_Education.pdt](http://www.umsl.edu/~henschkej/articles/a_The_Modern_Practice_of_Adult_Education.pdt).

## PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Before implementing ways to integrate assimilation and BIC, it is necessary to be mindful of certain andragogic and pedagogic principles. Examples from the New Testament and Augustine's catechumenate will serve to outline six principles for effective teaching.

### **Principles from the New Testament**

The New Testament records great teachers successfully communicating the truths of Christianity to their students. Before exploring what the New Testament can teach about andragogy and pedagogy, a note of caution from Darvin Raddatz.

The purpose of the Gospels is to make men wise unto salvation, to lead them to repentance and to the consolation of faith in Christ Jesus. They are a window into the dark world of God-man relationships. Through this window we may clearly see our sin and our Savior. Whatever else the Bible may reveal is incidental and seen only from the perspective of its relevance to God's mission in the world. The Scripture's purpose naturally sets a limit in its usefulness for other objectives.... In other words, as we study Jesus the Master Teacher we are going to have to be aware that we are looking at the broad field of 20<sup>th</sup> century pedagogy through an unnatural window.<sup>19</sup>

The main purpose of the Bible is not to teach andragogy and pedagogy. It is necessary to keep this as an overall mindset when looking at biblical examples of teaching techniques. With this caution in mind, adult teachers can properly gain much from the use of andragogy and pedagogy in the New Testament.

Three examples from the New Testament will serve aspiring modern-day teachers well as they look for ways to implement a healthy balance of andragogic and pedagogic teaching methods. Jesus, Philip the Evangelist, and the Apostle Paul each model examples of effective teaching. These examples will give five principles that keep the balance of andragogy and pedagogy.

### **Example: Jesus**

Meet Peter. Peter spent the formative years of his life growing up in the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee. He grew up in the Jewish faith and tradition and found a job as a fisherman. One sentence from Jesus caused Peter to leave his comfortable life, and begin a new life of education in Christianity. Jesus called out to Peter and his brother Andrew,

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<sup>19</sup> Darvin Raddatz, "Jesus the Master Teacher," Presented to: *The School Visitors' Workshop* (August 1978), 1.

“Come, follow me...and I will send you out to fish for people” (Mt 4:19).<sup>20</sup> From that moment on, Peter enrolled in an experience-driven, dialogue style class that used primarily andragogical techniques.

The greatest ancient teachers, including Jesus, were primarily teachers of adults. Knowles explains how these ancient teachers catered their teaching styles to best reach their students. He writes:

They naturally made a set of assumptions about learning processes, based upon their experience with adults, and those were a different set of assumptions from what was handed down to us later, in the middle ages, and has come to dominate our conventional education system. They saw learning as being a process of inquiry in which the learner had an active role, in fact the primary role, and the role of the teacher was that of a guide to the inquiry, a facilitator of the inquiry and, where appropriate, a resource to the inquiry.<sup>21</sup>

Whether planned or not, Jesus’ style of teaching allowed for learning to be active for the student. The setting in which he taught, content he included, and style he used allowed his students to learn as they lived. His methods were effective. Peter was a unique student who required unique teaching methods. These methods turned a fisherman into a man who confessed Jesus as, “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). Peter went on to play significant roles at Pentecost (Acts 2), in the conversion of the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), and the evangelization of Cornelius’ household (Acts 10:23-48). Peter’s writings in 1 and 2 Peter outline a pattern for discipleship. Surely, Jesus’ teaching was effective. He grew Peter from a student of Christianity to an educator of it.

Educators today can learn many principles for teaching from Jesus’ ancient teaching. The content, setting, and style of Jesus will each outline one principle for effective teaching to unique Christians. Jesus’ content models one pedagogic principle while his setting and style outline two andragogic principles.

### **Content**

The content of Jesus’ teaching related directly to his goal. Jesus’ focused content allowed him to be an excellent teacher, a direct teacher, and a teacher with purpose. Roy Zuck outlines Jesus’ goal:

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<sup>20</sup> *Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011). All Scripture references are taken NIV 2011 unless otherwise noted.

<sup>21</sup> Knowles, *Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy*, 202.

The overarching objective of Jesus' ministry on earth was to do the work God the Father had assigned him, thereby accomplishing his will. As Jesus told the disciples early in his ministry, his 'food' was 'to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work' (John 4:34). That is, spiritual sustenance was his priority; helping the Samaritan woman find 'living water' for her soul was more important than his finding food for his stomach.<sup>22</sup>

The master teacher had one goal, to "save the world" (Jn 3:17) by giving "his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). Jesus taught about Christian living in the Sermon on the Mount and worked toward saving the world from its broken state. Jesus told his disciples his "kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36) so they would know he had to leave this world to save it. His content was extremely nuanced because he, himself, was the substance of his teaching. While on earth, he spoke about his mission and how he was going to accomplish it. This made him a personal teacher.

As adult instructors today work through the question, "How can I be a teacher like Jesus?" they will acknowledge they will never be the master teacher. However, adult instructors today emulate Jesus' teaching content as they are purposeful in picking and designing their curriculum. The curriculum a BIC teacher chooses is larger than simply the content. The curriculum is "the plan the instructor follows to direct the experiences of his students so that predetermined objectives are met."<sup>23</sup> For Jesus, his predetermined objective was to do the will of God. For the BIC instructor, one predetermined objective is to "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20). A current sampling of BICs show that generally BIC teachers focus on eight key areas in order to make disciples of all nations. BIC teachers generally include lessons on these topics:

1. Doctrine of the Trinity (true God)
2. Person and Work of Christ
3. Sin/Grace
4. The Word
5. The Sacraments
6. The Church (visible and invisible)
7. Faith
8. Christian Life (prayer, worship, stewardship, evangelism)<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Jesus Taught* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 91.

<sup>23</sup> Peterson, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Reichel. "Becoming a WELS Lutheran: A Current Sampling." Delivered at: *WELS South Central District Pastors Conference* (October, 2016): 4-5.

