

THE TEACHER

By John F. Hall

The definition of a teacher is a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence or Virtue. In Luke, Chapter 6, Verse 40 are these words, “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. In a previous story, I wrote about my student teaching at the Hopkinsville Community College (HCC). I was still 31 years old when I completed my student Teaching at HCC. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 3, Verse 23 are these words, “Now Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began His ministry...” Jesus is the greatest of all the teachers. He taught us to be happy. He used flowers and birds to help people understand His message. As I sat on my front porch swing and looked at the beautiful flowers in my yard and looked at the birds singing high up in the maple-trees, I understand the lessons that Jesus was teaching.



The chain on my small electric chainsaw was dull, so I was sitting on the porch swing with a round file and a flat file. I took the battery out of the chainsaw. I was using the round file to sharpen the cutters on one side of the chain. I had to turn the chainsaw bar around to sharpen the cutters on the other side of the chain. I looked out at the amber fields of grain and watched as the combines harvested the wheat. I was also enjoying , the music from a battery powered radio on the porch floor. Being one with nature is a good thing. There was a nice soft breeze out of the north. You can always talk to Christ to keep you grounded in your faith.

In 1999, Billy Yates and Bob Lyons wrote the song, “Choices.” To most people, each day of life is a gift. To a few, it is like a jail sentence. God gives us a free will to do good things or to do bad things. The following are some of Yates' and Lyons' lyrics, “ I've had choices since the day that I was born. There were voices that told me right from wrong. If I had listened, no I wouldn't be here today. Living and dying with the choices I've made. I was tempted by an early age I found, I like drinkin' oh I never turned it down. There were loved ones but I turned them an away. Now I'm living and dying by the choices I made. I guess I'm payin' for the things I've done. If I could go back oh, Lord knows I'd run. But I'm still losin this game of life I play. Living and dying by the choices I've made...”

I tell my granddaughters the only person that they can change is that person looking back at them in the mirror. Graham Nash wrote the song, “Teach Your Children.” It has several lyrics that I can relate to. These are some of his lyrics: “You who are on the road must have a code that you can live by. And so become yourself because the past is just a good-bye. Teach your children well, their father's hell did slowly go by, and feed them on your dreams the one they pick, the one you'll known by...And you of tender years, can't know the fears that your elders grew by...”

Life is a hard teacher. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I would be caught in a pandemic. My grandfather, John J. Hall died during the Pandemic of 1918. His oldest

son, John took over the responsibility to care for his mother and his siblings. He told me that he could not go to college because he had to work to support the family. My dad, Charles was 11 years old when the second wave of the pandemic hit the country. When my dad was 46, his job was abolished; our rented house and all of our possessions burned to the ground; he was a single parent with no car and no money. The lesson that he taught me is never to give up in the face of adversity. The words on our paper currency and our coins, "In God We Trust," tells us exactly who we can always trust.

The Apostle Luke is spot on with his words, "everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher..." I have found memories from my student teaching at HCC. I had 42 students, some in their teens, some young adults, and some in their 40s. These were my first students and they are special. There is a bond that a teacher has with his students. It is like the bond, I believe that Christ had with his disciples. I feel that sharing my stories allows me to continue to be a teacher. I guess that is why I like the late Kentucky poet, Jesse Stuart. He was a school teacher in Eastern Kentucky. The Apostle Paul taught, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:6-7).

I am constantly teaching my surrogate granddaughters, Jade, Skyler and Lexie some of the lessons that I learned in Life. When I was invited to be the 1978 commencement speaker at the former Fancy Farm High School, I had to decide what I wanted to say. I said that a teacher has to earn the respect of his students. I felt that some of the teachers present did not appreciate that statement. Later, I realized that I was right. Teaching is hard work. Some teachers do the bare minimum required and very little more. My son's first grade teacher did not tell us that he could not read. She said everything was fine. She was going to retire after 30 years of teaching. She did not care about her students. I hired a tutor in the second grade to teach my son to read. A great teacher respects his students. He has to value the student's ideas and opinions. He has to be a good listener. He needs to convey to his students that he is accessible, enthusiastic and caring. He has to be a skilled leader. He has to be flexible when a lesson isn't working. He has to be able to find new ways to make sure that every student understands what he is teaching. I believed that if a student did not learn, then the teacher was not doing his job. I completed my student teaching the same year that I gave the commencement speech. Near the end of my student teaching requirement, all of my 42 students evaluated me. They all agreed that they wanted me to be their teacher.

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