

Episode 405: How to Stay Positive When the Education World Feels Negative

00:00 Staying Positive as a Teacher

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

The teaching professions can sometimes feel dark and negative. How do we stay positive amidst the negativity? Well, we're gonna talk about that in today's episode. Welcome back to the Teach 4 the Heart podcast, where we tackle teaching challenges from a biblical perspective. This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation.

Amanda joins us again to talk about this important topic. Amanda, thank you for joining us today.

Amanda Reed (00:58)

Happy to be back.

Linda Kardamis (00:59)

So we've been thinking about this question, right? And I think we get this question a lot. How do you stay positive

Amanda Reed (01:04)

Mm-hmm.

Linda Kardamis (01:05)

when things feel so negative? And I mean, I don't have to convince you that things feel heavy and negative, right? I think we know this, but it really can be hard sometimes to keep that positive attitude when, you know, the teacher's lounge feels negative and the news feels negative, and there's just this negativity all around.

Amanda Reed (01:26)

Yeah, I've I've said this many times that teaching is a profession where it is so easy to complain, but we disguise it by calling it venting. We we vent to each other about different things, about this email that we had, or this meeting that we're going to have, or what this student did during class. We we we call it venting to make ourselves feel better about complaining all the time. It just it naturally happens in the teaching profession.

Linda Kardamis (01:52)

Yeah, and that can wear on us, right? It can really, it can be, it can be difficult. So we want to talk today about some just important ways that we can choose positivity and not just in a fluffy way, but a real meaningful

02:04 Choose Gratitude

positive attitude in our hearts. So the first area we want to talk about is gratitude. And I know Amanda, you have a lot of experience in working with this with kind of your staff. So why don't you share a little bit about how you've used gratitude to help build a more positive atmosphere?

Amanda Reed (02:23)

So staying positive is a personal choice that you have to make. And it's really a matter of working on your own heart and your own mind because you can't control what people around you are going to say or do or how they think. So my main suggestion is to make Philippians 6.8 your verse for a little while, whether it's for a month or the rest of the semester or the entire school year. and Philippians 6.8, I'm gonna read it so I don't mess up the words here. Philippians 6.8 says,

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. So there was one one school year where it was actually the school year after after the COVID pandemic, we were all coming back to school and things were just really, really heavy. And there was a whole lot to to complain about and just a lot of negativity, you know.

naturally. and so we had this idea that we were going to make that like our our school verse for the year for our staff. And we got a thousand postcards from from the store. And every staff meeting we would bring those postcards to to the meeting and the teachers would write down anything good for that day. We would focus on anything, whether it was you know, the copier didn't mess up or I was able to actually sit and eat my lunch. And then there was also some great things on there, but they had to choose one

positive thing. And then we would share some of those. We would put some of those in in in our emails that we would send instead of having a meeting, we would put them in people's mailboxes. We would put them on their desk just as a reminder that good things are happening. And when we change our mindset to, this day has been so long, like I don't want to do this meeting or I don't want to do this or I don't want to grade these papers. When we first decide we're going to

think of something great. We're gonna think of something that's praiseworthy, anything that is praiseworthy. it's kind of hard to complain after you just thank God for something. It makes it really hard. and so just that simple mind shift of one little thing, even if it's, you know, you see that one student that comes in and it's it's that student where you see him and you just like, you can you can thank God for his health. Thank you, God, for having a making this child healthy today.

Or that parent sends that email, you know, you can thank God that this parent or that the student has a parent who who cares for them, or that you have eyesight so you can read that email, or you you you were taught to read so you can simply read that email. Just changing something to an attitude of gratitude. I know that's kind of a cliché thing to say. but if you can just start anything with with gratitude, whatever is praiseworthy, anything,

It can slowly start to turn your day around.

Linda Kardamis (05:17)

Yes. And I think it's part of the reason that's so powerful, particularly for us as believers, is because we know that God has God has given us so many blessings, right? there we have so much truly to be thankful for just in our daily lives, but even more, you know, in Jesus and sending his son and being with that. Like there's he's given us all his riches. And the problem is we just we just aren't thinking about that, you know, every moment of every day. We get so like bogged down with all the very real challenges that we're dealing with. And I think gratitude.

in just that little thing is a way to just unhook our minds just a little bit from the problems and take

Amanda Reed (05:52)

Mm-hmm.

Linda Kardamis (05:52)

just that tiny step back. And that can often encourage us, remind us of more and more of these truths. And I think that's so helpful.

