

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith  
Audio Script – August 13, 2009

John Hester, Forrest Shields, Dixie Avey, Hattie Boone – these names mean nothing to you, but they identify people who made an indelible mark on my life and whose influence is still being experienced some 40 years later. Who are they? A special class of people James admonishes in today's Templates of Truth.

It is back to school time. Classrooms and educational resources are being readied for students to mark their first day of classes which have already begun in many communities across our nation. The persons at center stage in those learning environments are the people we entrust with a large portion of our children's daily lives. Their impact on our children is immeasurable, and like the names I mentioned in the opening, our children will never forget them. They are the men and women of the teaching profession that perform an incredible task in the elementary, high school and college classrooms across our country every day.

James addresses this elite group of instructors in the third chapter of his epistle: *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment* (3:1). While the context of his message centers on Biblical teaching, the principle that James espouses may also be applied to the academic teaching profession as well. The words of this verse bring a sobering awareness to the significant responsibility every teacher bears in his or her role to the lesson and learner environment. It is not one to be taken lightly.

King Solomon was wise in his understanding of this profession and offers further insight to the process a teacher must go through to ensure the greatest effectiveness in learning. Although he addresses the *Preacher*, we would not be violating the contextual insight to substitute the word "teacher": *The (teacher) also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The (teacher) sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd* (Ecclesiastes 12:9-11). Inherent in this passage is a strategy for effective lesson planning and teaching all instructors can benefit from.

The Hebrew word, *ponder* means to weigh, test and prove. The word translated *searched* refers to an examination that is a deep, penetrating investigation of knowledge. *Arranged* has to do with composition and organizing the lesson plan so that it is made straight and understandable. *Delightful* words are not necessarily those that are enjoyable and entertaining, but more importantly, words that are valuable and acceptable to the task. *Correct truth* refers to a presentation that is upright, firm and faithful to the facts. When a teacher engages himself or herself in this process, an effective learning environment is created. This takes an investment of time and effort on the part of the teacher to plan accordingly. Admittedly, the task is overwhelming. But the promise that Solomon provides is that you are not alone. Your help, support and ability comes from the *Shepherd*. God is at work in the both the process of teaching and learning to assure that knowledge is obtained by those who desire it.

I have never met a teacher who did not want to make a marked difference in the lives of his or

her students. That is the apex that brings fulfillment to the profession. It is what keeps the teacher coming back to the classroom year after year, even when having to challenge and deal with problem students. Solomon touches on this desire in the heart of the teacher when he talks about *goads* and *well-driven nails*. These words illustrate the influence, the impact, that indelible mark every teacher can make on the lives of his or her students in the educational process. It is why we do what we do.

If that motivation weren't enough, James reminds us that a teacher's performance is measured against a higher standard, and will be held accountable to a stricter code. That may not seem fair, but that's the way it is, like it or not. Being a teacher is a high calling. The role demands a high level of credibility, responsibility and accountability. God holds every teacher to this standard through the promise of judgment: *every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned* (Matthew 12:36-37).

Pray today for our teachers and those whom they teach. Pray that God will anoint all of them with the ability to learn, develop in their skills, and grow to serve Him and our nation with effective leadership and productivity. If you are a teacher or know a teacher, receive and express your heartfelt gratitude for the sacrifice and the difference they make in the lives of the next generation of Americans.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.