SCHOOL LIGHT LINES

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Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul | Eva Wall

I brooded and I sulked. *This is not where I wanted to teach, but it seems that God has called me here. Is God sure He wants me here? in this particular classroom?*

Maybe I should teach elsewhere; surely that would be easier. Perhaps it is God's will that I teach here until now. Besides, what difference am I making anyway? I don't see any good changes.

Thus were my thoughts during that time. Though not put into many words, it described my *attitude* quite well. I wasn't even *trying* to make the best of the situation where God had placed me. I wanted to run from God's will and back into my own.

Deep down I knew that would never bring true happiness and peace, but I was tempted to try it anyway. It felt like God was holding me back, and this hurt and frustrated me for a while. Though I saw benefits to my preferences, I also strongly felt that they weren't God's will.

When I was called to teach in a different school, I was excited. I had high expectations of what God would work through me, and I felt sure of His calling. When I accepted the position, I had a wonderful peace in my heart.

However, the further I got into the school year, the more my enthusiasm waned. I began to wonder if this really was God's calling for me, because I seldom saw good results.

I sulked for several months, thoroughly confusing myself. But God did not give up on me. He did not leave me in my sorry state. He had called me to do His work, and He intended I learn to do it with joy.

One day as I was flipping through my Bible, I came across Psalm 43:5. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." This one verse spoke to me in so many unexpected ways that I believed that it was the voice of God.

First, I was being asked why I was so unhappy and discouraged, to which I could give no valid answer. I was acting childish for not getting what I wanted. Next, it instructed me to hope in God, showing me there was still much to hope for, because God still had a plan, even if I couldn't see it.

The part of this verse that touched me the most was "for I shall yet praise him." This sentence rang so beautifully to me that I couldn't help but feel joy. God was telling me that the very thing I'd brooded over for months, I would praise Him

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for yet. This meant that something wonderful and worthy of praise would come out of this. That assurance filled me with hope and joy.

Last, the verse reminded me that He is the help of my countenance, (paraphrased "He will help me smile through this") and that He is still my God, assuring me He hadn't left me alone.

Through that one verse, God changed my attitude. Before, I wished He would change my situation, but knowing what I needed, He instead changed my attitude.

Through that verse, He gave me joy that replaced the sulking.

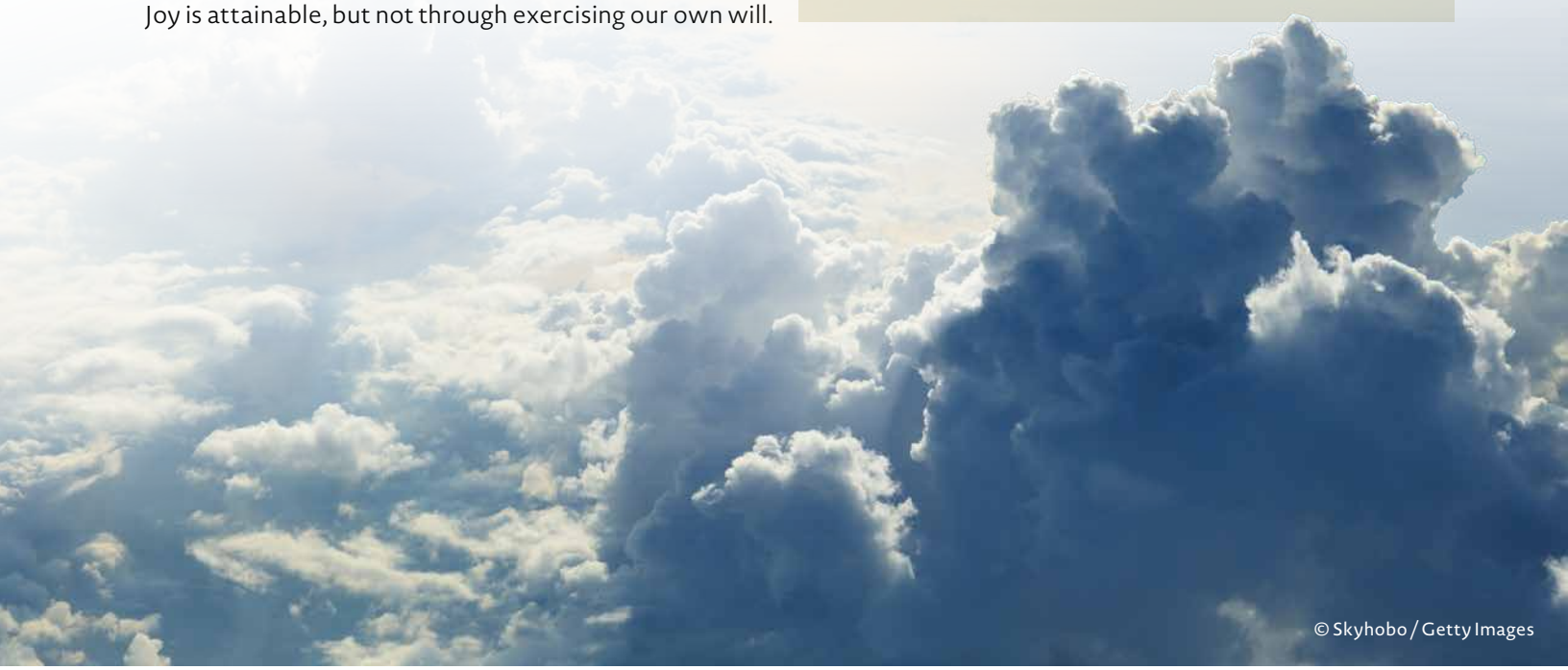
Through that verse, He gave me hope for the future.

Through that verse, God pulled me out of the pit and back into His embrace.

Joy is attainable, but not through exercising our own will. We must lay down our will completely and pray from an earnest heart, "Lord, not my will, but Yours be done."

Although God's will is always best and always for our good, it it is rarely easy, and we may not understand it. While yielding to His will is hard, it has amazing rewards; not earthly rewards, but joy unspeakable and peace beyond understanding.

Eva Wall teaches multigrades at Reinlaender Mennonite School in Hugoton, Kansas, where her classroom of nine students spans the whole school. Now in her fifth year of teaching—three of them in kindergarten at another school—she has found her calling. In her spare time, Eva enjoys drawing, reading, and exploring Anabaptist history.



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Avoiding Teacher Tussles | Caleb E. Crider

After I returned home from a trip, a former antagonist gave me a newspaper clipping as a friendly reminder of our acrimonious past. The cartoon showed two characters, one of whom had just returned after an absence. "Did you miss me?" he asked. The second character muttered to himself, "Yes, I did. In fact, I wasn't done missing you. Would you mind leaving again?"

Have you ever entertained similar thoughts about a co-teacher? Maybe you've wished that certain people would walk out of your life and never come back.

Friction between co-teachers can turn a good school year into a bad one for everyone involved. These scraps drain enthusiasm and mental energy, and time that should be invested in important priorities is wasted. Instead of preparing a devotional for the morning, we may

find ourselves stewing over the latest flare-up of hostilities.

Bad relationships can be rehabilitated and peace restored if we are willing to work at it God's way. Just as we don't want our students brawling with each other, God doesn't want His children breaking relationships with each other. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said, "for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Jesus also said people would be able to identify His disciples by their love for each other. If our relationship with Jesus isn't right, our relationship with our fellow disciples (in this case, co-teachers) is also likely to go awry.

Breaking peace

Peace-breaking seems to come naturally to us. Here are some of the things that tend to break peace in relationships:

- Jealousy
- Defensiveness
- Jumping to conclusions
- Anger
- Intolerance
- Irritation at personality traits
- Pride
- Speaking before thinking
- Making fun of others
- A critical spirit
- Gossip
- Loud opinions
- Harshness
- Hidden sin
- Selfishness
- Refusing to admit wrong
- Seeking revenge
- Being inconsiderate
- Holding grudges

Making Peace

Sometimes we are tempted to engage in *peace-faking*. We might pretend everything is okay, while hiding anger or grudges inside. Instead, God would rather that we initiate *peacemaking*. The following attitudes and actions can help bring peace into our relationships and keep relationships from souring in the first place:

- Smile
- Be respectful to everyone
- Agree to disagree
- Be friendly
- Ask forgiveness
- Apologize
- Drop the subject
- Be thankful
- Be gentle
- Be humble
- Give second chances
- Give the benefit of the doubt
- Give a compliment
- Look for good
- Be a giver
- Listen instead of talking
- Think before speaking
- Pray for the person
- Return good for evil
- Be tolerant
- Sympathize

Peaceful Pointers

As we attempt to bring peace into a situation, we can remember these practical truths:

God made everyone, He made everyone different, and our differences strengthen the church (and school). Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 12. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (12:4) . . . "The body is not one member, but many" (12:14).

First impressions are often wrong. Many are the times that I've made the mistake of judging someone as we met for the first time, only to discover later that my initial impression was wrong.