The general inclusion of these essentials in BIC today show that instructors are mindful of their content and curriculum. The issue, then, is being intentional about staying focused on these predetermined objectives and teaching them well. These considerations show that initial planning of a BIC is pedagogical. It is a point-for-point rundown of specific doctrines that must be taught. There is specific material that needs to be covered and learned in order for a prospect to become a disciple. Therefore, the first principle for an effective BIC: *Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.*

### **Setting**

As Jesus taught, he taught in a setting that allowed for true andragogy. Peter and his peers did not sit in a classroom and write quizzes, tests, and papers. Instead, they walked streets, entered households, and sat in synagogues. Jesus frequently made use of everyday illustrations. Peter wondered what the kingdom of heaven is like and Jesus gave him examples like the farmer sowing seed (Mt 13:3-8), a king preparing a wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14), or a treasure hidden in a field (Mt 13:44). Peter rushed to action when soldiers approached Jesus and quickly found Jesus was not interested in being freed from that arrest (John 18:10,11). Jesus did not have much of a choice for the setting he chose to instruct in, but it was a setting that promoted learning. If there is one thing to learn from the setting Jesus was in, it is that it was in the real world. It made great use of real themes that directly related to what needed to be taught.

For BIC teachers today, their setting will most likely be a classroom. A classroom setting naturally asks for pedagogical techniques. Using that setting to promote andragogic learning is not an easy task. Jane Vella lists six considerations for the teacher when creating an effective, andragogic setting. She writes that the setting must be:

1. *Political*—that is, it has to do with power and the distribution of power both in the process and in the content selected.
2. *Problem-posing*—that is, it is a dialogue around adult themes using adult materials evoking affective, psychomotor, and cognitive responses.
3. *Part of the whole*—that is, it must have follow-up and continuity and not be a single event raising and then dashing hopes.
4. *Participative*—that is, everyone involved will have time to speak, to listen, to be actively engaged in learning.
5. *Person-centered*—that is, its purpose is the development of all the people involved, not merely the covering of the content.

6. *Prepared*—that is, from the initial needs assessment...through the design of materials, the learning is designed for this particular group of learners and time is used lavishly to make it ready.<sup>25</sup>

Each one of these six considerations helps promote a safe setting. Safety is key for effective learning. If a student feels safe to ask questions, propose problems, and start discussion, the learner becomes an inquiry. An inquiry drives the discussion in ways that are most beneficial for their own growth. An inquiry is a self-directed learner.

By exploring Vella's six considerations in the context of creating a setting for BIC, instructors can begin to think andragogically. First, *the setting is political*. A BIC instructor is intentional about the politics of the setting. The instructor will have more power than the learner. The instructor will choose the content and the direction the class period goes. However, the instructor must not be quick to hold on to this power too strongly. Being able to shift a teaching style or topic to address issues brought up by the inquiry is imperative to promote a safe setting. Balancing the politics of the classroom allows the teacher and student to enter into a setting that facilitates self-directed learners. However, the instructor must always keep Principle One<sup>26</sup> in mind. The balance of power cannot lean too far in the direction of the learner to the detriment of the initial teaching objectives.

*The setting is problem-posing*. Every BIC student will bring their unique doctrinal views to the classroom. The non-Christian may be ignorant of many doctrines while the former Christian will have strong views from what they learned previously. It is essential for the instructor to investigate these problems through guided questions and discussion. Through an intentional, problem-posing setting, the instructor can explore these issues through an andragogic process and lead the student to learn effectively.

*The setting is part of the whole*. The instructor must intentionally tie the entire course together. This consideration is interesting in a BIC setting because the way the instructor ties the course together will be different for each student. For example, if a student has a problem understanding the Lord's Supper, the instructor will find ways in subsequent lessons to come back to this issue. The course will move differently for a student with problems understanding a

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<sup>25</sup> Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Principle One: Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.



different doctrine. This consideration has strong ties to Principle Five, “reiterate and review.” This principle is outlined later.

*The setting is participative.* Especially in large-group BICs, a participative setting is fundamental. Lecture-style teaching is the easiest way to cover the most material efficiently. When done well, lecture-style can be participative. However, not every instructor has the gifts to do this. The BIC instructor intentionally finds ways to involve every student and give them opportunities to learn through action. Most often, this will not be through lecture. Even in a small-group or one-on-one setting, a participative BIC allows for andragogic learning. This consideration ties closely with Vella’s first consideration: the setting is political. An instructor can achieve a participative BIC if a proper balance of power is clearly evident.

*The setting is person-centered.* In the end, BIC instructors are interested in achieving real learning. It is not sufficient for a BIC student to be able to recite mere facts and figures at the end of the course. The student must know truths and appropriate them to their new lives as a Christian. A sufficient BIC produces a Christian who has made the material their own. The BIC instructor will intentionally find ways to teach the material through the life the student has lived. By teaching the predetermined objectives outlined in Principle One<sup>27</sup> through a person-centered setting, BIC becomes andragogic.

*The setting is prepared.* Teachers cannot achieve enhanced learning without faithful preparation. In BIC, the instructor is asking a student to give up valuable time. Teachers cannot waste students’ time in BIC through poor preparation. A well-prepared BIC shows the student their time is worth the instructor’s time. While Principle One<sup>27</sup> focused on the development of the overall BIC, this consideration narrows that focus to each class.

These six considerations make up the second principle of an effective setting to teach BIC: *Create a safe, learner-centered setting.* A safe, learner-centered setting allows the instructor to choose the content and style while allowing the learner to make the content their own. An instructor intentionally organizing a safe setting can be confident their BIC will enable their students to thrive and enter into a course in which they are willing to participate.

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<sup>27</sup> Principle One: Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.

## Style

Jesus used symbolism, metaphor, story-telling, hyperbole, parable and many other styles of teaching. This broad variety of style caused his faithful listeners to come back and new listeners to arrive. Jesus roused interest in his listeners, and they were excited to hear what he would say next. His use of questions stands out among his methods. His masterful use of questions elicited inquiry from those listening. Note a sampling of his questions:

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (Mt 7:3)

Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? (Mt 9:15)

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? (Mt 12:34)

Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? (Mt 12:48)

John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men? (Mt 21:25)

The gospel writers record more than 100 of Jesus' questions. This small sampling of Jesus' questions show that they were effective. These questions cut to the heart. These questions began a process of dialogue that enhanced learning.

