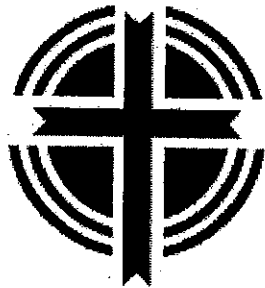


Assisting Beginning Teachers



*A Process to Help New Teachers
Begin Their New Ministries*



WELS

Christ's Love, Our Calling.

Commission on Parish Schools

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Assisting Beginning Teachers



*A Process to Help New Teachers
Begin Their New Ministries*

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Why This, Why Now?

- ♦ Love one another. (John 13:34)
- ♦ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:19)
- ♦ Submit to one another. (Ephesians 5:21)
- ♦ Bear with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2)
- ♦ Be devoted to one another. (Romans 12:10)
- ♦ Honor one another. (Romans 12:10)
- ♦ Accept one another. (Romans 15:7)
- ♦ Instruct one another. (Romans 15:14)
- ♦ Spur one another on. (Hebrews 10:24)
- ♦ Encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:25)
- ♦ Admonish one another. (Colossians 3:16)

These familiar “one-anothering” passages from God’s Word provide some excellent direction and encouragement for how we should treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. For the purposes of this resource manual, these passages also provide wonderful encouragement for how to “one-another” or mentor beginning teachers.

In business and industry, the past decade has witnessed the development and expansion of “Human Resources” departments. To be sure, the people of any company or organization are a vital resource and asset that must be managed conscientiously and cared for well. WELS certainly shares these feelings and actively encourages congregations to develop “Care Committees for Called Workers” (CCCW) in order to provide the necessary love, support, and encouragement called workers need to carry out their various ministry duties.

Over the years, the Commission on Parish Schools (CPS) has sought to encourage “one-anothering” within WELS early childhood education centers, Lutheran elementary schools, and area Lutheran high schools. More recently, the CPS has felt a special burden for the “one-anothering” or mentoring of teachers who are just beginning their service to the Lord and his church. *Assisting Beginning Teachers* has been developed in response to this special burden and seeks to provide a way for beginning teachers to receive the love, support, and encouragement they need and deserve.

Hebrews 10:25



**But let us encourage one another
and all the more as you see
the Day approaching.**

Why This, Why Now?

THE BACKGROUND

At the request of the Executive Committee of the Parish Schools Coordinators and the administrators of the WELS Commission on Parish Schools (CPS), a background survey on the perceived needs of WELS teachers entering the ministry (Moeller, 1996) was conducted for a presentation to the CPS. This was in response to the results of large and small group discussions at the 1996 National Teachers' Convention.

In the fall of 1996, permission was granted by the CPS for the CPS staff to further study the issue and come with recommendations. An additional survey was completed (Moeller, 1997). A focus group was gathered for further input (Peterson/Halter, 1997). Subsequent discussions by a committee of Karl Peterson, Joanne Halter, and Jim Moeller, with the direction of Administrator Daniel Schmeling, identified several items that would assist the beginning teachers in the WELS. The pilot project dealt with one aspect of this assistance, that of developing a mentoring program for new WELS teachers.

The Lord of the Church has always provided for the schools of the WELS. The teachers we receive to serve in our classrooms are a gift from him. However, the results of surveys and the focus group discussions indicated that the pressures and frustrations which WELS teachers experienced are similar to their counterparts in the public sector. The pilot project for assisting new teachers was a step to address these concerns. It was also a way to practice wise stewardship of the gifts the Lord has given us through the teachers assigned to train and nurture the lambs of his flock.

Why This, Why Now?

THE PILOT PROJECT

Upon approval by the WELS Commission on Parish Schools, the pilot project for assisting new teachers was field tested during the 1998-99 school year:

- ◆ Graduates of Martin Luther College assigned to WELS schools in the Western Wisconsin and Nebraska Districts participated in the pilot project. This allowed a field test in more than one district. These districts were chosen because one is a "heart-land" district while the other is more remote and isolated. Historically both districts have several MLC graduates assigned to WELS schools each year, and both districts allowed for a variety of educational settings: small schools and large schools, elementary schools and high school, urban and rural settings, areas with a concentration of WELS schools, as well as schools that are separated by larger distances.
- ◆ Information was presented to and permission to proceed was received from both district presidents. Information was also presented to the district parish schools coordinators and the district contact men of the Team Ministry Process (TMP), although the majority of these individuals did not have an active role in the pilot project.

The following steps were implemented following the assignment of teacher graduates at Martin Luther College:

- ◆ Once a graduate had been assigned to a congregation and school within the pilot project districts, it was the function of the school principal to assign a mentor to the new teacher. Issues to consider in the matching process were presented to each principal prior to the actual matching of mentor with new teacher. The following points were noted:
- ◆ Graduates assigned as principals had a School Counselor of the Team Ministry Process (TMP) assigned as their mentor.
- ◆ Principals were given the option to serve as mentors within their schools, but must realize the difference in roles between a mentor and a principal: a mentor primarily assists, a principal primarily assesses.
- ◆ The mentor would be involved in informal assessment in order to assist the beginning teacher.
- ◆ The new teachers were encouraged to develop a support system in addition to the assigned mentor. Options included a person respected in the educational profession, a peer mentor for friendly support, and a congregational mentor for congregational culture and climate.
- ◆ In cases where a graduate principal was assigned a mentor, the assistance of the School Counselor, the congregational pastor, and Dr. LeDell Plath were enlisted.

In late July of 1998, district level training sessions were conducted for both the mentors and the new teachers. This training was a one-day session. Principals and pastors of congregations receiving new teachers were invited to join in on the training.

- ◆ Background materials about the need for a Assisting program were sent out to mentors and new teachers prior to the training sessions.
- ◆ The following topics were a part of the training process; not all topics were covered in the one day workshop:

3 R's of Assisting (Reality, Relationship, Renewal)

Classroom management skills

Listening skills

Modeling skills

Conferencing skills

Time Management

Knowledge of the adult learner

Roles of the mentor - teacher

Observation skills

Formative and summative assessment

Culture and community issues

Coaching skills

Spiritual/personal issues for the new teacher

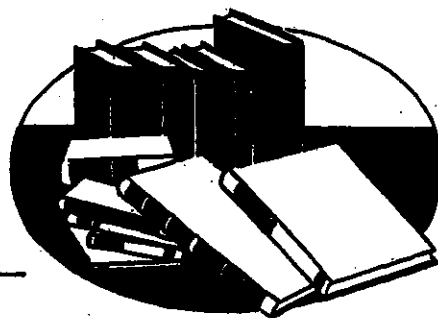
Stages of the Beginning Teachers

Goal Planning

Developmental stages of the teacher

Role of personal Bible study

Purpose of WELS schools





What Do Beginning Teachers Face?

Much has been written on the subject of beginning teachers and what they face as they start their careers. Research done about beginning teachers in both public and private school settings reveals astonishingly similar data. Surveys of teachers in the WELS school system supports the findings of the other school systems studied. Bottom line: the issues, concerns, and stresses beginning teachers face are very real and, if left unaddressed, could have disastrous consequences, both for the individual teacher, and for the school in which he/she teaches.

What exactly do beginning teachers face? What follows are a series of reviews and summaries from various studies conducted on the subject. The information clearly demonstrates that beginning teachers face numerous professional and personal challenges. Better understanding of these challenges will make Assisting beginning teachers a more successful process for both the new teachers and the schools in which they serve the Savior.