God has given me many opportunities to try again, so I need to forgive others and give them a second chance too. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

I don't have a monopoly on the truth. I could be wrong about this issue that is causing friction.

Strife is sin. "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3).

I probably irritate others more than they irritate me. Could it be that I am the source of the problem?

I don't know the other person's motives, or the possible stress and other factors influencing his behavior. Maybe he is dealing with stress or grief of which I am unaware.

God loves the person I'm struggling with and is using him for a special purpose. This is true even if that purpose is as a thorn in the flesh to help me mature.

Blessed are the peacemakers. We'll be called the children of God. LL

—Reprinted from *LightLines*, May 2015

Caleb Crider works for Christian Light in marketing and book publishing. He taught school for two years as a young man and admires teachers. The author of several books, his latest is The Team Player Challenge, *a guide to effective teamwork. It can be ordered from Christian Light.*

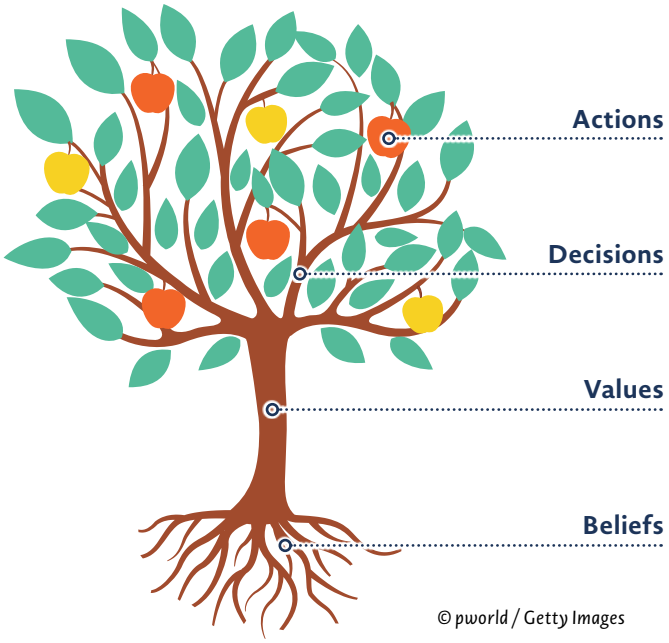
Integrity, Curriculum, and Trust | Jonathan Erb

Effective teachers know that curriculum goes beyond schoolbooks, and that integrity coupled with a living curriculum produces trust.

Integrity is being wholesome and unimpaired. It is strict adherence to a moral code, complete and pure. Integrity is a character quality achieved through one's choices.

Americans were once polled: "Who is your icon of integrity?" The top two names given were Mother Teresa and Forrest Gump.

Mother Teresa died in 1997. She had devoted her life to serving the poorest of the poor, including the sick, dying, and abandoned. She established hospices, orphanages, and clinics worldwide. She didn't merely say she lived for the poor, her actions proved her values. Mother Teresa's life demonstrated integrity as illustrated in the diagram below. Her worldview supported corresponding beliefs, her beliefs informed her values, her values produced decisions, and her decisions created actions. Each element aligned and grew together smoothly. That's integrity!



© pworld / Getty Images

Forrest Gump was a fictional movie character. Depicted with an IQ of 75, he was unwavering in his principles of honesty, loyalty, and doing right regardless of others' actions. He was faithful to his promises and his friends. He exemplified integrity by simple, childlike faith and action.

Neither of these characters is alive now. Today's students need a *living* example of integrity. Think about how school impacted you. I remember little of the academic content, but much about the interactions that shaped my character. That's because school—and more importantly, the teacher—is a living curriculum. The average seventh grader doesn't go to bed thinking about gerund phrases used as subjects. Rather, he may be rolling over in his mind what is "cool" at school, popular shoe brands, home runs, and—you guessed it!—teacher moods and responses.

Biblical integrity is the only safe way to live, doubly so if you are responsible to lead, and triply so if you teach children!

Students learn a great deal from a teacher's actions, decisions, values, beliefs, and worldviews. Because of a particular teacher in my life, I developed an enduring interest in small gas engines. I admired his observant, diligent ways and strove to be like him. In fact, I still live out what he taught me, but it isn't so much the "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic," that he taught as it is the curriculum of his life—who he was.

Teacher, *you* are the living curriculum. Are you influencing in the right direction? Luke 6:40 states that a student is not above his teacher, but when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Read James 3:1–2 and see that teachers will be judged more strictly than others. This is serious! Biblical integrity is the only safe way to live, doubly so if you are responsible to lead, and triply so if you teach children!

