

# Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



## Teaching is Endless Meeting

***"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."* 1 John 4:16**

No, not endless *meetings*, although sometimes it can seem like that! Teaching is endless *meeting*. This a statement made by Parker Palmer in his book, *The Courage to Teach*, as an addition to a quotation from the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber. The complete sentence reads as follows:

"'All real living is meeting,' said Martin Buber, 'and teaching is endless meeting.'"<sup>\*</sup>

At their heart, teaching and learning are relational. We are not merely communicating or acquiring knowledge or skills, we are relating with those among whom we teach and learn. Few other callings are as intensely relational as teaching. What Michael Schluter of the Jubilee Centre called 'The R Factor'<sup>†</sup> is everywhere present in the classroom.

God is relational for He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit in relation with each other in the Trinity through all eternity. He made us in His image to be relational beings and He said at the beginning that it was not good that we should be alone (Genesis 2:18). He made us for relationships of love with Him and with one another.

In a very helpful article (available on the internet), Marshall Gregory tells of a discussion with an English class at a secular American university in which he found himself saying, "blithely, not seeing my own words in advance, 'I think my job is to love you ... Unless I love you properly, I cannot teach you well. Grounding my teaching in love is the only way I can make sure that I do this job right.'" He goes on to say that he did not know that he had a view about teacherly love until he found himself saying this. He went on to write this article and to argue that the only proper love between teacher and student is the agape love that God has for human beings.<sup>‡</sup>

Yes, teaching is endless meeting and the only adequate resource for all such meeting is agape.

*Loving God, as we meet and relate to those whom we teach, may we live in your love and may they come to do so too. Amen.*

<sup>\*</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), p. 16.

<sup>†</sup> Michael Schluter & David Lee, *The R Factor*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

<sup>‡</sup> Marshall Gregory, [Pedagogy and the Christian Law of Love](#), first published in *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*, 6:1 (2002) and accessible on the EurECA website.