

Are You Getting the Best?

Jennifer Richmond ~ September 28, 2017



AS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL teacher, I learned something pretty quickly: Teach with the end in mind. In September, I'd get my bulletin boards all prepped, the name tags – oh, the hundreds of name tags! – hand printed, the

books organized, and my lesson plans planned...then the kids would come in that classroom door on the first day, and we were off! Off to where, though? In third grade, we were off to learning the multiplication tables, US History, butterflies, and cursive writing – that's what they'd need to know, among other things, by the end of the year.

CAN I TELL YOU SOMETHING about 3rd graders? They are just like grown-ups, only more honest. "Why do we need to multiply? Can't I use a calculator?" and "I can't write in cursive! Who needs to anyway? I have a computer!" It didn't take long for those wee, 8-year-olds to catch on that, like it or not, cursive, times tables, and history were all important and expected subjects to know. That didn't make them want to know it – that's where teaching comes in. Anyone can dispense information, a true teacher helps their students to want it, love it, embrace it, enjoy it!

SO, EARLY ON I DECIDED that instead of beginning with facts and figures, I'd begin with the why. I'd show why multiplying was so much faster than adding a stack of numbers...why cursive was cooler, fancier, and also faster than printing...and besides, someday it'd be a secret code because so many other kids wouldn't have been taught it! Multiplication...better! Cursive...better!

DON'T GO BACK TO YOUR OLD WAYS of doing things we've got a way better way! By tapping into their prior knowledge and familiarity with adding and printing, I could show them that while that was good for then, there's a way better way and they'd be smart to get into it. "You don't want to be stuck in 2nd grade ways anymore, do you?" Heck no! Big third graders want all the better stuff – better math, better writing, better playground! Let's go! That's it...I got 'em! And off we would go!

THE END I HAD IN MIND was graduating a group of third graders who not only knew their facts but had a heart for learning, so all year, that centered my teaching. Proverbs 23:26 is my guiding verse as a teacher: "My son (student), give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways." I don't just want my students' minds...I want their heart.

And, because I want to take my students somewhere they might be resistant to go, so I need ways worthy of observing.

WE'RE BEGINNING A Bible study through the book of Hebrews, and guess what? The entire book lays out the case for fixing our eyes on what is better. The author of Hebrews approaches his audience as a good teacher who wants his students to come around to the better way. He takes the first eleven chapters to set up a rationale for why there's a better way. He empathetically connects with them to help them see how worth it their trials are in light of the truly difficult trials they are facing. Surrounded by the realities of the darkness of their times, the author of Hebrews knows what they're tempted to do – go back.

LIKE THIRD GRADERS still clinging to addition over multiplication, printing instead of cursive, the audience of Hebrews needs to see the inadequacy

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of their old ways and the more excellent, far better, more amazingly radiant way in Christ.

ANGELS? – JESUS IS BETTER! . . .

TORAH? – JESUS IS BETTER!

MOSES? – JESUS IS BETTER!

PRIESTS? – JESUS IS BETTER!

SACRIFICES? – JESUS IS BETTER!

OLD COVENANT? –

JESUS IS SO MUCH BETTER!

That's great news, isn't it? Cue the Sunday School answer: "Yes. Great news." Can I be honest with you? My guess is that you don't struggle with wanting to go back to offering sacrifices and worshiping angels. You probably don't long for more Old Covenant ways or going

back to the times of Moses. But I wonder if, like me, you find yourself longing for the "old days" in other ways. You know Jesus is your Savior, but is that enough? Is He better than anything you're hoping for? Better than your deepest longing? Are you thinking of

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Jesus as better, but still functioning as though there's got to be something or someone who can fill your need right now? We all do that.

WE ALL KNOW the right answer – Jesus is better – but in reality, we live as though there was something missing. We don't live out lives that have been visibly transformed by having said, "Yes" to Jesus. We live much like the rest of the world does. Making it by day by day rather than living in supernatural power and authority. My heart is that you would not only know with full assurance that Jesus is definitely better, but that you would lose all taste for anything less than Jesus, that you would "fix your eyes on Jesus" as the One who spoke the truth of your faith and the One who will carry you through to the end with Him in victory.

IN A WORLD WHERE IDENTITY is wrapped up in family life, our job, or the image we project many - even Christians - end up feeling dull, empty, lifeless - fake. God says differently. Our identity is in something - Someone - far greater, far better, far more superior...Christ. This study will center us on Christ and in Him we'll find our true calling and our true faith. He is the radiance of God - and in Him we have our true radiance! Hope is here! Light is here! Truth and love - here! In Christ!

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OUR STUDY THROUGH HEBREWS will show us the truth of Jesus' greatness and how living like we actually embrace that truth will change everything. I pray that you will read and love and study and enjoy the message of Hebrews with that in mind. You'll find that our women's Bible study is a place where you will feel encouraged and challenged, loved and prayed for. It's a community of women, like you, who want something more. Know that you are loved and prayed for and that you have a special place in my heart as I seek to honor God as the women's pastor and your friend at LMCC.

Your sister in Christ,

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p.s. You can join the women's Bible study daily at 7am live on Facebook or through the archived videos on our Facebook page and website. You can also listen to the Bible study, meditations, and messages by getting the podcast on iTunes or any podcast app. Just search "Dwelling Richly." Not sure how to connect? Call, email, or text me. I'd love to help.