

Why Bother?

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It's the end of May. I'm struggling with many deadlines and expectations for a variety of duties and roles. It has taken its toll on me, and I'm in a deep, deep funk. It's at this time in my life that I ask the question, "Why bother?" Hopefully, as I ramble on, this question will be answered this year, as per other years, with enough resonance to keep me going until July 1.

I recall starting my career as an educator and explaining to some friends that it was such a positive experience to go to "work" and enjoy it so much; I recall that salary seemed inconsequential as long as my expenses were covered monthly. I couldn't believe that I was being paid to do what I was doing. My passion for teaching seemed boundless; however, my naivety wasn't.

Fast forward a dozen or so years and throw in a marriage with two kids. Blending two lives, much less four, seems impossible at the best of times. The simplicity of my earlier life has been overwrought by the endless rampage of meetings, sponsorships, duties, assessments and evaluations, and other miscellany. In most cases at this time of year, teaching has ceased to be the dream-career and has become more like the "survive until the weekend" job. The enthusiasm I once felt dwindles in the early, dark hours of the morning as I get ready to teach another 7:30 class that most of my students don't seem to want to endure. "Why bother?" persists in my subconscious.

There are many aspects to this situation. Is it primarily due to my personal life competing with my career? Is it a result of my work environment? Is it reflective of my years of service? Am I jaded as a result of wave after wave of dispassionate students taking my class because it is mandatory? Is it the time of year? Probably each of these questions has a piece of the overall pie.

At the very least, I am reminded that teaching is tough. I never truly appreciated my teachers while I was in school; I never realized the behind-the-scenes effort of planning and grading as well as all the extra-curricular aspects. Add to this all the work done in maintaining up-to-date certification, keeping reams of paperwork to ensure the multiple agencies inspecting the school are satisfied, and adapting new and updated learning strategies into the classroom. On top of all this, we are also expected to keep all students engaged in our course material and curricular goals while treating them as unique individuals with specific needs. It boggles the mind how life can exist beyond the profession.

And I'm tired of hearing from various associates in other fields that teachers have it so easy with two months of paid summer leave and a "minimal" load of three classes at the high school level. It frustrates me to the point that I ponder alternate job opportunities.

It is at times like these that I need to think about what motivates me in the morning to complete the school year rather than curl up in the fetal-position on my couch. It is the student who waves at me at the end of the hall just to say good morning. It is the colleague who brings me a hot beverage (caffeine free, of course) to take a break from the routine. It is the comic banter that

flows during the staff meeting between the science and humanities departments. It is the pride I see on our students' faces taking their final bow for a play well done. It is the one student who comes for extra help and says, "I get it!" It is the thank you note that one student brought at the end of the semester with the class's comments written within. It is the student who asks, "How are you doing?" and genuinely means it. It is the students who noticed how down I was feeling when my best friend was diagnosed with terminal cancer and who came over to support me. It is the comic anecdote provided in class where we all laugh together at a silly plot point in *The Princess Bride*. It is the prayer we share when a friend's house burns down. It is the unity of spirit during Week of Prayer. It is the three colleagues who sat with me at lunch and lifted my needs up in prayer half an hour after lunch was over. It is for God's service that I bother.

In conclusion, I can't help but think of how this article could have ended. God works in mysterious ways and comes through in our time of need. June is a crazy month – even more so than September – and we need to come together as colleagues, as co-workers, as students and teachers, and ultimately as children of our Heavenly Father to ensure that "Why bother?" is correctly put in its place.

I remember a quotation from *A Bug's Life*: "It's our lot in life – it's not a lot, but it's a life." I truly enjoy the word play in this expression. We as Adventist educators are laden with many burdens; however, we need to look at the glimmering positives as they shine through the bleakness to truly realize that our lot in life is our life itself – and what we choose to make of our life is the answer to "Why bother?" and the reason why we will annually persevere until July 1.