

How Will I Be Remembered?

J. D. Victor Fitch, Former Superintendent, Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference

I have purposely posed the above question in the first person because I want those who read this article to apply it to themselves. Whenever I write something, or preach, I always focus on something I need to read or hear. Hopefully it has application for others—the reader or listener. So, how will I be remembered?

Many Bible characters are remembered for very specific reasons. Some examples—Job, for his patience (James 5:11); Moses, as the meekest man (Numbers 12:3); Enoch, as a man who walked with God (Genesis 5:22, 24); Abraham, as a man of faith (Hebrews 11:8, 17); David for many reasons, but God identified him as “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22); Judas, as the one who betrayed Christ (Matthew 10:4, 26:25,27:3 and other verses); Lot’s wife, for looking back and becoming a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Other examples could be sighted but back to the question— how will I be remembered?



This is a question, I believe, teachers and administrators must daily ask themselves. I cannot have much impact now on the students I was privileged to teach because neither I nor they are in the classroom now. The impact I had has already been made and how I am remembered has been cast. You who are still actively involved in education are daily writing the answer to the question—how will I be remembered?

Some may ask, “Why is this question important? What difference does it make? There are many things I remember as a student. There are many things I remember that were spoken by my fellow students about issues they confronted. For example, I remember more than one student who remarked— “If that is what a Christian is, I want nothing to do with it!” Some have carried out that declaration. Whether we like it or not, our students will remember us. And it is our treatment of them that determines their remembrance.

After I graduated from Walla Walla College (University now) in 1957, I had two job opportunities: A teacher of math and science at Oshawa Missionary College (now Kingsway College) and Dean of Men at CUC. I chose to return to CUC where I had graduated two years previously. Being a Dean is not an easy position, but the five years I served are still very precious in my memory. My last year at Walla Walla, I was privileged to be one of the student deans. My boss, Dean Johanson, was a very real and practicing Christian in all his dealings and relationships with the fellows. Some took advantage of his Christian treatment but that did not change him. Before assuming my first position I asked God for strength, and prayed daily that I would always be fair and honest in all my dealings with the fellows. I wanted desperately to act always in a way that the fellows would see me as Christian.

I chose a math major and science courses to be my teaching area because of two specific teachers. P. G. Miller was a superb teacher, and was also the principal at CUC Academy. I did not always agree with him and we certainly had our differences, but as my teacher, he had my total respect. He was patient with the ones for whom learning was a challenge. He gave extra help and took time to carefully explain concepts. I remember an occasion when a student asked a question in physics class that made another student laugh in mockery. Mr. Miller was very direct

in his reprimand, but did so appropriately, making it clear that there are no stupid questions, and that behavior like this was not acceptable and would not be tolerated.

Mr. Winn was my college chemistry teacher at CUC. He was always dressed meticulously, suit pressed. He spoke quietly. His knowledge of chemistry was up-to-date. Often he would correct the textbook with current research. When not in class, he was reading either in his office or in the library. He had a breadth of knowledge in many areas. What an inspiration!

I remember many other teachers whose lives impacted mine. I have been blessed because I have very few negative memories, but for some of my classmates, this is not true. Even today some have been unable to come to terms with the treatment they received. They still remember.

I want to affirm, without any reservation, that we are saved by grace alone. In no way can we earn our salvation. It is a free gift. But in Matthew 25:31-46 it is very clear we will be remembered and our reward will be determined by how we have treated others. How Jesus remembers me will determine His words of judgment for me. If we remember our good deeds as a means of salvation it will be worthless. See Matthew 7:21-23. But, I believe, how my students remember me will be a vital part in the judgment process. All who have been, and are now, involved in education will have to answer the question—where is thy flock? (See 4T p. 424) The care of our flock will be determined by how we have treated them.

There are many examples in the Bible of men and women who asked God to remember them. I will cite only two. Probably the first one that comes to mind is the thief on the cross. (Luke 23:42) Jesus promised He would. The thief had no opportunity to do deeds of service for others. Samson, the strongest man physically, but one of the weakest morally, asked God to remember him one more time so that he could avenge the loss of his eyes (Judges 16:28). And God remembered, even though Samson had so often gone his own way. What a loving God we serve!

Some may be wondering what all this has to do with education? Does it really make any difference? In my opinion, absolutely. Students who think well of their teachers will be more motivated and will perform better in all aspects of their development.

May God be our strength and guide in all our interactions so that our students will remember us as loving and lovable Christians whose dealings were always Christ-like. But more than that, may Jesus remember us as always reaching out to the needs of all around us so that we may hear His well-done in the glorious day when He returns. Saved by His grace alone.