

## **Are All The Children In?**

*Dawna Beausoleil, Retired Teacher, Ontario*

With the warm wood stove at my back, and the frigid northern Ontario winter outside my window, I take time to reflect.

Actually, time is something I have lots of now. My teaching days are past, thanks to a nasty viral infection that stripped me of my career goals some years back. Though my body has only the strength to care for itself, my mind is still free to wander and life is good.

So I drift back to the days of my classrooms. Seems like another lifetime on another planet! Have I changed that much? Perhaps. If so, I pray the changes were positive. My priorities--I guess they've seen the most dramatic transformation.

The dreams and goals of my youth used to march up and down the competitive corridors of my future like trained soldiers. I was disciplined and self-motivated. I would achieve. My mark would be left on the world--big time. My religion was just one unit of the army, available for duty as called. Christianity and salvation were vital truths, but I hoped Christ wouldn't come before I had accomplished all I desired.

Wow! I can't believe I just admitted that. But that 20/20 hindsight flags us all down at one time or another. In my moments of backward longings, I wish I had taught more about Christ and less about mathematics. (Most kids never use it anyway.) I wish I had lived more like Christ and less like the current trend of society.

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Trying to awaken me gently this morning, my husband put on a Johnny Cash CD. And in that blissful moment between sleep and a new day, the words of a song struck home. Johnny's mother was asking: "Are all the children in?" When we get to heaven every mother and father and teacher will ask: "Are all the children in?" Definitely priority one.

I had been mulling over thoughts like these last spring, when a friend came by to tune our piano. After he finished, he sat down to chat with us. We covered much territory, including the above thoughts. He agreed with me---BUT. He said something that caught me up short. This man is still in the game of raising four teenagers. He's a devout Christian and they drive an hour each Sunday so the kids can be part of a church with active youth. He sent three of his kids to Europe this summer to experience another culture, and his own work carries him all over the globe.

What I'm trying to say, is, to me his opinion counts. And what he said was: "I still need to build a future for my kids." We could talk about the nearness of Christ's coming and eternal life, but his kids need a future here on earth.

No kidding. Why hadn't I thought of that. Perhaps because I don't have kids of my own. And in my ever growing connection to Christ, my thinking didn't leave room for the earthly future of children. Maybe it's a good thing I'm not still teaching! After all, I'd had my grandiose earthly dreams and no one had stomped on my bubble.

Ah---but there must be a way to connect these two. Wrapping our children in the arms of Christ while still giving them "a future and a hope" here and now. See, even Jeremiah promised it and I doubt if his eyes were only on heaven. This life counts, too.

So, unfortunately, even those of us whose eyes are now closer to heaven than earth, must still teach the basics of living in this world. We've had our youth and some of us even our middle age. We lived it up and made our mistakes. Today's children deserve the same opportunity. As long as Christ sees fit to tarry, we owe them the knowledge they'll need to fulfill this life. Be that mathematics and physics and all the rest, along with the witness of the most Godly life we can model. It also means revealing to them the joys of the Christian life. We have friends here who have many children. I asked about it once, and was told that if the wicked populate the earth, the Christians should do the same. Interesting thought. But more interesting is watching these kids grow up. They all gave their lives to Christ at a young age, and so far, not one has veered from the path. They choose to have no TV. One family is educated in public school. The other mother home schools--one of the best programs I've seen. This home school now has the internet. All the kids so far are well-adjusted, with the older ones taking up their places in the work world. They have rock solid church and home lives. Many group gatherings enable youth to mix and have fun in a healthy way. They travel and enjoy cultural activities. But dating is reserved for the serious search of a marriage partner. I've seen no out of wedlock pregnancies, and many happy marriages. Materialism is not ignored but played down. You likely think I'm making all this up. I'm not. And they've taught me more about combining Christ and earthly education than Advanced Ed 502!

Our children need a future and a hope, both in this world and the next. What a challenge! But I know of no group more capable of meeting that challenge than the Seventh-day Adventist teachers of our Christian schools. May God richly bless and direct you, each one.

**Resources:**

- "Are All The Children In?" from *Hymns By Johnny Cash* - Columbia
- "...to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV