Teaching Network Seminar

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Living for Jesus in the bits that aren’t formally observed

# Into and Welcome

As you come in introduce yourself to the person next to you and share with them what the biggest highlights and lowlights of your placements so far have been.

Give a brief outline of what we’re going to cover and let people know to stop me for questions at any point, otherwise there’s a Q&A at the end if people want to ask about anything (can be absolutely anything).

# Life in the staffroom

## The good and the bad of the staffroom

In groups on flip chart paper make a table and think about you time in the staff room on placement. On one side of your table write down as many good things as you can, things you can affirm, things that point us to Jesus, things we want more of. On the other side write down any bad things, things we can’t get on board of, things that are unfitting for a Christian to get involved in.

Feed back

As Christians our presence in the staff room should make it a better place for everyone, that’s in part what it means to be salt, salt brings out the best flavours in a meal and so we want to bring out the best bits of every situation we find ourselves in. That’s going to mean helping deal with the bad we find in the staffroom and encouraging the good.

## Dealing with the Bad

Most of the bad we’ve thought about has to do with the way we or others speak. Teaching is a hard job and we often work with difficult people, student’s, staff and leaders. It’s natural to use our words to work through the difficulties and figure out what we should feel, think or do. And it’s so easy to do that poorly. To complain, to make fun of staff or students, to gossip about that one teacher who did that thing on a night out. We’re not in control of what others say but we can strive to have our own words honour Jesus and point others to him. I want to touch really quickly on 2 principles to help us with this.

Feed back

### Groan don’t grumble

The first principle is “groan don’t grumble”, I’ve taken this from the way the Israelites deal with 2 different difficulties they face in the book of Exodus. If you’ve got a bible flick to Exodus 2:23-24.

Read Exodus 2:23-24

The Israelites are oppressed and beaten down, it all feels too much. It is too much. And so they groan to the Lord and cry out for help. It’s an acknowledgement of their difficulty, but also of God’s sovereignty. They’re not finger pointing or getting cross, they’re crying out for deliverance and help. And how does the Lord respond?

Read Exodus 2:24

Contrast that to an episode a little later on once they’re in the desert. This happens a few times but flick to Exodus 16 for me. I’m just gonna read 2-3

Read Exodus 16:2-3

So this time rather than a cry for help the people complain, their accusing Aaron and Moses of misleading them and trying to harm them. And even more look down at verse 8

Read Exodus 16:8

They’re not even really grumbling against Aaron and Moses, grumbling, any grumbling is ultimately a complaint against the Lord, he ordains the situations we find ourselves in, he chose the classes we’d teach, the times we’d teach them, the leaders we’d have over us. To grumble about our situation is to complain about the Lord.

It is hard, and it’s good and right to acknowledge it, but when we do let’s strive to groan and not grumble.

### Tame your tongue

The second principle is “tame your tongue”. Flick forward to James 3 with me.

Read James 3:1-12

We could a whole series of seminars on these few verses so I just want to pick out a few key things. First James is saying that the way we talk is the hardest thing to control about ourselves. See that in verse 2 “if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body”. And in fact our words are so significant that what we say can guide how we live. Like bits in horses mouths and rudders on ships. What our mouths say our hearts and lives will follow. It’s essential not only for our witness but also for our souls that we make a priority of taming our tongues, getting what we say under control. This isn’t possible on our own, v. 8 “no human being can tame the tongue”. It’s a work of the spirit that we must pray for and work hard to walk in step with him in. And it’s super hard to do in a staff room. My colleagues were really wonderful people, so supportive and loyal and funny, they became some of my closest friends. But the staffroom was still a den of gossip, slander and grumbling, and when I let me tongue join in with it my heart became, bitter, proud and harsh. So let’s make sure prayer for help taming our tongue is a priority.

### Summing up

There’s loads more we could say here but we’re really short on time, definitely keep chatting about this and praying with one another. And remember ultimately the way we’re going to be able to fight the temptation we find here is to have hearts that our soft and tender to Jesus love, we need hearts melted by the sunshine of the gospel. We need to see Jesus.

## Encouraging the good

So that’s two quick principles to help us live well in the midst of the bad stuff in the staff room, but we also want to encourage and take part in all the good things too. I think there are three things we can aim for that are really simple and can really help encourage all this good stuff.

I think as Christians in the staffroom we want to aim to be Generous, Curious and Vulnerable in word and deed.

Tell the story of going into James classroom and crying

Highlight;

* Him giving up his time after school – Generous
* Him asking about how I’d found it over the last few weeks and why it had got to me – Curious
* Him sharing how he’d been brought to tears by a class – Vulnerable

On paper write a bubble for generous, curious and vulnerable. In one colour write ways you could embody them in word and in another deed. It’ll be easier with some than others, that’s okay, some will be generic to life and some specific to the staffroom, that’s okay too. Then we’ll share all together.

Feed back

# Work Life Balance

The second thing I wanted to touch on, and we’ll do this a little more briefly, was what impact Jesus should have on our work life balance. You’ll hear this talked about loads in teaching, it’s a bit of a buzz phrase when it comes to dealing with teachers mental health and wellbeing.

I think it’s a really great opportunity for us to be distinctive as Christians in school. I’ve put out sheets with 3 scenarios on and a number of passages that I think can help us think well about this. We’ve got some time now to have a look at one of the scenarios and pick a passage, then have a think about how that passage can help us think well about what to do in each situation. There are no right answers! We’ll feed back a bit after.

Passages:

1. Ephesians 1:3
2. Psalm 127:1-2
3. 1 Cor 4:1-4
4. 1 Peter 2:13
5. Colossians 3:23-24

Scenarios:

* It’s 10pm on Saturday night, you’ve got an observation on the Monday morning and the lesson still isn’t quite how you’d like it.
* You’ve been invited to go away with friends over a half term and you’re really anxious about taking the whole week off from schoolwork.
* You’re finding that you just can’t balance being on the children’s (or ministry of your choice) team at church and helping run the extracurricular after school club you’ve started.