



Begin This School Year with Praise

By Becky Ramsey, Public School Representative

What will the school year 2021-22 bring that will impact our lives as teachers, after facing all that we have experienced these last two years at school? What will help us navigate through uncharted waters once again? What will school districts require of teachers and students as far as masks, social distancing, and vaccinations to keep students and teachers medically safe? Where will our protection come from? What or who will encourage us to keep going and help teachers to be an encouragement to their students?

Do we look to our communities and educational institutions?

Our first thought might be to look to our communities to understand the struggles we have faced in the past two years and receive help and suggestions for what to do or expect in this new school year with new obstacles. We might expect educational institutions and the government to solve problems and offer solutions, even when no one really agrees or understands what is best to do and even when the mandates we have faced did not really help to alleviate all the situations within the classroom. Neither those expectations nor the mandates protect all those involved—students, teachers, and the educational community.

Do we look to our administrators or colleagues?

We might also look to our administrators for guidance and help. We know they will do their best, but will they have a solution when those above them have none? We might think our encouragement will

come from our colleagues that are in the battle with us, and together we will share encouragement to continue. I do not believe that is the best source either.

Do we look to the Word of God for answers?

When I go to God's Word, I find examples of battles that God's people faced. God provided what they needed. After Joshua died, the Israelites needed to fight the Canaanites for the land. In Judges 1:1, the Israelites cried out to God to find out who would lead them. The Lord replied in Judges 1:2, "Judah shall go up; I have given the land into their hands" (NIV). It is significant that Judah means "praise." Praise was to lead them into the battle.

You can find this idea also in the story of King Jehoshaphat. In 2 Chronicles 20:20-22, God told Jehoshaphat to have the choir lead the army into battle. As the choir began to sing and praise God, the Lord set ambushes against the enemy. With God's help, the Israelites defeated the enemy.

In challenging times, when we see no clear answer or direction, we often forget to praise God. Praise should always be a part of our prayer to God. Our praise to Him strengthens us. Jesus reveals this idea when He quotes Psalm 8:2 in Matthew 21:16 and substitutes the word *praise* for the word *strength*. "Jesus replied, 'Have you never read, From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth praise'?" The children were praising the works of Christ among the people. We must remember that it is in our praises to God that we gather our strength.

Look to the Master

Instead of looking at all the problems, we must praise our greatest problem solver. In addition to looking to our government, our school leaders, or even those in the battle with us, we must look to the Master, the ultimate problem-solver. We must remember the power we have in Him. Ephesians 1:18-20 (NIV) states, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead...." [Bold emphasis added]

When the Lord calls us to be teachers, we need to know the hope to which He has called us! We must realize the power God has already given us! When we realize and believe what He has promised, we can praise Him.

I challenge you to live this year with praise! Praise God for all He has given to us—hope, power, strength, and courage. God can give us hope for this school year!

Becky Ramsey is from Reynoldsburg, Ohio. She has taught in public and Christian schools. She currently serves as a reading and math intervention specialist at a local charter school. You may contact Becky at ramseyfamily27711@gmail.com.