



Sermon notes - Education Sunday 2026

Tyndale, Paul, and living well together

Today is Education Sunday, when we give thanks for the gift of learning, and we ask God to bless those who study or work in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.

On the surface, today's reading from St Paul's letter to the church in ancient Rome is all about a bygone culture and tradition. Which foods are acceptable to God? Which days of the week, month, or year should be kept holy? We might be tempted to think, 'So what?'

We are not entirely sure how Christianity arrived in Rome. As the capital of the Roman Empire, it was a huge and diverse city of about a million people, and by the mid-50s there was already a Christian community there. It's possible that the faith had first taken root among the Jewish community living in the city. Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome in about AD 55. Unlike many of his other letters, which were written to churches he had established or people he knew, this letter was addressed to a group he had not yet met. Paul was writing to these Christians in advance of his planned visit to Rome.

These Christians were in disagreement. We might imagine that, as a relatively new community of believers, they were still learning how to apply the teachings of Jesus in their lives. They took those teachings seriously, but they were still learners working out how the teachings should shape their lives. Some of them thought following Jesus meant continuing to observe dietary laws and special festival days, while others disagreed. Possibly, what was at the heart of the dispute were questions about how far followers of Jesus should continue to observe Old Testament laws and Jewish traditions.

Once we look more closely, we can see that Paul is urging these new Christians to look beyond their differences and focus on how they can live together well. Paul encourages all of them to treat one another with humility, respect, and understanding. For him, what's important is that they become the kind of people who listen carefully, treat others with dignity, and recognise that every

person matters to God. Paul's concern was not simply to tell them the 'right' answers, but to guide them in becoming the kind of people Christ was calling them to be.

That sounds remarkably relevant today in a society that often feels fractured and divided.

Now, we're going to leave Paul and the Romans behind for a moment and fast-forward about 1,500 years to someone else who understood that learning is not simply about acquiring knowledge, but about becoming a certain kind of person.

Five hundred years ago, one man risked his life to enable people to experience God, up close and personal, through the Bible. This year, 2026, we're celebrating the 500th anniversary of William Tyndale's New Testament.

At a time when ordinary people in England had very limited access to the Scriptures in the language they spoke, Tyndale was determined that they should be able to read God's word for themselves. So committed was he to this vision that he lived in exile and risked, and ultimately lost, his life because of it.

Tyndale was a linguistic genius who has a strong claim to have shaped the English Bible more than anyone else. We all speak Tyndale. Many phrases that remain part of everyday English were coined by him, and many of the Bible translations used today are the descendants, as it were, of his work.

People who have taken the Bible seriously have often challenged injustice and changed society. Tyndale, highly educated and trained in ancient languages, did not translate the Bible as an academic exercise or for its own sake. He wanted ordinary people to read and understand the Bible so they could be transformed by it. He believed it would help them to cultivate wisdom, deepen their understanding of God, and to live well together. He was convinced that reading the Bible and taking its message seriously had the power to change lives.

Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to grow into people who could live well together despite their differences. Tyndale wanted people to encounter the Scriptures so that their lives would be changed by what they read. Both understood that the most important question is not simply, 'What have we learned?' but 'What kind of people are we becoming?'

So, if you're in school, college or university, whether you're a student, a teacher or lecturer, a governor, a member of the site staff or catering team, or if you're a grown-up who still loves learning – make the most of the opportunities God has given you to study and to grow.

And remember that, like those first Christians in Rome, it is sometimes OK not to have all the answers. Learning often involves uncertainty, questions and growth. The Christians Paul wrote to were still learning what it meant to follow Jesus faithfully, and so are we.

On Education Sunday, let us remember to stay close to God and his word. God is still speaking into our lives and into the challenges we face. So let us keep close to him through prayer, through his word, and through lives that bear witness to hope. And let us commit ourselves not simply to acquiring knowledge, but to becoming the people God calls us to be.

As we heard in our Old Testament reading, 'When the Israelites saw the great power of the Lord, they stood in awe; and they had faith' (Exodus 14.31, Good News Bible).

Amen.

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