

## What Does The Lord Require Of Us

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The course, "Teaching the Gifted Child", caught my attention as I enrolled in summer school at La Sierra University in 1995. Sandra, the enthusiastic young teacher, had just received her doctorate degree and had been asked to fill in for another professor at the last moment.



Sandra introduced herself with a story. She said that the first year she taught school the superintendent visited her classroom early in the year. He spoke to her for a few minutes before class and then sat at the back of the room with a small notebook in his hand. His blue eyes danced, as he nodded his head and smiled in encouragement while she taught.

After the class Sandra and her supervisor met in post conference while he showed her his positive observations of her teaching. His notes indicated where she had used a variety of techniques and how they enhanced her teaching. She was encouraged enough to share a few of her own concerns with him. He gave her some pointers and after prayer he left. Two days later she received an evaluation letter from him. The letter again affirmed her teaching techniques, reflected the fact that he had listened to her, and mentioned some of the things they had talked about, and where they had decided she might find some answers.

Sandra told us that she had walked on clouds for the next week. She believed that she was a gifted teacher! She went on to get her doctorate citing her first supervisor as her motivator.

After class I went to her and asked if the superintendent she had mentioned happened to be a certain friend and mentor of mine and I named him. She was surprised that I would know whom she had been describing. Sandra told me that indeed the supervisor I named was the person who had motivated her and made her believe that she could do anything she wanted to do with God on her side.

Times are changing. The constituency is expecting more. Technology has shrunk the world. Have we allowed changing times to push us to the point where we may forget that the children and the adults we work with are people with feelings just like ours? Superintendents, are we enabling our teachers? Teachers, are we empowering our students? Or, in our fear of being left behind in the education arena, are we racing ahead and frantically trying to drag our people with us?

In our fast pace of e-mail, Internet, hurry up and catch that jet, lets not forget that we are working with

people who have feelings. Doctor Kendall Butler, guest speaker at a recent teacher's convention in British Columbia, reminded us that we must deal with feelings before facts. The facts will be more easily dealt with after the feelings are considered. These people we teach or work with interact with their families and share their troubles, celebrate events, and experience life and death just as passionately or painfully as we do.

When I was a little girl, my sister and I used to play paper dolls. We each had a family we cut out of the catalogue. We had a continued story going on--our own "soaps". Do we as leaders sometimes revert to the game of paper dolls? Here are OUR paper dolls. We have a plan. This is OUR story. This paper doll will go here and that one will go there. Here is where they move now and this is what they will say? Paper dolls don't talk back. They cooperate all the time--until they tear or become worn out.

As Jim Roy, Associate Superintendent of Upper Columbia Conference, told us at our last BC teacher's convention, "Coercion, either in the form of positive rewards or incentives or negative reminders and punishments, leads to a low quality work and adversarial relationships." Relational skills, then, must be valued as we work with people, be they young or old.

What does the Lord require of us as educators and supervisors? In the book *Education*, page 18, Ellen White wrote, "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children." How do we reach those lofty goals? What about this ideal that God holds up to us? Can we enable others to grow, to stretch, and to reach? What can we do to motivate, enable and empower? Is it even possible for us to do this?

Micah 6: 6-9 asks the question, "What does the Lord require of me?" What does the Lord ask of each of us? Can we put self aside and without looking to advancement, or self-honour, simply follow His advice?

- ACT JUSTLY

Train, demonstrate, and mentor that we may develop a trust relationship.

- LOVE MERCY

Remember the human part--walk in the other person's shoes and follow Matthew 18 when dealing with conflict. Treat people like we would LIKE to be treated as we share ideas and strategies.

- WALK HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD

Remember why we are teaching or supervising. Ask ourselves if what we want to do is for OUR glory or for GOD'S glory? If it is for God's glory and we have been just and merciful, people will be empowered to be creative and inventive.

Somehow Sandra's supervisor empowered her. He helped her believe that she was gifted. He saw the possibilities. If we take the time, we, too, can see the marvellous possibilities as we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.