

# Meaningful Monday: Thomas Paine

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"The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

-Thomas Paine

I wish I had had Paine's words on the tip of my tongue as I was helping my two daughters with their math work last week. My oldest daughter was despondent. At that moment, she didn't see or appreciate the purpose of Math in her life at all. However, she wants to be a scientist, so Math is going to be important. I hardly need to remind her. She does know that.

My other daughter was wanting to give up because she thought it was too hard.

I understand. I really do. I vividly remember sitting at the after-school tutoring table throughout my elementary and Junior High years, then again at the college I attended, eraser marks tearing my paper. The clock ticked by so slowly. I had eraser crumbs in my hair. My forehead hurt. Summers Vacation was more of the same. Extra classes were taken to make up for the less-than-stellar grades I received that year in Math.

Math was not my thing.

I didn't understand it.

I loathed it.

I have told you the rest of my story, but for those who don't know, after I graduated with an Elementary Education Degree, I was then hired to teach Middle School Math.

I was scared stiff.

Then, something phenomenal happened.

No. I did not suddenly become a world-class Math genius.

I wish.

The phenomenal thing is that I realized that my many years of strife and tears (and eraser crumb hair decor) at the tutor table were not in vain! I could recall and teach the math I was hired to teach with the foundation I had built through hard work and determination.

In addition, and most importantly, I was able to have a compassionate attitude towards my struggling students and was able to discern how best to help them.

I have a personal appreciation for these simple, but profound words spoken by Thomas Paine.

What do these words mean to you? (I think I will have my daughters respond to this quote in their journals this week!)