

**James 3:1-2** *Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.*

### **God Has Chosen Me**

I love being a Lutheran teacher. Even as a small child I played school, and in mimicking the mannerisms and words of my teachers, I admonished, praised, and encouraged my pretend students. Fast forward to today, and I am still admonishing, praising, and encouraging but with a classroom full of God's children. Throughout my own schooling, I have had exceptional teachers as well as teachers who tried their best (and almost succeeded) to destroy my ambitions. Obviously, words and actions in the classroom matter, but as Lutheran teachers, our words and actions matter even more because our students are carefully watching everything we say and do in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

At times, I have questioned my calling—who honestly has not? God and I go round and round at times, particularly when criticism from a parent goes straight to the heart, or the inability of a student (or refusal) to learn challenges me to question my ability to teach and reach the needs of every student. Indeed, James' warning that not many of us should be teachers unless truly called gives me pause at these times, particularly when I stumble in my own thoughts, words, or actions. James tells us that "all stumble," but more often than not, my stumbles are spectacular!

But then, just when I allow myself to wallow in self-pity, or question (again) why God has called me to be a Lutheran teacher, He brings me a student or parent to remind me that my persistence and unfailing belief that every child can learn has made a difference. Time and time again, God sends messages and signs that teaching is my true calling, and He will never leave my side, but in my selfish and sinful ways, I do not always see because I am blinded by that very sinfulness. When I do see, when the Holy Spirit fills me, my heart leaps with joy because I know that God chose *me* to be an instrument of change in a child's life. When will I learn not to question the plans that God has for my students or for me? When will I learn to turn everything over to God in His perfect plans and ways?

Lutheran teachers *are* judged more strictly, but perhaps when we stumble, or question our ministry, we should pause and consider that we do not know who our students will be in five or even ten years because God is never finished with any of us. Today our students are watching what we say and do...let your words and actions as a teacher in the classroom make a difference in a child's life—God will take care of the rest. And when we do stumble, be confident that God will pick us up, dry our tears, and push us right back into the classroom to carry on with the calling of teaching for the Kingdom of Heaven.

*Dear Lord, I know that you will never leave my side. Help me to be a perfect model in the lives of my students. With you, I can be a better teacher in thought, word, and action. Let me love each of your children and teach them with a passion and fire that will shine like a blinding light—a light to guide their paths to You. You personally chose me to be a teacher for the Kingdom of Heaven—but I will stumble in my sinfulness. When I do stumble, Lord, help me to my feet and give me the strength to continue in your ministry, the ministry of leading your children in the Word of God. Amen*