SIX CHIEF NEEDS FOR NOVICE TEACHERS

*Glickman, Kurtz, and Newberry Study
(References follow)*



- 1) **Difficult work assignments** - What the teacher is being asked to do is simply too overwhelming for him/her at this point in his/her career.
- 2) **Unclear expectations** - The new teacher does not really know what he/she is expected to do.
- 3) **Inadequate resources** - What the teacher needs to do his/her job is not adequately available.
- 4) **Isolation (Emotional, Social, Professional)**
 - Veteran teachers are often fearful of interfering and do not reach out to the new teacher.
 - Veteran teachers may feel threatened by the "new, young, up-to-date" teacher.
 - The principal may be viewed as the person responsible for assisting the new teacher.
 - The novice teacher is often hesitant to ask for help, and maybe is not quite sure what to ask for.
- 5) **Role Conflict** - The previously young adult with somewhat limited responsibility must now view him/herself as a professional teacher with a lot of responsibility.
- 6) **Reality Shock** - It's not training to be a teacher anymore; you are one and what goes on is real not theoretical.

For additional information see...

Glickman, C. (12-1 / 1984-85) "The Supervisor's Challenge: Changing the Teacher Work Environment" Educational Leadership 42, 4: 82-84.

Kurtz, W. H. (1983) "Identifying Their Needs: How the Principal Can Help Beginning Teachers" NASSP Bulletin 67, 459: 42-45.

Newberry, J. (1978) "The Barrier Between Beginning and Experienced Teachers" The Journal of Educational Administration 16, 1:46-56.



TWELVE POTENTIAL NEEDS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Gordon Study (Reference follows)

- 1) **Classroom management help**
- 2) **Background information concerning the school and school system**
- 3) **Obtaining instructional resources and materials**
- 4) **Planning, organizing, and managing instruction**
- 5) **Assessing students and evaluating student progress**
- 6) **Motivating students**
- 7) **Using effective teaching methods**
- 8) **Dealing with individual students' needs, interests, abilities, and problems**
- 9) **Communicating with educational colleagues**
- 10) **Communicating to/with parents**
- 11) **Adjusting to the teaching environment and role**
- 12) **Receiving emotional support**

For additional information see...

Gordon, Stephen P. How to Help Beginning Teachers Succeed Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA 1991.

EFFECTS OF UNMET NEEDS ON BEGINNING TEACHERS

*Boccia and Vienman Study
(References follow)*



- 1) **Negative emotional, physical, attitudinal, and behavior problems may result. The teacher experiences...**

- insomnia
- nightmares
- fatigue
- physical exhaustion
- sense of failure
- depression

- 2) **Self-esteem may be lowered. The teacher feels...**

- less optimistic
- negative toward children
- less happy
- less relaxed
- less confident
- less perceptive
- more controlled
- more guilty and blaming

- 3) **The teacher feels he/she possess less knowledge at the end of the year than he/she did at the beginning of the year**

- 4) **Change in treatment of students. The teacher becomes...**

- more authoritarian
- more dominating
- more custodial

- 5) **Change in the educational process and delivery. The teacher becomes...**

- more impulsive
- less inspiring
- louder
- less responsive
- more reserved
- dull and boring

- 6) Ultimate exit from teaching profession - Attrition rate in education is 15% as opposed to 6% in other beginning careers. Ironically, many teachers who show great promise, leave teaching in the early years.
- 7) A "survival mentality" develops. The teacher...
 - Restricts teaching methods used
 - Limits participation in school related activities
 - Resists curricular and instructional changes
 - Develops a more adversarial relationship with students

For additional information see...

Boccia, J. A. (March 1989) "Beginning Teachers Speak Out: A Study of Professional Concerns in the First Three Years of Teaching". American Educational Research Association.

Vienman, S. (Summer, 1984) "Perceived Problems of Beginning Teachers" Review of Educational Research 54, 2:143-178.



PERCEIVED PROBLEMS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

*1984 review and ranking done by Simon Veenman
of 83 studies that have appeared since 1960, in Quinn and Gregory,
Assisting New Teachers, 1997*

- 1) Classroom discipline
- 2) Motivating students
- 3) Dealing with individual differences
- 4) Assessing students' work
- 5) Relations with parents
- 6) Organization of class work
- 7) Insufficient materials and supplies
- 8) Dealing with problems of individual students
- 9) Heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient prep time
- 10) Relations with colleagues
- 11) Planning of lessons and school days
- 12) Effective use of different teaching methods
- 13) Awareness of school policies and rules
- 14) Determining learning level of students
- 15) Knowledge of subject matter
- 16) Burden of clerical work
- 17) Relations with principals/administrators
- 18) Inadequate school equipment
- 19) Dealing with slow learners
- 20) Dealing with students of different cultures and deprived backgrounds
- 21) Effective use of textbooks and curriculum guides
- 22) Lack of spare time
- 23) Inadequate guidance and support
- 24) Large class size

FIRST YEAR TEACHING PHASES

Teacher Education Council of Ontario, Canada report
in Quinn and Gregory, *Assisting New Teachers*, 1997



ANTICIPATION PHASE

- Fear of the unknown
- Support mechanisms should be in place to help offset this

SURVIVAL PHASE

- Early weeks of school
- Unexpected situations and new problems
- Coping with day-to-day operational level of teaching
- A feeling of running to survive
- Some frustration with orientation to the school and community
- A desire to stop and reflect sets in
- Support needs to be extremely visible and sensitive at this time

DISILLUSIONMENT PHASE

- Sets in before Christmas and continues into January
- Experience doubts about their chosen career due to the enormous amount of time and energy required for teaching
- Question their own competence
- Classroom management seems to be a major source of stress
- Support must not take the form of new philosophies or theories but rather provide time for discussion, exposure to self-doubts, care and nurturing, reflection, highlighting of successes and achievements

REJUVINATION PHASE

- Routines of the school and mechanics of the system are understood and accepted
- Self-confidence is on the rise
- Newly formed relationships can offer both critical appraisal and an affirmation of one's worth
- Support should focus on programs and teaching strategy and reflect on teaching practices that foster improvement

REFLECTION PHASE

- Final months of the school year
- Feelings of satisfaction... the end is in sight
- Time to look back over the year
- Pride in and identification with the school
- Operational techniques may need revising or replacement but there is knowledge of what is needed and satisfaction from knowing what needs can be met
- Support should review the important relationships during this induction period



Who Is a Good Mentor?

As you look for a mentor for a beginning teacher or are considering becoming one yourself, consider the following:

A mentor *is*

- ◆ A person full of faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 7)
- ◆ A person with a proper understanding of Law and Gospel
- ◆ A person who models Jesus Christ
- ◆ A student of the Word
- ◆ Available, approachable, and receptive
- ◆ A person who truly cares about the welfare and feelings of others
- ◆ A person who has the respect of others
- ◆ Open to mutual sharing and growth
- ◆ An experienced teacher
- ◆ A person who loves children
- ◆ A person who understands how children learn
- ◆ A person who follows through and can be counted on
- ◆ Committed to improving instruction
- ◆ A person who understands what needs to be kept private and what needs to be shared
- ◆ Willing to...
 - spend a couple hours a week to help another
 - be a coach of classroom management
 - be a role model in and out of the classroom
 - be a "guide on the side" to the schools unwritten rules and traditions
 - be a counselor and confidant providing moral support
 - share encouragement, and inspiration
 - be a source of guidance and feedback
 - be one who assists, not assesses



A mentor *is not*

- ◆ A substitute for the school principal
 - ◆ A substitute for the pastor
- ◆ The "in-house" school psychologist
 - ◆ A know-it-all
- ◆ A gossip or busy-body
- ◆ A person with personal or professional axes to grind



How Does the Program Work?

