

The Student Teacher

The year 1972 was a year of transition for me. I lost my dad the year before (1971), and it was “touch and go” if I would even return to U of O to finish my degree and teaching credentials. Through prayer, my mother and I decided that I was too close to completion to quit now, so, with God’s Grace, I returned to finish what I had started after I got my BS degree in 1970.

It was now 1972 and I found my college career coming to an end. I was finishing my MS degree, and having had the required 45 hours of education classes, my teaching credentials should be granted after leaping the only remaining hurdle....My student teaching. This “fledgling teacher” would then be able to leave the protective nest of being on the student’s side of the desk to the teacher’s side of the desk, with its accompanying feelings of intimidation. So, in 1972, I embarked on my student teaching at a local High School in Eugene.

I started off with having a supervising teacher who saw fit to give me gradually increasing levels of responsibility until, in his opinion; I was “ready to solo.” He then divided up his class load, giving me half of the load. My half worked independently on projects. One particular student in my section opted to work in the area of Bacteriology. He had isolated a pure strain of bacteria and, in order to protect the student, his classmates, and myself I made the decision to see if what he had could be harmful. I then called a local hospital, who, after hearing my explanation gave me a unit of human blood for the purpose of experimentation and testing only. Although the time limit for transfusion had passed, it was still viable human blood, and would be able to indicate whether or not the particular strain of bacteria in question could be infectious.

I then made what is called “blood agar” when I returned to the classroom for which I had charge. Blood agar is simply a sterile non nutrient gelatinous mixture with the only source of nutrition being the human blood which is mixed in to the otherwise non nutritious agar. It is the color of the human blood which is infused in the media. A bacteria sample on that will die unless it is what is called hemolytic....In other words, if it is infectious to humans. The infectious bacteria appear as a clear circle surrounding the colony in a blood red field of agar. When the student in question tested the bacteria in question we found out that indeed it was hemolytic or infectious. We now knew that we had a potential blood pathogen....Something which could survive by consuming human blood. All it needed was to be able to infect something...And a means of transmitting the bacteria.

A wise and prudent student teacher would have opted to stop the experiment right here. However the student and I chose to inject the pathogenic bacteria into a mouse we had in the classroom. The results were serious, since now we had a proven human pathogenic bacteria and we also now had an infected mammal by which this strain of pathogen it could be transferred. We then knew the bacteria could infect both rodents and humans. I then notified my supervising teacher who was shocked to say the least. The decision was then made to humanely kill the infected mouse. The supervising teacher and I chose to autoclave the body of the mouse and everything connected with the pathogenic strain of bacteria, and swear the student, the supervising teacher and the student teacher to total secrecy.

When all things are considered, could only be by the protective hand of God that there was not a serious problem with this infectious microorganism. God had, in the past history of the nation of Israel protected His children under very adverse situations where in the entire nation might have been decimated or destroyed.

For example, God delivered the Children of Israel from 430 years of oppression by the Egyptians through the person of Moses. During this period Pharaoh was forced into acquiescence through God’s plagues upon his people[1]. These plagues were directed against The Egyptian people and Israel was set apart as a further indication that God was fighting for Israel. Even after the rebellion of the Children of Israel by Aaron’s building of a golden calf[2], Moses interceded for the errant children by praying to God for their forgiveness. God punished them by sending a plague but still promised them a land flowing with milk and honey[3].

The Bible is replete with God’s forgiveness and concomitant deliverance and protection from His enemies who fought against His Children. Just as the Children of Israel were given other chances to serve God better, so my student and I were given a second chance to avoid a disastrous outcome as we acted out of ignorance. Much learning took place

here: the student and I learned that experimentation with living things has a cost which is not always measured in dollars and cents, the student teacher learned how fast things can get out of hand if not for God's divine protection and the supervising teacher learned that not all student teachers play by the same rules.

This particular incident calls to mind how God will work all things for good with those who love Him[4]. Maybe we weren't exactly serving God here, but I feel His Protection still applies.

[1] Exodus Chapters 3-18

[2] Exodus 32:1-29

[3] Exodus 32: 30-33:4

[4] Romans 8: 28