

The Adventist Edge in Teaching

Dennis Marshall, Director of Education, Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, Oshawa, ON

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” (1 Cor. 9:24)



The above text is instructive in several ways, but I want to highlight only one point, that is, *when you are in race, you must run with purpose.*

Life is serious business. The apostle Paul likens it to running a race. Everyone is entitled to run in this race, but not everyone will win the prize. The prize is precious, for it is imperishable. The one who wins the prize is the one who has an edge over the others. What is the edge? Is it better preparation? Is it the will to win? Is it a positive mental attitude? The key to understanding the nature of the edge is scripted in the sentence: “Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”

Another way of saying this is: “Run with the end in view.” The runner must not keep his eyes on his competitors. He must not keep his eyes on the crowd waving him along. He must not keep his eyes on his coach, who is on the sidelines cheering him on. These are all distractions, not the intent of the race. The intent of the race is to win the prize. Therefore, the runner must keep his eyes fixed on the prize. Any deviation predisposes him to failure. Considering that the nature of the prize is imperishable, it is all the more important that the runner not lose focus.

In Christian Education we are running a race. We are competing not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual forces. The prize is invaluable: the salvation of the souls of our children and youth. Our competitor is strong, well trained with many years of competitive experience. To win this race, our teachers must have the competitive edge, which can only come through the application of the Word of God. The devil, our adversary and competitor, cannot withstand the Word of God. (see Luke 2: 1-13)

Our teachers must, teach our children with the end in view. They must keep their eyes on the prize: the salvation of the souls of our children. Intellectual achievement is important, but this does not constitute the Adventist edge. Strong, Christian values and a character molded and defined by the Word of God is what constitutes the Adventist edge. Our teachers must teach with a spiritual focus in mind. They must teach so our children and youth can recognize the need for Jesus in their lives. We are not primarily in Christian education to teach English or Mathematics or Science. These are important, and we must teach them well. However, Adventist education is primarily about the salvation of our children. That is the prize we are aiming at.

The Adventist edge comes by intentionally and properly instructing our children and youth about the nature and power of God, and what God has done through Christ for their salvation. Our teachers must see in English the cross of Christ; they must see in Art the cross of Christ; when the cross of Christ becomes our *modus operandi*, thus emphasizing the centrality of Christ in the curriculum, then we will teach with the Adventist edge and run the race with purpose.