

APPENDIX E: Directions For Commenting On Emmaus Exams

IMPORTANT: Statistics state that the majority of male prisoners never receive a visit or mail while incarcerated (no contact from the outside world). This is sobering. Consider this for a moment. This is why one of the most effective tools in a successful Bible correspondence ministry is the personal touch and communication of a person from the outside world. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the personal encouraging/instructing aspect of processing the students' courses. You will clearly see this need addressed in this supplement.

"Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them" — Hebrews 13:3.

1. Pray for the student before and after you comment on his course. Remember, we are in a spiritual battle — Ephesians 6:18. The student at times will ask for prayer. Be sure to take a moment to pray for him and note to him that you have just prayed for him. Imagine the impact! He has no contact with the outside world yet someone is now listening to him, encouraging him, and praying for him!
2. Use a different color of ink to comment than the student uses on his exams.
3. Put your first name on the first page of the first exam on the line marked "Instructor."
4. Read all of the student's answers before you begin commenting so you have as much information about him as you can before you begin, e.g. the student may say he is "lost" on lesson 1 but "saved" on lesson 8. etc.
5. Giving a substantive comment on every answer the student gives is very beneficial to the student. A substantive comment has content that edifies and accurately communicates biblical truth in an encouraging way. Think of commenting as a conversation you are having with the student. We all know what it is like to have a conversation with someone who's contribution is simply one-word responses. You wonder if they are really listening and if they really care.
6. There are three major guidelines to follow when commenting:
 - ✓ Always encourage.
 - ✓ If the student's comment is good we reinforce what he has said with a comment and *with scripture*.
 - ✓ When his response is in error, we correct him with a comment and *with supporting scripture*.
7. Take note of the student's answers regarding his depth of understanding and vocabulary, etc. so you can be sensitive to not use big words which "speak above his head" and give him something he is not able to digest, i.e. milk vs. meat. (This pertains to theology as well as vocabulary.)
8. Write out the names of books of the Bible instead of abbreviating them. Some students will not understand the abbreviation, e.g. Hebrews, not Heb.
9. Our policy is not to address students' comments on "Tongues" or "Healing" unless they are adding the manifestation of these gifts as necessary to the salvation message. We have found that if we do address these items, then the students tend to "fix" on them at the loss of learning the many good things they are being taught in the lessons.

10. If you need ideas for how to generate a comment, here are four ideas:

- You can look at the Emmaus courses which you completed and received back with comments. The comments you have received back can give you ideas. If they are suitable for the student's answers you are commenting on, just put the comment you have received back into your own words and use it as a response to the student's answer you are commenting on.
 - You can also look at the *Commentor's Guide* for ideas (See Appendix F). There is a guide for each Emmaus course. Each guide has verses and sometimes notes for each "What Do You Say?" question, e.g. Number one of the *Born To Win* guide corresponds to the "What Do You Say?" question of lesson one of the *Born To Win* course. The verses in the guide relate to the corresponding "What Do You Say?" question in the lesson. The words in the guide are not meant to be used as "ready-made comments." Primarily, the words in the guide are intended for the purpose of letting you know what the verse is about next to them. If you want to use the verses in the guide as ideas for comments, just put the thought of the verse into your own words to form a comment to the student's answer. The words in the guide are not meant to be copied word for word. They are usually not in complete sentences and, in order to write a comment to the student like you are in a conversation with him, you need to put the thought you would like to communicate into a complete sentence.
 - A third idea is to simply say back to the student what he has said by putting his thought into your own words (if he is correct) and, then, simply add a supporting scripture reference.
 - Lastly, you may have an idea of what to say to the point where you have a key word in your mind, but you are struggling as to how to complete the thought. In this case you can look up that key word in the concordance in the back of your Bible or in a larger concordance to find a verse that says basically what you would like to say. Once you find a sufficient verse, just put it into your own words to form a suitable comment to the student and simply add that scripture reference to the end of your comment. Asking yourself: "What do I think this verse is saying to me?" or "What does this verse mean to me?" will help you put the verse into your own words.
- In regard to ideas for comments, over time, as you treasure the Word of God in your heart, the Spirit of God will bring His Word to your remembrance when it is needed. Then, you can use the verse to generate a comment to share with the student. God really wants to speak His truth through different personalities as He exemplified for us in the Bible. This is why it is so important that, if we use the above ideas, we put our comments into our own words. The ideal for commenting as well as the Christian life is to learn, apply (obey), and then pass on what you have learned and applied. As you come to experience the Word of God in your life, you can then share it with others in a very practical way that is well fitted to their needs - Ezra 7:10.

