

And a Child Shall Lead Them

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As I was reading *The Great Controversy* I came across the portrayal of the work of Farel and Gausson. It depicted their desire to share their belief that the coming of the Lord was at hand. What excited me as an educator was the method they used to spread the Word. Children with an intense desire to learn and know became interested in Gausson's stories from the book of Daniel. Seeing their children interested, the once uninterested parents begin to accompany their children to hear the prophecies of Daniel being made clear. As the doors of the political and spiritual movements closed, adults were not allowed to share the Good News; children moved by the Spirit of the Lord took up the cause and begin to share the gospel message. (*The Great Controversy*, p.364) As I dwelt on the miraculous leading of the Lord in the lives of these young children and how they testified of God, my thoughts turned to sharing of God's word in today's setting.



Today's Laodicean North American society has turned a deaf ear to the to the earnest pleas of God's people, who are calling them to prepare for Christ's coming. Are we at those crossroads again? Are young children again going to lead the adults? If that is the case should we not take Solomon's directions seriously, "to train up a child... So when he is old he will not depart from it'. (Proverbs 22:6) How do we train a child in the way they should go? Solomon and other writer of scripture have suggestions for us. Paul advises us to bring up our children "in the nurture of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). A favourite author of mine, Ellen White speaks about a mother's grand and noble commission. She is to "make straight the paths for the feet of her children" (*The Adventist Home*, p.234). Parents have been entrusted with the most wonderful work, to educate and train their children as disciples of Christ.

As I see it, it will only be a matter of a few years when our children will be in charge of our communities and our country. They will be deciding how to treat their fellow citizens and the environment around them. The values and morals we have instilled in our children will be enacted as a result of their training. Lets take a look at what real training is all about. First of all it takes time, we are told that sanctification is the work of a lifetime. Therefore real training cannot be accomplished in a "fast food" manner just because we live busy lives. Real training means an investment of time. Children must be supervised. Children need time to be instructed and their action directed. (*Secrets of Discipline*, p.142) If it's worth having, it's worth taking the time to train your children well.

As we look at the commitment to train up a child, we must establish who is in charge. Society has told us for the last two decades that we must bargain and discuss with our children on issues relating to family rules. The question that begs to be asked is, who is the adult here? Homes and schools are not democracies where children have equal voice in decision making. There must be someone in authority so direction can be passed on. (*Secrets of Discipline*, p143)

Where education happens there is an understanding that growth will take place. Young people will display responsible mannerisms, young people will be entrusted with greater responsibilities, and young

people will behave better as they grow. Right? So why are eight year olds more courteous than teenagers. My understanding is that courtesy is a skill that will improve over time. (*Secrets of Discipline*, p.144) So why do we excuse the mannerisms of a teenager as a natural phase of their adolescent growth. When parents view training as a process of what skills their children need to learn, they must look at the progress their children make, not their mistakes.

If we as parents and teachers are to understand what true training is all about we must realize that rewards and consequences are not the tools for the job. When we train there are no failures, only forward direction in positive growth in the children we believe in. How does that happen? The Bible tells us that this process takes place by using correction and giving instructions until the child has learned the expected outcome. Let me use an example to make my idea clear. Billy enjoys communicating with his friends, unfortunately this communication also happens during class time. The teacher quietly walks over to Billy and gets his attention, and then he/she models the already discussed behaviour for Billy. This correction and direction giving continues in a loving yet firm manner until Billy has learned to manage his communication skills appropriately. Improper talking is not tolerated! Effective teaching happens not because of consequences or rewards, but only when a child realizes that there is a right way to behave in a public setting. Children feel safe and learn best when they know that an improper behaviour will be corrected, not how severe the consequence will be if they misbehave.

The children of Gausson's time worked well within the structure society had required of them. They had learned well the skills and attitudes of being responsible and cooperative. They then had the opportunity to make choices so they could learn how to handle independence. (*Secrets of Discipline*, p.146)

"When the mother has gained the confidence of her children and taught them to love and obey her, she has given them the first lesson in Christian life. They must love and trust and obey their Saviour as they love and trust and obey their parents. The love, which in faithful care and right training the parent manifests for the child faintly mirrors the love of Jesus for His faithful people. (*The Adventist Home*, p.250)

Resources:

- White, Ellen G, *The Great Controversy*, Pacific Press Publishing, Mountainview, California, 1917.
- *Holy Bible, King James Version*, Cambridge University Press, New York, N.Y.
- White, Ellen G. *The Adventist Home*, Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, Tennessee, 1952.
- Moorish, Ronald *Secrets of Discipline for Parents and Teachers*, Woodstream Publishing Inc., Fonthill, Ontario, Canada, 1999.