(The *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program follows the steps listed below.)

- 1.** The District President informs the beginning teachers in his district that they will be participating in the program and that they will each be assigned a mentor by their respective school principals. Beginning principals will be informed by the District President that they will be contacted by the Commission on Parish Schools' (CPS) Mentor for New Principals.
- 2.** The Commission on Parish Schools informs the school principals that they will be receiving a beginning teacher and that they will be participating in the program.
- 3.** The school principals obtain information from CPS about the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program and assign a mentor to the beginning teachers called to their schools.
- 4.** The Commission on Parish Schools informs its district Parish Schools Coordinators which beginning teachers have been assigned to what schools within the district.
- 5.** The district Parish Schools Coordinators schedule a one day seminar within their districts to bring together the beginning teacher, his/her school principal, the beginning teacher's assigned mentor, the Team Ministry Process (TMP) School Counselor (optional) and the District President (optional) to orient them to the Assisting program. The Parish Schools Coordinator informs the Commission on Parish Schools of the date and location of the orientation meeting.
- 6.** The *Assisting Beginning Teachers* orientation meetings take place sometime before the beginning of the school year.
- 7.** The principal, mentor, and beginning teacher start their work together.
- 8.** The district Parish Schools Coordinators arrange with their district teachers' conference program committee to present a sectional of interest for the beginning teachers at the fall teachers' conference.
- 9.** The district Parish Schools Coordinators schedule a winter meeting of the beginning teacher, his/her school principal, the beginning teacher's assigned mentor, and the District President (optional) to assess how the Assisting program is working in each school and to discuss any further contacts.



Responsibilities of Each Player in the Program

The following list represents the main "players" in the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program. After the list follows a more detailed explanation of responsibilities.

**DISTRICT PRESIDENT (DP)
COMMISSION ON PARISH SCHOOLS (CPS)
DISTRICT PARISH SCHOOLS COORDINATOR (PSC)
TEAM MINISTRY PROCESS SCHOOL COUNSELOR (TMP)
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
ASSIGNED MENTOR
BEGINNING TEACHER
LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION**

DISTRICT PRESIDENT



- ◆ Begins the process, soon after MLC assignments are made, informing beginning teachers about the program and their participation in it
- ◆ Contacts the principals of the schools who were assigned beginning teachers, touching base with them about the program and their role in it
- ◆ Throughout the year, monitors how things are going with the program, and offers any assistance he can
- ◆ Prays for the beginning teachers, their principals, the mentors, the schools, and the whole Assisting program

COMMISSION ON PARISH SCHOOLS



- ◆ Informs Parish Schools Coordinators about beginning teachers assigned to their districts and encourages prompt coordination of the district-wide orientation meetings
- ◆ Provides the program's written materials to the Parish Schools Coordinators and the affected schools' Assisting teams
- ◆ Pays all meeting related expenses for the summer orientation, winter follow-up, and subsequent district-wide meetings
- ◆ Throughout the year, monitors how things are going, and offers any assistance it can
- ◆ Prays for the beginning teachers, their principals, the mentors, the schools, and the whole Assisting program

DISTRICT PARISH SCHOOLS COORDINATOR



- ◆ Upon being informed about beginning teachers assigned to his district, coordinates the district-wide orientation meeting and informs CPS of the date, time, and location
- ◆ Informs affected school principals, mentors, beginning teachers, TMP School Counselors, and District President of the orientation meeting's date, time, and location
- ◆ Becomes thoroughly familiar with the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program and organizes and facilitates initial orientation meeting
- ◆ Coordinates with all involved a date, time, and location for a winter follow-up meeting and informs CPS of the details
- ◆ Arranges with the district teachers' conference program committee to conduct a sectional at the fall teachers' conference on a topic relevant to the beginning teachers and informs CPS of the details
- ◆ Throughout the year, monitors how things are going, offers any assistance he can, promotes the program, and provides evaluative feedback to CPS
- ◆ Prays for the beginning teachers, their principals, the mentors, the schools, and the whole Assisting program

TMP SCHOOL COUNSELOR



- ◆ Becomes thoroughly familiar with the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program through information provided by the PSC and the CPS.
- ◆ Throughout the year, monitors how the program is going, offers any assistance he can, promotes the program, and provides any evaluative feedback to the PSC
- ◆ Prays for the beginning teacher, the principal, the mentor, the school, and the whole Assisting program

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



- ◆ Becomes thoroughly familiar with the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program
- ◆ Assigns a mentor for the beginning teacher called to his school
- ◆ Attends district orientation meeting
- ◆ Raises awareness and understanding of the program and the new teacher's needs within the Board of Education and congregation and encourages their support and prayers
- ◆ Throughout the year, monitors how things are going, offers any assistance he can, promotes the program, and provides evaluative feedback to TMP School Counselor and PSC
- ◆ Prays for the beginning teacher, himself, the mentor, the school, and the whole Assisting program

MENTOR TEACHER



- ◆ Becomes thoroughly familiar with the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program, particularly the sections titled, "What Do Beginning Teachers Face?" and "Who Is a Good Mentor?"
- ◆ Attends district orientation meeting
- ◆ Throughout the year, mentors beginning teacher, offers any assistance needed, promotes the program, and provides evaluative feedback to the principal and TMP School Counselor
- ◆ Prays for the beginning teacher, him/herself, the principal, the school, and the whole *Assisting* program

BEGINNING TEACHER



- ◆ Attends district orientation meeting
- ◆ Throughout the year, works with mentor, and provides evaluative feedback to the principal and TMP School Counselor
- ◆ Prays for the him/herself, the assigned mentor, the principal, the school, and the whole *Assisting* program

LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION



- ◆ Becomes thoroughly familiar with the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program
- ◆ Supports the principal, the mentor, and the beginning teacher in whatever way needed
- ◆ Raises awareness and understanding of the program and the new teacher's needs within the congregation and encourages their support and prayers
- ◆ Networks with the congregation's Care Committee for Called Workers (if there is one) to address any needs that develop through the *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program
- ◆ Underwrites or encourages the congregation to underwrite the travel expenses of the staff members participating in the orientation and follow-up meetings.
- ◆ Prays for the Board, the principal, the assigned mentor, the school, and the whole *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program

Hebrews 10:25


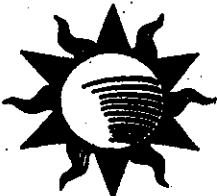





And let us consider how we
— may spur one another on
toward love and good deeds.



Timetable of Program Activity

The *Assisting Beginning Teachers* program works best if it follows this timetable.

	MAY	Martin Luther College Transitions Seminars Teaching assignments given
	JULY	<i>Assisting Beginning Teachers</i> District Orientation Workshops
	OCTOBER	District Teachers' Conferences Special sectionals and topics offered for first year teachers
	JANUARY FEBRUARY	<i>Assisting Beginning Teachers</i> Saturday 1/2 day follow-up meeting
	APRIL	Evaluation Principal, first year teacher, and mentor evaluate the program and suggest improvements to CPS



Important Additional Resources

In this section you will find the following helpful materials:

- ◆ **Devotions and/or Bible studies for meeting use**
- ◆ **Sample prayers for use by mentors and first year teachers as they work together**
- ◆ **A list of conditions that support a teacher's growth**
- ◆ **Sample questions and responses to keep the discussion going**
- ◆ **Active listening suggestions**
- ◆ **Suggestions and tips for obtaining valuable feedback**
- ◆ **Teacher "Career Cycle" Graph**

Eleven Bible Studies

Team Ministry

Nine fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-control

and

Humility

**These Bible studies
are a component of the
TEAM MINISTRY PROCESS
and available in the TMP binder.**

LIVING ABOVE THE WORLD

by

Faith

That Depends on God's Love

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:2

Picture in your mind how people would look if they were feeling the emotions below.