Amanda Reed (05:58)

Yeah, and God

God is our source of joy, not not how well that student behaves,

06:03 God Is the Source of Joy

not not how friendly that parent is today, not did my admin smile at me today. You can't find your joy in those things. Those can give you little moments of happiness. But God is our source of joy. And when we turn our mind towards him and we make him the center of it, that's when joy starts to just pour out of us.

Linda Kardamis (06:24)

Absolutely. That's so true. And and that kind of brings me to this the second thing I had written down. How do we stay positive when everything feels so negative? I think it's by remembering that we are not alone, right? That God

is with us. I love Joshua 1 9. It says, Have I not commanded you be strong and courageous? Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Now, of course, in context, this is a word to Joshua.

06:36 Remember You're Not Alone

But we know from the rest of scripture that God has absolutely promised, I will never leave you or forsake you. So this absolutely applies to us as well. And I think that's so important to recognize like we, it's easy to get discouraged, but God is with us. We are not entering the classroom alone. We're not entering the you know, IEP meeting alone. We're not entering our, you know, marriage alone, our parenting alone. Like none of this is happening.

by ourselves. We have an amazing God who is powerful, who cares about us, who loves us, and he's with us. And so we don't have to take on all the world's worries. We we can trust him and and we can know that he's with us each moment.

Amanda Reed (07:34)

Yeah, just acknowledging his goodness and just his presence that can make such a change.

Linda Kardamis (07:41)

Absolutely. We're gonna take a quick break and we'll be right back.

All right, so we've been talking about how to stay positive when the education world feels negative. And we talked about the importance of gratitude and just that little, even if even if it's just something tiny is all you can muster, how that one moment of gratitude can really help turn around how we're viewing things. And we talked about remembering that we're not alone, that God is with us. Third thing I've written down is to have an eternal perspective.

And this is really, we kind of alluded to this before, but that zooming out, right? Sometimes our problems feel so big. But when we zoom out a bit and remember the big picture of what is going on, it can really help just frame our perspective. When I talk about that big story, I'm talking about like kind of the large story arc of the Bible, which is that God created a perfect world. Man messed it up with our sin and now it's broken.

08:25 Keep an Eternal Perspective

God sent a savior to redeem us and he's already making things new. But there's a chapter still to come, right? This is not the end of the story. We're still in kind of that messy middle where it's already being renewed, but not yet. There's still a lot of a lot of messed up stuff. But one day God is gonna make everything right and everything's gonna be perfect. And all of that, all that we're frustrated by is gonna be resolved. All that we're longing for is going to finally happen. And I think it's just that's just a helpful remote.

thing to remind ourselves of, right? When we're frustrated with what's happening here and now, it's because God's not done, right? He mourns with us over

Amanda Reed (10:00)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (10:01)

whatever it is that's like, this isn't right, this isn't fair, this isn't just, this is, this is this poor kid, this, you know, whatever it is, that it is, it's, it's in a sense right that we mourn those things, because that's not how it should be, right? and it's not how it will be.

God will make everything right. But in the meantime, He calls us to shine His love and His light. And we actually get to play a role in what God is already doing and what He'll one day bring to completion. So that's, I mean, that's, you know, a little bit, you know, that's that's not always what we're thinking about. But but when we stop and remind us of that, it just, it just changes, right? The problems start to look smaller than they did. and they kind of puts it back into perspective.

Amanda Reed (10:45)

Yeah, we're we're still in in the middle of of that that whole story. And you no nobody's story is perfect. Nobody's story is is great and fantastic all the time. you know, like any any really good story you can think of, it gets really, really messy before it starts to get really, really good. And the Bible even tells us that, you know, we're we're gonna go through hardships. We're we're gonna go through through different pains. but just keep your eyes on him and

it'll it'll be okay. It'll be all right because he's there, he's always with us and his his his love is perfect and his plan for us is perfect. So we just have to to trust that.

Linda Kardamis (11:26)

Yeah. And sometimes it's easier said than done, but just

Amanda Reed (11:29)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (11:30)

one day at a time and just choosing to trust him in those moments. And that actually brings me to my fourth point, which I think is of we've been talking about I think we kind of started with something very practical,

gratitude, and then we went into a few mindsets. We're gonna come back to something that can really practically help us to do that. And that is community. It's so important that we make godly community a priority. I think it's so easy.