In her book *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, Jane Vella assumes adults learn best through dialogue learning. She argues this approach "holds that adults have enough life experience to be in dialogue with any teacher, about any subject, and will learn new knowledge or attitudes or skills best in relation to that life experience."<sup>28</sup> As she defines dialogue learning, she outlines twelve principles that contribute to its success.<sup>29</sup> These principles are interrelated and many overlap with the six considerations listed earlier for crafting a safe setting. Of particular interest is her third principle: "Dialogue learning creates a healthy relationship between teacher and learner for learning and development."<sup>28</sup> The use of pointed and nuanced questions opens a dialogue for the instructor and student to speak about the learning material. They are able to talk about the material on a level that will bring the student's life experiences into the classroom. This allows the teacher and student to grow together in their relationship, to learn more about each other's lives, and learn the teaching material from their life experiences.

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<sup>28</sup> Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 4-22. Her twelve principles are: (1) Needs assessment: participation of the learners in naming what is to be learned. (2) Safety in the environment and the process. (3) A sound relationship between teacher and learner for learning and development. (4) Careful attention to sequence of content and reinforcement. (5) Praxis: action with reflection or learning by doing. (6) Respect for learners as subjects of their own learning. (7) Cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects: ideas, feelings, actions. (8) Immediacy of the learning. (9) Clear roles and role development. (10) Teamwork: using small groups. (11) Engagement of the learners in what they are learning. (12) Accountability: how do they know they know?

The use of dialogue inducing questions in a BIC setting will allow the instructor to learn the students' past struggles, successes, and experiences. The BIC instructor will be able to use the resulting relationship to ask questions that elicit deep thinking, cut to the heart, and further the dialogue. Therefore, the third principle for effective BIC instruction: *Make use of dialogue education to enhance learning through a growing relationship.*

**Example: Philip the Evangelist**

Meet the Eunuch. He lived south of Egypt, in an African land controlled by Semites.<sup>30</sup> He had responsibility in his job, being in charge of the treasury of the Ethiopian queen. Although from a distant land, he went to Jerusalem to worship the God of the Jews. On his journey back to Ethiopia he met Philip, a Christian. Philip enrolled the Eunuch in a course on Christian education, focusing on Isaiah 53:7-8. After one of the shortest BICs ever conducted, the Eunuch commanded his chariot to stop. He and Philip approached water, the Eunuch was baptized, and another unique man became a Christian.

The account of Philip and the Eunuch continues the narrative in the book of Acts of God's Word spreading to lands outside of Jerusalem. Missionaries like Philip met new challenges. They encountered men and women who were not well educated in the Hebrew Old Testament. While Philip had ample support from the Holy Spirit in this teaching moment, one thing is certain: Philip was the agent of change in the Eunuch's life. The Eunuch had a previous relationship with God in the past, but now Philip's work changed that. The Eunuch had a new and different relationship. He was baptized and knew of the Messiah Isaiah foretold. The Eunuch would go back to Ethiopia and the relationships he had made there would change due to the changed relationship he had with God.

Nancy T. Foltz writes about how adult religious educators are change agents in students' lives:

Adult religious education is about relationships. It is about understanding how we relate, work with, share the faith, and are in community with one another. At times tradition stands in the way of people and relationships. It blocks the doorway to the future. The task of adult religious education is assisting persons to find meaning in life, to establish a relationship with God. Relationships rather than accomplishments must be held in creative tension, not ignoring one another or refusing to admit they both exist.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> George Lillegard, "Lecture On Missions," *Thiensville Pastor's Institute* (1955), 9.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy T. Foltz, *Handbook of Adult Religious Education* (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1986), 250.

Foltz recognizes that relationships are the commonality between educators using dialogue education and educators being agents of change. However, the focus regarding relationships in being an agent of change is different from that of dialogue education. For dialogue education, the relationship in question was that of educator and student. In becoming an agent of change, the focus is on the relationship between the student and the other people in their lives. In Christian education, teachers present material that will fundamentally change the student. The student will take this new information and incorporate it into their lives. Naturally, whatever relationship they had with coworkers, friends, and family will change as their relationship with God grows.

Philip the Evangelist worked tirelessly as a missionary in Samaria. When the Holy Spirit came to him and directed him to the Ethiopian Eunuch, Philip went. The impact Philip had on the Eunuch was life changing. He used Isaiah 55:7-8 as a starting point to tell the Eunuch about the greatest agent of change in his life. With this new knowledge, the Eunuch went back to Ethiopia. Surely his life was different. The way he worshiped was different. The way he encountered the Bible was different. His relationship with God was different. Philip knew this would happen and carried out God's will accordingly. Especially when met with a prospect who is not a Christian, the BIC experience will be life and relationship changing. Therefore, the fourth principle for unique education to unique Christians: *Be an agent of change to create new and different relationships with prospects.*

### **Example: The Apostle Paul**

Meet the Ephesians. They lived in a famous, urban city with many people ready to hear the gospel. Their city was home to the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. They organized their churches according to household with thirty to forty people meeting in each place. Organizing in this way added some diversity in the church as each church family was different in culture. The apostle Paul had visited twice, starting and growing the church there. The Ephesians were young Christians who needed continuing education in Christianity. Although Paul spent much time in Ephesus and taught the Christians there, he was not done. His letter served as continuing education for those Christians.

In ten short verses of chapter two of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul gave a template for an entire BIC. It is worthwhile to look at these verses to gather how much teaching Paul did in a small amount of writing.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

In these ten verses, Paul reiterated common themes he stressed in other areas of his letters.

Notice in this short section, Paul touches on fundamental teachings like:

1. God’s attributes (vv 4, 10)
2. Person and Work of Christ (vv 5, 6)
3. Sin and grace (vv 1, 5)
4. The Word (vv 1-10)
5. Faith (v 8)
6. Christian Life (v 10)

Much of the content of these six lessons is the same or similar to the eight general topics most BICs in WELS cover.<sup>32</sup> Paul went back to these topics again and again in his epistles. He expanded on these topics, refined them, and explained them in new and different ways. Principle One<sup>33</sup> holds true in Paul’s writings. He had predetermined teaching objectives and did not stray from them. By constant reiteration and review, his teaching honored Principle One.<sup>33</sup>

Martin Luther’s preface to the Large Catechism is an exhortation for constant reiteration and review. He stated:

Let all Christians drill themselves in the Catechism daily, and constantly put it into practice, guarding themselves with the greatest care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security or arrogance. Let them constantly read and teach, learn and meditate and ponder. Let them never stop until they have proved by experience and are

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<sup>32</sup> See page 11.