ANGER GRIEF LONELINESS HELPLESSNESS FEAR STRESS
NERVOUSNESS PAIN INDECISION RAGE HURT BITTERNESS

If people had one or more of these feelings all the time, what would that do to their...

- ▶ outlook about the future?
- ▶ relationships with others?
- ▶ feelings about themselves?

People who constantly have feelings like the above, would have a pretty hopeless life and future, wouldn't they?

Is hopelessness a feeling Christians have?

What do the words below have to do with the idea of hopelessness?

Tomorrow's plans I do not know,
I only know this minute;
But Jesus will say, "This is the way,
By faith walk ye in it."

Christians, because they are also sinful, can have hopeless feelings. However, during these times, Christians, in faith, fall back on their Savior, Jesus. They trust that he will lead them through the

tough and dark times. Faith in Jesus makes it possible for the Christian to see and feel God's great love. This amazing love from heaven helps the children of God to live above the world.

► What do you think "living above the world" means when it comes to feelings?

Let's look at a familiar Bible story: "The Young Man of Nain" recorded in Luke 7:11-17. This story clearly shows how dependence on God's love makes it possible to live above the world.

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son

¹¹Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹²As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

¹⁴Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!"

¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." ¹⁷This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

► Why could the woman's situation be considered hopeless?

► Though a large crowd went with the mother and her dead son, why would this crowd's comfort be only temporary?

► Why would Jesus say to the mother, "Don't cry?"

► The Bible account indicates that the mother said nothing to Jesus. She asked no questions; she made no requests. What could have been the reasons for her silence?

► What would Jesus show the crowd, his disciples, the mother, the son, and us by the miracle of bringing the young man back to life?

► How would Jesus' miracle of love help everyone's faith to grow and help them and us to live above the world?

► How do these words apply to our discussion?

DOUBT sees the obstacles; FAITH sees the way.
DOUBT sees the darkest night; FAITH sees the day.
DOUBT dreads to take a step; FAITH soars on high.
DOUBT questions, "Who believes?" FAITH answers, "I!"

CAN YOU LIVE ABOVE THE WORLD?

Hebrews 12:2-3 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...so that we will not grow weary and lose heart."

LIVING ABOVE THE WORLD

by

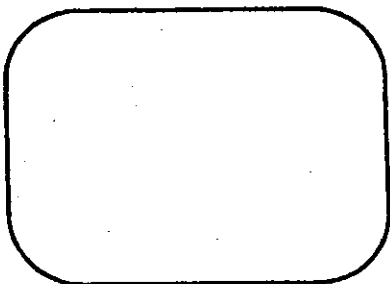
Faith

That Trusts God's Forgiveness

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:2

BURY THE HATCHET.

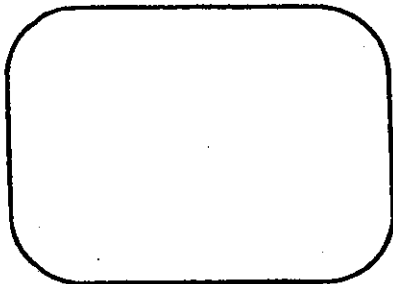
In the box below, draw a picture to illustrate this phrase, then to the right, write what you think this phrase means.



The above expression is an odd one, don't you think? Did it originate with two Indian braves who got in a fight, made up, and then symbolized their becoming friends again by physically burying a hatchet, an object used in fighting? Burying something in the ground would help you to forget about it, wouldn't it? Did the braves want to show each other and all the other people who knew them that they had made up and now would forgive and forget?

SOME BURY THE HATCHET BUT LEAVE THE HANDLE

STICKING OUT. Draw a picture in the box below to illustrate this phrase, then to the right tell what the phrase means to you.



► Why wouldn't Jesus "keep the handle sticking out" when it comes to our sins against him?

► Why is the term "unconditional love" a good one to use when talking about Jesus' love for us?

► What five letter word means that Jesus loves and forgives us even though we don't deserve it?

► How can the way Jesus loves and forgives us, help us to live above the world?

A wonderful Bible story on love and forgiveness is about Jesus and a sinful woman and is recorded in Luke 7:36-39 and 44-50.

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴¹You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴²You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴³Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been

forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

⁴⁴Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁵The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁴⁶Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

► Two people are shown in the story, a Pharisee (Simon) and a sinful woman. How did each person treat Jesus differently in a physical way?

► How did each treat Jesus differently in a spiritual way?

► What do Simon's and the woman's thoughts or actions say about how each looked at him/herself?

► Which of the two would the world say was the better person? Why?

► Which of the two was really living above the world? Why?

► In verse 50, Jesus identifies the thing that makes it possible for the sinful woman to be forgiven and to "live above the world." What does Jesus say?

Imagine how the sinful woman must have felt when she heard, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Though we are not told, we can imagine that the woman's tears of shame, sorrow, guilt, and repentance were replaced by tears of joy, peace, love, and forgiveness. Her faith in Jesus, her forgiving Savior, gave the sinful woman a way to live above her sinful world. Her past was forgiven and forgotten and now she could look forward to real life above the world in heaven. Now, in thanks, she could live a life that God would be pleased with.

CAN YOU LIVE ABOVE THE WORLD?

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

LIVING ABOVE THE WORLD

by

Faith

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:2

That Accepts God's Authority

Look at the familiar questions below. Whether spoken by adults or children, these questions all seem to be challenging something. Fill in the blanks to the right of the questions to reveal what's being challenged. Some clues have been given to you.

"Who made you the boss?"

"What gives you the right?"

"Who put you in charge?"

"Who do you think you are?"

"Who says I have to listen to you?"

____ T _____ T _____

Challenging (the word you wrote down) is one of the most common activities of sinful men, women, boys, and girls. No one likes to sacrifice control to others. No one likes to give up their rights. No one likes to take a back seat. No one likes to be told what to do.

► Why is that true?

► Why should it be easier for Christians to accept authority?

► What's your reaction to this statement:

"Faith is believing what God says simply because it is God who says it."

Faith shows Christians that the only authority that really counts is God's. Faith allows Christians to take God at his word. Faith helps Christians to accept that what God says, goes. Faith urges Christians to turn all their problems, troubles, worries, and cares over to Jesus. Faith makes it possible for Christians to live above the world.

►What do you think "living above the world" means?

Let's look at a familiar Bible story: "The Centurion of Capernaum" recorded in Luke 7:1-10. In the world's view the Centurion was certainly an authority figure, yet we see that his faith in Jesus caused him to live above what the world expected.

The Faith of the Centurion

7 When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him:

"Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Look at the following phrases from the story and identify the "above the world" (Christian) attitude the Centurion showed.

"...a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly..." _____

"...asking him (Jesus) to come and heal his servant." _____

"...Lord, don't trouble yourself..." _____

"...I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you." _____

"...But say the word, and my servant will be healed." _____

►How was the Centurion, the powerful authority figure that he was, able to display such wonderful attitudes?

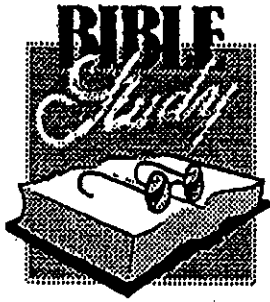
►How had the Centurion's faith in Jesus Christ affected him and his life?

