

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Knowing When

***"A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—
and how good is a timely word!" Proverbs 15:23***

"There is a time for everything," says the writer of Ecclesiastes and, a few lines later, "a time to be silent and a time to speak." Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7

Much of our work in our schools has been traditionally concerned with knowledge of facts that can be expressed in 'knowing that' statements. The children and young people whom we teach come to *know that* King John signed the Magna Carta, *that* the square root of 49 is 7, and *that* limestone is a sedimentary rock.

In an age when so much factual knowledge has become available at the click of a mouse, we are now becoming more concerned with 'knowing how', with skills rather than facts. Our curriculum objectives are defined in terms of what our pupils are able to do, not least in relation to how they use a computer and access the internet.

In his book, *Wisdom and Curriculum*, Doug Blomberg writes of the importance of another kind of knowing – 'knowing when' – which he regards as a major part of wisdom.* As teachers, we so often feel our lack of wisdom. It was a time to be silent but we uttered those words that we heartily wish we had never said. Or there was one of those unexpected moments when we failed to respond to the serendipitous, a time to speak but we didn't speak. How we need to 'know when' to say or do the right thing, to have that sensitivity to the moment amidst all the words and actions of classroom life.

But if we lack wisdom, if we lack aptness of reply and timeliness of word, James tells us in his epistle, all we have to do is to, *"ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault"* (James 1:5) and it will be given to us. Now *that* is surely gospel good news!

Lord, I lack wisdom. Classroom life is so full and so unpredictable. I don't have time to think. Help me to show that timeliness of response in word and action to the moment, to the unexpected, to the person who is that child made by you in your image and loved by you. Amen.

*Doug Blomberg, *Wisdom and Curriculum: Christian Schooling after Postmodernity*, (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt Press, 2007), p. 5.