

"Jesus - Our Teacher and Our Friend"
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My first day of First Grade was not a good day.

First of all, my two best friends from Kindergarten were not there. Tina had been "held back" and Sarah had decided to try the "other" elementary school.

Also, I had been expecting Mrs. Rothermel to be my teacher, but it turned out that she decided to have a baby. So when we walked into the room, a stranger greeted us. The stranger's name was Mrs. Milbrand.

Her classroom didn't look too bad, so I decided to stick it out and see how things went.

Things didn't begin very well at all.

Mrs. Milbrand gave us each a piece of paper and she wanted us to write some things on it ... probably our name and some numbers or something like that. Well, I was good at writing so I finished rather quickly and had nothing to do. Then I remembered! Just the day before, I had learned how to whistle! I could practice my whistling!!

I pursed my lips and blew. (whistle here)

From the front of the room came a very stern voice, "WE DON'T NEED ANY WHISTLING!"

Hmmmm. Well, okay, I thought. Whistling is blowing air out....I wonder what would happen if I pulled the air back IN? (hoot)

From the front of the room came that same stern voice, "WE DON'T NEED ANY HOOTING EITHER!"

And I knew it was going to be a long year.

But it turned out that, even though we got off to a rough start, the year really wasn't so bad. It wasn't quite a "musical" as I could have made it with my whistling talents, but we had a good time. Mrs. Milbrand was a lot of fun. We laughed a lot and we learned how to read about Jill, Bill, and Ben. I'll always love her for teaching me that.

Over the years, Mrs. Milbrand and my mother became friends and our families became friends. I even stayed at her house a few times when my parents went away for a few days. I always enjoyed those times ... they were a surprisingly fun family fun family.

Years later, when I was grown-up, I was a teacher at a preschool. Mrs. Milbrand was a preschool teacher then too. I visited her school one day and she proudly showed me her classrooms and the artwork her children had made and the puppet theatre and the playground. "It's all very nice," I told her, "but I suppose you still have that ridiculous policy about the whistling." She told me that she indeed DOES keep that policy, but that she is very careful about how she uses her words when enforcing it. "You must be very careful when speaking to children," she told me, "They remember EVERYTHING you say."

When my son Benjamin was just three days old, I took him to worship at my parents' church. Mrs. Milbrand goes to that church too, and she came over to see Benjamin up close. As she held him in her arms, she shook her head and said, "He's going to be trouble ... he looks like a whistler!"

Last spring, my family was very sad because my grandmother died. On the day of her memorial service, I was standing in the back of the church watching as people arrived, and who should walk through the door? Mrs. Milbrand! I was so happy to see her that I hugged her. We talked for just a few minutes and I told her that I would be singing a song as part of the service. She looked at me with a fun twinkle in her eye and said, "Singing!?! I thought maybe you'd be whistling a few hymns!" And then we laughed as only people who have been friends for a long time can laugh even when they're very sad.

Mrs. Milbrand is my teacher and my friend.

She is a good teacher.

She cares about her students and wants them to learn how to be polite and useful.

She tries to use her words carefully so that she doesn't hurt her students' feelings.

She makes sure that all her students know that she loves them.

Jesus is our teacher and our friend.

Jesus used words that his followers could understand.

Jesus teaches us how to live with one another without hurting one another.

Jesus tells us how much God loves us.

Mrs. Enney, who usually sits here, is also our teacher and our friend.

She, too is a good teacher. She taught me that the two most important things to remember when doing a children's story are to

have a strong finish and to give the children something to take back to their seats.

So, here are your papers, AND I'M ALL DONE!