►What do you think the following words mean?

"Faith is a grasping of almighty power; the hand of man laid hold on the arm of God; the grand and blessed hour in which things impossible to me become possible, O Lord, through Thee."

CAN YOU LIVE ABOVE THE WORLD?

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."



Written by
Mr. and Mrs. Jon Eiche
for the
Depression Support Group
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(used with permission)

Encouraging One Another

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. (Hebrews 13:1-3)

Consider these Scripture passages:

Romans 8:18-39—*I consider our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Ephesians 4:15-16—Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:29, 32—Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:19a—Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Hebrews 10:25—Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Barnabas: Son of Encouragement

There are times when we need encouragement. There are times when we need to give encouragement. This can be difficult if we have grown up in a family that never made time for encouraging one another. We have a wonderful role model in Jesus. But in this study let's look at someone who, although was not perfect, encouraged his fellow believers in much the same manner as Christ.

This study is on a rather obscure New Testament figure, Joseph from Cyprus, better known as Barnabas. His life provides a role model for ministering to others in need.

Barnabas appears in the Bible for the first time in Acts 4:32-37.

How do we know that Barnabas was a sensitive and compassionate man?

That Barnabas was indeed an encourager is evident in this first account of his interaction with others: he sold some of his personal property with the specific goal of meeting the needs of others. Barnabas not only saw what was needed; he acted to meet the need.

What needs do you see in your church or community that you could help meet?

Barnabas reappears five chapters later in Acts 9:26-27. Once again we see Barnabas' desire to reach out to others—in this case, Saul of Tarsus. Upon this man's word, the apostles accepted the validity of Saul's conversion, even though they were filled with fear and suspicion. We can assume that Barnabas sought Saul out, listened to his story, and concluded it was real; for in this passage it is Barnabas, not Saul, who is providing the account of the conversion. Barnabas was willing to take risks with people. He had all the same information as the apostles, yet he deliberately chose to find Saul and help him deal with this difficulty in his life. As a result of Barnabas' ministry of Saul, the new convert secured a position of respect and love in the leadership of the early church.

What do Jesus' words in Matthew 10:16 (I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.) mean to you?

Paul (Saul) says nearly the same thing in Romans 16:19 (Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.) How was Barnabas wise about his dealings with Saul?

Barnabas was careful before he was fully caring. We would do well to follow his example. Too many Christians feel it is their duty to help everyone in need. This is an easy way to become burned out or even taken advantage of.

Barnabas next appears in Acts 11:22-26. From the Greek we can know that the words "encouraged them" indicates that it was a continual act of encouraging, not merely when he first arrived. It was an ongoing focus of his ministry. We read that there was real substance to his encouragement—Barnabas and Saul "taught great numbers" while in Antioch. Encouragement is more than just a warm feeling. It has significance and purpose.

What are some ways that you can encourage others?

Note that in meeting the needs around him, Barnabas was not intimidated by the ministry gifts of others. He traveled to Tarsus to recruit Saul to help him minister. How often are we either envious of or threatened by other gifted Christians. Thinking that we are the only ones who can do something is a trap that leads to burnout and depression. We need to focus on the ministry of helping others, not making us look good or important to others.

In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit tells the church at Antioch to, "set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them". This is the commencement of a life of missions for both men. God used Barnabas to train Saul. Up to this point whenever the two men are mentioned Barnabas is listed first and then Saul. From Acts 13:42 on, the majority of the occurrences of their names has the order reversed. Saul (known from here on as Paul) appears first, followed by Barnabas. Slowly Barnabas slid out of the spotlight. He knew that he had, with God's help, met Paul's needs. Now Paul was to be the leader and Barnabas followed up Paul's ministry. It is important to realize that helping someone is generally temporary in nature. Otherwise, you can face hurt or bitter feelings.

Do you think it was easy for Barnabas to move from being out in front and setting the pace to being a behind the scenes person?

The next major appearance of Barnabas is in Acts 15. Here we see the differences in how Paul and Barnabas sought to resolve a problem. Paul wanted to sort out the false doctrine, resolve the issue; Barnabas wanted to help people. Of course, the passion for doctrinal purity that characterized Paul's life and ministry is necessary, however, when it comes to the ministry of encouraging others we need to follow the lead of Barnabas.

Read Acts 15:36-41. About what did Barnabas and Paul disagree?

Why was Paul unwilling to give Mark a second chance?

Paul was an "issues person" rather than a "people person". Barnabas had believed in Paul when no one else did. Now Paul had the chance to do the same and he didn't. But, Barnabas, true to his name, simply ends his ministry of encouragement with Paul and begins it anew with Mark. At this point Barnabas essentially fades from the pages of scripture. Subsequent references to Mark, however, show that Barnabas was as committed and successful with his second disciple as he had been with his first. For one thing, this young man, whom Paul judged so harshly, went on to author the Gospel which bears his name. Second, we learn in 1 Peter 5:13 that Mark was a trusted companion of the apostle Peter.

Paul later realized how wrong he had been. While in prison he asked to have Mark brought to him to help with his ministry. (2 Timothy 4:9-11). Paul had to learn what Barnabas already knew; sometimes a decision has to be made with thoughts as to how it will affect people. In God's gracious plan and timing Paul did learn that.

Barnabas was not commended at the time for his decision to continue with Mark. Sometimes the ministry of encouragement to others can produce discouragement in us. But the cost is worth it, for Mark became the author of the Gospel of Mark.

***In reviewing the life of Barnabas,
we can see ways to reach out to others:***

- 1. The encourager spots someone with a genuine need and has a sense of how to meet it.**
- 2. The encourager draws alongside this person with the goal of helping him grow.**
- 3. The encourager gives faithful and continued help.**
- 4. The need is met.**



Written by
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(used with permission)

Coping With Depression & Burnout

***No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.
And God is faithful... (1 Corinthians 10:13)***

"Where are you, God? I thought you loved me!" Sound familiar? Would you be willing to share some of the thoughts you've had about God when you've felt depressed? (Remember, these thoughts are common to sinful man.)

Consider some passages from Scripture:

Deuteronomy 31:6 - *Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you:*

Joshua 1:5 - *I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Psalms 27:10 - *Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.*

Psalms 37:25 - *I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken.*

Hebrews 13:5 - *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

Matthew 28:20 - *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

List some of the things God has done that show He has been faithful to you, that He does truly care.

God is faithful. Before Adam and Eve even admitted their sin, God already promised a Savior. For thousands of years He repeated and amplified that promise. Then He gave the Son He loved. For 30 years Jesus lived our life – in a lifestyle that we'd avoid at all costs! On the cross his Father cursed and killed him for our refusal to obey. Now he lives, guaranteeing God fulfilled His promise. And He gives us the Holy Spirit, who overcomes our hell-bent spirit and makes us alive in Christ. There just is no evidence whatever to suggest that God does not care.

From where does this accusation that God doesn't care really come?

Doesn't much of our complaining (if we are honest with ourselves) really come because we don't care for the way God does things? He doesn't seem to be answering our prayers. He doesn't see things our way. His answer is not what we expected. And it certainly doesn't come quickly enough for us. We want solutions to our problems that require no personal effort and especially no sacrifice or pain – and God won't give it to us!

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. Why was Paul given a “thorn in his flesh”? What is “God's answer” when we accuse Him of not being there and not caring?

No more manipulation! We want our lives to be consistently in harmony with God. We ask Him for the courage to follow through when He makes His way clear. Yet, there's another sense in which God is incredibly faithful. We see that in His dealing with the prophet Elijah.