<sup>33</sup> Principle One: Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.

certain that they have taught the devil to death and have become more learned than God himself and all his saints.<sup>34</sup>

Teaching the six chief parts of the Catechism is a general outline for most BICs. Luther hoped that a Christian would review parts of the Catechism daily. He stated that even he did not know the entire thing perfectly, and no one this side of heaven would either.<sup>35</sup> By instilling in BIC students a spirit of reiteration and review, they will learn how to continue reviewing the chief articles of faith throughout their lives as Christians. Therefore, the fifth principle: *Reiterate and review*.

The simplest way to reiterate and review is through pedagogical techniques. The difficulty, then, is to be able to do this in a way that falls in line with the andragogic teaching principles. A simple quiz or test will not be sufficient to allow learner-centered reiteration and review and promote a safe setting. Reiteration and review must deepen truths that are already in the students' heart in a way that teaches self-directed review in the future.

### **Principles from Augustine's Catechumenate**

In ecclesiology, a "catechumen," was a potential Christian convert enrolled in some form of Christian education. The catechumenate was the process early church fathers implemented to educate the catechumen. Hippolytus and Tertullian in the third century and Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodore of Mopsuetia, Ambrose, and Augustine in the fourth century all had some form of the catechumenate.<sup>36</sup> Augustine was a catechumen under Ambrose. However, Augustine changed the catechumenate he experienced to suit his style and goal. His catechumenate had four stages.

First, Augustine enrolled prospects in the catechumenate after an initial hearing of the gospel. It is unclear exactly how Augustine preferred to do this, but there is evidence both for an

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 383.

<sup>35</sup> *The Book of Concord*, 380. "Nevertheless, each morning, and whenever else I have time, I do as a child who is being taught the catechism and I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, The Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the catechism daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the catechism—and I also do so gladly."

<sup>36</sup> Paul Alms, "Review of *Augustine and The Catechumenate* by William Harmless and *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* by Charles Arand," *Logia*, January 1, 2002, 37, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=aa7efae8-89fb-4974-bd64-ec1fc1aec3fb@sessionmgr101&vid=5&hid=125>.

interview process and an introductory sermon with an evangelism theme.<sup>37</sup> After this initial hearing of the gospel, catechumens became “hearers.” A “hearer,” rather than entering directly into formal catechesis, spent time listening in worship.

Catechumens seem to have simply blended in with the baptized, with penitents, with any who might attend the Liturgies of the Word. There all would have pondered the same Scriptures, sang the same psalms, heard the same sermons. In other words, what catechumens heard did not seem to have differed from what other groups in the assembly heard.<sup>38</sup>

Although catechumens blended into worship with members, they were not able to be just that. Augustine made sure they were more than just hearers of sermons and participants of the liturgy. He forced them to be active hearers.

A moment ago, I noted that the catechumenate, from our vantage point, lacks easy visibility because catechumens simply blended in with the larger worshipping assembly. In the main, this is true. But every so often they become visible; that is, whenever Augustine in the course of an ordinary sermon would turn and speak to them directly. In the sermons that have come down to us (only a fraction of those he gave), he makes at least twenty-two of these turns.... These turns basically take one of four forms: (1) Augustine would beg catechumens to live in a manner that respected the cross they bore on their foreheads; (2) he would remind them of their ignorance of the “secrets” (i.e. baptism and Eucharist); (3) he would single out their behavior to illustrate a point; (4) he would exhort them to complete their initiation.<sup>39</sup>

Apparently, Augustine had no qualms about calling out his prospects in the worship service. While this is a difficult practice to defend, the educator can learn from Augustine’s use of this technique. Through this technique Augustine made sure the hearers were acutely aware their education was not complete. They could not help but remember that they still had a long way to go before they would be baptized and receive the Lord’s Supper. They knew they needed to come back to worship again to learn more.

The next stage of the catechumenate happened during Lent. Their time in study during Lent was a period of formal catechesis and testing. Formal catechesis during this period focused on the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. During that time, there were periods of spiritual testing. “Testing included penitential disciplines, scrutinies, exorcisms, and catechesis.”<sup>40</sup> This

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<sup>37</sup> William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 110-111.

<sup>38</sup> Harmless, 157.

<sup>39</sup> Harmless, 158.

<sup>40</sup> Alms, 38.

period taught the catechumens that they were going through a process of complete change from spiritual death to spiritual life.

The last phase began with the Easter Vigil, where catechumens were baptized and received the Lord's Supper for the first time. Catechesis continued through the eight days after Easter with a series of sermons and special gatherings. The Easter Vigil has fallen out of popular use today, but up until the Middle Ages it was the highlight of the Christian church year. The early church fathers chose the Vigil as a time to initiate catechumens because there was no more fitting of a time.

The insistence on the Easter Vigil as the normal setting for Christian initiation is neither ecclesiastical nostalgia nor doctrinal wistfulness. There is simply no other time of the year, and certainly no other liturgical context, that serves as so rich a setting for sacramental initiation and its meaning. Not only are the initiates dying and rising in Christ as the Church commemorates his passage from death to life long ago. More importantly the initiates are entering into his corporate real presence which is the Church.... Only the Easter Vigil yields up an ecclesiology worthy of baptism.<sup>41</sup>

The initiates went through the Easter Vigil, dying and rising with Christ in their baptism and receiving his real body and blood in communion. In the periods of instruction after the Vigil, Augustine reviewed and reiterated Baptism and the Lord's Supper because the catechumens had just gone through these rites. He did this "in the context of the symbols of the liturgy and customs the baptized were experiencing, such as the sign of the cross, the white robes they wore all week, and the liturgy of the Eucharist they were participating in for the first time."<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to Christian education done in a classroom, Augustine's classroom was his basilica.<sup>43</sup> He spent some time with the catechumens in special gatherings, but the majority of the teaching he did happened in church services.

Here the rhythms of education moved to the rhythms of the liturgy itself. Every gesture, every sign, every word mattered—whether ritual greetings, sitting-and-standing arrangements, the cross people "wore" on their foreheads, or the secrecy of what followed dismissal. All these, Augustine insisted, held some import for how one believed, felt, and acted. In this classroom, silence was rare; instead, the atmosphere was rowdy, emotionally charged, more like that of a sports arena than a modern church. It

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<sup>41</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1978) 134-135.

