

The Questions I Never Was Asked

Cal Kalsbeek

There are tons—and that's a lot—of questions I never was asked. Some of them might be labeled frivolous: Do you like sushi? Or, what is your fourth favorite color? Others might be considered meaningful: Who is the most important U.S. President and why? Or, how important is the U.S. Constitution to you? Then there are questions I've never been asked that are quite significant: How has the doctrine of the covenant affected your life? Or, why is it important to you to maintain the doctrine of reprobation?

However, I'm talking about “THE” question I never was asked; not “A” question I never was asked. This suggests I have in mind a specific and very important question that everyone should consider, but that I never was asked, and one that maybe you have never been asked either. But before I ask you THE question, allow me the freedom to relate a few of my life experiences that relate to the question I never was asked.

Since Covenant Christian High School did not exist when I graduated from 9th grade at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, my parents sent me to Unity Christian High School (1960–1963) in Hudsonville, Michigan. Thinking back, although I liked to read, I was not all that interested in school. Nevertheless, I reluctantly heeded the advice of Mr. TenHarmsel, my adviser, to take a college preparatory course of study. Surviving that (including chemistry and Latin), when I graduated from Unity, I did the expected and began working as an apprentice for the business established by my father and uncle, Kalsbeek and DeJong Plumbing (now Kalsbeek Plumbing). After three years and at the tender age of 20, I had my state of Michigan journeyman's license in hand. I was well on my way toward a lifelong career as a plumber.

Though “the question I never was asked” still was not asked, over the next four years my sovereign

Lord was leading me by his counsel (Psalm 73) to a career change. Regrettably, for most of that time I was oblivious to his leading, but looking back I can see his hand at work. He worked especially through my older brother, John, who had completed college and was teaching in our South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School. Visits with John opened my eyes to “the question I never was asked,” which by this time I began asking myself. The Lord also worked through other circumstances in my life. Being single, financially sound, and working for my father and uncle made attending college and working part-time as a licensed plumber a very manageable situation. Consequently, at the age of 24, I had the freedom to begin college, which I did. At first, I was not committed to a specific goal, though all the while I had teaching in the back of my mind. The circumstances surrounding my mother's death in an automobile accident during my second year at Grand Valley, confirmed the Lord's guiding me by His counsel to what I saw as the calling to teach in one of our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. With a diploma signed by the president, Arend D. Lubbers, and the chairman of the board, L. William Seidman, in hand; on the “ninth day of June, nineteen hundred and seventy-three” I was available to teach, but where? In God's providence, one teaching position was available in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools that year (Adams), and I was contracted to fill it. Nine years later the Lord led me to Covenant Christian High School where I spent the last 29 years of my teaching.

Reflecting on my own experience, I believe there is value, not only in asking others “the question I never was asked,” but also relating some of the blessings that will result from an affirmative response to that question. Consider for example the blessing of working every day in an environment in which those with whom you are in contact are professed Christians, who believe and confess what you do, and who labor with you day by day to advance a singular goal: “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17). Be assured that is a special, even enviable environment in which to labor.

Consider too that many godly relationships will result from your work with the teachers, parents, and students with whom you come in contact. Sadly as you grow older you may not remember all of their names, but then it's not your fault that they have become unrecognizable due to their loss of hair, or their acquisition of facial hair, and their increased belt size. The fact remains, on your life's pilgrimage you have touched the lives of many others, and they have touched yours, resulting in many new friendships. No doubt your life and theirs have been enriched in the process.

Also, rest assured a teacher's life is never boring, at least I have never found that to be the case. Each year the teacher engages new students and circumstances. Also, there is the lifelong challenge of improvement; even if one teaches the same grades or subjects for many years. As you are teaching, you will find that the list of areas that need development grows. The following examples of what I mean come to mind: My students struggled to grasp this concept last year, how can I improve my lesson plan to clarify it? Is there a different method I should try to make this unit or lesson more relevant and interesting? What books can I read that will help me inject new life into this unit of study? What do I need to do to improve the learning environment in which my students are called to work? What other teacher could I consult for help with this particular challenge? How can I better apply biblical principles to this area of study? And the list goes on.

Often there are encouraging evidences of goals accomplished: My students really did understand this important concept. By the grace of God, this conflict between students has been resolved in a godly manner, and they developed an understanding of what it means to love one another. That class discussion demonstrated that my students are growing spiritually. Many times evidences of goals accomplished are not seen until years later, as in the case of the unmotivated or mischievous student who later in life becomes a godly wife and is much involved in the life of the church. Rest assured, the

Lord is faithful in providing positive fruit on the faithful teacher's work.

While there are many blessings that accompany the life of a teacher, the fact remains, the Lord has not called or equipped everyone to be a teacher. However, since I have already far exceeded the 1,000 word limit for this article, I direct the reader to Prof. Dykstra's *Standard Bearer* articles (April 1, 2018, and April 15, 2018) titled "Vocation, or, To what life and work does God call you?" for that discussion. Also, talk to others about it (parents, friends, elders, pastors). Sometimes we are not the best judge of our own abilities.

All that being said, I leave you with the question I never was asked: "Is God calling you to be a teacher?"

Originally published in:

Vol. 77 No. 8 August 2018