

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Playtime

***"When he gave the sea its boundary
so the waters would not overstep his command,
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.
Then I was constantly at his side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind. Proverbs 8:29-31***

This passage from Proverbs depicts Wisdom as being at God's side when he created the world. Twice Wisdom is said to be 'rejoicing' but translations seem to use this word because it sounds more pious. In fact, as Charles Melchert points out in his book, *Wise Teaching*, "everywhere else in the Hebrew Bible, this term is translated 'play' . . . children playing with toys and games . . . people playing musical instruments and dancing . . . even the love-play between Isaac and Rebekah."* Others have translated it as 'frolicking' and 'jesting'.

Both in our churches and in our schools, we can sometimes become so serious, so soberly logical and rational, that laughter, play and imagination have difficulty in finding their place in our lives and in our teaching and learning.

Play opens up possibilities and imagination leaps over the boundaries of the ordinary and everyday into fields of exploration and laughter. As Kieran Egan says in his lovely little book, *Teaching as Story Telling*, "children's imaginations are the most powerful and energetic learning tools".[†] But we can too often deaden them with the predictable.

Where, in the lessons that we have planned for today or this week, can we make more provision for a free flow of imagination, a playful moment in which we can explore possibilities that we would have missed because we were so focussed on our curricular aims and objectives? Let's jump over the walls and go for a run in the meadows with those whom we teach. You never know, we may learn something new ourselves in the process!

Lord Jesus Christ, you were Wisdom at play in the creation of the world. Help me to be playful in my teaching that those I teach may catch something of that playfulness which is part of your image within them. Amen.

*Charles F. Melchert, *Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Educational Ministry*, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1998) p. 189.

[†]Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986) p. 2.