

CONVERSATION

Deborah Menken Gill

discusses the joys of teaching

Deborah Menken Gill, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Pastoral Ministries at North Central Bible College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, recently spoke with Ann Floyd, technical and research editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel*.

Evangel: Why did you choose the field of education?

Gill: I could never have anticipated the privilege of teaching in a Bible college. It was the sovereign leading of the Lord, opening doors I never pursued.

My call has always been to the ministry of the Word, but I began at the University of Minnesota pursuing a degree in music education. I didn't see a lot of women pastors, and I thought I probably would be in a place of ministry that couldn't afford to support a pastor. So I got a degree that would put bread and butter on my table as well as enhance my ministry to the church.

When, after teaching in the public schools for 1 year, the school was closed due to declining enrollments. I thought, *Great, now I can prepare for the ministry.*

I attended the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Missouri. At the end of my first year, Central Bible College in Springfield offered me a contract to teach music. After explaining that my calling is the ministry of the Word, they said, "When you finish your M.Div., we'll phase you into the Bible Department."

From then on I've been ministering as a Bible college teacher.

Evangel: What teacher impacted your life?

Gill: Perhaps the earliest influence in my life as a pedagogue was my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Gloria Newman. She said to me one day, "Debbie, you're smart—you should consider going to

college. And if you decide you want to, you're going to have to get A's from here on—in this class of mine, through your junior high years, and all the way through senior high school. And you're going to have to come back and show me your report cards to prove you did." All the way through school I went back to Mrs. Newman with my report cards.

We lost contact for many years. Then the night before I was to speak at NCBC Alumni Days in 1994, Mrs. Newman called and I invited her to breakfast, to visit our campus, and to hear me speak, if she'd like to. When I was telling the alumni about people who have been models for my life, I told about her and then said, "By an amazing stroke of circumstances Gloria Newman is here today, and I want to introduce her to you." She stood up, and we all applauded.

At the end of service she responded to an invitation I gave. There was no way we could have planned that.

Evangel: That's beautiful. Now as a teacher, how do you stay fresh? And what are some of your greatest joys?

Gill: The Hebrew word for *teach* is the word *learn* in its most intensive form. There's a real lesson in that. A teacher has to be an intensive learner in order to have something to share. I guess that's why I love teaching, because it grants me the constant challenge to dig deeply

and discover new things.

A former student of mine and graduate of North Central Bible College, Dawn Rector, gave me a cross-stitch motto that hangs on my office wall. It

says, "Those who love teaching help others love learning." I want my students to have as much fun learning in my classes as I did preparing for them.

The students themselves keep me fresh. I don't want to just teach subjects, but to teach students. This makes all the difference. My goal is not to merely transfer the pro-

cessor's lecture notes onto the students' notepads but to shape their very lives—and that is a joyful privilege of which I never tire. My best friends on campus are my students.

My greatest joys are seeing my students grow in the Lord, succeed academically, and bless the kingdom of God.

Evangel: How do you as an educator feel about the future?

Gill: During my years of teaching Greek and homiletics, I have become very encouraged. Among this young crop of pastors coming up, I have seen a tremendous love for the Word, a discipline to study it, a desire to preach with excellence, and a genuine touch of the Spirit of God. Our Fellowship and the church of century 21 is in good hands. These students will feed the flock and live in the Spirit. ■



GOAL: I want my students to have fun learning."