

## Episode 367 – 6 Mistakes Teachers Make Coming Back From Break

### 00:00 Returning to School: Mistakes to Avoid

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

So we're heading back to school after the break. Here are some mistakes that you will definitely want to avoid. 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. Today I'm joined again by Julie, one of our Teach 4 the Heart team members and our podcast manager. Julie, thank you for being with us again today.

Julie (00:46)

Yeah, thanks again for having me.

Linda Kardamis (00:49)

So today we're gonna be talking about some mistakes that we wanna avoid when we're coming back from a break, right? In a break, it's a little bit of a fresh start coming back from the break, heading back into the classroom, but there's some things that we don't wanna do and then some things that we do wanna do. So we're excited to dive into these with you today. So the first one that we have is one that I've definitely made before. And it's...

It's a little bit tricky to explain, but it basically works like this. Sometimes when we come back from a break, we had trusted in that break to revive us. And so when we're heading back into the break, we're really frustrated because it wasn't enough. So it's this idea of I had counted on the break to make everything better. I thought I would feel revived. I thought I would feel refreshed. And here I am coming back to the break and I'm not. And the real problem there is that we put too much trust in the time off.

Now time off is good, it's important, we need that downtime, we need that rest. But if there is some really big issues going on or some really big challenges that we're facing, often a break is not enough for us to totally feel ready to dive back into them. And I think there's two ways to tackle this. ~ One is

on the spiritual level. It's recognizing that a lot of times what we really need to do is find our hope in Christ.

not in how we feel or the problem going away and recognizing like Christ is with me and God will help me and I need to work through my emotions towards this issue with him so that I'm ready to engage and not just thinking if I took time off that I'll magically just feel better about it. And I think the second thing from a practical standpoint is sometimes there are things that need to change.

Like sometimes there's things happening that are leaving us exhausted or overwhelmed. And what actually needs to happen is I need to change how I'm approaching this, or I need to advocate for a change in the schedule. Or, you know, there's something practical that I need to do differently ~ so that I can work more sustainably. So my advice is if you are finding yourself like, I'm not ready to go back and it's because I was hoping I would feel better to dig in and just recognize ready or not, here it comes. And to dig into both the spiritual and practical side.

looking for, how can I approach this and dive back in from that perspective?

### **03:08 The Importance of Change After Break**

Julie (03:14)

Right, yeah, I've absolutely done the same time and time again, which I hate to admit, but it's true, And we always think, if I just had, a three-day weekend, or if I just had a week off or two weeks off. And like you say, the break is such a gift. Like it is much needed. we need that physical rest and time with family to rejuvenate, but you know, it's not going to magically fix your burnout or the months of stress.

that you have just endured and it's not going to erase the energy that you've expended. And so like you said, taking time to identify what it is that's really making us feel that way. And if it's something that's self-inflicted, like can we readjust our schedules or the way that we're taking home work? Then I think that's things to really reevaluate and also to, like you said,

I was reminded of a scripture, so Matthew 11, 28, Jesus said, come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. And, you know, I stopped to think that was written so, so long ago and how much that applies today. And it's not just an invitation for that one-week break, in December. That is an ongoing invitation all year long that we—

should take advantage of.

Linda Kardamis (04:32)

Yes, absolutely. So thank you so much for sharing your thoughts on that. Yes, just going to God because he is the one that gives us rest, absolutely. So number one, mistake, trusting in that break to revive us is often not gonna be enough. Number two, mistake, is not taking the opportunity to make changes. ~ Now, what kind of change you might wanna make totally depends, and I'm not saying that you have to make a change every time you come back from the break.

But what I am saying is if there are things that you've been wanting to change or that need to change, the break provides a really good opportunity for a little bit of a fresh start to make them. I'm talking about all kinds of different things. It could be a classroom management issue in your class that you're like, OK, we kind of need to address this. We need to change the expectation or change how we're handling this. It could be something in your class structure. This hasn't been working. I want to remake this procedure or remake how I teach the math class or

### **05:56 Managing the First Week Back**

and stop doing it this way. It could be something in your own schedule. Man, I need to take a fresh look at how I'm organizing my time and try something different. It's anything. So I'm not saying, once again, that you have to make a change every new year or every time you have a spring break or whatever it is. But I think it's a mistake for us not to at least ask ourselves, hey, is there something that I should change? Because while we can make a change any time, those coming back from a break just

is a little bit easier to reset, to create a fresh start. It's that opportunity and we don't want to neglect it because we didn't even consider it.

Julie (06:06)

Right. And yeah, I think a break absolutely lends itself to the perfect time to reset and relook at, you know, what was not going great before and what can I change after Christmas, I was like, you know, I really need to come up with something to keep my students from putting like gum wrappers in my sinks.

