



The True Teacher

By JOHN BICKART, Ph.D. | **Science Education and Spiritual Transformation** / Chapter 2: You Are Your Own Best Teacher

In 2007 I learned a great lesson from my students in Shanghai International Studies University. I wrote about it in my book, *20 Opportunities to Transform Yourself While Teaching* (Bickart, 2022, pp. 17-18). It adds to *becoming your own teacher*, watching for the *wonder* in life and even the *unseen*, by underscoring that you must always be grateful for your lessons - especially when they come from your students! Here is that story.

Story #2b

The True Teacher

Telling, I became a teacher.

Listening, I became a student.

Thanking, I became a friend.

And then I woke up to find ...

I was Truly Teaching!

Bill of Rights #2

Learn something from your student that transforms you, then show your gratitude. In other words, truly teach by modeling true learning!

(The Teacher's Bill of Rights - bickart.org)

If you are *telling* somebody something, you could be teaching. If you are *listening*, you could be a student. If you are *thanking*, you could be a friend. But, if you find yourself, as a teacher, listening to a student so well that they taught you something, and you were being moved at having just learned something new, and then, you

thanked them ... then you were being a *true teacher*. You were modeling to them how to learn. You were modeling learning. That is the highest thing for a teacher to do. You want them to thank you, so ... that is what you want to model to your student.

A story. It's back in 2007. I'm in Shanghai International Studies University - SISU, in China. I'm in a position of teaching people who are of all ages. They range from 12 years old to adult. I had students who were doctors, parents, and children. We were going over very simple things having to do with speaking English.

I think it was the first or second day. We split them up into two groups at big round tables and said, "We are going to have a debate. Oh yeah, we know how to teach debating. In America, we argue a lot. We're really good at it. So, I gave them opposite points of view, and I said, "Work on your point of view and decide how to defend it, because you are going to argue against the other group."

I'm standing in the room watching and every single person sitting at the tables is leaning in. They are listening to each other as if every single person - even the 12-year-olds - are the most important people in the world! And I lose it. I have to go the corner of the room for a minute because I'm crying. It is such a moving experience for me to see this beautiful listening that is going on.

Well, the lesson is a bust. They start debating and they did a terrible job. Every time the other group would say the opposite viewpoint, the arguing group would say, "Well, I could see that. I see that point, too. In fact, I needed that opposite point of view in order to complete my view. In fact, I see a middle way."

So, they did not learn the debating, but they taught me a great lesson. By the end of the day, I ended up telling the students, "You taught me about the middle way all over again. It's not like I had never heard of the middle way. It's not like I don't know of the yin and yang for years, but today, you took me another step forward. You showed me how to actually implement a form of listening for the middle way. I just grew. Thank you very much!"

So, although my lesson was a bust, I found myself thanking them for what they taught me. So in the end, it was a very great success. I was a true teacher that day! And that is what I wish for you - to be the true teacher. That's it for today. I'll see you in one of those tomorrows.



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About the Author



John Bickart

John Bickart, Ph.D., likes to work in the background and let good ideas speak for themselves. He believes that children, and sometimes adults, know what they want and that they empower themselves when they listen to their hearts.

References

Bickart, J. (2022). *20 Opportunities to Transform Yourself While Teaching*. Asheville, NC: Red Shirt Interactive Group.