**“TEACHER” (#1)**

***The Most Important Word & Work On Earth***

It was January 28, 1986. I remember the moment vividly. I had been doing my daily run on the track of Thomas Jefferson High School in Port Arthur, Texas. Exhausted I got in my car to drive home. The radio was on. The announcer was giving the horrible details of a disaster of the Space Shuttle launch from Cape Canaveral. Just 73 seconds from liftoff the shuttle Challenger had exploded, killing all seven astronauts on board. I sat stunned. This couldn’t be happening. There had not been a space program disaster like this since January 27, 1967 when three astronauts were killed during a fire in the Apollo 1 spacecraft that was only on the launch pad.

What made this tragedy even more memorable was the fact that one of the astronauts was a civilian school teacher. Christa McAuliffe had been chosen from over 1,000 applicants to become the first civilian teacher in space. She was going to teach children school lessons while orbiting the earth. Thousands of people, including many school children, were on hand when the Challenger launched. Barely a minute after liftoff, while still in clear view of all these children staring at the sky, the Challenger exploded and fell in scattered pieces all over Florida and the Atlantic Ocean.

Why I bring this story up is because of a quote from Christa McAuliffe during an interview before launch. She was asked why she was a school teacher when she obviously had great skills to be an engineer and make a lot more money. Her reply is impressive:

**“I touch the future … I teach.”**

We have all heard the names of famous teachers of Greece like Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. They changed the world forever by their methods of teaching. Perhaps you have also heard of more modern teachers in American history like Maria Montessori, Emma Willard, and William McGuffey. Their stature on the education system in America is legendary (note: if you don’t know these names I challenge you to look them up and read their story, it will make you realize your own education is likely based on the lives of these great teachers).

Anne Sullivan’s story as the teacher of the blind and deaf Helen Keller was forever memorialized in the 1962 movie *The Miracle Worker*, starring Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke. Imagine opening the world to a blind and deaf child. Now that’s touching the future.

Let me add one more name, Jaime Escalante. If you don’t know his story I suggest you read the book, or watch the movie *Stand And Deliver*. This immigrant from Bolivia forever changed the L. A. inner city Garfield High School by challenging these poor, forgotten kids of the ghetto to raise their math skills and pass college entrance exams. Indeed, “I touch the future … I teach!”

I’ve written thus far on teachers of secular education. To this day I remember many of my teachers in grade school, high school, and college. They certainly touched my future.

But my thoughts obviously lead me to the greatest teachers who not only changed the future for many students but changed the destiny of thousands, yea millions, of souls for all eternity. Teachers of the Bible hold the highest position of all.

Jesus could have easily chosen to be anyone He wanted to be when He came to this earth as the incarnation of God. He had created the heavens and the earth (Col. 1:15-18). He had made the greatest scientists (Albert Einstein, Galileo Galilei), the greatest mathematicians (Isaac Newton, Archimedes), the greatest inventors (Thomas Edison, Leonardo DaVinci), the greatest military conquerors (Alexander the Great, Augustus Caesar), the greatest rulers (Charlemagne, Hannibal) in world history.

Instead of choosing any of those routes to greatness He chose to become the humble son of a lowly carpenter in a backwater village for whom it was said, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (Jn. 1:46). At the age of 30 He began His “career” as a rabbi, that is, a teacher. During the three years of His earthly ministry Jesus was always approached as “*Good teacher*” (Matt. 19:16). In the gospel of Matthew alone look how many times He was described by that word: Matt. 8:16; 9:11; 12:38; 22:16, 24, 36; 26:18.

When Jesus warned His disciples about the scribes and Pharisees, claiming they loved to be greeted with the title, “*Rabbi! Rabbi*!” He then warned them not to embrace such titles for personal glory (“*do not be called ‘Teachers’ – for one is your teacher, the Christ*” – Matt. 23:7-10). But that did not mean He did not want them to become teachers. Indeed, He did, but for God’s glory! After His resurrection He sent them into the world as teachers and preachers of the gospel. “*Go, make disciples of all nations … teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you*” (Matt. 28:19-20). “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel*…” (Mk. 16:15). “…*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (Lk. 24:47).

That same commission to become teachers has been handed down from generation to generation for two millenniums. Paul described the work of teaching this way: *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to* ***teach*** *others also”* (2 Tim. 2:2). The role of Bible teachers, whether of small children or grown adults, is the highest calling to which men and women can aspire. Whether it touches the life of one, or one thousand, to teach another the Bible is to forever change the world for good and for God.

“*Good teacher, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life*?” Teach someone that and you have made angels in heaven witness the joy of God. Don’t believe me? Then believe Jesus: *“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents”* (Lk. 15:10).

Study with me this week the role that teachers play in the plan of God to change the world. “I touch the future … I teach.” May Christa McAuliffe’s words be your words.

Because I love you, I teach. – Rick