

To all those who are on the Faith Journey,

SCRIPTURE:

2 Timothy 2:15 (CEB) – Larger reading: 2 Timothy 2:141-26

Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn't need to be ashamed but is one who interprets the message of truth correctly.

STORY:

The first-year students in an ancient academy were called wise men; the second-year students were called philosophers; the third-year students were called disciples, learners.

OBSERVATION:

As the students go back to school, my 3 grandchildren will each have a different experience for one will be kept home and taught by his parents, one will be back in school full time and the oldest will be in school 2-days a week and do the virtual school 3-days. Everyone is holding their breath and doing a lot of praying because of the Covid-19. We pray that God will protect them, watch over them and guide them in making wise choices. It is the words from 2 Timothy 2:15 that come to mind. In the King James version it reads: “study to show thyself approved...” While that is always a challenge the reality of today's situation makes more of struggle to do your best.

As we watch the students go back to school what memories do those days have for you? Some of the memories are good and ... some are not so good. The beginning of the school year, be it elementary, Junior or Senior High or college, was always filled with excitement, anticipation, great goals, tremendous desires and always a resolve that this year was going to be different. But, then the classes began, the teacher's expectations were laid upon us, the assignments were passed out, the social interactions within the classroom became complicated, and the year simply moved into the “same-old-same-old” stuff.

There are a few outstanding memories. The best year ever was the sixth grade. Dr. Malanggo was the teacher (*I'm sure that I am not spelling his name correctly – after all that was over 63 years ago*). He motivated us like no other teacher that I had ever had before or since. Come Christmas break we had completed all of the necessary work for sixth grade, if you can believe it. Thinking back I'm not really sure how we did it and I'm sure that he never informed us of his goal, but the rest of the year was fantastic because we, the students, determined what we were going to discover during the remaining months of the school year. It was marvelous and what sheer joy of those experiences and discovery.

Another memory includes my homeroom teacher in Senior High School, Uncle Jimmy Hudson. Once you met this unusual, loving, caring gentleman your life was going to change ... guaranteed. If anyone ever was meant to be a teacher and to be involved in helping to shape the minds, spirit and future of young people it was Uncle Jimmy. I

never had him for any classes, but homeroom was a class in itself. He took the time to teach us about life and how to live it through the stories he would tell, jokes shared, and quotes for the day upon the board. It was just 15 minutes at the beginning of each day, but had a profound impact upon us all.

Then there was the American History professor in the second year of college. He taught American History II from two perspectives – from the textbook (*required reading*) and journals that he, his father, grandfather and great grandfather kept while they were in service to the president and other members of congress. He would be lecturing away and then stop, pause and state, “*Well, that is what the history books tell us, but here is what was written in the journals.*” It was a personal and often conflicting interpretation of American History ... rich in texture and insightful in observations ... hard to forget those kinds of experiences.

The rest of my college learning experience is kind of jammed together because shortly into my third year of college Margaret and I were married ... and then Tim came ... and then Tracy ... and trying to adjust to married life with a family while “trying” my hand at serving a church 50 miles due west of Atlanta was a juggling act at best. There was times that I felt like the circus guy who tries to keep all the plates spinning on those little thin sticks ... mine just kept falling off and breaking. It was the best of times ... it was the worst of times ... hard to concentrate with so much demanding for your attention.

I do remember one seminary professor, Dr. Ted Runyon. It was during one of his oral final exams – he would sit at his desk and simply enter into a dialogue with you about the course subject and what you learned. He had his set questions, but they kind of found their way into the conversation. At some point I remember him shutting his book, leaning across the desk, looking me directly in the eyes and state, “*You know, Martin, if you ever got serious about your education you would be dangerous!*”

Looking back it wasn't really that hard. God never gives you more than you can handle. Oh, it might stretch you. It might seem rather demanding. It might require more from you than you think that you can give. And, yet, we all survive, making the necessary adjustments and come out the other end the victor.

And so, as the students and teachers go back to the classroom, they go with my prayers and good wishes for rich memories of not necessarily what they are going to learn from the textbook, but what they are going to experience from each other. Because when all is said and done, it will be those interpersonal relationships between teacher and student, and between student and student that will remain with them for the rest of their days. Has that been true for you?

“... make an effort to present yourself...” “study to show thyself...” – it is still a challenge, especially in the day of Covid-19 ... but what memories do you hold of your days as a student? What teachers impacted your life? What relationships still linger in

your heart? What events changed the faith journey that you are on? Does 2 Timothy speak to your spirit ... to your life? Are you “making an effort”?

Here is to good memories. I have some and I hope that you do too!

QUOTE:

Smartness runs in my family. When I went to school I was so smart my teacher was in my class for five years. - Gracie Allen

PRAYER:

If you answer no other prayers this year, please Lord protect our precious young boys and girls as they go forth into their learning experience. Give the teachers peace as they seek to teach in these challenging times. Guard them, because each one is drastically needed. Bestow upon all individuals who have been entrusted with the precious lives of our young people the wisdom that is required so that all of them will be able to do their best ... safely. In the name of the one who saves us all, namely Jesus Christ. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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Heads up for the Worship Service this coming Sunday. We will be celebrating Holy Communion so have your bread and juice ready. If you would like to have one of our prepackaged cup & wafer, just come by the office.

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