

# THE TEACHER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

By K. EUGENE FORDE

**A**t age 12, Angela entered the Barbados Seventh-day Adventist School. During her first term, beginning in September 1975, she attended the Week of Prayer session—a regular segment of the school's curriculum. When she learned about God's love for her and about the truths of the Bible, she decided to give her heart to God. When she told her grandparents, with whom she lived, of her decision, they told her firmly that she would have to wait until adulthood to fulfill her desire.

Though disappointed, Angela resolved that someday she would serve God as she ought, no matter

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what the cost. As her school years progressed, her life-style began to change, much to the dismay of her grandparents. Angela refused to eat harmful and unclean foods, as she learned about these principles from her teachers. It was not easy for her to be different and vulnerable to ridicule, but the example of her close friends and teachers strengthened her decision to do God's will.

Angela joined the Bible study club conducted by the headmaster of her school. This set the foundation for her beliefs. Although she had never entered a Seventh-day Adventist church, she learned church doctrines and tried to apply the teachings of the Bible to her life, hoping someday to be

### Angela

able to worship with those who kept all of God's commandments.

Six years passed, and Angela was about to experience what was likely to be the last Week of Prayer of her school life. The speaker seemed to be speaking directly to her when he admonished the fifth-form (grade 12) students especially, about their decisions for God. He told them that they were going out into an uncertain world and that they would need God to be their guide.

Once again, Angela confronted her grandparents with her decision to follow God's leading. This time they were furious and refused even to speak to her. They threatened to throw her out of the house if she became a Seventh-day Adventist. Family friends tried to discourage her by saying that it didn't matter on which day one worshiped and that the teachings of the church were unimportant, as long as one had faith in God and lived a good life.

But Angela stood firm. With the encouragement and prayers of her teachers, school pastor, and others, she followed her Lord in baptism on June 20, 1981—six years after her first decision to do so. That joyful day passed swiftly, and Angela returned

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home accompanied by the district pastor, expecting to find her clothes at the door as she had been warned, but nothing happened. Nobody said anything to her, and the night passed without incident.

However, the next morning everything came crashing down, as her grandparents told her that since she had disobeyed them, she could no longer live in their home. Her grandfather told her that it would be best for her to leave, as her life would be in danger if she didn't. No longer wanted, with neither clothes nor money, and

without a job, Angela left the home she had grown to love. One of her teachers took her into her home. Providentially, Angela found a job, and was at last free to follow God's leading.

Angela's experience illustrates the great missionary potential of our schools. It truly highlights the overriding objectives of our educational system and the primary mission of our teachers—to lead youth to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. The consistent witness of Angela's teachers through her entire high school career not only led her to Christ but also helped to establish her in the faith.

"Institutions that are *God's instruments* to carry forward His work on the earth must be sustained... These institutions are *ordained of God*, and should be sustained by tithes and liberal offerings."<sup>1</sup>

Like other institutions of the church, our schools are *ordained of God* and are *God's instruments* to carry forward His work on the earth. We operate an educational system because God has ordained that we do so. This is the most compelling reason for operating church schools. God in His infinite wisdom saw the need for Adventist schools and directed His church to

operate them. Where the Seventh-day Adventist Church has established its system of education it has been an act of obedience to God's will. As a result, God's blessings have flowed richly to His people through the work done by the schools of the church.

**U**nfortunately, in many parts of the world, a major portion of Seventh-day Adventist children are not attending church schools. Does this constitute full obedience to God's will that our children shall be taught of the Lord? It seems not. To the extent that we fail to enroll the children of our church in our schools, and to the extent that we fail to make our education the effective instrument of God that it should be, we thus frustrate the purpose for which church schools were established. As a result, we disobey God, fail our youth, and weaken the church.

