

Teach 4 the Heart Podcast Transcript

Episode 354 – How to Respond with Love When You Want to be Defensive

00:00 Navigating Defensiveness in Teaching

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

It can be so easy to get defensive when students, parents, colleagues, admin, whoever it is, are kind of talking to us and we don't agree with what they're saying. It can be so easy to get defensive and upset. But today we want to dive into how do we handle those feelings in a way that is Christ honoring and glorifying to Him. Well, welcome back to the Teach 4 the Heart podcast where we tackle teaching challenges from a biblical perspective. Why are we here?

because we don't believe that our spiritual walk and teaching profession should exist in two separate domains. Rather, the hope we have in Christ should change how we approach everything, not just at home, but at school as well. So join us as we explore both the spiritual and practical sides of key teaching challenges, integrating them together so we can succeed at teaching, glorify God, and make a lasting difference in our students' hearts and lives. This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation.

And I'm so excited to once again be joined by Sarah Humes, one of our long time Teach 4 the Heart team members and a Teach 4 the Heart Plus mentor. Sarah, thank you so much for being with us again today.

Sarah Humes (01:03)

Thank you again for having me. Hi everyone.

Linda Kardamis (01:07)

So we get a lot of mentor questions in Teach 4 the Heart Plus, which if you're not familiar, Teach 4 the Heart Plus is our membership that includes all of our best PD programs and courses. And then you also have the ability to ask mentor questions on our coaching calls or in our support inbox. And we've noticed that we get quite a lot of questions sometimes. ~ We noticed a few questions that were kind of following a similar pattern where a teacher is struggling with being defensive.

~ about different situations. It could be the one was about a student, that is an issue with a student. It could be a parent. It can come up so many different ways, but we thought this would be a great topic to talk about on the podcast about what do we do when we are feeling that defensiveness rise up in us and we know that's probably not causing us to like want to respond in an un-Christ-like way and how do we kind of combat those feelings and have a right response.

02:01 Understanding the Roots of Defensiveness

So Sarah, do you want to share maybe a little bit about some of the questions we're getting or maybe an example that we could use as we go through this?

Sarah Humes (02:07)

Sure. basically, the email, one of the emails that we received, and I just thought that this one was so good because unlike a lot, you know how a lot of times people are like, what do I do about this other person? This other person is so, insert the negative adjective, right? Well, I loved the emails that we get where people are like,

Okay, I can admit maybe I'm a little bit of the problem here. I think that that humility is so amazing and such a great way to grow. And so not too long ago, we got an email that was from a teacher who said, I get super defensive when people question me and particularly her students when her students are questioning her. And I thought, wow.

I think this is a great thing for us to talk through because I know that at the end of a long teaching day or sometimes even at the beginning of a teaching day where I haven't had enough sleep or I've just for whatever reason maybe I'm in a mood. don't maybe okay would I ever get in a mood it's not I'm gonna be honest like it's not very very rare it's very rare but I do have a mood every now and then.

To be quite honest. ~ But you know, like we have those days where we're like, do I really have to explain myself to you? You know, and I think it's really important to talk about why we might get defensive and how to respond maybe differently or also like how to give ourselves grace when we are defensive and maybe even like

Linda Kardamis (03:39)

I never do.

Sarah Humes (04:06)

How do we respond to our students after we're defensive and maybe we want to apologize or make sure that we don't do that again, you know, that whole repent thing. yeah.

Linda Kardamis (04:16)

Yeah.

Yeah, there's, my goodness, there's so much we're gonna talk to. We're probably only gonna scratch the surface of this topic, but yeah, I think this can come up and show itself in so many ways, right? And if you think back to your own life, both in and out of the classroom, it might be students that are really, like this teacher was the students that were really bugging them. You might have a colleague that when they make a suggestion, it really just irks you. It might be parents. You might just be like, I can't handle it when parents question things. Or maybe there's an administrator or someone that's.

So it's gonna look different maybe for everybody, but kind of maybe think right now, like yeah, what is it that kind of gets me, gets my dukes up? And kind of have that example in mind as we talk through some of this. So I think one of the first things to maybe start with is asking yourself like, why am I feeling this way? And thinking about going a little bit deeper and saying, what is causing me? What emotions am I feeling?