11. Respond to what the student has actually said. It should be obvious to the student that we have listened to what he has said and spoken back to him about what he has said. We may be the only persons in his life that are caring enough right now to listen and respond in this way. Our comments to the student are like a letter, and we all know what it is like to get a letter back from a friend or family member who did not respond to anything we said nor answer any of the questions we had asked. Respond to the student's answer as if you had asked him the "What Do You Say?" question and he has answered your question. Your commenting is simply a continuation of the conversation, i.e. respond to his answer as if you were talking with him. What would you say from God's Word to encourage, correct, or reinforce what he has said? What Scriptures would you use to support your response? The ideal is to think of a scripture verse and then let your thoughts be generated by that verse. The following are two examples of commenting in a conversational way verses a non-conversational way. The first example is one to correct and encourage the student because he missed the point of the question and the second example is to simply encourage him in his right answer since he shows by his answer that he understood the lesson.

Example 1) Born To Win, Lesson 4:

What Do You Say? question: Which one is a picture of you - the self-righteous older brother or the repentant prodigal?

Student's Answer: *"I am the youngest of my family so I've got to be the prodigal."*

Instructor's Comment: *"Repentance leads to salvation."*

(this comment doesn't really respond to the student's answer and it has no supporting scripture.)

Here is an example of a comment that does both: "This does give you something in common with the younger of the two sons but do you also have repentance in common with him? Repentance is a change of mind where we agree with God, taking His side against ourselves in His presence because He is holy and we are sinners who deserve hell." - 2 Corinthians 7:10; Acts 20:21."

Responding to his answer so he knows we are genuinely listening.

Getting him to think about the main point of the question and instructing him in what repentance is, with supporting scripture.

Example 2) Born To Win, Lesson 10:

What Do You Say? question: Have you said "I do" to the Savior and committed yourself to Him to save you?

Student's Answer: *"I said I do several years ago and I am still a strong believer."*

Instructor's Comment: *"Believe on Jesus Christ and you will be saved" Acts 16:31.*

(Again, this is a correct statement but it does not really address the student's response because, you see, he has already said he has believed, so why tell him to believe? This sends the message that we may not be listening and it also may be confusing to the student.)

Here is a comment that does respond to the student's answer: "That is good to hear Frank, you are safe and secure in Christ, forever! 2 Timothy 1:12"

Encouraging him in his correct answer

Further instruction with supporting scripture

12. Using the student's name periodically in your commenting is really beneficial because it personalizes your comments to the student. One instructor had the following idea that he does faithfully: Since our commenting is a form of correspondence, he addresses the student by his first name to begin his comment on the first "What Do You Say" question, kind of like you would a letter without the "dear" of course. You can see how this relates to the conversational format of our commenting. With a little imagination and love for the student you can come up with all kinds of ways to encourage him. Enjoy! Making someone's day is very enjoyable and rewarding!

13. After commenting on his "What Do You Say?" answers, write an encouraging closing comment with supporting scripture to the student at the end of the exams. The closing comment should be addressed to the student. This closing comment is a final encouraging response to the student's exams over all for the course. You may compliment him on his grade or about his understanding of the lesson etc. In some way, always encourage. Also, share with him a thought God has shared with you during your quiet time with Him this week (pass it on). This is your last thought to him. Let him know periodically that you are blessed to have him as a student. Those incarcerated rarely have the blessed opportunity of being thought of as a blessing to someone else, especially to someone on the streets because they are "outcasts" to those on the streets (a drain on society instead of a blessing to someone in society). A student will read your comments over and over, potentially for months or even years, simply because they are the only source of encouragement to him from someone on the streets or from anyone for that matter. The time, energy, and care you spend in commenting will reap an eternal harvest and reward. It will be one of the greatest investments you have ever made!!!