

A Meditation for Teachers based on 1 Corinthians 13

I may be fluent in all 94 languages spoken by the families of students at my school, but if I am not courteous and respectful, parents will say I am unapproachable; pupils will say I never listen; other members of staff will say I am arrogant. A voice void of compassion is about as welcome as the sound of a dentist's drill ... or fingernails being slowly scraped down a chalkboard!

I may know how to assess, plan and teach the perfect lesson; I may have a higher degree in curriculum development or child psychology; I may even have faith in my ability to conquer the marking mountain that covers my desk; but if I do not love the students I teach I need to consider whether I'm in the right profession after all.

I may buy expensive things for the classroom with my own money; I may do countless hours of unpaid schoolwork every weekday evening and most term-time weekends; but if I do not love the students I teach then all I stand to gain by my heroic acts of self-sacrifice is a large dose of burn-out, breakdown and bankruptcy.

Communication skills, subject knowledge, experience, qualifications, hard work and personal generosity – though important – are not enough. If a teacher does not LOVE her students her efforts are in vain.

A loving teacher is patient and kind. She builds confidence and self-esteem; she is sensitive to the fact that no two students ... or parents ... or colleagues are ever the same. She gives words of encouragement and reassurance to every student; and she is prepared to explain a concept again ... and again ... and again until it sinks in. She makes positive eye contact and smiles a lot.

A loving teacher does not envy the fact that another teacher appears to have an entire class of perfectly-behaved, straight-A students. Instead, she celebrates their success.

A loving teacher does not boast if she happens to have an entire class of perfectly-behaved, straight-A students, nor does she try to take all the credit for their achievements!

A loving teacher is always humble and polite. She is never proud or rude; she is never dismissive or condescending; and she never gossips, swears or blasphemes.

A loving teacher does not advance her own career at the expense of her students or her colleagues. Instead, she strives to protect her students by putting their needs first. She is confident and assertive, rather than selfish or pushy. At all times, she is considerate of the thoughts and feelings of others.

A loving teacher does not lose her temper every five minutes. She recognises those situations when she needs to stop and count to ten in her head before saying anything she might later regret. She knows that, when provoked, she should remain calm and in control.

Although a loving teacher may have to keep a record of student misconduct in accordance with her school's behaviour policy, she steadfastly refuses to give up on those students who break the rules. She is always fair and never holds a grudge. She remembers that every student is made in the image of God; and she reminds her class that every lesson offers a new beginning.

She celebrates good behaviour and academic progress instead of getting hung up about a few minor misdemeanours or a handful of disappointing pieces of work. She praises honesty in others and is honest herself; she trusts, and is trusted by, those around her; she is the embodiment of hope and perseverance.

A great teacher radiates PATIENCE, PERSEVERANCE and, most important of all, LOVE. Is it any wonder then that the greatest teacher is Jesus?