Sarah Humes (04:57)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (05:12)

And kind of naming that can be an immediately first helpful thing of recognizing, okay, I am feeling this way because, you know, because of this. Sarah, do you have any examples of like what that might look like?

Sarah Humes (05:25)

I mean, for me personally, sometimes it's, I'm feeling this way because I'm wondering if they're right, you know, and I just, I mean, I'm not saying that that is the case for the other person. For me, that is often the case. Like when I get called out, ~ I can think of this particular instance where another educator was like, you really shouldn't have handled that.

Linda Kardamis (05:32)

I don't want to examine that, yeah.

Sarah Humes (05:54)

like that and she was completely right. And ~ I was just shocked the way she handled it, you know what I mean? And so maybe shock is part of it too. But you know, but part of it is like the imposter syndrome. I hear teachers say all the time, what, how, how am I leading kids? Like, how am I in charge of these people? How did this happen? You know, ~ but also like, you know, we get tired.

Linda Kardamis (06:02)

Mm-hmm.

Sarah Humes (06:22)

We're worn out. This is a hard job. I mean, a lot of the people we serve aren't just teachers, but they are people who have families at home, which, hello, that's not easy. ~ You know, I think of, especially when your kids are little and you're trying to go to school, you have a baby who didn't sleep through the night, you go to school and you're like,

barely, you you're trying to get the kids to the babysitter before school and, you know, trying to get them out the door in the middle of winter. you know, I've just been living those days and I want to cry, like just remembering them. ~ And they're hard, you know? And then maybe there was a point where my husband was like, okay, you need to consider maybe leaving the classroom.

And that was a point of contention every day. And so that was in the back of my head. And he was like, we miss you at home. This is a long commute, all of those things. And so there's a lot that could be going on in our heads every day to make us defensive. And so I think self-examination is worth it at that

Linda Kardamis (07:36)

Yeah. So

it's so important, right, to recognize that, like, what is underneath that? You know, if it's, yeah, I'm really exhausted or I have all these emotions going on. Just recognizing that, like, our responses can be colored by that or from history or from so many things. And just recognizing that can be helpful to recognize, okay, part of the reason I'm feeling so defended is because I'm exhausted. I did not get enough sleep last night. That can immediately perspective shift it.

08:05 The Power of Prayer in Response

~ Or sometimes like you're saying recognizing, you know, maybe like I'm feeling undervalued in this position. So that is making everything that happens. I am immediately equating that with, yeah, nobody appreciates me. And that's making everything seem more awful than it is. So just recognizing this can immediately just put a little bit of perspective on it and help us recognize, okay, this is part of why. So let me try to.

You can't really totally detach from that, but let me kind of step back and look at it with a little bit of fresh eyes. So that's really good. So after we kind of think through, you know, why am I feeling this way? You know, what all is going on? Then the next thing that we can do is to kind of consider, ~ well, actually, I think the next thing we should do is pray about it. So before we even get into the, do I respond and all of that, just...

Sarah Humes (08:40)

Yes.

Linda Kardamis (09:00)

praying about it is so helpful. And obviously this is happening like in the moment in the classroom, you might just be a quick, God help me, I need your help. You might not have time. You might have to come back later and process. So we're talking more about like when you come back later and process through a moment, taking some time to pray about it. And I think there's definitely space here to share your honest and raw feelings with God. We talked some on the podcast and in Hope Renewed about lament. You might even need to do a little bit of crying or lamenting with God and just really sharing what you feel, depending on how deeply this affected you.

that might be something that's part of that. But then asking him for help, like, God, help me know how to respond well, give me wisdom, the Holy Spirit is in me, help me to do that. So I just think prayer is a

really important piece, maybe even before you really try to think of, how should I be responding to this?

Sarah Humes (09:45)

Yeah, I love the verse in Psalm 61. Actually, it's a group of verses. It's Psalm 61, one through three. And it says, my cry, O God, listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth, I call to you. When my heart is faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. And now, obviously, I'm not calling our students our enemy. Ever.

