

# My Wish for My Students

(an undelivered address)

- I want my students to be intellectually curious, seeking understanding rather than grades and insight rather than approval.
- I want my students to work at understanding their own selves—who they are, how they have been made, what they love, what they might be suited for.
- I want my students to realize that they have much to learn, and to do the hard work of learning: reading, thinking, discussing, writing, reflecting, evaluating, revising. (Armstrong, Trimble)
- I want my students to love God with all of their being, and their neighbours as themselves. (Jesus)
- I want my students to read widely, not because books, plays, stories, and poems are assigned or deemed “worthy”, but because they love to read; and I want them to read well, because they have learned to distinguish what is worth reading from what is not.
- I want my students to attend concerts, and to know how to listen to music—to truly hear it; to begin to distinguish mediocre music from good, and good music from great; and to hear the world differently because of the great music that they come to love. (Hsu, Smith)
- I want my students to delight in clouds and in weather—of all kinds. (Castor)
- I want my students to know what it means to read a paragraph and spend the rest of the morning or afternoon pondering its meaning and implications; to seek out others with whom to discuss its meaning, and to argue over whether or not it is true, and its continuing significance for their lives.
- I want my students to have learned to ask questions, not in order to challenge authority, but in order to understand.
- I want my students to be humble, merciful, gentle, and pure in heart. (Jesus)
- I want my students to fear the LORD. (Solomon, Job, Qohelet)
- I want my students—every student—to have some practical skill that he or she can use to help those in need. (The Talmud)
- I want my students to discover what they have been made to make—whether with pen and ink, canvas and paint, camera, wood, clay, stone, music, dance—whatever it may be for which God has fitted them.
- I want my students to leave class discussing the topic of the day, not looking down at their mobile phones.
- I want my students to be peacemakers. (Jesus)
- I want my students to want to learn more, not out of the restless curiosity that comes from a distracted, unquiet, or unsettled spirit, but because things interest them, and because they are willing to follow the chain of inquiry wherever it leads. (Socrates, Pieper, Sertillange)
- I want my students to visit museums, and to learn how to look at art—to truly see it; to know what makes some art great and other merely “so-so”; and to see the world differently because of the great art that they come to love.
- I want my students my students to realize that not all questions are equal, that only some things truly are “worth knowing”, that most questions need to become “answerable worth-knowing” questions (Postman & Weingartner), and that the question “Why?” begins to get at the real issue when we ask it for the sixth or seventh time. (Jensen)
- I want my students to live lives of faith, hope, and love. (St. Paul, Pieper)
- I want my students to listen to those with whom they disagree until they understand them (and until those with whom they disagree agree that they have been understood). (Heie, Barr, Zeldin)
- I want my students to be able to be at peace alone with themselves in an empty room. (Pascal)
- I want my students to love learning.
- I want my students to be able to follow a conversation, to eschew side trails in pursuit of understanding, but also to recognize helpful detours when they come up.
- I want my students to recognize the pressures of their culture, to have the self-confidence to examine and judge them, to resist whatever is unworthy and to praise what is good, true, lovely, and praiseworthy. (St. Paul)
- I want my students to understand that there are limits to human knowledge and understanding, that some things we believe by faith, and that those beliefs are just as valid as what can “proven” mathematically or scientifically. (Pieper)
- I want my students to be prudent, just, courageous, and temperate. (Aristotle, Pieper)

I want my students to understand the difference between being rational and rationalism. (Stanlis)

I want my students to delight in those things that are worthy of delight, and to be reduced to silence in the presence of what is truly awe-some. (Plato, Aristotle, Lewis)

I want my students to prefer silence to earbuds, and paper to screens.

I want my students to be men and women of integrity, diligent and faithful in all that they undertake, to the best of their opportunities and abilities.

I want my students to want to understand their beliefs, rather than merely to defend, reinforce, or confirm them.

I want my students to seek wisdom above all. (Solomon)

I want my students to be confident in their faith, but humble, without arrogance.

I want my students to know that imagination and intuition offer genuine insights into reality, and that they are as important as reason in the search for truth and understanding.

I want my students to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and when they are persecuted because of righteousness, to know that they have a hope which cannot perish or fade away. (Jesus)

I want my students to know that everything they have—assets, abilities, talents, appearance—comes from God, and that they are accountable to him for how they use them. (Jesus, St. Paul)

I want my students to appreciate those around them as human beings created in the image of God and precious in his sight. (Lewis)

I want my students to understand that learning that they are wrong about something is almost always the first step to becoming right about it.

I want my students to know that reading is a conversation with someone who is absent, and not merely passing their eyes over the page or pronouncing the words. (Schall, Lewis)

I want my students to delight in the beauties of a well-formed poem or church (or house!) or sonata or triptych.

I want my students to understand the difference between opinion or belief and public defense of the same. (Heie)

I want my students to understand that every day is a gift.

I want my students to see their writing as communicating with another person. (Trimble)

I want my students to know the joy of discovery.

I want my students to love, praise, and admire those things that are truly lovely, praiseworthy, and admirable, and to hate, despise, and abhor whatever is truly hateful, despicable, and abhorrent. (Plato, Aristotle, Lewis, Budziszewski)

I want my students to be comfortable sitting around a table, eating and talking about things that matter with their peers and elders.

I want my students to write well, and to want to write. (Trimble)

I want my students to understand that the best answer to most questions is another question. (Barr, Postman & Weingartner)

I want my students to know that some myths are real, and that real myths are true. (Tolkien, Lewis)

I want my students to be joyful, patient, kind, and good. (St. Paul)

I want my students to ask “What else can I read?”

I want my students to ask “Why?” and “How do we know that?” because they want genuinely to know, and to ask them again and again until they begin to know.

I want my students to have a spirit of wonder. (Leach)

I want my students to see the stars. (Dante)

**I**N NONE of this is the increase of knowledge the most pressing goal—knowing who composed or painted or thought or wrote this or that, or when, or why, or what that or this “means”, or where it comes from, or what it is “for”. The greater goal is fourfold: (1) hearts thankful that those who have gone before us have blessed us by using faithfully their gifts and abilities; (2) a sense of what really is good, true, and beautiful; (3) the knowledge that reality is true; and (4) the conviction that those who are in Christ are never, never, *never* alone.

And why do I want these things for my students?

Not only because I want students like this in my classes—who wouldn't?—but because in being and becoming persons of this sort, they will find themselves growing into the image of the stature of Jesus Christ, becoming what they are meant to be in him, in which is found that peace, joy, and happiness for which we all were made and for which we long.

This is my hope for you; and may God have mercy on us all. Thank you very much.

fc  
Easter MMXIV

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