

Making Men Thinkers

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It is hard to realize that forty-five years ago that I was directed to my niche as a teacher. At college, our professor was introducing us to the book, "Education" by E.G. White, as part of the Philosophy of Education class. I had vowed I would never be a teacher. Through miraculous intervention, I was at Good Hope College, registered as an education major. I truly wrestled with the question: "What will my thrust be as a teacher?"

Our professor challenged us that as we examine the book "Education", we would find direction for ourselves as teachers. In our study we were discussing page 17, "...make men thinkers of their own thoughts and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts...". Tied to page 18, "... Higher than the highest human thoughts can reach is God's ideal for his people ...Godliness, Godlikeness...". This actually blew my mind. I, and those thoughts to be the loftiest! This was an awesome challenge. I saw this as my focus in my teaching at the same time I saw the enormity of the task and shrank from it. How to develop this focus into the daily ritual of teaching? I quickly recognized that this God-given direction can only be achieved if it is God-lead. That was the moment I committed my life to God and to be a teacher as long as He wished.

I was a senior at college and had less than a year to develop the pattern I would adopt in my teaching. We students spent much time observing and then teaching the subjects, one at a time. I was the typical "gung-ho" student teacher who thought he knew better than the classroom teacher. I soon over-whelmed the students with information overload. Most of them regularly flunked the tests I gave them. It was time to stop/take stock. Was I making thinkers of the students? Was I expecting just regurgitation of my thinking? I did slow down. I did take time to guide the students to be generally enthusiastic about learning. I did take time to be open to students expressing themselves. I quickly learned that listening to students was vital; avoid giving students quick answers; direct students to where they could find the answers - to think their own thoughts in sifting information.

I did have a lot of fun teaching. It became evident that much could be done for, and learned of, students outside the classroom. In the past forty odd years of teaching I have been an enthusiastic participant of student activities at recesses. Playing with students, one is allowed to model sportsmanship; one truly receives insight into students' thought patterns and makes them easier to reach.

Making students thinkers of their own thoughts - and lofty thoughts at that - is always long-term goal. None of us should expect instant change because teacher said so. Thinking truly lofty thoughts, developing Godlikeness is an awesome goal as well as an awesome responsibility. "Teachers touch a life", the saying goes. What a responsibility! The teacher does not teach the pattern: the teacher is the pattern. The teacher can not demand clean thoughts, good thoughts, lofty thoughts, all leading to Godlikeness without being all expected of the students.

How do we respond to the students? What do we think of the students? How do we relate to the various students? Are we actively working towards every student being a favorite? Do we show impatience with the slow or baulking student? Have we won each student's confidence and trust? Do we understand and know what the students think of us, the teachers? Do we love each student in spite of any adverse or

negative circumstances?

What does all this have to do with making students thinkers of their own thoughts? Everything. The teacher is what the teacher wants the student to be. As the teacher, my goal is to lead the students to want to be Godlike, to want Godlikeness. The only way is to emulate the pattern. What responsibility! We all wish our students to be the best thinkers they can be - show them how. What an opportunity we have to develop our own characters, our own thinking patterns, our own lofty thoughts, our own emulation of the Master Pattern of Godliness, Godlikeness. Yes, style of teaching counts, clear delivery of information is important, listening to students is vital; being well prepared for classes is essential; making the classroom a happy and safe place a must; the teacher should be clean, well-groomed and open to the students.

I wish there was a better word to describe our God, His desire for us and our responsibility as teachers, than awesome. Forty-five years ago, God gave me the focus of my life: To "make the students thinkers"... thinkers who will see and desire lofty thoughts, higher than the highest human thoughts can reach, and so reach out to Godliness, Godlikeness. This is awesome - that I as a human teacher, may lead students to, as it were touch and stay in-touch with God because I lead them there.

Resources:

- White, Ellen G., Education, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California.