

God's Change Agents

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“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children.”¹ This is a quote we are familiar with, but have we seriously considered its relevance and application to Christian education? The “children” mentioned in the above quote refers not to some children, but to all God's children, regardless of economic and social status, intellectual acumen or physical ability.



As God's change agents, we must do whatever is necessary to help our children realize God's purpose for their lives. God has predestined his children for an “expected end” as residents of the kingdom of God. He has equipped each child with a measure of faith and potential for a good future. We, therefore, have an awesome responsibility to cultivate, develop and polish the characters of the boys and girls, to fit them for the good future nestled in the kingdom of God.

There are essentially two ways that educators can act as a catalyst to excite children and youth to realize their potential for growth and development as ordained by God. The first way is for us to have a positive attitude toward them, despite their shortcomings. We must help them dream big dreams, and groom them for success.

During my teaching career, I came upon a classic case of self-depreciation in the person of a Grade 9 student. We call him John for convenience. In appearance, he looked as any normal teenager, but he was significantly disadvantaged. He was illiterate, and showed no interest in learning.

One day I had an after school talk with John regarding his non-performance and his future. My effort was futile, and when John sensed my frustration he asked me a rhetorical question: “Why are you interested in me? Nobody cares,” he said, “so get off my case.”

This was the entry point to a most interesting and revealing interchange. I found out in twenty minutes what John's fundamental problem was, and the possible solution to his problem. His world began falling apart when he failed Grade 3 and his parents' attitude toward him changed. In his eyes, neither his parents nor his teachers believed that he would amount to anything. So he stopped believing in himself.

I knew that I had to build this young man's self-esteem to recreate in him the excitement of learning. All my teaching would be of no avail if John had no desire to learn. My task was to help him become his own catalyst for change.

Being a Christian teacher in the public school system, I believed that God had endowed this young man with the capacity to learn and it was my responsibility to help him actualize his potential. The first step in this process was for me to have a changed attitude toward him. I had to treat him differently for his needs were different. I had to give him special attention because of his fragility and his negative past.

This brings me to the second thing that a teacher must do to help children actualize their potential. It is summarized in the famous quote attributed to Lawrence Lieberman, “If kids can’t learn in the way we teach ... then we must teach them in the way they can learn.” This simply means that we must be sensitive to the needs of our students, know something about their learning style and make the necessary adjustments in our lesson delivery. This may take us off the beaten path of our lesson delivery, but we must invest the time and take the risk, because as God’s change agents, we are collaborating with God to transform the life of one whom he has predestined to an “expected end.”

Teachers and administrators should get into the habit of displaying the quality of care that makes our students and their parents feel that we think highly of them, and that we will go outside our comfort zone to facilitate their success. We must have the optimism of the teacher who instilled confidence in her students, when she said to them on one starry night, “You are among the stars. You are bright, and you are constant, and you are always expected to shine.”²

Resources:

- ¹ Ellen G. White, *True Education*. (Oshawa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000), 10.
- ² Marge Scherer, “Once upon a Time before Brown, a Conversation with Clifton L. Taulbert,” *Educational Leadership* 61, no. 8 (May 2004): 12.