

Personal Reflection – April 2018

Learning to Yield, Learning to Teach

My esteemed teacher (through his books and generous email responses), Walter Brueggemann, loves the word *yield*. I do, too. Where does *yielding* work in my life and in my learning and teaching?

I try to yield to my age (87) and celebrate that reality by a great deal of snoozing, sitting by the fire or on the Back Porch, in sheer joy. The ole fella said: *Sometimes I sits and thinks, and sometimes I just sits.*

I try more and more to yield by offering a quiet response to what others say. My voluble responses of the past are not necessary today, nor are they healthy for me or for the other. A quiet response face-to-face can be a nod and a warm smile; on the phone, “Yes! I see.” Such, yielding serves us both!

I try to yield to the weather, celebrating rain and snow, heat and humidity, glorious blue-sky North Carolina days - without distinction. All is Grace. I try to yield to the joy of cooking and of dining with friends. Yielding in this case means *taking time. Slow down, Jane, you move too fast!*

I yield to my importunate cocker spaniel’s big dark eyes staring at me exactly at five p.m., reminding me: *It is dinner time!* I am trying to yield to the relentless “buts” that often are a response to a suggestion I make. *It was only a suggestion. Thanks for listening.*

I see now that *yielding*, far from being a sign of weakness, is a sign of deep trust and strength. Jesus’ mother is reported to have said, as she yielded to God: *Be it done to me according to your Word.* Later in the story, Jesus is said to have repeated his mother’s prayer, saying in the garden, *“Not my will, but thine be done”.*

William Isaacs in his book *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together* names this process *suspending*. He calls it one of the basic elements of dialogue.

What has all this got to do with teaching?

What you are doing speaks so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying.

Thank you, Walter Brueggemann and William Isaacs!

by Jane Vella