Trust is well-placed and comfortably given to a teacher who possesses integrity and who is a sound living curriculum. Trust is essential for relationships, cooperation, and practically all functions of a school. It is built through consistency, honesty, and transparency.

In hundreds of school communities, parents stream into the school driveway in droves every weekday morning. The greatest assets of the community climb out and disappear through the school doors. Morning after morning, parents hand over their children for the prime six hours of the day, often to young men and women who only recently entered adulthood. How does that work out? Only through abundant integrity, a sound,

living curriculum, and much trust, does God bless our schools.

The following poem captures the concepts of integrity, living curriculum, and trust. The student moved beyond the log and later served as president of the United States.

Education by Arthur Guiterman

Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log,
And a farm boy sat on the other.
Mark Hopkins came as a pedagogue
And taught as an elder brother.
I don't care what Mark Hopkins taught,
If his Latin was small and his Greek was naught,
For the farm boy he taught, thought he,
All through the lecture time and quiz,
"The kind of man I mean to be
Is the kind of man Mark Hopkins is."
For education is making men.
So it is now, so it was when
Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log,
And James Garfield sat on the other.

Effective teaching is accomplished best in a setting of well-placed trust in the curriculum of your life, which can be safely emulated through your integrity. Many are counting on you; don't let them down!

Father of five, Jonathan and his wife Ellen live in southwest Montana. As a former teacher, he agrees with the saying, "A teacher can leave the classroom, but the classroom never leaves a teacher." He works for Christian Light as a school rep and is passionate about encouraging communities and teachers toward sustainable school efforts.

A teacher shares how she helped this "stuck" student

When Numbers Become Your

Bonica Reimer

The classroom was quiet with thirteen kindergarten students bent over their work. I smiled as I watched.

A *few minutes of peace*, I thought. Then I remembered something.

"Jaidel, come to the table for flash cards."

Jaidel bounced out of his seat, pencil flying across the room. Full of energy, he scraped his chair across the floor, leaving his chair at a weird angle. I looked up from sorting flash cards in time to see Jaidel prancing to the table.

"Jaidel. *Shh!* We do not run inside. Now go back, pick up your pencil, and *walk* to the table."

Sheepishly, he retrieved his pencil and tiptoed to the table.

"Good job," I praised, when he was back at the table.

As his eyes met mine, they were shining. He flashed me a

Continued on page 11

Outdoor Classroom

Tsunamis

The most powerful, the tallest, the deadliest, and the most expensive

Ken Kauffman

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The word *tsunami* comes from Japanese: *tsu* means "harbor" and *nami* means "wave." It translates literally to "harbor wave," which makes a lot of sense because tsunamis often cause the most damage in coastal harbors. Tsunamis are usually caused by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or landslides.

The Most Powerful Tsunami

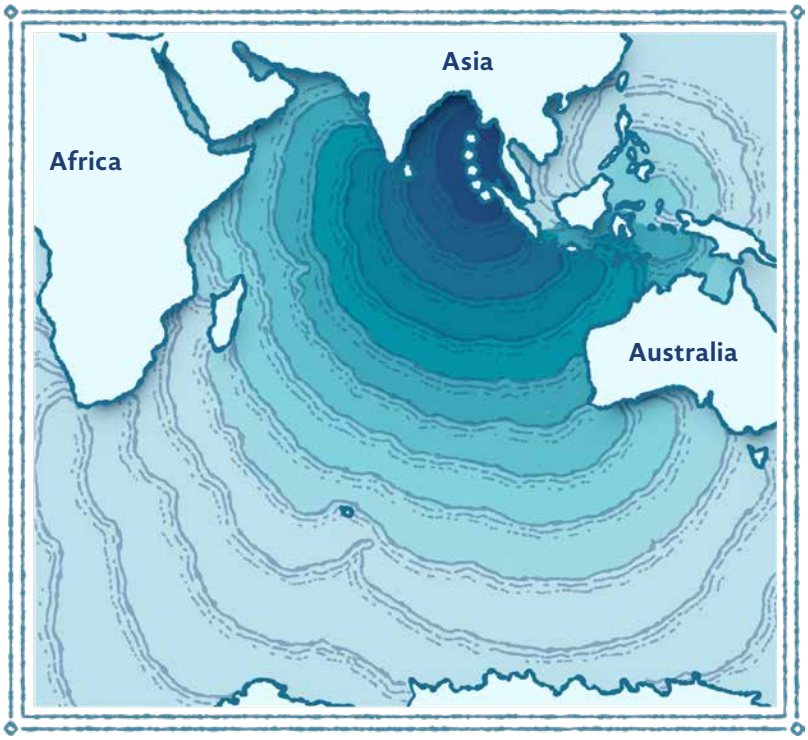
The 1960 Valdivia tsunami is probably the most powerful tsunami in history. It was generated by the most powerful earthquake ever recorded—the Great Chilean Earthquake, which registered a staggering 9.5 on the moment magnitude scale. The earthquake occurred on May 22, 1960, and was centered near Valdivia in southern Chile.