Elijah – Prophet of God

As Mary sat staring at her open Bible, she began to weep. Her prayers seemed to just stick on the ceiling and the Bible seemed like just meaningless phrases. She couldn't remember the last time she felt encouraged. Her mind raced and tumbled over itself in search for a place to rest and find meaning. The children were whining in the background and she found herself snapping at them. Why couldn't she cope? God had blessed her with a loving husband and three lovely children. It was the model Christian family. Yet, she and her husband were fighting more, as she sought to cope with this depression that eluded description and cure. Where was her faith? Where was her joy? Why did she continually have to fight back thoughts of suicide? She felt like a shallow, ungodly, unloved, and faithless Christian.

The story above is fictional, yet it is played out everyday in hundreds of homes. Whether a stay-at-home mom, a woman on the go, father, pastor, teacher, or college student, many people feel like this during times of their lives. It is the story of people who want to be "on fire" for the Lord, but feel that their faith is a dimly burning wick that will soon be extinguished.

Depression like this is deceitful, not because of what it is but because of what it isn't. Too often, what we think is a hopeless spiritual condition, evidence of a faithless heart, is really only the natural consequence of an over-extended life. It is the fruit of burnout, not faithlessness.

The study of Elijah gives us insight on such a life. Elijah was a man of God. He knew God intimately and walked with Him faithfully. He had witnessed miracle after miracle, from being fed by ravens near a brook, to seeing the never-ending supply of grain and oil at the widow's house. He had seen his prayers bring on famine, fire from heaven, and raise a boy from the dead.

But the man in 1Kings 19 is drastically different.

Read verses 1 to 5a

What was the root of Elijah's fear?

Why was Elijah's fear unfounded?

How did Elijah show that he was in a state of depression?

What are some of the signs of depression that Elijah demonstrated?

Of what losses might Elijah have been thinking?

What would we say to him? Would we remind him of how God has used him throughout his life? Would we tell him what an impact he has made on our own life? Would we try to get him to ignore his feelings? Would we try to make him feel guilty about his feelings? Maybe we would "speak the truth in love" and tell him that his behavior is sin, plain and simple. Or maybe we would tell him to read the Scriptures and pray more.

If we said any of those things we would, in essence, be telling him that he has a spiritual problem. A lack of faith. Really though, although sin is a part of Elijah's depressed condition, there is more to the problem.

Elijah was a person of solitude. By the time he is wanting to die he has been alone for years and is now on the run. Elijah is tired. He is burned out. People who are burned out feel rejected, like no one appreciates them. They tend to isolate themselves, emotionally or actually, from others. Elijah's sense of isolation can be seen in his conversations with God. Elijah uses the words I, me, or my ten times in eleven verses. People who are burned out want to be left alone because they already are alone.

Read verses 5b to 9a

How did God show that he was concerned about Elijah's physical needs?

What have you learned about depression that would indicate that this is a reasonable concern here?

What indications does the Bible give that Elijah's needs went beyond the physical need for food and sleep?

Another symptom (or cause!) of burnout is fatigue, physical and emotional. As soon as Elijah sits down he falls asleep! People who are burned out have to push themselves to do daily routine tasks. They have nothing left to give.

The prophet Elijah was not lacking in faith. He was lacking resources (physical and emotional). He was burned out. His loss of hope, his desire to be alone, and even the emotional state of mind that prefers death to life, are symptoms of a life over-extended.

This chapter of Elijah's life should make us more careful about saying there is a spiritual cause for every human shortcoming. If we can't sleep or have chronic headaches, we are often quick to conclude that God has abandoned us or that prayer is ineffectual. We should be careful not to prescribe, solely, a spiritual cure to a much more complex problem.

Read verses 9b to 14

How did God address the self-centeredness of Elijah's depression?

What was the significance of the appearance of God to Elijah?

What was the significance of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire that God was not in?

What does the sound of the gentle whisper teach us about God's dealings with Elijah?

What was God doing by focusing Elijah's attention on himself?

How does Elijah's repeated answer to God make it clear that he still had much to learn?

Read verses 15 to 18

How does God address Elijah's needs in these verses?

About what is God aware that Elijah is not?

How does God demonstrate his patience with his servant?

What do God's commands to anoint other servants demonstrate to Elijah and us about God's control?

How might this question of who is in control cause Elijah to feel isolated, depressed, and anxious?

Our churches (as well as homes and businesses) are filled with people who are on the edge of fatigue and depression. Fortunately, burnout is not terminal. If we think our burnout or depression is caused by fatigue, we should sit down and take a look at our lives. Seeing what we are doing every day can be a good way to determine how much of our depression is physical in origin. We have to remember that God doesn't expect everything from us, only our faithfulness in what we are able to do. The Bible makes it clear that God uses our weaknesses to glorify Him (2 Cor. 4:1-15, 12:7-10).

God is faithful and He will sustain us. He wants us to rest (He created a day for it!). He wants us to depend on Him. He doesn't want us to be so tired that we can't enjoy Him or our life. God allowed Elijah to sleep. God also provided food to sustain Elijah. Then Elijah slept again. Then he ate again. It was only after his physical needs were completely taken care of that God spoke to him and instructed him. Then Elijah was ready to go and do all the Lord had asked of him.

Isaiah 42 (a Messianic passage) speaks of the servant (that is Christ) who "will not break a bruised reed, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope". (Isaiah 42:3-4). Christ will uphold the weak (the bruised reed) and help those burning out (the smoldering wick). In His strength we can be "on fire" for God once again.

Prayers for the Mentor

(Insert the beginning teacher's name in the prayer blanks)

Dear Jesus, you have asked me to be a mentor to _____, a first year teacher at _____ Lutheran School. We are both nervous about the process. Ease our anxiety. Give each of us confidence. Let our personal confidence give each other security. Use me and my experience as a teacher to nurture in _____ a sense of purpose and inner direction. Let me be the kind of example that _____ needs while he/she grows as a teacher of your precious children. In Jesus we pray this. Amen.

Dear Savior, make _____ and me ready. We have an important job to do—that of working together, experienced teacher and beginning teacher. You have given us your promise to never leave us or forsake us. Help _____ and me, through this Assisting process, to see your face in each other. Help us to proceed today eagerly and unafraid keeping the words of Philippians 4:13 in our hearts and minds: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." In your name we pray. Amen.

Dear Father in Heaven, _____ and I feel like students on the first day of school who are excited by their slick, unopened notebooks, freshly sharpened pencils, and newly purchased school clothes. We are excited! Excited that you have, in your wisdom and grace, brought us together as fellow laborers in your vineyard. Together, _____ and I will be exploring the school year, seeing familiar landmarks and coming upon totally new ones. Yes, there will be periods of adjustment. We may even question at times, "Who's in charge around here?" At those times, come to us with the still, small whisper of your gospel. Remind us that you are in charge and we need not fear. We wonder what the year will bring. You know what it will bring. _____ and I commit our way to you. Be with us and bless our growth together. In your name we pray. Amen.

Dearest Lord of all, _____ and I ask for your presence at our meeting today. By faith we know that you are always here, and we especially thank you for the times when you do things which truly confirm that in you, we live, move, and have our being. Help _____ and me to understand with all of our hearts, that you have brought us together for a special purpose. We both have important work to do and we know that as we learn to rely on each other in this work, we both will grow to see you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly. I thank you for _____ and ask that you bless our time together. In Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

Prayers for the Beginning Teacher

(Insert the appropriate names in the prayer blanks)

Dear Jesus, you have called me to be a teacher at _____ Lutheran School. You have led _____ to be my mentor. I thank you for this. At times, I am nervous and anxious about teaching. Give me confidence. Use my mentor and our relationship together to bolster my spirit. Help me to be a receptive student as I sit at the feet of a more experienced teacher. Help my new mentor and me to be the kind of examples that bring your precious children into a closer walk with you. In Jesus I pray this. Amen.

