

LISTENING ALONGSIDE



ECHOING CHRIST

Lenten Devotions 2017

**Saturday,
March 11, 2017**

Lessons Learned
By Deborah Wright

This past Christmas we took our kids from heARTw♥rks to see the musical, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." When we returned to Lakeside, some of the children had questions about what a souvenir was. In trying to explain, Jordan, a perceptive fourth grader, said a souvenir was something that would "bring back memories of a special time." I loved his definition.

I've often wished I had kept a journal of some of the wise and witty words shared with me by my students. I didn't think I had the time and I thought I'd never forget, but over the years I've forgotten a lot. This Lenten season I'm trying to bring back some of those memories of lessons I learned from "listening alongside" children.

When I began working as an itinerant reading teacher, I was assigned a student at Redirections, an alternative school for students with behavior problems. Needless to say, I was nervous. I remember organizing all my teaching materials before meeting Jonathan. I had everything neatly arranged on the table, and I was prepared for anything! Jonathan stormed in with defiance, took one look at a table full of unknown expectations and angrily snapped, "What's all this stuff for?" I soon came to realize he was just as nervous as I was. He couldn't read and spread before him were all the things that frightened him most. I took time to listen to what he was really saying and learned the importance of simplicity and common ground. Enlightening words and lessons learned...

I usually had 45 minutes twice weekly to work with each struggling reader. There was never enough time! After working with a middle schooler for several months, he blurted out mid lesson one day, "Hey...you've been coming here a long time to work with me, but you really don't know me. And I don't know much about you. I think we should get to know each other better." Startled and taken aback I asked, "Well, what do you want to know?" Demonte wanted to know about my family, what I liked to do besides teaching...and he

wanted to tell me things that were important to him. I was so focused on what I was teaching that I didn't take time to know who I was teaching. Listening alongside Demonte that day taught me that we all have a story to tell and a desire to be heard and known. Admonishing words and lessons learned...

After working with another middle schooler for two years, he was becoming a more confident reader. At the end of one of our lessons Brian's eyes met mine as he wondered aloud, "Why hasn't anyone taught me this before?" He was in middle school and just learning to read. He was also the student who enthusiastically hugged me at the end of the school year when I gave him a dictionary. I was so worried a teenage boy would be disappointed with such a gift, and he was grateful I cared enough to give him his first dictionary. Encouraging words and lessons learned...

As we listen alongside God through prayer, Bible study, worship, and meditation, we are better equipped to listen alongside one another as we discern voices of truth and love. Then, hopefully, we will be better able to act in truth and love as we echo the words we hear.

Prayer:

O God, you are the Word among all words
that spoke words into being.

But you did not remain a distant word,
speaking only in the language
of darkness and light,
day and night,
sea and stars.

You came to live among us,
talking in the everyday language of
all who need a word of forgiveness,
all who long for a word of love,
all who pray for a word of hope.

And now we dare to speak to you
in words of our creation.
Take our words and live your grace through them.
Transform our words, and change our lives through them.

And when our words are too deep to speak aloud,
we pray that your Spirit will speak them for us
so that all the words of our mouths
and the meditations of our hearts
will be acceptable in your sight,
the Word beyond all words.

–Sharlande Sledge

From *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons*

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.
They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.
Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.
Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins;
Let them not rule over me;
Then I will be blameless,
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Colossians 3: 16-17

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.