The tsunami generated by this earthquake traveled across the Pacific Ocean at about 200 miles per hour. After devastating the Chilean coast, it reached Hawaii 15 hours later, killing 61 people. Twenty-two hours after the earthquake, the tsunami arrived in Japan—6,200 miles away—with waves as high as 35 feet, destroying nearly 3,000 homes and taking 138 lives.

The Tallest Tsunami

An earthquake during the night of July 9, 1958, in the Alaska Panhandle loosened about 40 million cubic yards (think 10 million 10-wheeler dump trucks) of rock that plunged from 3,000 feet into the waters of Lituya Bay. The impact of the rockfall generated a local tsunami that crashed against the southwest shoreline of Gilbert Inlet and swept completely over the spur of land that separates Gilbert Inlet from the main body of Lituya Bay. The huge tsunami wave then swept the entire

Derived from Wikimedia Commons



Intensity map of the 2004 Sumatra tsunami

length of Lituya Bay, over La Chaussee Spit, and into the Gulf of Alaska, removing all trees and vegetation up to 1,720 feet above sea level. This is the highest wave ever recorded for a tsunami.

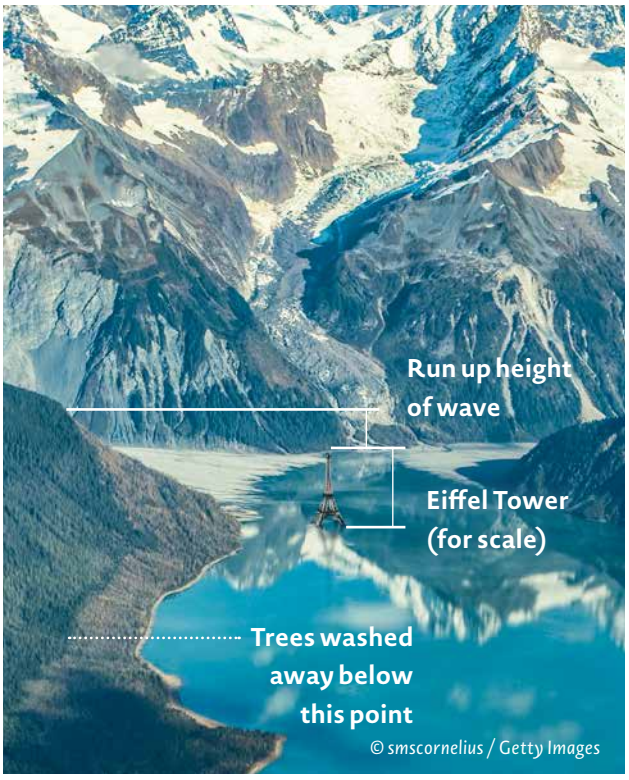
The Deadliest Tsunami

The deadliest tsunami in history was the December 26, 2004, Indian Ocean tsunami. It was triggered by a massive 9.1 magnitude undersea earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, and struck with waves up to 167 feet high, causing deadly flooding up to three miles inland. This tsunami claimed the lives of over 230,000 people, displaced 1.7 million people, and caused terrible devastation along the coast of countries like Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. All in all, fourteen countries across South and Southeast Asia were affected. There was no official tsunami warning system at the time.

The Most Expensive Tsunami

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.1 earthquake, the largest ever recorded in Japan, generated a tsunami that caused tremendous damage, mostly in Japan but also in other parts of the Pacific Ocean. The tsunami was as high as 127 feet and traveled up to five miles inland, killing more than 18,000 people and displacing more than a half million others. The bill for damages caused by the tsunami was a whopping $243 billion in Japan, $94 million in faraway California, and $7 million in losses to the fishing industry in Chile.

www.noaa.gov/jetstream/tsunamis/historical-context
www.missedhistory.com
geologyscience.com
Geology.com



Aftermath of the 1958 Lituya Bay tsunami. A line can be seen where trees were washed away.

