



President Walton's September 2020 Message

The Teacher's Way

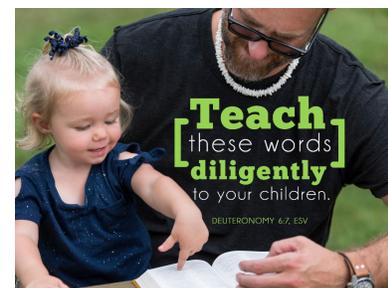


Last month my five year old granddaughter began her kindergarten year. I remember taking her father to visit his school for orientation. He had heard some rumors that the principal had an electric paddle to discipline children, and he was afraid. So I introduced him to Mr. McFarland, the principal, and told him about my son's fear. He scooped him into his arms and took him into his office to show him there was no such paddle, and he gave him a piece of candy to boot! It totally changed my son's opinion of school, and it made the first day of class something he looked forward to. The school was on my route to work, so I typically took him to school. For the first three weeks I dutifully walked him to his classroom each morning. You

can't imagine how heart-broken I was when that fateful Monday morning came and we pulled into the school and he said, "Dad, you don't need to walk me in anymore. I'm a big boy." Tears formed in my eyes, partly out of pride that he was growing up, and partly out of sadness because he was growing up so quickly.

Unlike my son's first day of kindergarten, my granddaughter began her school year on an iPad. Her school, like so many others across the nation, will be virtual, at least for now. Again I felt sadness, this time because so many children will not experience the joy of their first day of school the same way most of us did. I feel a sadness because these children are missing out on the socialization skills that are naturally formed by schools. More importantly, I am sad because virtual education is difficult for both students, parents, and teachers, especially given the short duration most teachers had to prepare as they, too, learned some new skills. None the less, the educational process is important to our world!

I celebrate teachers because they are some of the most underappreciated, underpaid heroes in the world. While I truly appreciate and admire first responders, the doctors and nurses who have dedicated themselves to serving all of us during the pandemic, teachers are often overlooked. What all first responders have in common is that they are the product of an educational system. They had teachers who enabled them to learn and grow, not only in academic subjects, but as people. Some of my favorite teachers taught me less academically and more relationally. These were men and women who were encouragers, doing more than just a job. They were truly helping to shape young men and women, as they themselves had been shaped. In fact, over the years I have encountered many teachers because my wife is a teacher. Having spent time with many of her colleagues I learned most became a teacher not because of the fame and fortune, but rather because they were influenced by a teacher.



God values learning. You see it throughout His holy Word. The role of the teacher has been an important part of our Judeo-Christian heritage from the start. The law of God was to be taught to the generations. In Deuteronomy 6 we read, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Solomon, who was known for wise sayings and was one of the greatest teachers in the Old Testament, once said there is nothing new under the sun! Teachers have been teaching a long time. The Prophets of the Old Testament were essentially teachers, sometimes in words, and sometimes in deed.



Of course, the greatest of all teachers was Jesus! Some called Him a Rabbi, some called Him Lord, but His disciples knew Him as a teacher. Jesus said in John 13:13, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.” His life was all about teaching, and there were many moments, if not most, which He used as teachable moments. In fact, we are still learning from His lessons today! Some who have studied the Bible for many years will tell you that they are constantly learning new things from God’s Word. Perhaps it is because “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Each day as we turn to God’s Word we can learn new things as we strive to become more like Jesus! As sinners redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ it should be our heart’s desire to become more like Jesus. This isn’t the obligation of a Christian disciple; it is our privilege! In Luke 6:40 Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

A disciple refers to one who learns. Yet, especially as it relates to our faith, it was never God’s intent for us to simply learn, but to share what we learn as we live out our faith. Every single disciple that watched Jesus be crucified gave up their personal ambitions and even their lives to share the teachings of Jesus! They wanted all people to know the forgiveness and redemption that comes by faith in Jesus because of His grace. Many of these disciples raised up more disciples to perpetuate faith in Jesus. Scripture is literally packed with words that encourage the followers of Jesus to become teachers of the faith, passing along the Truth, and connecting people to Jesus from generation to generation!

Paul wrote in Titus 2:7-8, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.” An expectation of followers of Jesus teaching through word and deed was implied. Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, saying, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Not only were they to teach those who had never heard, but also each other as a means of encouragement. Similar words are found throughout Paul’s Epistles, and really throughout the New Testament. From start to finish, the Bible lauds teachers because each of us, in some manner, really is a teacher.

There are teachers all around us. They are not necessarily defined by age, race, religion, job or experience. I have learned a lot from my children, and even my grandchildren. I have learned from friends, and even strangers. I’ve found helpful tips in a variety of books and magazines, and even from things I’ve seen on TV. Some of us learn best when a teacher uses a visual and vivid example. The night before He was crucified, Jesus taught His disciples a lesson they would likely never forget as He gathered them in the Upper Room. Jesus said, in John 13, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you... If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Jesus not only gave them an example, but He charged them to do the same. He challenges each of us to humble ourselves and become a servant for the sake of the Gospel in a world that will surely take advantage of us. For Jesus, it would lead to a painful death on a Cross. However, death could not hold Him! He rose victorious, defeating sin, death and the devil. This is His promise to each of us, and is what gives us the confidence to teach others about Jesus and His love.



Among the very last words Jesus spoke to His disciples was a charge to teach. He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” We know these words as the Great Commission, where Jesus sends His disciples on a mission to reach the world with His love and forgiveness. As these words continue to stand in Scripture, they are words that teach us the mission of Jesus—to reach the lost. And we go with the promise that Jesus Himself goes with us. Peter had learned this, Andrew, James and John had learned it. Paul also had learned, as have disciples who have devoted themselves to Jesus through the centuries, not only learning, but also teaching the faith, remembering Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.”

I am grateful for the teachers in my life, and for the many teachers across the Florida-Georgia District who, despite the challenges, continue to connect children and parents to Jesus. God’s call on your life has not gone unanswered, and even when you don’t see it or feel it, God is using you in amazing ways! Thank you for your service!

Beyond these dedicated men and women with a special call to teaching, we are all called to teach the faith in Jesus. As we are faithful to teach what we have been taught, the Holy Spirit is faithful to use us for the glory of Jesus! Who knows how God will use any of us to impact the whole world for the sake of the Gospel? There is power in education, for this life, and for all time! I challenge you to continually learn, but also to teach the faith to those who have not yet heard. You will be eternally grateful that you did!

Your fellow student and teacher in Jesus,

Greg



The President’s Equip Conference for all church workers AND laity, offering practical, strategic resources for congregations to learn and grow, will be held September 24-26, 2020. The theme is “One Body, Many Parts,” from 1 Corinthians 12, and we desire to bring together the whole family of God in the Florida-Georgia District. In addition to useful workshops, we will have

David Kinnaman, CEO of the Barna Research Group, ***Donna Snow***, and for entertainment, ***The Skit Guys***. More information can be found through our website - <https://flgadistrict.org/pec/>

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Reaching Many in 2020
for Jesus!