



PAST COLUMNS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Scott Stoner, LMFT, has been a licensed marriage and family therapist, and a pastoral counselor for thirty-five years, first in the Chicago area and then in Milwaukee, WI. His focus is working with individuals, couples, men, and families. He is the co-director, with his wife Holly Hughes Stoner, of the Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The foundation's focus is creating preventative wellness materials for adults, families, and teens. He is also the creator of the national Living Compass Spirituality and Wellness Initiative. Scott lives in Shorewood, Wisconsin, with Holly, and also has three adult children and two grandsons.

LIFE LONG LEARNING

All across the country students have returned to school. Feelings of excitement mixed with a tinge of stress are ubiquitous for both children and their families, as the rhythms of summer are replaced by the rhythms of the school year. One question that is on the mind of every student, no matter their age, is "Who's my teacher going to be this year?"

For most of the readers of this column, it's probably been a few years since you have started a new school year, but I would still like to invite you to think about this question, "Who are your teachers?" We may not be in school anymore, but we remain learners our whole lives. Life is our classroom, and the potential lessons are limitless. As you reflect on your own life right now, who are you learning from? What teacher or teachers are you seeking to learn from? What lessons do you want to learn from this teacher or teachers? There is an old saying that when the student is ready, the teacher will arise. What in life are you ready to learn right now? Who will you learn it from?

In this classroom called life, we are all students, and we are all teachers as we are all lifelong learners. We turn to our friends, family members, mentors, colleagues, pastors, rabbis, coaches, therapists, and others to be our teachers. And along the way, others turn to us to be their teachers as well.

We often turn to someone to be our teacher who has more experience in what it is we need to learn. This is frequently someone who has already been where we are going. A parent turns to other parents, especially those with more experience, to learn from their wisdom. A person struggling with a cancer diagnosis turns to other cancer survivors to learn from their life experience. A person wanting to deepen their spiritual life turns to their faith leader and members of their faith community to learn from and be inspired by their faith journeys. A person starting out in their career turns to a respected leader in their field. A singer turns to a voice teacher and joins a choir. A person wanting to start exercising takes a fitness class or joins a fitness club. A reader joins a book group.

When we were school children, we did not have a great deal to say about who our teachers were. As adults though, we get to choose who our teachers will be, knowing that there is always more for us to learn. To be a lifelong learner is to relish the fact that our awareness and consciousness are continually expanding.

So who are your teachers right now? As you think about who your teachers are right now, also think about whether you are looking for an additional teacher or perhaps an additional learning community at this point in your life. If so, this time of year is a great time to make a change.

One of my primary teachers continues to be the author Richard Rohr. His writing has nourished and enriched my emotional and spiritual life for many years. His quote above is one small sample of his wisdom and is also a reminder that even life's toughest challenges can teach us valuable lessons.

And so to all the students out there, both young learners and lifelong learners, "Happy back to school!"