

Daily View

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13

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"...by this time you ought to be teachers..." (Hebrews 5:11).

The astronomical clock, Prague (2018). The clock was first installed in 1410 and is the oldest clock still operating.

“Special Second”

The best teacher I ever had in elementary school was my second grade teacher, Mrs. Christiansen. The class she taught was called “Special Second.”

Special Second was a class at Harbor Elementary established for kids who fell behind because they didn’t learn what they were supposed to learn in first grade. It was also for kids with learning disabilities (or “special needs”). Mrs. Christiansen was charged with bringing all of these kids up to speed.

As a six year old, I had no consciousness of being in a “special” class although I did notice that many of the kids were different in some way. But there were also some kids in the class who had been in my first grade class.

I wouldn’t have thought anything about this if my mother hadn’t, uncharacteristically, expressed her anger with my first grade teacher, Mrs. Walton. My mother’s beef was that Mrs. Walton didn’t teach us what she was supposed to teach us in first grade so we were not ready for second grade. She was either tired or incompetent so, according to my mom, my only “learning disability” was Mrs. Walton.

But my mom loved Mrs. Christiansen. For one thing, she was the kindest, sweetest teacher I ever had, hands down. But she was also, by any standard, an outstanding teacher. The students in her class had lots of different issues, some congenital, some emotional, some intellectual, yet she managed to prepare every kid in that class for “regular” third grade. I never had any learning issues after being in her “special” class.

I imagine some parents were embarrassed that their kids were in a “special” class, but my mom was grateful that the school had the foresight to provide a class like that and that they had identified a teacher who had the ability and temperament to deal with kids who had these issues.

I’ve met a lot of very learned Christians in my life but also a lot of older men and women who need a “special second.” I

include myself in that category of Christians who had a bad experience in our “first grade” of Bible classes. As we got older, we were unprepared for second grade and beyond. By the time I was 21, I had a lot of catching up to do. When Christie and I married, I was surprised at how much better her knowledge of the Old Testament was than mine — and she was just 18. I desperately needed a “special second” to catch up.

The writer of Hebrews told his readers they, too, needed a remedial class:

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 5:11-14

The writer wasn’t just scolding these people; he was trying to help them realize that they needed to strengthen their faith, for themselves and for their families. Let’s face it: if my faith is weak, whose fault is that? If my kids’ faith is weak, who’s responsible? There’s no “Mrs. Walton” to blame. But there’s also no shame in seeking out a “special second” to get caught up. It’s better than being embarrassed at judgment — by then, it’ll be too late.

It’s so easy to put off studying the Bible. It’s not like school, where you don’t have choice. Neither my mother nor I was asked to be put into special second — the school just did it (they probably couldn’t get away with today). I’m glad they did, but the church can’t do that. We have to take personal responsibility — for ourselves and for our kids.

Do you need someone “to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God”? Do you and/or your kids “need milk, not solid food”? Don’t wait until they get too old to enroll them — and/or yourself — in “special second.”