

# Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



## Welcome!

***"Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."* Matthew 18:5**

The Master Teacher doesn't just talk in abstract terms about children; He calls a little child and has him stand among them as He teaches them. Welcome a little child like this 'in my name', He says, and you welcome me, yes me!

Many teachers stand by the door and greet each child as they enter the classroom. At secondary level, it may be more a matter of catching the eye of each student if possible, so that they know they are more than names in a class list. One primary teacher I once knew would get to school early in the morning to go round the classroom, pausing by each desk to pray for the child who would sit there through the day.

The African Christian educationalist, Samson Makhado, urges us to see ourselves as hosts and our students as honoured guests. He writes, *"Students will seldom believe that they have anything to bring unless there is someone who will show their willingness to 'receive' them. Indeed, we discover our gifts in the eyes of the receiver."*\* This reminds us that we need to detach ourselves from our need to control and impress and to allow ourselves to become recipients.

Hospitality is something taken for granted in the Bible and in this passage Jesus makes it very concrete in His injunction to welcome the child. The old-style pictures on the walls of Sunday schools and in children's books generally used to portray the children who came to Jesus as being washed, brushed up and in their Sunday best. This child may well have been anything but that! He may have been smelly and have had a running nose, the child about whom we feel perhaps a tinge of inward relief when they are absent from school.

Nevertheless Jesus says that, as His followers who call ourselves by His name, we are to welcome the child and all that he brings . . . and in doing so we welcome Somebody Else too!

*Welcoming Teacher and Lord, help me to receive with a truly warm welcome my students and all that they bring to my classroom, so that they may discover their gifts in my eyes. Amen.*

\* Samson B K Makhado & Dean Spalding, 'Community and Hospitality in Multicultural Classrooms' in *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*, Vol 5 No 2 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 135-144 (136).

**Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** Lamentations 3:21-23