

Teaching means sharing Christ's love. Teaching means making an eternal difference. Those definitions are inspiring. But they also intimidate. I hope they intimidate the teachers we are honoring today. Each of us is fully inadequate for the holy work to which our Savior calls us. That's why it's of the utmost importance that we take to heart what the apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:16:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

As that word has its way with us, we will be equipped for the honor of teaching, for the service our Lord—the Master Teacher—has entrusted to us.

Taking It Home

We here at (*name your congregation/school/organization*) thank our Savior today for the many ways in which (*name the individual teachers or groups you are recognizing*) serve among us. And we thank each one of you, too, for drawing us closer to Jesus by opening his Word to us.

We pray that the (*name the thank-you gift each teacher will receive*) you receive will remind you often of our respect and love for you. And we pray our Lord's blessings on all you have done and all you will continue to do for your students in Jesus' name.

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The Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

#TCHXDA



Expanding the Impact of Your
Gifts of Encouragement

Teaching

Introduction

Visit the reference room in any major metropolitan library, and you'll be amazed at how many dictionaries you'll find: abridged and unabridged, Spanish and Ukrainian, scientific and urban, medical and biblical—dictionaries of every sort, every size, and every focus.

It was inevitable that someone with a strong sense of humor would at some point spoof all this serious effort at defining words. Here are some definitions from a daffy dictionary:

- ♦ **Adult:** A person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle.
- ♦ **Dictionary:** The only known place in the universe where success comes before work.
- ♦ **Hors d'oeuvres:** A sandwich cut into 20 pieces.
- ♦ **Professor:** Someone who talks in someone else's sleep.
- ♦ **Toothache:** The pain that drives you to extraction.
- ♦ **Kindergarten teacher:** Someone who knows how to make the little things count.

Getting to the Heart

Today, we will briefly explore a definition of teaching. But it's not a daffy definition, and it applies, not just to those who teach kindergarteners, but to everyone here at (*name your church/school/organization*) who teaches. We want to honor our teachers and thank them for helping us grow closer to our Savior. Most of all, we want to honor our Savior himself for giving these people to us as his gifts.

So what is *teaching*, anyway?

In the church, teaching involves first of all sharing Jesus' love. What an honor that is! Jesus called himself a teacher (John 13:13), so when we teach, we continue the ministry that our Lord himself began when he lived here on earth:

- ✦ We experience the same kind of joy our Savior experienced in seeing the eyes of students brighten with understanding as they learn more about their heavenly Father.
- ✦ Like our Savior, we know what it's like to think and think, pray and pray, then think some more about the best ways to present the truths we hope to get across to our students.
- ✦ Sometimes, like our Savior, we sigh in frustration and sorrow over students who ignore God's will and insist on going their own way despite all our prayer, and all our effort.

In an old joke, a tax preparer looks up over his computer screen at a new client to say, "So you're a teacher. What do you teach?"

To which the client replies, "Children."

You may teach children here at (*name your church/school/organization*). Or teens. Or adults. But they are first and foremost people—people for whom Jesus died. They are people for whom he had to die, because each of them needs a Savior. Each of them—like every teacher here—is a sinner. From time

to time, teachers and students alike live under the delusion that life would be better for us if we were in charge—if we were in control—instead of God. Each of us fails to trust God fully—and therefore, our prayers are often weak and halfhearted. None of us is as thankful as we should be for all our Lord's many blessings. In fact, we often misuse those blessings, and we sometimes convince ourselves that we deserve more of them. We fail to show Christlike love to those around us. We shred the reputations of other people with our gossip. We take things that don't belong to us. We cheat.

We need a Savior. We really do!

And we have one—in Jesus. He hung and bled and died on Calvary's cross, absorbing into himself the penalty that we, by our sins, had deserved. Then he rose from death, destroying sin and death for us in the miracle of his resurrection.

Jesus' love is no wimpy love. It's true love, full-bodied love, love we can rely on. It's the focus of all our teaching here at (*name your church/school/organization*). In fact, that message defines teaching here—sharing Jesus' love.

But our definition of teaching goes even deeper. Because we teach God's Word and because the Gospel message of love and forgiveness in Jesus lies at the very center of our teaching, teaching here means making an eternal difference.

And again, what an honor! As we share all that Jesus is for us and all that he has done for us, the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of those who populate our classrooms and cell groups, our youth groups and Sunday school classes, our Bible clubs and home Bible studies. Children, teens, and adults come to faith and grow stronger in that faith. Only in eternity will we realize the scope of what God has done through us—all by his grace at work in us.