<sup>42</sup> Alms, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Harmless, 235.



offered entertainment as well as instruction, theatrics as well as worship: its drama was salvation history; its script was the Scriptures; and its actors included everyone.<sup>44</sup>

Approaching adult education like this must have had a life-long impact on the catechumens.

They learned to make worship a learning moment and a learning moment worship.<sup>45</sup> They were well educated in the style, purpose, and function of worship. Therefore, the sixth and final principle for unique Christian education: (6) *Integrate instruction and worship*.

### **Six Principles Summarized**

These six principles will serve the adult educator well when working to begin a new BIC. These six principles are not in an order based on importance or sequence. While they are interrelated, they each bring a particular focus to effective teaching. These principles hope to do two things: (1) Introduce more andragogic teaching methods into BIC; (2) Teach BIC in a unique way that will use the actual class time to assimilate members into the church family. The six principles are included below for easy access.

1. Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.
2. Create a safe, learner-centered setting.
3. Make use of dialogue education to grow relationships.
4. Be an agent of change.
5. Reiterate and review.
6. Integrate instruction and worship.

### **SURVEY OF BIC PRACTICE IN WELS TODAY**

In researching this topic, I sent a survey to pastors within a 200-mile radius of Mequon, WI. Below, I analyze the first 100 responses I received. I asked five questions to find out in what ways pastors in WELS use andragogic teaching methods in BIC. The questions also focus on how pastors work to assimilate new members into their church.

Pastor Ben Reichel recently conducted a study entitled, *Becoming a WELS Lutheran: A Current Sampling*.<sup>46</sup> Although his focus was different from mine, some questions overlap. He

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<sup>44</sup> Harmless, 235.

<sup>45</sup> Alms states it well, "If catechesis is completely a classroom affair, then the connection between living in the church and participation in the church's life will not be readily apparent. Here the early church teaches us well." Alms, 38.

<sup>46</sup> Reichel, 1-13.

surveyed pastors in WELS throughout our nation and received 80 responses. My survey will give a good sampling of BIC practice in a limited geographic location. Reichel’s research gives a good sampling of current BIC practice across the synod. The two surveys together provide the general practice of assimilation through BIC within WELS. An analysis of the five questions I asked shows how well the six principles outlined previously are being implemented in BICs today. For each of these questions, I hint at the possible changes to make to BIC courses while I list concrete suggestions in the last section of this paper.

**1. How many lessons is your BIC?**

Of the 100 respondents, 99 answered this question. They responded:

7 Lessons: 1	18 Lessons: 2
8 Lessons: 1	19 Lessons: 5
9 Lessons: 3	20 Lessons: 15
10 Lessons: 8	21 Lessons: 1
12 Lessons: 14	22 Lessons: 1
13 Lessons: 4	23 Lessons: 1
14 Lessons: 8	24 Lessons: 2
15 Lessons: 20	Other: 4
16 Lessons: 9	

Those who responded “other” supplied a range of lessons. As expected, there is a wide variety of responses. However, it is worth noting that 86% of responses fall within the 10-20 lesson range. Reichel’s study yielded similar results. “Over half of the respondents indicated they used 10 or 15 lessons for BIC, the other half consisted of 20+ lessons or ‘Other.’”<sup>47</sup> This confirms one assumption I was hoping to test with this question. I asked this question to test the hypothesis that there is an emphasis on formal adult instruction in WELS and that it is longer than in other Christian denominations. I define “formal adult instruction” as instruction that happens in the classroom while ‘informal adult instruction’ is that which occurs in worship. Of course, adult instruction happens as new Christians hear the Word in worship. However, the point to take away from this question is that, for new Christians, WELS emphasizes lengthy formal instruction in the classroom.

Two brief examples from other Christian denominations serve to show an alternate emphasis. Baptist Christian education varies, but when it happens formally, courses are three to

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<sup>47</sup> Reichel, 3.

six weeks long.<sup>48</sup> Evidently, there is less emphasis on formal education in this instance. Pentecostals implement little to no formal Christian education but educate informally through worship. While practice varies, some Pentecostal churches find a Christian educated once they have proved themselves worthy. “Having been found worthy” can occur after two years of faithful attendance and tithing.<sup>49</sup> There is little to no emphasis on formal education in Pentecostal churches. Rather, they rely on informal education in worship and personal Bible study.

This question hints at aspects of Principle Six: *integrate instruction and worship*. Thinking back to the example of Dexter at the beginning of this paper, he went through a BIC consisting of 15 lessons. All of these lessons occurred formally, in a classroom. After he completed BIC, he still had a long way to go before assimilation occurred. By taking one or two of these lessons and teaching them intentionally through worship, some assimilation could have been accomplished informally while enrolled in BIC.

## **2. How many lessons are taught by someone other than the pastor?**

I asked this question to test how well educators implement Principle Three<sup>50</sup> and Principle Four<sup>51</sup> in current BICs. Using dialogue education and being an agent of change both revolve around growing and changing relationships. Entering into dialogue education hopes to teach through the growing relationship between student and teacher. Being an agent of change hopes to teach through recognizing the changing relationships in the rest of the student’s life. All 100 participants responded to this question. In response, 96 said the pastor teaches all lessons; four said someone other than the pastor teaches one to three lessons.

This question shows that 96 percent of the time, when given the opportunity to use dialogue education and be an agent of change, pastors in WELS choose to do this through one relationship—that of pastor and student. Since Principle Three<sup>50</sup> and Principle Four<sup>51</sup> revolve around relationships, they are most effective when many relationships are affected in their implementation. By making use of more educators than the pastor, a BIC student can build

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<sup>48</sup> Andy Schroer. “Church Membership Practices – The Good, The Bad, The Ugly.” Delivered at: *WELS South Central District Pastors Conference* (October, 2016): presentation. Slide 3.

<sup>49</sup> Schroer, Slide 8.

<sup>50</sup> Principle Three: Make use of dialogue education to grow relationships.

<sup>51</sup> Principle Four: Be an agent of change.

relationships with leaders in the congregation. While it would not be wise to completely take BIC teaching out of the pastor's hands and place it into the hands of the laity, there are ways to do this on a smaller scale. If educators other than the pastor taught some lessons, the prospect would be in a better position for assimilation at the completion of BIC.

