

Model Repentance

“It is him or me!” The PE teacher glared at me and spat out the words. It had been a quiet afternoon with the high school out doing Sport. I was getting caught up on paperwork when the teacher and the Year 11 student strode into my office.

“Are you aware that he has a note excusing him from participating in Sport?” I asked.

“Yes, but he could at least follow my directions to help out.” The teacher stood there and then challenged again, “Well, who are you going to choose?”

“**As teachers and parents, we sometimes stand on our pride. We think we must always be right.**”

It was a very difficult situation. I explained that I needed to have time to talk to the student first, to get his side of the story. With that, the teacher stormed off saying, “I am going home. You can care for the students at Sport.”

It became clear as I walked with the student to the playing field that he had not done anything wrong. His refusal to comply was based on the extent of his injury, and the active role the PE teacher had anticipated him fulfilling. I could only apologise to the student for the way he had been treated and express my sympathy.

I went home well after school and reflected on the situation with my wife. She has always been a fountain of common sense. I needed to see the teacher at his home that night, talk it out and try and deal with it away from the pressures of a boarding school.

With some trepidation I found myself on his front door and knocked. I was graciously invited in. They were just doing the dishes. So I joined in drying the

dishes for a few minutes and then we sat down and I was able to address the problem of the ultimatum that day.

He regretted the rash statement. God blessed and he was willing to apologise to the student in my office the next day. We chatted light-heartedly. Near the end we had prayer and I went home a much relieved person!

As teachers and parents, we sometimes stand on our pride. We think we must always be right. Sadly, sometimes we don't take the time to listen to a student's point of view. We need to model the process that we want our students to emulate.

There are so many Biblical examples that show patience and a soft answer work so much better. The life of Moses as he deals with two million complaining Israelites for 40 years is a classic example. When David exiles Absalom, Joab encourages an old lady to highlight the lack of process in the whole reaction. That is where we get a beautiful picture of God as found in 2 Samuel 14:14b: “But God does not just sweep life away, instead He devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from Him.”

In the New Testament, we see Paul quick to cut the young, home-sick John Mark out of his team. It is Barnabas who offers encouragement, support and nurture for the young man. Ultimately an important decision that initially doubles the evangelistic team. A decision that Paul is man enough to admit he was wrong, as noted in 2 Timothy 4:11—“Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me.”

There are times when our judgement is not as inclusive as it should be. I remember reading a slogan over a photocopier in a staff room, “What you allow is what you teach.” We need to model the processes that we want our students to follow.

