

## An Eternal Focus

There is one thing that sets Adventist education apart from excellent state run education. Both will have great teachers, good resources, and follow the curriculum. Both will focus on using contemporary teaching methods. Both systems will want the best for their students. And both will be keen to produce good citizens for their country. What is the key difference for Adventist Education? It is the added focus on eternity.

The word *Eternity* was featured in the 21st millennium New Year celebration over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This was the legacy of Arthur Stace, a reformed alcoholic who was converted to Christianity in 1930. For over 35 years he chalked the word *Eternity* in beautiful copper-plate writing on the streets of Sydney. It is estimated he did this over half a million times. That one word captures the ultimate difference for Adventist education: *educating for eternity*.

School Captain Jose had been diagnosed with secondary cancer half way through his final high school year. He put up a brave fight. He dipped into his bucket list and lived every day with zest. His peers were in awe of his positive spirit. In his intended gap year he was the part-time chaplain of the Adventist school where his mum now taught. He was an inspiration to his peers and his entire community. At his funeral that year, a week shy of his 19th birthday, his peers shared their inspiration from his life. His was a life that had been far too short; yet a life that had made a significant difference for all around him. He was at perfect peace in his relationship with God and was absolutely confident in the resurrection hope. His focus was *eternity* and he had transmitted his assurance to his peers in a remarkable way.

Some students choose not to accept the Christian view. Some express their reservation and clearly are establishing their independence from their parents' values and faith. That is the integrity of freedom of choice in action. It is a risk God took when He created us, and it is the same risk parents and teachers take as they provide options but cannot dictate another person's response and thinking. In fact, as I have heard it expressed, "Faith is like a toothbrush: everyone needs one, but it works best when you have your own."

God was in the school business in Eden. He was the teacher for Adam and Eve, and what a fantastic classroom! God's original plan was a group of students and a classroom designed to last for *eternity*. Samuel instituted the Schools of the Prophets as he saw the importance of educating and training for *eternity* too. These schools were an integral part of Samuel's long-term plan to strengthen the values and spiritual nurture of his people. Adventist education has a similar focus. It seeks to inculcate values. It creates opportunities to establish or enhance the student's personal relationship with God.

"Heart education is of more importance than the education gained from books. It is well, even essential, to obtain a knowledge of the world in which we live; but if we leave eternity out of our reckoning, we shall make a failure from which we can never recover."<sup>1</sup>

Yes, Adventist education helps student to do well academically. It prepares graduates to make a constructive contribution to their society. But the ultimate goal is to develop an eternal focus. We want them to echo with their lives the word that was the mantra for Arthur Stace in response to God's remarkable change in his own life: ***eternity***.

*E White, Child Guidance, p.497*

### KEY CONCEPTS

As [the teacher] awakens a desire to reach God's ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above. E White, *Education*, p.20

Our lifework here is a preparation for the life eternal. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity —ever progressing, never completed. More and more fully will be revealed the wisdom and love of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour, as He leads His children to the fountains of living waters, will impart rich stores of knowledge. And day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of His power in creating and sustaining the universe, will open before the mind in new beauty. In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended.

E White, *Child Guidance*, p.298

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