### **3. Did you write this BIC or use a preexisting one?**

I asked this question to test Principles One<sup>52</sup>, Two<sup>53</sup>, and Five<sup>54</sup>. Through the BIC pastors choose, they choose the objectives of the course, the setting in which a student will learn and the style of reiteration and review. Of the 100 who responded to this question, 16 percent said they wrote their own BIC, 57 percent stated that they use a preexisting one, and 27 percent said "other." Those who responded "other" had the opportunity to explain their BIC method; all offered insight. Their insights iterated a common theme:

"I used a preexisting as a basis, but made changes to suit my needs."

"Modified one of the ones I was given in WLS Senior education and made it my own."

"We use both, depending on the situation."

"I started with 'HIStory Matters' by Dan Habben, but every time through I alter it to better fit my style and the needs of the class—so at this point it is a hybrid of mine and someone else's."

"It is a combination of several preexisting ones as well as my content. I put it together to suit my teaching preferences."

Taking these insights into consideration, it is evident that those who responded "other" for this question wrote the majority of their own BIC while using an existing publication as a base.

Taking this into consideration, the "wrote my own BIC" and "other" selections fall into the same category. Therefore, 57 percent said they use a preexisting BIC while 43 percent write their own. Nearly split right down the middle.

This question shows that pastors in WELS are aware that in order to best implement Principles One<sup>52</sup>, Two<sup>53</sup>, and Five<sup>54</sup> they will choose a BIC method that best suits their needs. This question did not test specific ways they do this, only if they were aware that their context and culture differs from every other area in WELS. With 43 percent of respondents writing most of their own BIC, they recognize they need to be proactive in choosing the objectives, setting, and method of reiteration and review.

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<sup>52</sup> Principle One: Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.

<sup>53</sup> Principle Two: Create a safe, learner-centered setting.

<sup>54</sup> Principle Five: Reiterate and review.

#### **4. While a prospect goes through BIC, do you have ways to connect them to existing members?**

This question dug even deeper into Principles Three<sup>55</sup> and Four<sup>56</sup>. It specifically hoped to find ways pastors use the actual time spent in BIC to grow relationships between prospects and members. There was overlap with this question and question five, “Once BIC is completed, how do you assimilate new members into your church?” Many listed similar answers for each question. However, some responded while also giving specific processes for assimilating through BIC. Of the 98 who responded to this question, 51 answered “yes” while 47 answered “no.” Respondents were given the opportunity to explain their answer and many listed ways they assimilate. Some responded to this question in more than one way, resulting in 71 listed instances of assimilation. These instances fell in six different categories.

1. 21 instances of enrolling existing members in BIC.
2. 15 instances of connecting with an existing member.
3. 14 instances of worshipping with the church family.
4. 10 instances of service and fellowship opportunities.
5. 6 instances of a mentor program.
6. 5 instances of a new member orientation process.

Assimilation categories “connecting with an existing member,” “worshipping with the church family,” “service and fellowship opportunities,” and “a new member orientation process” happen outside of the BIC course. While these may happen during the time a prospect takes BIC, they are not specific ways to use the actual time spent in BIC as assimilation. These assimilation instances more accurately fall into categories under question five. They are listed here to reflect how respondents interpreted the question. These answers also indicate that respondents were not thinking of assimilation specifically happening inside of a BIC, but in their ministry setting as a whole.

Enrolling existing members in BIC and creating mentor programs are beneficial ways to encourage Principles Three<sup>55</sup> and Four<sup>56</sup>. Enrolling current members in BIC promotes healthy relationships between a prospect learning the basic truths of Christianity and mature Christians.

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<sup>55</sup> Principle Three: Make use of dialogue education to grow relationships.

<sup>56</sup> Principle Four: Be an agent of change.

They can ask pointed questions and participate in a discussion that explores the many life experiences of prospects and members alike. In this way, dialogue education occurs naturally as the prospect uncovers the specific ways they learn best. Discussions will be more fruitful and learn in an enhanced way. Enrolling existing members in BIC exposes prospects to many agents of change. The existing members help to modify the scope of relationships the prospect has in their life. Instituting a mentor program is an intriguing idea. If a prospect is assigned a mentor for the duration of their time in BIC, that prospect has a specific agent of change other than the pastor to dialogue with, learn from, and question.

With these thoughts in mind, the data from this question shows that assimilation does not often happen through a BIC. Of the 71 instances of assimilation, 27 instances (21 responses of “enroll existing members in BIC” and six responses of “through a mentor program”) were specific ways to assimilate by using the BIC process. Therefore, 38 percent of the time those who are mindful of assimilating while the prospect is in BIC use the actual BIC course to do this. This question showed that 48 percent of respondents realized they do not use BIC as an assimilation tool. It also revealed that 52 percent of respondents recognize that assimilation happens while the prospect takes BIC, but only 38 percent of the time do they use the time spent in BIC for intentional assimilation.

### **Once BIC is completed, how do you assimilate new members into your church?**

This question helped to qualify question four. It gave those who did not identify specific ways to assimilate through the BIC process a chance to show how they assimilate in their ministry as a whole. 94 responded to this question and most gave more than one process for assimilation. Only seven noted that assimilation does not happen or that there is no formal process in place.<sup>57</sup> Six responded by saying assimilation is done primarily before or during BIC. The 81 remaining respondents listed 136 instances of assimilation processes. These fell into ten categories.

1. 34 instances of making use of fellowship and service activities.
2. 24 instances of a new member orientation seminar.
3. 19 instances of a public confirmation service.

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<sup>57</sup> This was one area where my results differed from Reichel’s research. From page 9 of his paper, “Out of the 80 total responses to this question, 35 of them were some form of ‘no formal process,’ or ‘needs to improve, or ‘in the works.’”

4. 14 instances of a time and talents survey.
5. 12 instances of introducing to existing members.
6. 12 instances of encouraging regular worship and Bible study.
7. Eight instances of a mentor program.
8. Six instances of follow-up by the pastor.
9. Four instances of a new member bulletin board.
10. Three instances of a special Bible study for new members.

The wide variety of responses and the fact that 87 respondents reported having some sort of assimilation process in place show that pastors are mindful of assimilation. However, many responses included qualifying statements like, “No set plan, but we try...” or “Through confirmation, but assimilation has been an issue for us.” One response was especially telling:

With difficulty, although some new members make it easy by involving themselves.... You can assimilate new members only to the degree and at the speed that they are willing to be assimilated. But you still have to try. In another congregation, my wife and I invited to our home three couples who didn't know each other. Over the next few Sundays we saw these three couples continue the bonding. We've talked about doing this same sort of thing ever since, but with so little help in the congregation, we've lacked the energy to repeat this idea. In that same congregation, I asked people, "Why did you come back after your first visit here?" They all pointed to a certain couple who had invited them to come over after church and eat dinner with them at their home. The more friends and family that a new member has outside of the church, the harder it usually is to assimilate them—and within seven years, they leave.