11:40 Prioritize Godly Community

To get really isolated and to be trying to deal with all this stuff kind of on our own. And it's very important that we have a community somewhere where we can really dive deep and to get to know people, right? So I hope that you have a church family, but even within a church family, sometimes we can come, show up, sit in the pew, and just leave and we don't get to know anybody. So it's very important that we're involved in some type of smaller group.

within your church community, you know, or some part where you're connected to the body of Christ, where you can actually get to know people, where they know you, when you're having a rough day, you can pick up a phone call or stop by, and there's someone that will pray with you, that will, that will encourage you, and you'll do the same for them. That is so beautiful. And that doesn't happen in a day. Like that takes work to spend time enough time with people that you feel comfortable.

And that they can speak into your life and that they notice when you're feeling down, but it's it's worth investing in that. And if you're recognizing, man, yeah, I don't, I don't really have that. That's not really, you know, or I have one person and that's it, you know, recognizing that that's worth an investment. And I do think like a church small group or like like it depends what you have at your church, but some type of smaller context within a church is is a great place to start if you're just like, I don't I don't know where to start.

Any advice in this, Amanda?

Amanda Reed (13:24)

Yeah.

Yeah. And of oftentimes you can think like, I don't I don't have time for that. I don't have time for that. I'm too busy. My evenings are filled with with grading papers and emailing and stuff from my own family. But when we're good stewards of our time and making that a priority, it can it can make a world of difference in your life. it's you know, just like with anything that God calls us to be a good steward of. Whenever we have our whenever we have faith and we're putting

We're putting our time and our resources and energy into things that will glorify him, then he's gonna honor that and he's gonna bless that. And so I I know for myself personally, like I I sometimes say, I don't have time for that. I don't have time for that. I have too much to do.

Linda Kardamis (14:06)

Mm-hmm.

Amanda Reed (14:07)

but whenever I do take a step back and I'm like, no, you do have 15 minutes to read your Bible this morning, or you can sacrifice one night this week and go to your Bible study group.

It's going to be okay. Like whenever whenever I leave those those moments and I walk away from those moments, it's not, my goodness, now I have to get caught up. It's okay, I can do this. Like I I feel great. I feel so much better. And I leave in such a better headspace than when I started.

Linda Kardamis (14:36)

Yeah. Yeah, that's such a good point. And it it it can feel like a little overwhelming, scary, all the all these different things, but it benefits us because that's what God designed it, right? Like God designed the church. He designed us to need each other. And I think it's it's so ironic that in our culture with so much connectivity, we feel more disconnected than ever. but it's like

Amanda Reed (14:54)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (14:55)

that is hardwired into us. And so I think we have to be intentional about seeking it out, about saying, hey, this is important. It is

it is a priority. And we're not saying you need to do five different groups, but do you have at least

Amanda Reed (15:05)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (15:06)

one meaningful way to connect where you're building those relationships? I think is is such a good thing.

Amanda Reed (15:13)

Yeah, 'cause I mean it says in the Bible how got God talks about like the body of Christ and how everybody has has has different different gifts and different abilities and different purposes. And when when you're alone, you you can't do all that by yourself. But when you're together with people, you get to witness and be around all the different gifts and blessings that God is intending for your life.

Linda Kardamis (15:36)

Yeah, absolutely. And I think teacher besties are amazing. I hope that you have a wonderful teacher

Amanda Reed (15:41)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (15:41)

bestie. I hope you have a Christian teacher bestie that can encourage you. That's great. but yeah, don't also overlook having just other people that aren't teachers. Sometimes that's a good perspective too.

So I think both an in and out of perspective, they can both be really helpful. Well, I hope you guys found some

of these thoughts helpful. I have one other thing to recommend to you, and that is our rise up summit.

15:58 Rise Up Summit

So at the Rise Up Summit coming up here in just a couple weeks, it's a free, if you're not familiar, it's a free online conference for Christian teachers. Not only will we have some sessions that will specifically address how do I keep from burning out and stay positive, but also this camaraderie piece is does not replace a small group by no means. But there's something powerful about being amongst a bunch of Christian teachers from all around the world and realizing, hey, I'm not alone. There are

ton of other teachers dealing with the same things, going through the same thing and and encouraging themselves in the Lord. So we would love to have you at the Rise Up Summit at riseupchristianeducators.com. Amanda, any final words as we wrap this one up?

Amanda Reed (16:44)

No, just I'm I'm so incredibly excited for the summit because there's also this great piece where you get to network with with other with other educators through our Facebook group and there's so many great sessions about how to not burn out and how to stay just energized and I I can't wait for it.

Linda Kardamis (17:02)

Yes, I hope you guys will definitely join us. So hop on over there. You can sign up for free, or you can grab an all access pass. Once again, riseupchristianeducators.com.

Well, this episode has been 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 for being with us. We look forward to speaking with you again soon. In the meantime, teacher, 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.