Pedagogical Meanderings

Cursive Comeback

Across the United States, twenty-five states now require cursive instruction in school, according to *Popular Science*. The renewed push came after Common Core standards dropped cursive in 2010 so schools could put more emphasis on typing. Supporters of cursive say that the decision went too far. For example, in 2022, former Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust wrote that two-thirds of students in one of her history seminars said they could not read or write cursive. Requirements vary by state, though most states require it by the fifth grade. California and Ohio begin in first grade; Pennsylvania requires it in second and third grades; Louisiana requires it from third through twelfth grades; and Mississippi requires it from second through eighth grades. Some children in Virginia have also started after-school cursive clubs.

—*www.popsci.com*

Fostering Respect

Since January 2026, Quebec students are required to use formal language to address their teachers under new rules designed to foster civility. The province required public and private schools to draft a code of conduct that includes requiring students to address teachers and staff as "Mr." or "Ms." Elementary and high schools were also required to outline respectful conduct between students and toward school property. It is hoped that requiring students to use formal language will instill respect and help create a formal distinction between student and teacher.

—*www.thecanadianpressnews.ca*

Curriculum Defined

In this issue, Jonathan Erb refers to a school's "living curriculum." This hints at a broader, more holistic, definition of curriculum than we may be accustomed to. We typically consider curriculum to be written works that must be read, taught, and understood. But what if *curriculum* is *the entire set of student experiences and values absorbed in school*? This definition includes the atmosphere, activities, and relationships in the school. You could say that a school's curriculum is divided into three pieces:

- Written curriculum—the printed material.
- Living curriculum—the teacher's pedagogy, life and example.
- Implicit or hidden curriculum— what the student absorbs from the unwritten set of values and the social and cultural norms of the school environment.

Which is most life-shaping? Think about it!

Curriculum as a Tool

A neighbor asked to borrow our brace and bit to drill a few holes in wash line posts. When the neighbor returned it to my father, he remarked how much effort it took. He and his two sons exerted all their strength to drill through the post. My father asked a few questions and to the neighbor's great embarrassment, he learned that he had drilled through the post while turning the drill backward! All the energy and sweat they expended because they were not using the tool as designed was a waste.

Likewise, [written] curriculum is a tool on loan to the teacher. It must be understood and properly wielded to make it work well. Study and learn its inherent design and procedures. A great curriculum wrongly wielded is folly, whereas a less-than-ideal curriculum in the hands of a great teacher can produce good results.

Three Teachers, One Verdict | Marten Klassen

There is coming a day when your classroom will be silent—no voices, no questions, no laughter, no frustration.

The desks will be empty. The assignments will be finished. The reports will be written for the last time. The parents, the board, the expectations—all of it—gone.

And you will stand alone. Not as a teacher before students, but as a servant before your Master.

And on that day, only one voice will matter. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . ."

Those words are not a slogan. They are not encouragement. They are a verdict. And one day, every teacher will receive a verdict.

The question is not if you will stand there. The question is what will be said of you.

In a parable that Jesus told, a master gave his servants a responsibility, something to steward. When he returned, he didn't ask how busy they were. He didn't ask how difficult their situation was. He asked only: "What did you do with what I gave you?"

Some had multiplied it. One had done nothing. And the difference among them was not ability; it was faithfulness.

Let's consider three types of teachers that may exist in any school.

The Busy Teacher

This teacher is always moving, planning, marking, and organizing.

The classroom runs. Lessons are prepared. Students are managed. Time is filled. From the outside, it looks like success.

But this teacher is tired. He is committed and involved, but underneath all the activity, there is a question: *What am I actually accomplishing*?

Because busyness is not the same as faithfulness.

It is possible—very possible—to fill every hour of your day and still neglect what matters most. This teacher manages behavior but has no time to shepherd hearts. The busy teacher delivers content but does not shape character. Busyness becomes a shield, a way to avoid intentional, spiritual work, a way to feel productive without being faithful.

I remember a classroom where everything ran smoothly. The students knew the routines. The lessons moved quickly, and work was getting done. From the outside, it looked like success.

But there was one student sitting near the back. Quiet. Not disruptive. Not failing enough to draw attention. Just . . . there. And if I'm honest, he was easy to overlook, because he didn't demand anything from me.

One day, I realized something uncomfortable. I had spent weeks managing a classroom but had barely invested in that student. Not because I didn't *care*, but because I was *busy*. My busyness had allowed me to ignore what mattered most.

It is possible to run an excellent classroom and quietly neglect a soul sitting right in front of you.

On that final day, standing before the Master, there will be no mention of how full your schedule was. Only one question will remain: "Were you faithful with what you were given?"

The Fearful Teacher

In the parable, there was a servant who did not waste what he was given. He didn't lose it or misuse it. He simply buried it.