This respondent recognized the difficulty of assimilation but offered his best solution. He and his wife were able to be agents of change for the three couples they invited to their house. These couples did not previously know each other, but after experiencing the fellowship at this pastor's house, they made new relationships in the church. This pastor pointed to these new relationships as a catalyst that aided assimilation.

### **Survey Summarized**

This survey showed that respondents invest many hours in the education of new prospects. Almost all of the time the pastor is the leading BIC educator. There are some who have concrete ways to assimilate prospects into the church while they take BIC. Most become intentional about assimilation once the prospect completes BIC. While part of assimilation is familiarizing the prospect with the ways the church works, most responders recognized introducing new members to existing members as necessary for assimilation.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR INTEGRATING ASSIMILATION AND BIC

Working hard to implement the six principles above will introduce more andragogic techniques into BIC. Using these techniques will allow the instructor more opportunities to introduce moments into BIC where assimilation can occur. This next section offers five concrete suggestions to integrate assimilation and BIC. These five suggestions correspond to Principles, One<sup>58</sup>, Two<sup>59</sup>, Three<sup>60</sup>, Four<sup>61</sup>, and Six<sup>62</sup>. Principle Five<sup>63</sup> is interspersed within these five suggestions.

### **Principle One: Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objectives.**

For this principle, we studied how Jesus' stayed true to his objectives to do the will of the Father. This principle is one that balances out the more andragogic-centered principles. This principle urges BIC instructors to continue to have two predetermined objectives: (1) teach the truths of Christianity, and (2) intentionally assimilate while the prospect takes BIC. This principle balances andragogy and pedagogy because BIC lessons that incorporate assimilation will naturally be more andragogic, while the other lessons will be more pedagogic.

This principle requires proper, initial planning. Principle One<sup>58</sup> is the big picture planning stage where the instructor chooses general topics. It is the stage to decide how many classes the BIC will have and how many of those will be specific "assimilation" classes. With BICs running 10-20 lessons in length, it would not be impossible to set aside 20-25 percent of those classes as "special" classes, where you invite a guest presenter or integrate BIC with worship that Sunday. Examples of these types of lessons are given below. It is fundamental to remember the specific teaching points during this stage of planning, so every lesson serves the predetermined objectives.

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<sup>58</sup> Principle One: Determine specific teaching points that serve the predetermined objective.

<sup>59</sup> Principle Two: Create a safe, learner-centered setting.

<sup>60</sup> Principle Three: Make use of dialogue education to grow relationships.

<sup>61</sup> Principle Four: Be an agent of change.

<sup>62</sup> Principle Six: Integrate instruction and worship.

<sup>63</sup> Principle Five: Reiterate and review.



## **Principle Two: Create a safe, learner-centered setting.**

For this principle, we looked at six considerations Jane Vella outlined for creating an effective setting. Consider this suggestion for one possible way to craft a safe, learning-enhanced setting for a BIC course.

Giving testimonials, or coming-to-faith stories, is not a general practice in WELS. However, the practice could find its place in BIC. To teach conversion, invite a current member to talk about their path to faith. They would be the guest speaker that day and have control of the class. Students would be able to ask questions, react, and begin to think deeply about their own coming to faith.

Mentioning testimonials requires much explanation. Jane Vella's six considerations for crafting a setting come into play here. Instructors must handle the politics<sup>64</sup> of the situation. They have the power in the process and content selected. Picking the right person to share their coming-to-faith story requires much work.<sup>65</sup> Instructors need to make sure the biblical aspects of conversion normally taught in a regular BIC course are still taught well. The period needs to be more than a story-telling session. After the instructor has confidently chosen and trained the right guest speaker, power shifts to the speaker as they lead the class. The instructor balances power in the classroom as students realize they can learn from people other than the pastor.

Teaching conversion in this way is problem-posing.<sup>66</sup> It elicits affective responses as it touches the emotions. It elicits psychomotor responses when the presentation includes participation.<sup>67</sup> It elicits cognitive responses as the presenter works through the specific doctrinal points needed to cover conversion. The student wrestles with the problem of how well their experiences relate to the experiences of the speaker. They are forced to think deeply about how this doctrine of Scripture has affected them and will affect them.<sup>68</sup>

In the next BIC session, it would be necessary to have a reaction period to receive student feedback on the guest speaker's presentation. This serves as a way to reiterate and review that

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<sup>64</sup> Consideration One: The setting is political.

<sup>65</sup> Consideration Six: The setting is prepared.

<sup>66</sup> Consideration Two: The setting is problem-posing.

<sup>67</sup> Consideration Four: The setting is participative.

<sup>68</sup> Consideration Five: The setting is person-centered

solidifies this life experience as a worthwhile one.<sup>69</sup> In this way, instructors reiterate and review not through pedagogy but andragogy. It also allows pinpointing gaps in knowledge where continued review is necessary. The instructor can come back to these gaps in knowledge as the course continues.

**Principle Three: Make use of dialogue education to grow relationships.**

In studying this principle, we looked at Jesus' use of questions and a simplification of Jane Vella's 12 points of dialogue education. We said that dialogue education does two things, allows the student to learn through inquiry and grows a relationship between the student and teacher. In defining andragogy, I mentioned two other types of andragogic learning techniques: the flipped classroom and learning activities. Consider combining these techniques to promote dialogue learning.

For example, to teach baptism, assign students a video to watch of an instructor's lecture on baptism. The flipped classroom does not call for in-depth media tools. The video is meant to simply be a floating head giving an explanation of what baptism is and what the Bible says about it. At the beginning of class, spend time receiving reactions to the video they watched. Use that time to fill in holes in their learning. Assign the task of watching a video<sup>70</sup> of a different church body's views on baptism. Follow this up with the learning activity of writing down three specific phrases they heard in the video that contradict what the Bible says about baptism. Enter into a dialogue with them as instructor and student talk through issues and reactions.

