

## "A Message for Christian Teachers" by Angela Powell

*This is web-exclusive content.*

Maintaining a professional website has been a balancing game. On one hand, I need to reach teachers who are solely interested in educational resources, but on the other, I have a responsibility to be bold in sharing what I believe. This is the only page on my website that has any eternal value, the only one that will have made an impact on an infinite scale. From an everlasting perspective, this is the only message that matters, and to leave it out would be to waste the largest opportunity thus far in my life to share what God has done for me and what He wants to do for others.

God has worked so many miracles in my life and I have so much joy because of how He has changed me, that I can't help but share what is truly the Good News! When you are really in love with someone, you want the whole world to know it: you talk about that person all the time and you want to spend every waking moment with the one you love. That's how I feel about Jesus. Sharing so much of what I do on a daily basis in my classroom is nearly impossible without mentioning Him.



There are many days when I feel impatient with the kids--like the three thousandth time I have reminded them to put their names on their papers and am still faced with the inevitable task of handwriting scrutiny to determine the authorship of four random papers. I want to chastise them ("How many times have I told you?") but the thought always occurs to me--how many times have I done that to God? How many times has He corrected me with loving-kindness only for me to turn around and make the exact same mistakes over and over again, sometimes even willfully! What if Jesus treated us that way: "This is the last time I'm going to tell you to do this. Next time, forget it, I'm not helping you. Don't come crying to me when the consequences hit." His patience is endless, and that is how He calls us to be.

His grace is the model for how we are to treat others- rendering favor when we don't have to and changing our focus from giving students what they 'deserve' to seeing them how God sees them. That doesn't mean there are no consequences--God is a just God ([Isaiah 30:18](#)), He is a God of order and not of chaos ([1 Corinthians 14:33](#)), and He speaks repeatedly in His word about how children must be taught obedience and respect ([Proverbs 22:6](#), [22:15](#), [23:13](#), [29:15](#), [Ephesians 6:1](#), [Colossians 3:20](#)). But our place is not to condemn and criticize, it is to lift up our students. When I deal with a particularly challenging student or parent, rather than saying, "This kid doesn't care, his parents don't care, I give up, I'm not dealing with it anymore", I try to pray for them instead, that God would work through me to bring positive change. That's really hard to do sometimes and I end up praying for my own attitude to change more than anything!

The books of Ephesians and Galatians always remind me of the character God wants me to have (all scripture in the New King James Version):

**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. (Ephesians 4:29)**

**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. *Against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23, italics added)**

These are the attributes God calls Christians to show, and I know that He would especially want us to demonstrate those qualities towards the precious little ones in our care. We are to *love* them unconditionally, have *joy* in our work, let the *peace* we have inside show on the outside, be *patient* with others' shortcomings, model *kindness* and *goodness*, be *gentle* with our words, and have *self-control* when we are tempted to make harsh or rash decisions. What a calling! And how wonderful that we can call upon Him for help when these things seem too difficult to manage. We should also keep in mind that the Bible tells us:

**Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)**

I personally believe that this verse applies not only to teachers of the word of God but also to anyone in a position to dispel knowledge to others in a formalized setting. In other words, those who chose to hold false beliefs or live an immoral lifestyle will be held accountable for their actions, but those of us who are pillars in the community, whose lives are on display in front of impressionable young people, who mold the attitudes and priorities of children and are responsible for teaching them truth and wisdom--we are held to a higher standard by God. Our influence on students cannot be overestimated. Don't we all remember a horrible teacher from our childhood who embarrassed us or made us feel like we were worth nothing? And doesn't each of us recall a fabulous teacher who inspired and encouraged us? What a powerful impression these teachers made, for good or for evil--we still remember them far into our adult years. As educators, we have an awesome responsibility and privilege set before us and we are called to take it on with grace and wisdom.

Although sharing our faith is not appropriate in a public school setting, we have the privilege and obligation before God to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit when working with our students, their parents, and our co-workers. Other people should be able to tell through our actions that something about us is different. Showing Christ's love through the way we live our lives is the most powerful witness we can have.

**"You [believers] are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." -Jesus (Matthew 5:14-16)**

IN SUMMARY: Students have more religious freedom than we as teachers do. Our job is to make sure that all of our students feel comfortable, respected, and accepted in our classrooms. The best and only truly legal way to express our religious beliefs in school is through the witness of how we live our lives; striving to be modest in appearance and attitude, honest and full of integrity, avoiding gossip, helping others whenever we can, showing patience and respect to our students, and sharing the joy and peace that we have found in God through a positive attitude.