Why? Because he was afraid. And that feels far closer to many teachers than we want to admit.

This teacher knows what should be done. He sees the issues. He recognizes the needs. But fear steps in: fear of confrontation, fear of losing control, fear of upsetting parents, fear of tension.

So, he pulls back. He stays safe. He avoids the hard moments. Nothing is falling apart, but nothing is being multiplied.

Let that sink in. *Nothing was lost—but nothing was multiplied.*

I remember one student. He was difficult. Not in big, dramatic ways, but constant—always something: a comment, a look, a refusal, just doing things his own way.

Every day there were small acts of defiance, and it was affecting everything. The class saw and felt it. And I knew they were waiting for me to deal with it.

But I didn't.

I knew what needed to happen. I needed to meet with the parents. But I was afraid.

The father was loud and strong-willed; I didn't expect him to take this well. So, I delayed. Finally, one day it simply had to happen.

The meeting was set. Within minutes, the father was raising his voice, pointing his finger, blaming me.

"You're provoking him. You're picking on him. You have favorites."

Everything in me wanted to react. But I had decided beforehand that I would not lose my temper. I would not raise my voice. I would not interrupt.

So, I listened. When he finished, I said, "You're right. I am inexperienced. I fail often." And I slid a paper across the table.

One week of incidents. A long list.

And as the father read, he went quiet.

I asked him, "What do you think I should do? How can we work together to help your son?"

We didn't walk out as friends, but we did walk out aligned. That changed things. It wasn't perfect, but we could move forward.

On the last day of school, that same boy came to me, gave me a hug, and said, "I love you, Mr. Klassen."

And it broke me. I had almost missed that moment—because I had been choosing fear.

How many moments like that are missed, not because we don't care, but because we hesitate? We don't usually ruin classrooms with bold rebellion. We do it with quiet hesitation.

Consider this: *What in your teaching right now do you already know you should do, but fear is holding you back?*

The Faithful Teacher

What does faithfulness look like? Not in theory, but in a real classroom.

It is neither easy nor comfortable. It isn't always visible. It always costs.

The faithful teacher is not defined by personality, or talent, or results. He is defined by obedience. That obedience shows up in specific ways.

First, he is faithful with truth. He does not avoid truth to keep peace. He says what needs to be said, even when it risks tension. He doesn't speak harshly or carelessly, but clearly, because he cares more about the student's future than the moment's comfort.

Second, he is faithful with attention. He does not give all his time to the easiest students or the loudest or the ones who respond quickly. He notices the overlooked and invests in the difficult. He refuses to let a student drift quietly through the year, unseen. Some students are easy to teach. Others we must choose to teach. The faithful teacher chooses them.

Third, he is faithful without immediate results. He keeps going when nothing seems to change, when the student doesn't respond, when the effort feels wasted, when growth is slow—or invisible. Because he understands he is not responsible for the outcome; he is responsible for . . . faithfulness.

Faithfulness is doing what God has asked of you, with what He has given you, whether you see the results or not. It often looks small. It often feels inefficient. It often goes unnoticed.

But faithfulness is exactly what God sees.

One day, what was unseen will be seen. And the Master will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Marten lives in Walsingham, Ontario, with his wife and four children. He taught school for sixteen years at Walsingham Christian School and was principal for most of those years. He conducts Christian Light teacher trainings in Ontario and Alberta during the summer. Outside of school, he enjoys writing, building homes, and playing hockey and baseball with current and former students.

wide smile, his whole body wiggling. My heart warmed at the sight of him. He was the type of student that gave me grayer hair but also made teaching fun and exciting.

"Alright, let's do these number flash cards." I started flashing cards to him. He said them correctly as long as I had them in a row.

"Good, now I'll mix them."

"Five, four, three, two . . . ?" Jaidel paused. "Umm . . . five?"

"Noo, what is it?" I asked, looking into his eyes.

Jaidel hoisted himself up a few inches on my table, then shrugged.

"It's seven. Say that three times."

"Seven, Seven, Seven!"

"Okay, now let's do one more round."

Again, when we got to the seven, he stalled. "Six? Five?"

"Let's write it on the blackboard." I turned to the board and wrote a couple of big sevens.

"Seven, seven," Jaidel whispered as he traced them neatly but hurriedly.

"Try to remember the number *seven*," I said, sending him back to his table.

Over the next few days, I'd often drill numbers with my students, but especially with Jaidel. The seven was still a problem.

One day, I decided to use a different approach. It was the last class time of the day. All students were busy coloring or playing with toys on the floor.

