

Relationships for Eternal Success

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In each of our pasts, there is a teacher who stood out from the others, our model. They were what we would consider successful. Do we remember all they taught us academically? Not likely. But we remember how they taught us to relate to life, and to eternity. They gave us skills beyond the classroom, and led us to our own success. And, just like them, we will be successful as teachers only when our students are successful in their academics, in life, and for eternity.

We may not remember specifically all the academics we were taught, but we learned well. These exceptional teachers exceeded curriculum standards and found ways to make academics so meaningful and enjoyable that what we learned became second nature. These teachers hooked us into the lesson using our interests. And they knew us well enough to know what these interests were. They took the time to have a relationship with us that went beyond the classroom.

These teachers were our Ron Clarke. At our NAD convention, Ron Clarke's amazing story inspired us all. What made him successful with students who had never experienced success was that he formed relationships with them. He talked with them about personal things, and taught them to do the same. He jumped rope with them, wrote them notes, and visited in their homes. They wanted to be with him because he was interested in them, and so they wanted to be successful for him and for themselves. He inspired them to become more.

As Christian teachers, we have had this example for centuries. Ellen White tells us, "In the training of His disciples the Savior followed the system of education established at the beginning. . . . To them, above all others, He gave the advantage of His own companionship. Through personal association He impressed Himself upon these chosen colaborers" (Education, 52). Jesus showed over and over again that the relationship was most significant.

For the teachers who inspired us, this relationship walked the walk. We saw that Jesus was interested in us because our teacher was. We found in us the desire to be like them. Have we met our goal to become like our model? Do we look beyond the job description and meet our students on a personal level? This means even when we're tired, even when their behaviour doesn't meet our expectations, even when their interest isn't ours, we take an interest. It means we learn about what's important to them—who their idols are, what they do in their free time, the words of their favourite song.

Why would we do this? It's time well spent. This relationship tells them they are more important than a grade. It gives them reason to learn, not only the academics, but the life skills and the spirituality we model to them. The relationship we build with them will lead them to a desire for a relationship with Jesus, and that relationship will give them—and us—eternal success.

Resources:

- White, Ellen G, *True Education*, Pacific Press, Oshawa, 2000.