Dear Savior, make teaching something I really love to do. Sharing the gospel is such a high privilege and important task. Help me to share it well and with conviction. Thank you for providing a mentor teacher for me. As _____ and I work together, experienced teacher and beginning teacher, help us to nurture in each other a love for children, and more importantly, a love for you and your Word. Help _____ and me, to see you in each other's words and actions. Help us to grow together, and use us to further your kingdom in this school and congregation. In your name we pray. Amen.

Dear Father in Heaven, sometimes I think working with my new mentor will be too nerve racking. _____ is a veteran -- always organized, highly experienced, totally calm. I am a rookie -- frequently in disarray, fresh out of college, and scared to death. I know I don't compare, so help me to be truly happy that you have ordered things so _____ and I can work together. I know this will be best. I know I will become a better teacher and minister of your Word because of the help _____ will give me, the Christian friendship he/she will offer me, and the Christian example he/she will model for me. I know your precious children are precious to _____. Help them to be precious to me, too. Bless _____ and me, and bless the kingdom work we will do together in this Jesus school in which we both are privileged to serve. In his name we pray this. Amen.

Dearest Lord, watch over me this day I pray, and look down on my classroom from above with your loving, guiding gaze. You have called me to this school. You have brought me together with my mentor, _____. You have asked both of us to serve you faithfully and with gladness. Help me to be a receptive learner of what _____ will tell me and show me. Help me to know in my heart that _____ is being used by you to make me a better minister of your gospel. I thank you for my high calling and for the love and fellowship of _____. In Christ Jesus I pray, Amen.

Conditions that Support a Teacher's Growth

- 1. Collegiality***
- 2. Experimentation***
- 3. High Expectations***
- 4. Trust and Confidence***
- 5. Tangible Support***
- 6. Reaching Out to the Knowledge Bases***
- 7. Appreciation and Recognition***
- 8. Caring, Celebrating and Humor***
- 9. Involvement in Decision Making***
- 10. Honest, Open Communication***

***Source: Good Seeds Grow in Strong Cultures
Jon Saphier and Matthew King***

Assisting Beginning Teachers

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Attitude

1. Be yourself, but try to walk in the other's shoes.
2. Respect the other's dignity and individuality.
3. Show sincere care and concern.
4. Possess an accepting attitude.
5. Trust your judgement and the other's sincerity.
6. Be friendly.

Behavior

1. Listen to understand rather than to respond.
 - A. Clarify statements
 - B. Restate the other's feelings and perceptions
2. Maintain good eye contact.
3. Keep body language "open."
4. Allow people their personal space.

Communication

1. Show interest and enthusiasm.
2. Show support - praise, recognize strengths
3. Do not dominate, but be appropriately assertive.
4. Display a sense of humor.
5. Describe your feelings and perceptions.
6. Offer assistance or suggestions.
7. Follow through on requests and commitments.

1. Door Openers

- "I'd be interested to hear how you feel"**
- "I've got the time if you have. Want to talk?"**
- "I'm ready to show what I observed."**

2. Passive Listening

The coach's willingness to keep quiet is usually understood as evidence of interest and concern. Silence is a potent tool for getting people to talk occasional acknowledgments show attention.

- **Look at speaker, nodding**
- **"I see what you mean"**
- **"Mm-hmmmm"**
- **"Interesting"**
- **"Tell me more"**

3. Factual Feedback

Use evidence from your observations as you back the aspects of the lesson the teacher chose as his/her focus. Don't bring in peripheral issues. Assist the teacher in interpreting the results and developing alternatives for future situations.

- **"Here's what I saw and heard. What do you think?"**
- **"What were you pleased with?"**
- **"What would you change if you were to do this again?"**
- **"Could you tell me more about...?"**
- **"How would you use the same strategy in a different situation?"**

4. Active Listening

This technique helps the teacher reflect and ensures clearer communication. It involves frequent and continuous feedback to the person talking. It tests accuracy and shows proof of understanding. The listener restates the senders message. It is confirmed or corrected. It requires patience.

- **"It seems that you got the results you wanted."**
- **"You're feeling pleased/disappointed."**
- **"What do you think is...."**
- **"Tell me if I understand it correctly..."**

"Feedback" is a way of helping another person to consider changing his behaviour. It is communication to a person (or a group) which gives that person information about how he affects others. As in a guided missile system, feedback helps an individual keep his behaviour "on target" and thus better achieve his goals.

Some criteria for useful feedback:

1. *It is descriptive rather than evaluative.* By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the individual free to use it or to use it as he sees fit. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to react defensively.
2. *It is specific rather than general.* To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that "just now when we were deciding the issue you did not listen to what others said and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."
3. *It takes into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback.* Feedback can be destructive when it serves only our own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.
4. *It is directed toward behaviour, which the receiver can do something about.* Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which he has no control.
5. *It is well timed.* In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behaviour (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.).
6. When feedback is given in a group, both giver and receiver have opportunity to *check with others in the group the accuracy of the feedback.* Is this one man's impression or an impression shared by others?
7. *It is checked to insure clear communication.* One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback he has received to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind.

Feedback then is a way of giving help: it is a corrective mechanism for the individual (or group) who wants to learn how well his behaviour matches his intentions; and it is a means for establishing one's identity—for answering "Who am I?" Feedback is most useful when the receiver himself has formulated the kind of question which those observing him can answer.

Feedback and Observation

Feedback is the report to a learner of how his behaviour is affecting others.

Observation is the conscious watching of group process (with or without some checklist) and the reporting back to the group for interpretation and evaluation.

Learning by an individual or a group can be increased tremendously by receiving feedback. Such feedback can be gained by the use of film, tape recorder, role playing, or the use of observers (either participant-observer or nonparticipant-observers). Feedback aids the learner(s) by correcting his own subjective perception and by increasing awareness and understanding of the overall group process. Each of us tends to observe himself and others; unless there is opportunity for comparison, interpretation, and evaluation of observation, each assumes his observation is the true one, the whole one. While feedback never wholly removes the possibility of distortion, inadequacy, it does move in this direction.

Certain standards are necessary for feedback to be really effective:

1. The climate must be permissive
2. Comments made must be honest
3. There must be a basic trust in one another
4. There must be an increasing awareness of each other's thresholds
5. Specific data are, by far, the most helpful
6. Feedback must come early enough for a person to have a chance to experiment with his behaviour
7. Feedback should not come before members have a fairly clear picture of each other
8. Comments must not be judgmental
9. Comments must not be interpretative
10. Each person reports only for himself.

Observation, as a means of feedback, is most useful when we realize:

1. Each of us sees what we want to see, screening out or missing the rest
2. Results of observation are only as good as the recording procedures
3. Observer stays within limits of what the group wants him to look for
4. It should report on group behaviour only, unless individual behaviour has been asked for
5. It is not a simple task, but one that can be learned through practice
6. It meets the purpose of helping the group understand what it seeks to understand
7. Greater objectivity can be achieved by use of two or more observers
8. Often reports can be given midpoint in the session
9. It takes practice and checking for several persons using the same method to get the same results
10. Many kinds of instruments are available for use by observer
11. Training sessions are the best place for feedback (time, free from job pressures, with behaviour essentially the same)
12. When all involved decide the things to be looked for, the method(s) to be used and the manner of evaluation
13. All concerned must have patience with each other; we do not change easily or quickly.

