

Voices: Education and the intersection of God's word

September 26, 2018

Throughout the last few weeks, our church has emphasized Christian education. Christian education is important because it explains the word of God. Not to be mistaken with narrative text on a page, the word of God is the reason we praise. The word of God shares hope in our struggles and reminds us “trouble don't last always.”

Peter wrote: “The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ—eternal and glorious plans they are—will have you put together and on your feet for good” (1 Peter 5:10, *The Message*).

Pastor Michael Evans of Bethlehem Baptist Church noted: “The word is a lamp unto our path, guiding us in the dark landfill of this world.”

During our choir's annual concert, Pastor Evans said we should know what we're singing about. We are not just singing words; we are singing the word of God.

Educationally, we should also know what we're teaching about. We teach more than English, math and science. We also teach life lessons, and in doing so, a few directly or indirectly teach Jesus.

In teaching Jesus—be it through the smile they wear, their encouraging words, their ability to go to the heart of a matter with compassion—these teachers prepare students for life beyond academic pursuits. They see a bigger picture and encourage fellow teachers—through their steadfast actions—to always go higher because aiming for the stars is not only for students.

The word of God enlightens these dark times

The Enlightenment was an age of intellectualism, a philosophical movement and a world of ideas. History teachers tell us this period was between 1715 and 1798. Scientists insist we study how the scientific revolution catalyzed the Enlightenment. English instructors share how communication was radically reoriented during the 18th century. Economics teachers shed light on what industry or industries fueled the economy.

Like that former age of Enlightenment following the Dark Ages, Pastor Evans reminds us, “God’s word is enlightenment in dark times.”

This is especially good news for educators. It is good news because with God’s help we can use our God-given ideas and the gift of our intellect to teach, share, explain, clarify, show and impart to the next generation of believers. Regardless of the era or season, we are equipped with God’s mighty power at work within us (Ephesians 3:20).

The word of God stands when all else changes

We are entering a time of the year when most educators start and end work in darkness. They go to work before the sun rises and return home after the sun sets.

The seasonal darkness is analogous to some of the dark situations their community, school and students may be facing. The darkness also may be analogous to dark situations educators themselves face personally and professionally. The challenge is to watch God amid dark situations and to stay alert and involved.

Genesis 2:18-24 teaches us it is not good for man to be alone; so, God created Eve for Adam. In a similar manner, stay involved in and outside of school because it is not good for educators to be alone.

Yes, the age of Enlightenment may have brought about a proliferation of ideas, but I heard on Sunday that all good things are from God, not man (James 1:17, NIV). Yes, seasons may change, and although the season of prolonged darkness is upon us, I heard on Sunday the word of God is here to lighten our load during dark seasons, to lift our spirits in dark situations and steady us through the trials of life—personally *and* professionally.

What I heard on Sunday helps me on Monday.

The word of God gives the missionary the heart to face the dark

There are those educators who expose darkness. They are not out to prove anything, yet they do not sit idly by either while students are destroyed by the ill effects of this world in which we live.

Teaching with a mission heart allows these educators to teach and empathize with students, to fulfill their duties while also sharing life with students. Many educators—Christians and non-Christians alike—share how their work with students flows from a missionary heart and a desire to help, enlighten and transform people.

Christian teachers know Jesus' words to be a light in this world. They speak truth to power, they undermine competition by willingly participating in the collective struggle to educate, and they move with urgency about their heavenly Father's business to teach an uncompromised truth.

My prayer for educators as the fall approaches is that you allow God's word to enlighten your path and lighten your load and life. I pray you will

welcome the changing season while standing steadfast in your purpose and that you will move forward with an even stronger heart to serve.

Lisa M. Rainey, Ph.D., is an experienced educator. She and her husband, Daniel, are members of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield, Texas. She applies Sunday's sermon and Wednesday's word by Pastor Michael A. Evans, senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church to issues of education.