

THE MATH TEST

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A week ago, I gave my grade 5 & 6 students a math test like no other. After working with multiples, factors, adding and subtracting, it was time for a test. The students knew a week in advance what questions to study and practice so they could prepare themselves for their test. I even held a homework club after school the day before the test to work with any student who chose to do some extra practice.

The students came in from recess feeling a bit anxious like they always do prior to math tests; some, knowing that they should have spent more time than they did reviewing the material on which they were going to be tested.



I directed the class as usual, taking last minute questions to clear up any problems they might have had from studying the night before. We went over prime and composite numbers again, so those definitions were cleared up before we began.

I then proceeded to hand out the test and instructed my students to begin. As soon as they turned their papers over I had all sixteen hands go up in the air. A few students just blurted out without waiting for me to call on them, "Mr. Gabrys! I have all the answers on my test!" A few more students continued to say, "Me too!" "I have all the answers too!" I just acted like there was nothing out of the ordinary. I then instructed, "This is your math test. If you want to receive credit for it, you need to put your name on the top and hand it in."

I wasn't sure what the response would be at this point, but I was surprised to find that none of them handed in their test at this point. They all sat there trying to understand why I would be doing such a thing. I have been known to pull a few tricks on my students once in a while, and a few students that I had last year still remembered the April Fools test I pulled on them the year before. Most of them were looking very closely at the answers on their page. One student blurted, "I think Mr. Gabrys is up to something!" and started erasing the answers, thinking that I had written the incorrect answers for the questions but soon stopped after realizing they were all correct. "Wait a minute! They're all right!" Another girl across the room agreed saying, "Yes, they are all right!"

My favourite response was from one of the quick thinkers in the class. "I think this is a test to see if we will put our name on someone else's work," he said, "and therefore we'll be caught cheating!" At this point, I explained to them a bit more about what I was doing. I told the class that I had written in all of their answers for them the night before. It took me two and a half hours to complete all sixteen tests. It was my gift to them and I double-checked all of my work to make sure it was completely correct. If they wanted to accept my gift all they needed to do was write their name on the top and hand it in. I also made it clear that this test would count towards their grade for this term. Whether a student had studied or not had no bearing on the gift I was giving them.

I still didn't have any students come to hand in their tests. They were still in a state of shock, trying to understand why I would do this. Was I even allowed to do this as a teacher? At this moment, I started to read from Ephesians. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9 NIV)

I talked about the memory verses we had studied up until then. These verses stated that we have all sinned and are not good enough for God's glory, and only a perfect and innocent person was allowed to live with God. So if we have all sinned, we could never be with God. That's where grace comes in! All we have to do is write our name at the top of the test and we can receive God's gift.

"I don't care about multiples and factors," I told my class, "Addition and subtraction doesn't even compare with the reality of this Bible truth. If we live our lives here on earth without ever knowing God and accepting His gift we will eventually die. But if we live this life, choosing to accept His gift, just by believing, we will have a chance to live for eternity with God. I pray for each and every one of you, and every day I hope that you will choose to accept God's gift and write your name at the top of His test where all of His answers are."

I had a flood of students rush to my desk all handing in their tests with their names written on them. They were very thankful for the gift I gave them. The experience was overwhelming. I hope that my students will always remember the experience of the test in which all the answers were written out beforehand, because that will remind them of the gift that God gave to each and every one of us.

Resources:

- *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible (Second Improved Edition) NIV* - Compiled and Edited By Frank Charles Thompson, D.D., Ph.D. 1990 by The B. B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC.