

43. Culture Wars in your Classroom



At their best, the beautiful marble statues of the ancient empires declare that these idealised forms are aspirations we can strive toward -we can actually become better than ourselves. We can become braver, dance more elegantly, and run even at the pace of horses. Against this we now have a loss of idealism, and a disturbing despair that prevails in the culture around our students. Sculptures and art is abstract to the point of being unintelligible, is purveyed. Depressing movies that are negative, can dominate the student mind.

Youth are told in a myriad of ways- that love doesn't last, to question everything as there is no absolute truth only bigotry; and that fairy tales and myths no longer embody what's noble, for we all live on a planet in orbit about a star that will die, so everything is ultimately meaningless.

Into the vacuum step the advertisers who say to students: *You are what consumerism tells you that you are. Only consumerism is real. Amuse yourself to death and acquire all you can.*

You are well placed to expose the students to alternatives. You can access music, art and literature that speaks of nobility and quality. There is music that they will never stop and listen to, because it doesn't come across MTV or their radio playlist of very transitory

and mediocre pop. Art that is not on the cover of magazines or on advertisements or featured on *The Simpsons*, lies outside the periphery of their vision.

You are positioned to entice a taste for visual drama and what is a delight to the eyes, beauty rather than titillation; stories of heroes like Esther and Paul of the Middle East - inspiring stories of local people of note who showed lives of courage and integrity as they created, promoted the good and just need to be shared. They served the marginalised in their community as well as the whole. Artists who embody the good, and hope can be introduced. This is an alternative to the non descript icons of despair and chaos offered by our culture, and celebrated in the shows that obsess about the latest personality to obtain celebrity and fame.

Your life as a teacher shines out an alternative into Vanity Fair, as you faithfully declare, day by day, that the latest is not the greatest. Jesus is the greatest, he was of ancient times, is contemporary to now, and is going to be the answer to the heart longings and alienation of all people of the future.

*People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself. **Luke 12:30-32***

*We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. **Colossians. 1:28***

*The world and its desires will pass away, but the person who does the will of God lives forever. **I John 1:17***

*Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious - the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. **Philippians 4:8***

*So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. **Ecclesiastes 2:17 & 18***