The church has a special work to do in educating and training its children that they may not, in attending school, or in any other association, be influenced by those of corrupt habits. The world is full of iniquity and disregard of the requirements of God... The hearts of the young are easily impressed; and unless their surroundings are of the right character, Satan will use these neglected children to influence those who are more carefully trained.<sup>2</sup>

Do our children receive from the teachers in the public schools ideas that are in harmony with the word of God?... Is obedience to all the commandments of God taught as the beginning of all wisdom? We send our children to the Sabbath

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School that they may be instructed in regard to the truth and then as they go to the day-school, lessons containing falsehood are given them to learn. These things confuse the mind, and should not be; for if the youth receive ideas that pervert the truth, how will the influence of this education be counteracted?<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, these things should not be, and yet they are. Too many of our children still attend schools and are taught by teachers whose life-styles and beliefs contradict our faith and confuse the minds of the youth. Teachers exert great influence on children. They make a real difference in shaping the thinking of their students. As a church we can and should determine the nature of that influence by fully adopting and applying the principle that Adventist schools with Adventist teachers make the best Adventists.

When will we as a church declare with power our commitment in this matter? When will we cease to send our youth to schools with influences

that confuse them, and with teachers who subtly, though at times unwittingly, pervert their ideas of truth?

The principle of distinction and separation are found in both the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>4</sup> In His wisdom, God saw the importance of having the young impressionable, vulnerable mind filled with the principles of righteousness, and with reverence for Him who is the beginning of true knowledge and wisdom. The injunction is laid upon the modern church no less than on ancient Israel:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

**T**he implications of this passage are profound and varied:

1. The church must recognize that God has commanded us to operate church schools that function as extensions of our Christian homes.

2. This divine imperative, like every command from God dealing with the dissemination of truth, is vital to the salvation process, and requires strict obedience.

3. In order to effectively teach these truths, men and women of God must be "thoroughly equipped for every good work," as the Apostle Paul put it.<sup>5</sup>

4. Those who teach the way of salva-

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***The teacher must convey to the students the pleasure and excitement he or she experiences in studying the subject.***

transference of rules or principles to new situations.

4. *Analysis.* The answer demands the student to subdivide a learned idea or concept and to analyze its components.

5. *Synthesis.* The answer requires that the student formulate a new idea based on principles or concepts already learned.

6. *Evaluation.* The answer requires the student to apply a standard or value set to a new concept and to justify the results of such application.

## Conclusion

These eight methodological factors, presented above in outline form, are based on a review of research on student learning. They form the fundamental principles of instruction.

In analyzing your own teaching, did you find room for improvement? If you make the necessary adjustments you can become the most effective teacher you are capable of being. □

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> David Bowman, "The Method Variable as a Facilitative Factor in the Teaching-Learning Process," *Journal of Christian Education*, 1:2.

<sup>2</sup> For a helpful and practical book on this topic, see Norris M. Sanders, *Classroom Questions: What Kinds?* (New York, Harper & Row, 1966).

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tion in our schools must be diligent, always alert to capture every opportune moment to press home some truth.

5. The God-fearing teacher must seek to adapt his or her methods and approaches to time and condition, ever seeking to integrate faith into learning. This will help the church's children grow into the likeness of Christ, even as they grow into a knowledge of the sciences and humanities.

Such teachers do not occur by chance. They too must be molded in the schools of the church. They must be trained to be Christlike in order to be coworkers with the Divine Teacher. They must learn to love and draw young hearts to Jesus. Such teachers make our schools different, because they themselves are different. They have been trained by the Holy Spirit and have become wise in the things of God.

Responsible school boards and administrators must ever bear in mind that "Wise teachers should be chosen for our schools, those who will feel responsible to God to impress upon minds the necessity of knowing Christ as a personal Saviour."<sup>6</sup>

Adventist teachers trained, rooted, and grounded in their faith live Adventism, teach Adventism, work toward Adventist objectives, and produce the fruit of Adventism. Adventist teachers *can* and *do* make a difference. □

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## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), vol. 4, p. 464, Italics supplied.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> See Deuteronomy 7:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:17. From *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 152.

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