But, you know, when we're facing those struggles, I just, I love the phrase, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. And there's this song that says, when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. And I think about that all the time, because for me, a lot of times that defensiveness comes from feeling that overwhelm and just going to God and giving those thoughts and emotions and.

Now what? You know, in prayer to him is just like, you know, he's hearing your cry, he's going to listen to your prayer and he'll help you know what's next.

Linda Kardamis (11:55)

America turns 250 years old next summer. And as we approach this incredible milestone, the Herzog Foundation is launching the Freedom Tour—a national event series celebrating the history and hope of America. It's a powerful reminder that our freedoms—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—aren't government-made, they're God-given.

The Freedom Tour invites you to experience how faith shaped our founding- and to carry that message into your classrooms, your homes, and your communities.

And that's not all. Starting this summer, the Herzog Foundation is also releasing a new video series called Faith & Freedom 250. Every Friday, you'll hear voices from across America—teachers, parents, pastors, and leaders—sharing powerful stories from our nation's history and reminding us why our founding values still matter today. Learn more and follow along at FreedomTour250.com.

11:58 Choosing Christ-like Responses

Linda Kardamis (11:58)

So after we pray about it, I think one of the next things we can do is just thinking through, ~ like choosing to respond the way God would have us respond. And I think there's two pieces to this. I think first it's thinking through, how would God have us respond? Because sometimes it's not immediately obvious. Sometimes what we are thinking we should do is like, okay, this actually isn't the Christ-like response. So kind of sometimes we have to like go through and think about that.

And then choosing to actually do it. So sometimes we do know what to do or we've gotten to the point where like, I know what to do, but I still like, it's just like not the way our flesh wants to respond. So both the kind of recognition and then the actual response. And I'll share what's kind of helped my

favorite verse for this. And then Sarah, maybe you can share some of yours. One of my favorite verses whenever I am just annoyed with somebody is,

Sarah Humes (12:34)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (12:50)

Colossians 3 and I forget which verse, I think it's maybe 12 through 17, somewhere in there and it goes, therefore as God's chosen ones holy and dearly loved put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if you have a grievance against another, just as the Lord forgave you. You are also to forgive, And above all put on love which binds us together in perfect unity.

and let the peace of God rule in your hearts and be thankful." And it goes on from there. And I kind of do what I just did. I slow down and I think about each of those words and it just kind of like, for me, like, it like takes the wind all out of my sails. Like when I'm like, I got my dukes up and that's my fleshy response. And normally I've already responded, unfortunately, with a little bit of that. And I have to just step back and be like, And it's just like, no, okay, okay, I can't, I can't. That's not the right way to respond.

Sarah Humes (13:36)

Thank

Linda Kardamis (13:47)

need compassion, humility, patience. And for me, that bearing with word is super helpful. It implies like maybe the other person is being a little overbearing, but I'm supposed to bear with it. Even so. And it's okay. And God is there. And it's a wonderful thing. It's a beautiful thing. And you never regret responding that way. You know, we never do. So, Sarah, what about you?

Sarah Humes (14:12)

~ There are so many verses that just soften my heart. One of the things that is like a daily prayer of mine to begin the day is to help me see the people around me when I look at them that I can just remember that God loves them so much. And I know that that maybe seems like a childlike prayer or something like that, but I think if I can just remember that God loves them just like he loves me.

Linda Kardamis (14:31)

Mm.

Sarah Humes (14:41)

And that just helps keep me humble. That just helps me remember that the way I do things is not any better, the way I think is not any better. so then I think, I love Galatians, Galatians 5, there's this whole thing that talks about how we're in freedom. And we have freedom in Christ. ~

Linda Kardamis (14:46)

Yeah.

Sarah Humes (15:09)

And we could use that for an opportunity to serve our flesh. But it says, love, serve one another, for the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbors yourself. And then it says, but if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. And there's another version of those verses, another translation that

~ It says beware of destroying one another.

Linda Kardamis (15:40)

Mm.