So I taught science, so we had a big science lab and I noticed as we got closer to Christmas, I'm like, why am I finding wrappers in my sinks? Maybe we need to relook at the procedures or is gum allowed? Or is that something we're gonna do in class? And then reminding them, which they knew, but I'm reminding them gently like, hey, we have three trash cans you could choose from in this corner, this corner, or this corner. And so something even as simple as that.

I feel like made such a big difference in the second half of the year and I wasn't getting annoyed and frustrated every time, that came up because it came up way less because we addressed it and we went back and fixed things that we may have neglected before the break.

Linda Kardamis (07:07)

Yeah, and that's what brings up a great point of just if you're like, I don't know what to change. Just ask yourself what's been bugging me. What's something that's really been causing an issue or causing chaos? And that's a great problem to figure out. Okay, what could we do differently? Love that.

So that's number two mistake. Number three mistake is overloading the first week back. Sometimes we are heading back into that first week back and we're like, okay, we're going to get back on track and I'm going to do this this and this this and this. And we just kind of hit the ground running and it's like too much.

too soon. So want to be kind of careful in how we plan that first week back. Julie, you had a lot of good thoughts on this that you could share.

Julie (08:44)

Yeah, and coming from teaching a tested subject too, it's really hard to think, okay, we've got this test in April and I have to hit all of these standards before we get there and then also leave time for review for the test. And so I think just kind of reminding myself that first day back, maybe the first two or three days back, depending on what break we're coming back from is you're not behind. It's okay. It's all about reentry, not about productivity. So...

I always try to make a point to take time ~ to let the kids reflect and review on what we learned, find fun ways to kind of incorporate that, refresh their memory, but then also give them a chance to like have a glance at what we're gonna be doing in the future, like get them excited about what we're learning. And all of that is just as impactful rather than, you know, coming back day one and putting the book on the desk and say, here you go, flip to page 14, ~ So I feel like...

### **09:39 Revisiting Classroom Procedures**

Just reminding yourself that you're not behind. It's okay. You're going to get to those standards. Just take time to reconnect with your students. ~ You know, it's gonna be okay.

Linda Kardamis (09:50)

Yes, and just, yeah, I think sometimes we can get frantic and hurried and ~ that's not, we don't need to do that, especially on that first day back. So the next one we have is failing to revisit classroom procedures and expectations. And this I think is particularly relevant over a longer break like Christmas break where it's been a little while and also where...

Honestly, the week or two leading up to it, things probably started to get a little crazy because everyone is just so excited for the break. So when we're coming back, it's a really good time to revisit ~ expectations, re-practice procedures. And that also ties back into what we were saying about not overloading those first weeks back, because it's like you do need to take some time to re-teach procedures, re-talk about what to expect. And once again, that's an investment of time that's going to way pay off in being able to learn the whole rest of the...

rest of the semester. yeah, taking that time to, I wouldn't take as much time as I did the beginning of the year, but taking a little bit of time to remind everybody the expectations, work on procedures if the ones that you need to, and just get things back where we want them to be so that you can have a productive next few months of learning.

Julie (11:01)

Mm-hmm. And if you think about older students too, you know, kids who have multiple class periods, every teacher's expectations are going to be a little bit different. You know, each room's procedures and routines are going to vary differently. ~ So just taking the time to remind them, hey, remember in math, this is how we do this thing. ~ And I feel like, you know, don't assume that they remember all of the rules and expectations, but I always like to give them the opportunity to.

So one fun thing that I had come up with was, kids will do just about anything for a Jolly Rancher. And so I'd have my bucket of Jolly Ranchers and I would say, okay, think back to the first day of school. We went over rules, expectations, and then what we were going to learn for the year. I said, if you could tell me something you remember from those slides, raise your hand. And it's amazing how many things that they did remember, rules, procedures, and then ~ subject content that we were going to, you know,

go over and so I was like, hmm, it's interesting what you remember. And so the things that were not listed, we would, I'd pull the slides back up and then go over those. And then like we talked about changing things that might need to be readdressed. And so I'd usually create a new slide to tack onto that of any procedures that we were going to change. So yeah, don't expect them to remember everything, but it doesn't hurt to give them the chance to, because you you might be amazed of what

they do end up remembering.

### **12:30 Building Relationships with Students**

Linda Kardamis (12:30)

that way of doing it. It's a good blend of ~ pulling kids in and then giving opportunity and then seeing what do I actually need to talk about because they didn't remember that piece. That's really smart. So that's number four. Number five, mistake we don't want to make is neglecting relationships in the rush to get back on track. So this kind of falls into some of the same theme we were talking about before. We're kind of in a rush to get back going, get everything back on track, but

recognizing that we're always wanting to build relationships. And particularly as we're coming back, this is a spot where we can take just a few moments to reconnect with our students, to show them that we care. They just spent a lot of time with family, Lord willing, and so did we. And so ~ that might be fresh on their mind. And so it just creates those opportunities to talk about that, to connect over things that aren't school related. And we don't want to miss that.

