

Seventh-day Adventist Educators are Called to be Faithful Stewards

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My former school was up for re-accreditation. Wired in everyone's head was this message: "Make sure you can prove to the accrediting team that you are integrating your faith with learning." As vice-principal and registrar, I had taken the time to ensure that all my records were up to date. I knew every student by name and number. I knew the mission and vision of my school. In my office I posted evidence of my faith. The day of the much-anticipated visit finally came, and the director of education chose to interview me.

My personal goal in education is to strive for excellence; notwithstanding, L. Herbert Fletcher is the epitome of professional perfection. I knew that well. Before he was called to be the director of education for the division, he was my college president. There was no "interview." Elder Fletcher and I had more of an informal talk on my professional growth. When he got up to leave my office, the sage looked me in the eye and asked, "What evidence of your faith will students and their parents find when they come in here?"

Silence filled the room. I felt the muscles in my chest turning into rope. All my canned responses were now mocking me. This church leader had watched me emerge from a little-known freshman into a senior worker in the Seventh-day Adventist school system. Previously when he was college president, he had congratulated me on academic honours' days. He offered me my first job when I graduated. Now he asked me one significant question and I was floored. *So much for his high esteem of me*, I thought. And then I remembered the posters that I had placed on the walls for such a time as this: "Higher than the highest human thoughts can reach..."; "Practice makes perfect...." I bounced back by pointing to the wall, but the leader showed that he was ahead of me by gently resting his hand on the Holy Bible that was on my desk. I was mortified. I had failed the open-book test because I had forgotten to open the Book! This experience has taught me many invaluable lessons. Let me share three with you:

(1) **Faith is not something we display; it is something we live.** In retrospect, I had put that Bible on my desk for the wrong reason--to impress the accrediting committee. Had I put it there as a genuine symbol of my faith, I would have remembered to refer to it. Yes, the posters were relevant; but they were secondary to the Scriptures. As a lifelong learner, I resolved to always keep God's words open so that I will be ready to "teach them diligently" (Deut. 6:7).

(3) **A mere emotional commitment to integrate faith and learning is futile.** There must be a synergistic connection of heart and soul. 1 Peter 3:15 is empowering: "...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." This warning is sagacious. It shows me that at all times I should be able to take my students--many of whom have not yet made a personal commitment to Jesus--to the word of God and show them the reason my faith is anchored in Him. It is the ever-present word

of God that will transform these students into the image of God. Whenever I use it as a mere showcase, I derail my mission.

(3) **Seventh-day Adventist educators are called to be faithful stewards.** What does this mean? I am an unfaithful guardian when I merely follow a routine. Through the grace of God, then, I must be responsible and creative. I must put my focus on generating and improving--not just copying and pasting. I must be committed to the tasks of feeding the sheep (John 21: 17) and making disciples (Matt. 28: 19). In other words, I must be equipped with the tools my students can hone and use to ultimately make them students of the school of Heaven.

Finally, when Christ came to vindicate the character of God and teach us the way back to Him, there was no room in the inn. As we begin another school year, it is imperative that we make room for the Master Teacher.