

Survivors. Are you Ready?

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“Survivors, are you ready?” Some of you may have seen the TV reality show “Survivor” that pits teams and individuals against each other in a remote part of the world. These players have to “outwit, outplay and outlast” (Survivor CBS). The game contains many twist and turns, and the plot surprises players and viewers alike. The contestants make alliances and are willing to backstab others in order to win. While watching this show I have been reminded that this game is much like trying to survive in our Adventist school system.



The present school year is drawing to a close and some of you are wondering if your school job will live to see another year. We are in the middle of a crisis in Adventist education!! I wonder if we will have to lose the system before we realize what a gem we have. A few months ago I read a book entitled *How to Kill Adventist Education (and How to Give It a Fighting Chance!)* and I whole heartily agreed with most of the authors' opinions.

One of the statements Shane Anderson makes in the book is: “If we are to reverse the tide of decline in Adventist education, then the hearts and minds of many of our Adventist pastors will need changing as well” (Anderson p. 44). I have had many discussions that focus on this topic. I have seen many pastors pull their children out of our schools and send them to other Christian schools. I have also heard pastors speak negatively about our schools and the teachers working in them. These pastors underestimate the influential role they play in their districts. Have you ever wondered how they would feel if members started attending a local Christian church in the area because the building was better, the choir more professional, the people more friendly and the sermons more inspiring? Wouldn't they cry out, “But we teach the Truth? How could you attend a place where Sabbath isn't held in high regard, the return of Jesus isn't hoped for, and the blessed hope of a resurrection isn't a belief?” They would be very upset over the loss of several hours a week, yet many pastors think nothing of sending their children to non-Adventist schools five days a week, six hours a day where our cherished beliefs are not taught or respected.

Some may say at this point that these cherished beliefs aren't being taught or respected in our own schools. This point is well taken. The fact is that teachers and school boards who lack the passion for disciple-making do exist. But I believe that you can only change a system from the inside, not by criticizing from the outside. In the book of Daniel, the prophet prays for his people using “we.” This prayer illustrates this principle of involvement very well. Daniel identified with God's people and prayed for a change in himself and forgiveness for HIS people. Ignoring the problems that exist in our school system only makes those same problems worse. By recognizing the need for change and involving ourselves in the attempt to change, God can lead us to His solutions.

This leads me to my final point. Do you have a passion to help your students become disciples for Jesus? If you don't, then why are you teaching in an Adventist School? These are the hard questions that every teacher, principal, superintendent and support staff must ask. We can't continue with business as usual. We must fight for our schools and, more importantly, for the children we teach. In his book *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, George Barna writes, "We discovered that the probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Saviour was 32 percent for those between the ages of 5 and 12; 14 percent for those in the 13- to 18-age range; and 6 percent for people 19 or older"(Barna pg 34). In other words, if our children do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour before they reach their teenage years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim. Our schools should be our biggest evangelistic field. The churches' time, money, and best resources need to be poured into them. "Survivors, are you ready?"

Resources:

- Anderson, Shane. *How to Kill Adventist Education (And How to Give It a Fighting Chance!)*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 2009.
- Barna, George. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003.