

Devotion from the past ... 2015

Read [Matt. 9:9–13](#)

Wrong Answers

“Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt. 9:13 ESV).

Religion isn’t always what it’s cracked up to be. Or, maybe, *fractured* would be better than *cracked up*. For example, trick questions can trip you to wrong answers and a nasty fall.

Despite all your diligence in teaching faith and salvation, Scripture and its meaning, several students will finish the school year with faulty concepts about their spiritual condition. Oh, they may know the Six Chief Parts verbatim or be able to resolutely and proudly crow a few Bible passages appropriate to their age. And, yes, they may sing with gusto (even “Silent Night!”) and accomplish the increasingly rare perfect church AND Sunday school attendance. All this is good but can easily lead to wrong answers. When asked about their assurance of heaven, you’ll hear something like, “I try to be good and obey God.”

Self-righteousness finds fertile fields in lists of accomplishments. But none of them earns salvation. You’ve taught that. You believe that. How could anyone not learn it?

Weeeeellllll—maybe you’ve had the wrong answer a few times yourself. As for your students, they’ve had trouble learning all kinds of important things, so why not this one? And then there’s the Satan factor: The old evil foe has freely passed the wrong answers since he fell from heaven and landed on his lying mouth. In the quest for right living, Satan’s answers can sound plausible, if not downright ego pleasing.

God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has been at the truth even longer than Satan has been at the lies. Praise God that His Triple Threat is more powerful than Satan’s legions of liars. Praise God that His mercy is infinitely inexhaustible, while Satan’s evil is on a choke chain. This empowers you and provides you with right (as opposed to righteous?) answers.

You and your students know that Jesus did everything and the only thing necessary to open heaven’s promise to you. With gratitude then, you are free to flash your faith in the form of mercy to others. No, no suggestion of gift grades here or patronizing the guilty with assurances that their sins “are not so bad.”

Mercy materializes in treatment of others—you know, the tax collectors and other shameful sinners in your class. And don’t forget the sinners who don’t perceive

or don't yet acknowledge their sinfulness. They need the nourishment too, which the Father reveals to them by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word and Jesus' love working through your teaching and persevering mercy.

Mercy is mighty! Spread it around to your family, colleagues, students and their families, congregational boards, and those even less deserving!

You can do it. It happened to you.

Quick Questions

- Who among those soon leaving your care may still have the wrong answers? With what will you leave them?
- When are you most likely to have the wrong answers? How will you guard against this?

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To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)