Julie (13:24)

Yeah, I mean, you hear all the time that students aren't going to learn from a teacher who they don't feel respects them. And so it's a very natural time to just build in that intentionality to reconnect with your students and then ask about what's going on in their personal life and how their break was. Because I've found that all ages want to share. You it's not just the kindergartners who want to raise

their hand and have a fun story, but even, you know, your older kids, a lot of times want to share their experiences too. ~

And then I feel like one trap we can always avoid falling into, especially after Christmas break, is not asking, okay, what vacation did you go on? What gift did you get for Christmas? ~ We know our students have varying backgrounds ~ and not everyone's gonna go on a vacation. Not everyone's gonna get a Christmas gift. And so I feel like if we can find ways to ask maybe who did you spend time with over break? Or what was the best part about not being at school? And most of them will say sleeping in.

So ~ I feel like being intentional with that time to reconnect and just be human and not be teacher and student, but just to be human with one another, but also being cautious when it comes to what it is we're asking them to share with the class, because not everyone's break experience is going to be the same. Not everyone's break was going to be really exciting either.

Linda Kardamis (14:49)

Yeah, picking a question that everyone can answer in a way that's comfortable. think that's a great thing to keep in mind. So that's number five. then number six mistake we don't want to make returning from break is we don't want to not seek God's guidance on what to adjust. In other words, we want to pray about everything that we're doing. We've talked a lot about taking the break as an opportunity to make changes, about not overloading the first week.

making sure we revisit our expectations, relationships, like all these things, we wanna bathe them in prayer, right? Asking God to guide us, help us know what questions to ask, who to talk to, who to connect with, what things to focus on, and recognizing that, yeah, we can do that on our own, and maybe we'd even do a good job, but we're neglecting that opportunity to invite Christ in to this space, and obviously, he has so much more wisdom and knowledge of what's going on in those students' lives than we do.

### **15:16 Seeking God's Guidance in Teaching**

And so allowing him to speak to us is gonna make us more effective and it's also deepening our relationship with him. So mean, there's so many reasons to do this, but I honestly just think in the busyness, I know speaking for myself, I can sometimes just like, ~ I go in through my to-do list and I didn't pray about any of these things, I just got done. So definitely always, always valuable anytime we invite God in and pray about it and listen to him as we're making even these small day-to-day decisions.

Julie (16:11)

Right. And a lot of times our classroom problems can be complex. You know, might not seem like that to us, but we don't always see the whole picture. You know, we've got bias and emotions and preconceived ideas, but I feel like praying for clarity or a new perspective and like you say, guidance

on what to change because, he sees what tomorrow holds, we do not. And so just trusting him to help us prepare and make those changes is so, so important.

Linda Kardamis (16:40)

Absolutely, and he's always there, right? He cares. He's just a prayer away. He's with us all the time, he wants us to reach out to him so that we know that the answer came from him and not from ourselves, and we can grow our faith in that way. So encourage you to do that every single day and today as you're heading back from break.

Thank you guys so much for talking about this. I hope kind of thinking through some of these mistakes is giving you some ideas and hopefully help you avoid some of these mistakes that we've definitely made from time to time heading back to break. Julie, do you have any final advice for people as we wrap up?

Julie (17:13)

would say just remembering that it's a natural reset, restart. God's mercies are new every morning. And so it's just like a natural deep breath of, okay, here we go, we're starting again. Take the things that you loved from before the break and change the things that don't. And I feel like even making those small adjustments can really impact the rest of your year.

Linda Kardamis (17:35)

Absolutely. Well, thank you guys so much for being with us. We enjoyed talking with you today and there's all kinds of resources we have. As you think about this, you're like, man, I could use some help. We have free trainings on classroom management. We have free trainings on time management. We have full courses, Classroom Management 101, Reclaim Your Time 101, Hope Renewed. So we have so many things to help you. If you want to check those out, we'll link to some of those in the show notes.

And then also if you just go to [teach4theheart.com](http://teach4theheart.com) and scroll down, you can see so many of those resources there. So if there's an area where you feel like, man, I could really use some more practical help, definitely hop on over. We'd love to be able to help you kind of dive deeper into some of these topics that you might want to adjust, but not quite sure what to adjust.

So thank you guys so much for being with us. This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. All views and opinions are our own and don't necessarily affect those of the Herzog Foundation. If you enjoyed this episode, please do like, subscribe, share, comment, leave a review. All those things really do help us to reach more people. Well, we appreciate you being here and 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 4 the heart.