

## EDUCATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the church, and we too have just honored and celebrate the graduates - Heath and Carissa. Separate events? Not really, for many churches on this Sunday this is also a celebration of Christian Education. It is brought into focus today that the birth of the church was made possible by the Holy Spirit, teaching the disciples to speak out! **It reminds us today, that we all remain learners regardless of age.**

Like today's graduates, we, at times in our lives "graduate" learning a lesson God has been trying to teach us on our spiritual pathway. Our graduates today will go on to more learning that will open doors for them and there will be decisions to make. Isn't that the way it is for our learning too? The Holy Spirit ever present prompts us to learn more, make decisions, and stretches you and I and our faith.

For sure there is a strong connection between education and the Holy Spirit for us as his disciples, and **if we are not learning, not growing, then we are either standing still or worst falling back!!!** If you think about it even if you are standing still, things are moving and by just standing still we are really falling behind!!!!

On this birth of the church and graduation day how do we keep learning on life's path? In the Bible we can find principles that apply in the area of education. As we have heard the saying "you don't learn everything in books". Carissa and Heath, I can tell you and many seated here including your parents can speak to that! *For myself, a book education is a great thing for knowledge is something once learned no one can take away from you, but after a great education, I learned more in my first six months on the job working with people than I did from all my years in school.* That is not to belittle or put down book learning, after all the Bible is a book; it is to say there is much more to learn on the job - OJT! **Experience is one of the greatest teachers we have in our lives. Another great teacher is the Holy Spirit.**

When we look back to Pentecost, people from all over the known world at the time were there. The Holy Spirit through the disciples taught and blessed all that were there. Remember in Galatians 3:28, "*there is no Jew, no Gentile...*" the word of God and its blessings are for all. Education, as you two are about to take up, is there for everyone and there certainly will be people with a variety of backgrounds, different states, even other countries! The blessing of education and knowledge is there for all who attend.

Anyone who has been in a class on Sunday, Bible study or VBS hear the word and know their sins are forgiven. Fear and confusion are replaced with faith, love and hope! You may not see tongues of fire or hear a rushing wind, but you know the Holy Spirit dwells within to teach us just like he opened the minds of the disciples to all the scriptures held.

Think of Baptism, the Holy Spirit is there through the visible signs of water and The Word to bring into the family of God that child. No longer to “fight” Satan and evil with a butter knife, but with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Education is a powerful tool, one that will enable you to do the work for God and your boss! Remember though it takes time and a commitment to your education whether it comes out of books **or the book. You cannot in ministry or vocation take shortcuts.** For some in church they believe that by just sitting here on Sunday that they will somehow absorb that relationship with Jesus that others have. They will not, no more than you by sitting in a class will absorb the knowledge to do the job!

Graduates, we who have been around longer know learning is a life-long experience, whether it is for your job or your walk with the Lord. **Teachers and instructors, even bosses will come and go, but the Holy Spirit will continue to be with you all through your life to teach, guide, and support.** We all here this morning are learners, age has nothing to do with it. There will be events we have yet to experience or go through and we will need the discernment and guidance of the Holy Spirit, which by the way may come to us through others around us. I am not the only one here, but can, from my experience tell you that much can be learned from people around you. Never, never be hesitant to ask a question, no one knows it all whether it be secular or spiritual.

**The Holy Spirit will continue to teach us as we use the gifts God has given us, not unlike the knowledge we gain from books during our education.** When we use that knowledge on our job and achieve success we become more confident of our ability and can go on to do more and more.

The Puritans had an interesting belief which sadly we have “lost” in modern times. The Puritans believed that your ministry and your vocation/occupation were one in the same. No matter what job you are called to it is a ministry.

**Dr. Martin Luther King composed a speech, called the “Street Sweeper.” He essentially said no matter what God has called you to do, be the best at it.** Sweep the streets like Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music. Dr. King was also quoted in a speech at a junior high school saying that *"intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education."* He

also was quoted from a speech on education saying *“that reasoning ability is not enough. He insists that character and moral development are necessary to give the critical intellect humane purposes.”* The more I read Dr. King’s speeches the more I come to realize this man strongly believed in the connection between our ministry and our job is with godly purpose.

Once I was told by an instructor that worked part time in an employment agency that an overwhelming number of people would change jobs, because circumstances short-circuited what they really felt called to do. Running after the money will satisfy for only a brief time, if you are not in your calling. It is the very reason we have been given the Holy Spirit – to hear, discern from deep within your spirit that which you are meant to do.

Dr. King knew what God had called him to do. He understood that connection between God and purpose. However, we have to remain connected just like the branches to the vine. Life will have its ups and downs, look at Dr. King’s life and as tragic as it ended, it really didn’t, and his idea lived on.

The same can be said for Pentecost. Many of the disciples met tragic ends after spreading their witness and the teachings of Jesus. His teachings, death and resurrection live on today. The examples of forgiveness, love, hope and faith Jesus shows us, we must continue to pursue in our lives and to demonstrate them to others. We must never stop learning from The Word.

Henry Ford summed it up – **“anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”** May you graduates continue to learn from the books as you seek knowledge of your vocation and learn from the book with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.