

## **Get Real!**

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I've always appreciated when people are real. What is "real"? Maybe the best way to describe "real" is to contrast it by using examples of what is not real--fake, two-faced, and self-seeking. An experience I had at camp meeting during my teen years helped me to understand what it means to "get real!"

Word around camp meeting that particular summer was that the teen speaker was a really great speaker. So, my friends and I went to the meetings. We really liked the speaker's messages about loving others and living godly lives. By the end of the week, we were all pumped up and excited about living better, more meaningful Christian lives.

After the last meeting, a few of my friends and I decided to go up and thank the speaker for his amazing messages. We normally would not have done such a thing. But, for some reason, we all decided to go up to the platform and thank the man personally.

We waited for our chance to thank him. Finally, our chance came. He seemed preoccupied, but we didn't let that deter us. Each of us briefly stated how much we appreciated his presentations. Then, abruptly, he said he had an appointment, cutting us off before we could say more. We were all quite surprised by his hasty departure.

Minutes later, after walking out of the auditorium, we saw the man chatting casually with several other pastors. He didn't seem to be in a rush to get to an appointment after all. As we passed him on the sidewalk, his face flushed crimson with shameful embarrassment. We realized immediately that what he preached was not what he practiced. All his messages about love, patience, thoughtfulness and Christian virtues seemed like empty phrases. Our simple thanks had been insignificant to him. My friends and I felt like telling him to "Get Real"!

The following summer at camp meeting our guest speaker for the teen meetings was none other than...you guessed! You're right. He was back! I admit it; my friends and I didn't go to any of the meetings that year.

Teens haven't changed that much over the years. They still see fake coming a mile away. They still value authentic, real, honest adults. They still see what you do as more important than what you say. Teens still need to know that they can trust the adults in their lives. Parents, teachers and pastors are just a few of the adults that make a difference for teens. If these major adult mentors are not real, they can end up doing more harm than good.

Everyday that I enter the classroom to teach, I am humbled. I realize that I have been given a sacred trust to "Get Real!" with my students. My job is to teach the curriculum. However, my job (as a Christian teacher) also includes teaching about God's redeeming power to save. My mandate as a Christian teacher goes beyond merely teaching the provincial curriculum, as important as it is. My job includes teaching young people to serve God in all their pursuits.

So, how do I "Get Real" with my students? What can I do to show them how to "Get Real"? In Matthew 28:19-20 we are told to "teach all nations" about Jesus and his love for us. In verse 20

we are admonished to teach all that Christ has commanded. We are to win souls to Christ. We are to remain faithful to the commandments and to the examples of how Jesus lived on earth among the people. He “rubbed shoulders” with them. He was part of society. He saw their pain. He felt sorrow. He gave comfort. He knew how to “Get Real” with them.

Back to the classroom! Getting real in the Christian classroom must include each teacher’s pursuit of a relationship with Christ. Ellen G. White makes a powerful statement in *The Acts of the Apostles* (pp.477, 478). She writes, “Renouncing all that would hinder him [her] from making progress in the upward way...the believer will reveal in his [her] daily life mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, forbearance, and the love of Christ.” Proverbs 15:33 echoes the essence of Mrs. White’s statement when it says, “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.”

I wish the great camp meeting speaker of my youth had lived out the concept of “before honor is humility” (Prov. 15:33). He had the truth. He knew God’s word. He spoke with conviction. However, he missed the most important part of being a good preacher/teacher. He forgot to live what he preached!

As I teach, I want God to be my partner. I want His spirit in the classroom to give me wisdom when I face difficult situations. I need Him working in my life to keep me humble when I forget to devote my ways to His cause. I need His loving spirit to guide me in all my pursuits, in all my dealings with my students. What about you? Are you willing to “Get Real” in the classroom?