

WELCOME *Home*

TEACHER RESOURCES

Overview

Imagine the scene. The door opens to a place that was once familiar. Inside the door is a caring face with open arms. Those arms wrap gently around you, and as they do you hear, “Welcome home! I’m so glad you’re here.” You may have approached that door with an eager expectation. But you may also have come with a sense of hesitation or anxiousness. You haven’t been there in a while, and in your absence, you’ve lost contact and connection with those inside. Do you still belong here? Are they glad to have you back? Is this something you really need to do?

The *Welcome Home* initiative encourages each of us to consider those we know who haven’t been through a church door either in a while or not very often. Some, by God’s grace, come to the realization that church, and even more, being connected to the Word, is where they need and want to be. But for many, human obstacles block their path. Guilt and complacency are likely two of the most powerful barriers. How can you and I make a difference and minimize those barriers?

Whether you’ve been teaching for only a couple of years or have a couple of decades of experience, you have an understanding of the unique relationship between teacher and student and their parents. It can be powerful while the student is in your classroom. But for many, your impact is felt for years to come, even if you don’t see them. You can likely name one or two teachers that are that person for you. Now it’s your turn.

A suite of materials has been gathered that can help you consider how you can use that unique relationship to reach out in Christian love to one, or two, or more students or parents whom you know need encouragement to not only reconnect with you but also reconnect with the means of grace. It is our prayer that this document and the accompanying resources will provide you with the encouragement and some simple ways that you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, can make an eternal impact on someone you already know.

Resources available:

“A Simple Gesture/A Powerful Impact”: This is an article for individual teachers or for a staff that shares how teachers can make a powerful impact through a simple gesture.

Devotion Series: This series of four devotions can be used by individual teachers or for staff devotions. They can be used one per week over a four-week period or sequentially in one week. They include a focus on God’s Word motivating the hearts of his people to reach out and reconnect. The devotions conclude with simple action steps that can be immediately applied.

Promo video: This short video (less than two minutes) can be shared among a staff and through social media. (Who can you encourage to join in this?) The video encourages each of us to consider current or former students and what impact a simple gesture could make in reaching out to them. Who’s not here? Who could you “Welcome Home”?

Simple Steps: These are only suggestions. Each person will be different. Go slowly to rebuild the relationship that provides the opportunity to encourage them to come back home to their church, yes, but more importantly, to being in the Word.

Step One: Write down the name of student/family on index card and a prayer for them. Post the card in a visible spot or place it in your Bible to remind you to pray for them regularly.

Step Two: Reach out. Consider a simple text, short email, a note in the mail. In this initial step, you will simply want to share that you were thinking of them and wondering how they were doing. Keep it simple. Maybe share a special memory you have of them. The goal is simply to reconnect.

Step Three: Open the door. Hopefully, they will respond and will appreciate having heard from you. What a blessing to have the opportunity to rebuild a relationship. What might be a natural next step? Can you meet for coffee? Invite them for dinner or lunch? You want it to be authentic and sincere, not a meeting with an agenda. You want to convey that you are excited to be reconnected with them.

Step Four: As your relationship grows, look for opportunities to invite them to join you for a Bible class or attend worship with you. To be honest, they are likely expecting that you will do so at some point. And for some, they may have been waiting for someone to make it easier for them to make that step. Some will agree and some may not.

Step Five: Don't give up. For some, this will be a wonderful story that flows just as you hope or even better. For some, the journey may take a long time. And for some, you may realize that even maintaining a relationship with them is not possible. Be patient. Be prayerful. Reach out to others for encouragement and do the same for them. Remember—it's not up to you. That's the Holy Spirit's work. However, you may have the opportunity to have reconnected with someone you care about, and you may have the blessing of seeing the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Step Six: Who else do you know? Can this become a part of how we think? Can we be constantly thinking of ways to reach out in love to those we know and share Jesus with them? Isn't that what God has given us the privilege to do in response to his love for us?

It would be amazing if every person that we reach out to would come back home to church, to growing in faith through the Holy Spirit's working through the means of grace. It would be amazing indeed! But we know that on this side of heaven, it's unlikely. So now what? It can be discouraging. But the Lord knew this would be a challenge. He has filled us with promises that give us hope and confidence, but he has not promised that we would always see the fruit of our efforts. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth; It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." It's not up to you, and it's not up to me. But the Holy Spirit does use us, and his work is powerful and effective.

So, who do you know? On whom might you make an impact more powerful than any math or history lesson you ever taught them? Who can you—*Welcome Home*?