



The Presence of Christ “in the Midst”

By Marilyn J. Dominick, Chairperson of Nazarene Educators Worldwide

One of the greatest blessings of following Christ is His promise of safety and protection. Such protection comes through His abiding presence in our lives, often *in the midst* of great challenges. God assures His people that He will be with them ALWAYS. Those who walk with the Lord can have confidence that He never leaves us or forsakes us. The following promises of His presence come to us even in, maybe especially in, difficult times:

“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3, NIV).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1, NIV).

Jesus promised: *“I am with you ALWAYS, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20, NIV, emphasis added).

In recent months, through conversations with my grandchildren who are now teenagers, I have come to realize that Christian students in public schools can experience significant persecution when they express their Christian faith. My granddaughter is almost 17 years old. She told me that she has felt intimidated by some teachers and others when she mentions the biblical view taught by her parents and people in her church. Our grandson, who is 14, has had similar experiences on his journey. This environment can make young people feel alone and sometimes unsafe.

I have spent over four decades in public schools in New York State. I have watched the climate and culture in my region shift from a positive view of Christianity to a negative view. I have witnessed many Christian teachers and students living for Jesus, and experiencing the very real presence of Christ, in an increasingly secular environment. They have wrestled with questions about how to live for Jesus in such environments and have been champions of the faith. As believing families observe

such challenges, many have asked, “What can Christians do to help believing students and educators in the challenges they face in public schools?”

Here are some steps we can take that will make a difference:

- **Pray!** Any Christian action must begin by kneeling at the throne of God in prayer. We need guidance and wisdom as we share God’s love, truth, and redemption with a world entangled by sin. Pray for boldness to proclaim Christ even when it is not popular. Pray that every teacher and student be protected from evil and be open to the truth found in Jesus. Finally, pray that God will give courage to teachers and students who are standing up for what is good and right in God’s sight.
- **Get involved in our local schools.** Volunteer in the classroom. Attend school board meetings. Consider running for a seat on your local school board. Be aware of the school’s curriculum choices. Through the ups and downs, don’t give up in doing good (Galatians 6:9). Our children’s eternal future is worth the investment.
- **Teach our children to defend their faith.** In Ephesians 6, Paul encourages believers to put on the full armor of God so that we can take our stand. One piece of God’s armor is *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* By knowing scripture and talking about its application to life, we plant the truth of God deep within the heart of the child. As Christian parents and grandparents, we need to talk about our Christian faith and the scriptures in our homes and around our dinner tables. In addition, I would urge youth leaders and Sunday School teachers to consider using materials that include apologetics in your curriculum plans. This will help our children be prepared to “give the reason for the hope they have” (1 Peter 3:15) when the opportunity comes. There are many helpful resources to guide such discussions. One link is mentioned below. Also, I recommend the author Natasha Crain. She has authored some terrific books on this important subject.
- **Partner with our church’s leadership teams in building a good, positive relationship with the public schools in your area.** Plan for your church to have a known presence in your schools. Do not push an agenda, just offer to help. Ask, “What can our church family do to support you?” Maybe your church can provide appreciation gifts for teachers/staff, volunteer at events, pray for the school, help a needy family identified by the school nurse or social worker, or provide supplies to classroom teachers who often buy them out of their own pocket. Building goodwill may pave the way for our voice to be heard more clearly on serious issues.

Bottom line – determine to do more as Christ-followers. Let’s access the unlimited power of God in the lives of our educators and students. I will be praying for you as you do this!

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Sources:

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