Pulling out a sticky note, I called, "Jaidel, please come here." I had my green pen and a small piece of paper ready.

Jaidel tiptoed to my table, a mischievous look in his eye. He clearly remembered last week's episode.

"You may use Miss Bonica's pen today."

His eyes sparkled as he took the pen.

"Write two," I instructed. "Now seven."

"How?" Two question marks in his eyes.

"Like *this*." Bending over his paper, I guided his chubby fingers to make a seven.

"Yes. I know."

"Then write two, seven, three, four, seven, one."

Once Jaidel realized what I was doing, he eagerly wrote down numbers.

"Good job." The paper was full of tiny numbers. "Now I want you to circle all the sevens and say the correct number."

The pen started its line around a seven and Jaidel said, "Five!"

"No!" I pulled the paper away from him. He stared at me, surprised.

"Listen, this number is your friend. And friends have names. When you call a seven 'five,' it becomes sad and starts to cry," I explained. "Would you like if Anthony (his best friend) would call *you* Peter?"

"Huh?" gasped Jaidel, and the whole class giggled. "No way!" Jaidel exclaimed. I saw I had his full attention.

"Then don't call your friend seven a five. What is your new friend's name?"

"Five?" he asked.

"*Waaa*!" I pretended to cry.

The whole class snickered. I silenced them with a look but smiled.

"Hmm . . . seven!" exclaimed Jaidel, remembering his new friend.

"You may go sit now, but don't forget your friend's name. Here, take this paper with you."

Jaidel cradled the small paper gently in his hands. "Seven. My friend, seven," he whispered as he walked back to his desk.

I smiled. Maybe my spur-of-the-moment thinking would work.

The next day when Jaidel came to school, I asked him, "What's your friend's name?"

"Seven!" he promptly replied, smiling.

"Even numbers can be our friends," I said to no one in particular as he bounded out to play. LL

Bonica lives in Spanish Lookout, Belize. She's currently a full-time kindergarten teacher in a mission school. She's had five years of experience, but every new year gets her excited all over again. Teaching a class of twelve to sixteen six-year-olds is simply her favorite thing to do.

Ask Another *is a question-answer space for teachers. Teachers are invited to pose questions on school-related subjects, offer responses to questions, or reply to responses.* (LightLines *will occasionally assign questions to experienced teachers for their qualified response.) Send questions or responses by email to* lightlines@christianlight.org *or by mail to* LightLines Editor, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803. (*Try to limit responses to fewer than* 400 *words.*)

Question: How should I respond to a third-grade student that doesn't respect authority? (I suspect he was "gentle-parented.")

First, a few thoughts on gentle parenting. "Gentle parenting" could be a response to perceived authoritarian parenting in previous generations. However, it seems to have often veered into "permissive parenting," with relationships being highly valued but also failure to bring children into subjection. Such parents tend to "talk things over," appealing to children to think carefully and to make right choices, without considering that a five-year old's intellectual power is not well-developed, and is certainly not strong enough to counter their inherent selfishness.

Teachers who were themselves "permissive-parented" will usually have a hard time with classroom control, not knowing how to properly engage with misbehavior. Students who are being gentle parented (permissive) may feel that they can negotiate with rules and authority and will likely have a hard time with the necessary structure of a well-run classroom.

Now, regarding your third grader who may have been permissive-parented. He might show his lack of respect for authority in several ways.

1. Pouting or a tantrum when not getting what they want.
2. Impatience with the teacher.
3. Talking back and arguing; excessive questioning.
4. Disregard for rules and instructions.
5. A pronounced sense of entitlement.

How should a teacher deal with it? In short, by *authoritative teaching*. Teachers have authority delegated to them by parents and school administration. An *authoritative* teacher carries a high level of authority and expects obedience, but also highly values relationships.

The authoritative teacher keeps in mind that he is accountable for the way he runs his classroom. The authoritative teacher works to build relationships with all students and wins their trust and respect by consistently and firmly enforcing rules and dealing with infractions. The authoritative teacher knows that rules without relationship foster rebellion. However, he also knows that relationships without rules and boundaries foster chaos. If a third-grade student continues to defy authority after proper discipline is exercised, the authoritative teacher will seek counsel and communicate with parents and school administration to find a workable solution.

— LightLines staff

Next question: What are some tips for creating an atmosphere of respect in a school? (2-3 sentence answers are okay.)

Please respond by December 22, 2026. We'll print responses to questions in a future issue of LightLines. Please respond with answers or submit new questions by email to lightlines@christianlight.org, by fax to 540-433-8896, or by mail to *LightLines*, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

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