Helpful feedback is a process of giving data to a person in such a way as to help him improve his performance in achieving his goals.

1. Individual Feedback

A. Why do we want to give feedback to another person?

- To punish him
- Get something off our chest and make us feel better
- To show our superior wisdom and insight
- To help the other person achieve his goals in a more effective way
- To help the person achieve his goals in a more effective way.

B. What about the person receiving feedback?

- It is difficult to give feedback to a person who is not ready to receive it.
- He may be asking for feedback but people do not give this to him for several reasons:
 - a. They feel they have nothing helpful to give him
 - b. They feel he is not ready or the conditions are not right
 - c. They feel the feedback will not be particularly helpful at that time
 - d. They feel the person wants feedback to reinforce his self image, i.e., that he is really a good person or he is really as ineffective as he thinks he is.
- *People need both positive and negative feedback from someone else?*
 - a. Our culture has certain norms against expressing personal feelings to others
 - b. They are afraid if they give feedback the person will get upset and they will lose a friend
 - c. Afraid if they give feedback, the other person will attack or punish them
 - d. They are afraid the feedback will be misunderstood
 - e. They don't know how to go about it.

C. How do people commonly react to feedback? Since feedback is often seen as criticism, people often react in ways trying to defend themselves by:

- a. Choosing not to hear what is said—selective reception
- b. Doubting the motives of the person giving the feedback, e.g., he's telling me this just to get even; because he's a natural sorehead, etc.
- c. Denying the validity for the feedback data
- d. Rationalizing why he behaved the way he did
- e. Attacking the person who is giving the feedback; telling him some of his faults

If successful feedback is to be communicated, the barriers between "giver" and "receiver" need to be broken down and a relationship of confidence and trust established.

D. What kinds of feedback data are helpful?

1. **Objective data:** observation of actions that one sees external to his own feelings, e.g., "I saw you talk for five minutes continuously, you talked to only one person."
2. **Subjective data:** How the other person's actions made you feel: e.g., "When you did that you made me feel very uncomfortable."

This is not to impugn the other person's motives. We do not know why he did what he did. We do know how his behaviour made us feel.

When we get feedback from one person, we need to check this against others' reactions to see if we need to alter our behaviour generally or just with that one person.

E. Timing and Method

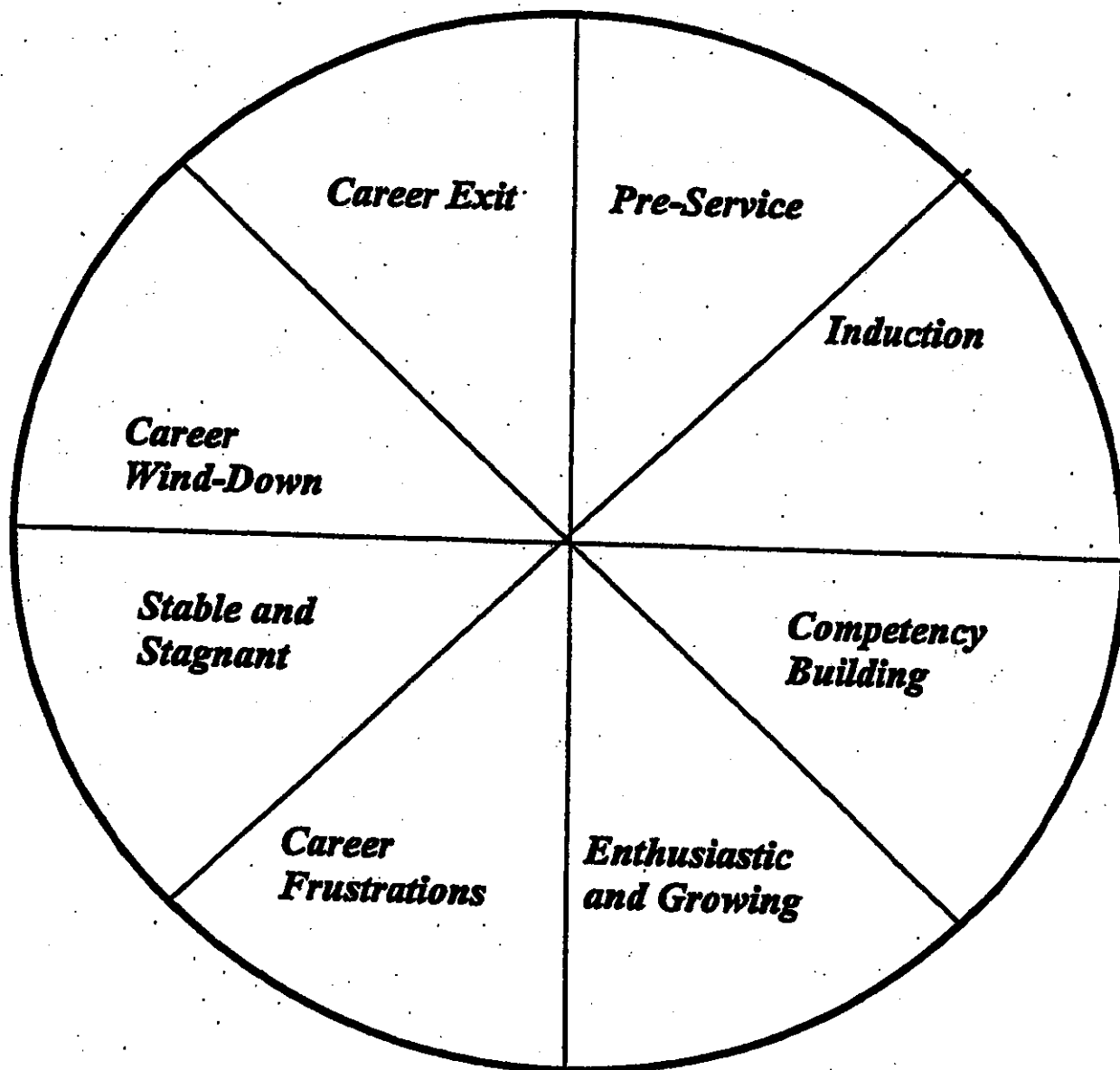
Feedback is generally most helpful if connected with a *specific incident*. A person who is told only that he is "domineering" has less opportunity to know exactly what this means in terms of what he has done, than if you told him that "yesterday when we were deciding the issue, you did not listen to what others said, and people felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."

While there are certain arguments for giving feedback as close to the incident as possible (allowing hostile and defensive feelings to abate) experience indicates that with adults they can recall and learn from feedback attached to incidents that happened some time earlier—provided that the recall is accurate.

2. Group Feedback

- A.** The group also need to receive information about its performance. It may need to know that the atmosphere is defensive, there is too much rigidity in procedures, there is a lack of using certain people and resources, there is too much reliance on the leader.
1. The same problems involved in individual feedback are present to the total group to a greater or lesser degree.
 2. The group may receive feedback from:
 - a. Members acting as participant—observers
 - b. Members selected to perform a specific observer function for the group
 - c. Outside "consultants" or experts who come in to observe from a more objective perspective
 - d. Forms, questionnaires, reaction sheets, interviews from members.

- Set a good climate
- Get together within two days
- Refer specifically to your data
- Encourage the teacher to talk
- Listen, listen, listen
- Generate ideas
- Be empathetic
- Summarize, plan next steps



Source: from Burke, Fessler, Christensen, 1984