Sarah Humes (15:40)

And that really just like, it catches in my throat. Like I don't want to destroy anyone that God has made. I want to encourage them and let them know how much God loves them. I mean, yes, they might kind of me crazy, but I want them to know everything that he has done for them. You know, like part of why I'm here is to share the love of Christ with people.

and I have to remember my place. And so I go back to that all the time. Like, I might think I'm right, but really, it doesn't matter what I think about my opinion. And so I don't want to destroy any of my brothers or sisters. And I come back to that time and time again.

Linda Kardamis (16:13)

Yeah.

Yeah. my goodness, that's so good, right? And just that perspective shift, right? Because when we're defensive, we're worried about our own emotions. And I mean, that's natural. there's nothing, I mean, that's part of life, right? I mean, nothing inherently wrong with that. But taking that perspective just outside, like just getting it a little bit higher, right? Outside of just my own concerns and my own feelings and just seeing like, yes, this is someone God loves and just getting that heavenly.

eternal perspective of like, wow, there's so much more important things going on here than just how I'm feeling in this situation. And that can really just help us to have that compassion and have that love. And if it's still not helping us, just remember we have the Holy Spirit in us, right? And He empowers us to do what we can't do on our own. If you're feeling like I just can't, I can't do it, keep praying for help because God

Sarah Humes (17:12)

Nice.

Absolutely.

Linda Kardamis (17:21)

is there. And I'm talking to myself, my goodness, this is so helpful to just think through this ~ as well, because I do think it can just crop up so easily in so many different areas.

Sarah Humes (17:29)

If you

don't close my mind, Linda, is like there's that verse in Romans, I think it's Romans chapter eight, where this just every time I think about it, it is like, what? Like when we are struggling with that defensiveness or we're struggling with how in the world am I going to like love on this person, that power from the Holy Spirit is enough power to raise Christ from the dead, right?

Linda Kardamis (17:57)

Yes.

17:57 Embracing Grace in Teaching

Sarah Humes (17:57)

So if that power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us from the Holy Spirit, I know that that power can help me get through this day, this moment. And there's just so much hope in that. I just, I cling to that so many times.

Linda Kardamis (18:07)

Yes, yes.

I love that. love that. if those of that like music, a good song maybe to add to your playlist or go to listen to after this podcast is Phil Wickham's song, The Jesus Way. And he talks in that about just kind of like, it's really good. I'm not gonna spoil it for you. You go listen to it. It is so good. And kind of just reinforcing this idea of like, yes, I'm gonna respond the way that Jesus would have me respond. So that's awesome. Any final thoughts there as we wrap this one up?

Sarah Humes (18:24)

Yes.

I'm just getting so pumped up. I just, I love, I love when we get an opportunity to bring the true grace of the gospel into how we are serving those that we are teaching and living with and walking side by side with every day. I think it's, I think it's exactly how Christ meant for us to live.

Linda Kardamis (18:43)

Hahaha

It's a beautiful, a beautiful opportunity. So thank you guys so much for listening. As we wrap up, I have a few things just to share with you. We've mentioned a few things in today's episode. We talked first in the beginning about Teach for the Heart Plus where we have, where we answer mentor questions and help. So if that's something that you are interested in, you can go to [teach4theheart.com / plus](http://teach4theheart.com/plus), ~ and you can find out more information about that. Another program we have is our Hope Renewed program, which is a five week kind of.

Sarah Humes (19:05)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (19:30)

of a nation of like Bible study and teaching that really helps you kind of stop feeling defeated and teach with joy and the hope of the Lord and kind of dive into some more of this of like how do we respond and react the way Jesus would have. So that's at [teach4theheart.com / hope renewed](http://teach4theheart.com/hope-renewed). And if you're interested in either one of these programs, because you're a podcast listener, if you use the code podcast 20, you can save 20 % on either of those. We'll also link to these in the notes for this week's episode, which will be at [teach4theheart.com /354](http://teach4theheart.com/354)

Well, this episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. All views and opinions are our own and don't necessarily reflect those of the Herzog Foundation. Thank you so much for being with us. We look forward to being with you again soon. In the meantime, teach you remember God is at work in you and through you, and he's using you to make a difference. Keep your eyes on him and teach for the heart.