**Principle Four: Be an agent of change.**

In studying this principle, we looked at Philip the Evangelist's impact on the Eunuch's life. Philip's teaching to the Eunuch changed his life and changed how he would live in the future. Nancy Foltz showed that a teacher of adults is an agent of change. This agent of change affects relationships.

Introducing more agents of change in a student's life is the best use of the instructor's role as an agent of change. The respondents to the survey identified two ways to do this: (1) enroll current members in BIC and (2) assign a mentor to BIC students. These certainly are fine

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<sup>69</sup> Consideration Three: The setting is part of the whole.

<sup>70</sup> These are all over the place. For convenience' sake, here is one link:  
<https://www.southeastchristian.org/beliefs/#baptism>.

ways to expand the relationships of the prospect. Both of these ideas will go a long way in aiding assimilation through BIC.

Two more examples augment the implementation of Principle Four<sup>71</sup>. First, allow current members to teach BIC. Think of this differently than a guest presenter coming for one week (like the testimonial example), but allow a member to teach a series of lessons. The section on marriage and family is a natural place to do this. Consider asking a married couple to teach this lesson or series of lessons. Again, proper preparation is necessary. The instructor would need to work hard to properly train members for this task. However, consider the benefits it could have. Not only would the teachers become agents of change in that student's life, but the student would learn from someone who is living the lesson. BIC serves to assimilate as the student meets two new members with whom they now have a relationship.

Secondly, one response to question four<sup>72</sup> of the survey provided an intriguing option, Sometimes BICs are "*are hosted at a member's house.*"<sup>73</sup> Is not that an interesting idea! Consider scheduling the year in such a way that the time set aside for BIC coincides with the time set aside for small group Bible study. Craft a small group Bible study based on one of the chief parts of the Catechism. Move the regular scheduled BIC class time to the time a small group meets. Tell BIC students that is where the class will be that week. Students participate in the small group study, meet more members, are assimilated even more into the congregation while learning the lesson for BIC that week. Again, this requires much preparation on the instructor's part. However, after the initial work, it should be simple enough to implement the same method year after year.

### **Principle Six: Integrate instruction and worship**

For this principle, we looked at Augustine's catechumenate and saw how much of catechesis he taught through worship. Immediately, a problem arises when thinking about Augustine's situation and ours: What if we emphasize BIC learning in worship, but the prospect does not show up?

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<sup>71</sup> Principle Four: Be an agent of change.

<sup>72</sup> Question four was, "While a prospect goes through BIC, do you have ways to connect them with existing members?"

<sup>73</sup> Emphasis mine.

Consider how this problem could be solved by being intentional about when and where BIC is taught. Choose a Sunday where the Lord's Supper is served or a service that includes baptism. Rather than meeting during the week for that BIC lesson, stress with the student that the lesson will happen on Sunday morning. Schedule an interview session with the person being baptized, the parents of the child being baptized, or one of the communing members. If the student knows they have a commitment to keep with another member of the congregation, they are more likely to be there to complete this learning task. Before or after the service, the BIC student meets with the member to discuss why they want to be baptized, why they want their children baptized, or why they continue to receive the Lord's Supper. Meet with the student the following week and include a period of reiteration and review reflecting on the events of the previous Sunday.

Again, this would require preparation on the instructor's part. However, after some time the instructor would have a core group of members trained in being able to be the interviewee for the student. Again, assimilation and BIC are integrated.

### **Conclusion**

Andragogic teaching techniques are techniques used by facilitators to allow learning to be self-directed, inquiry-based, and experiential. Many of the great teachers of history taught with this style. Of special focus is the biblical classroom. Students of Christianity as found in Scripture learned through life experience, were given opportunities to ask questions about their subject matter as it related to their lives, and were encouraged to seek out answers. Andragogic teaching techniques fell out of widespread use with the organization of first monastic and then secular schools. In recent years, andragogic teaching has begun to come back into use. Leaders in andragogic teaching techniques argue that these methods will create life-long learners. Education has always been an important part of WELS ministry. It is necessary in WELS to use andragogy to effectively educate.

Using andragogic teaching techniques is one way to integrate BIC and assimilation. This is a big task. It would require a change in the church's ministry plan. A total ministry plan could be divided up into six areas of ministry: (1) worship, (2) education, (3) fellowship, (4) stewardship, (5) outreach, and (6) in-reach. A pastor once told me something along these lines, "A pastor can realistically specialize in two of these six areas. That is not to say the other four areas of ministry are neglected, but it is to say that he tries his hardest to do two of them really

well while also being faithful to the other four.” In order to integrate BIC and assimilation through andragogy a pastor could choose worship and education as the two areas of ministry he would hope to excel in. These two areas of ministry most naturally line up with the five suggestions for integrating BIC and assimilation listed above.

My suspicion is that while reading this paper, you have thought, “You are looking at this through rose-tinted glasses!” To that, I say, “You are right.” I realize that a pastor’s schedule is busy and equipping volunteers to serve in this way is difficult. I also realize that the method of BIC that I am proposing requires a total ministry plan. The way you equip your current members to do outreach, your small group plan, your worship style, and your catechism class would be affected. Not every congregation is fitted with members who have the gifts to accomplish all that I propose. However, I do think this method is possible for some. It would require rethinking all areas of ministry so that education is done well to the benefit of worship, fellowship, stewardship, inreach, and outreach. It would require implementing parts of this plan over many years.

While everything I propose in this paper is not possible for all to implement, parts of this plan can be. Consider one final thing: Choose the one proposal you find most intriguing or the one that would be simplest to implement, and try it one time. Take one example that is simple to try: In order to teach communion, give your students one out-of-class task. Give them a question sheet that says, “Observe communion in worship. Based on what you see, answer this question, ‘Write a four sentence paragraph explaining why Christians at this church take communion.’” At your next BIC, use the paragraphs your students write as the base for what you will need to teach regarding communion.

By implementing this task one time, you will be able to evaluate for yourself if this style of teaching is worthwhile. If it is worthwhile, consider experimenting with more, simple andragogic techniques. Experiment with teaching BIC by using one, ten-minute interview with a member who can speak about sanctified living. Or try beginning your BIC with a brief survey to find the areas of Christianity your students are weakest. Try some of these simple examples to evaluate for yourself if andragogy could be your way of effectively teaching the truths of the Bible while also assimilating members. If that is the result of reading these pages, then they were worth being read and worth being written.

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