

A traveler came upon the construction of what appeared to be an impressive building, which piqued his curiosity. He asked a worker what he was doing. The man responded without hesitation, “I am painting great portraits upon these glorious walls for all the world to see.” The traveler asked the same question of a second worker, who explained with pride: “I am a world-renowned carver, and I am carving magnificent sculptures to be revered by all.” Approaching a third worker, the traveler asked again, “What are you doing?” The third worker paused, and looked toward the sky, deep in thought. “I am a humble workman with gifts from above,” he began, “and I am building a cathedral to the King.” Do this humble worker from centuries ago and present-day Adventist teachers have something in common?

Well-Meaning, But Misguided

Like the workman in the story, Adventist educators are building “cathedrals to the King.” However, the construction of earthly edifices, however impressive, is not as important as the work we do every day. This work builds character, and inspires and motivates students to achieve their spiritual, emotional, mental, social, and physical potential. We are engaging in this work in the midst of tremendous forces.

We are building cathedrals for the King—sacred temples meant for great things.

too rebellious, too shy, too “bad”?

- What is it like to feel weighed down by excessive expectations and so much stress that success seems impossible and your motivation is destroyed?

Think back to when you were a teenager. Did you have such a need to be loved and accepted that you were drawn to a crowd of totally accepting peers because the adult world around you didn't seem to realize you existed? Was your childhood dominated by words like *excellence* and *rigor*, and phrases like “raising the bar”? If so, you have caught a glimpse of what it is like to be a child or teen in today's world, struggling for self-worth and for success. Well-meaning teachers and parents need to embrace a new paradigm that accurately defines what students really need to be healthy, vibrant, and fulfilled.¹

This article is meant as a call to action. How much do we care, and to what extent are we willing to commit ourselves, even if it means challenging established practices? Are our students worth investing time and resources to cre-

Building Cathedrals in the Midst of Hurricanes

These “hurricanes” are literally robbing our children of their childhoods and starting them on a path toward unhappiness and dysfunction. Think about these questions:

- What is it like to be a child struggling for survival in a highly competitive world, a world where survival of the fittest is the norm?
- What is it like to feel that what you say has little or no influence because you are too young, too “dumb,” too slow,

ate a system where commitment to excellence means raising *all* the bars—spirituality, emotional health, social interaction, life skills, recreation, and problem solving, not just academics? The issues and principles discussed in this issue of the *JOURNAL* are vitally important to the survival of our young people. If we don't try to feel what they feel, and experience what they experience, the percentage of those who choose destructive alternate lifestyles will increase.² We have enough data and personal experience to prophesy the future with a high degree of accuracy, especially if we keep doing the same things in the same way. In her

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important book, *Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students*, Pope³ describes how the educational system adults have created is, in turn, creating at-risk kids. Levine⁴ further documents this new group of at-risk youth in her book, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*.

Basic Needs and the Quality World

Our children have needs, and if we don't help them meet these needs in positive ways, they will find their own ways of getting them met! William Glasser⁵ describes five basic needs that all human beings share—survival, love and belonging, power or success, freedom, and fun. These needs fuel behavior. Glasser believes that when educators understand these needs and their relation to motivation, students will become more confident and effective. Jim Roy describes a similar approach in *Soul Shapers*,⁶ where he combines Glasser's secular ideas and Ellen White's spiritual principles.

When children's basic needs are not met, they go into ac-

tion to fix the problem. They try to find an environment where they feel better. This frequently leads to rebellion, drugs, alcohol, sex, and gang membership.

Glasser's Choice Theory states that positive relationships are an effective antidote to dysfunctional youthful behavior. Further, Glasser describes how every person, including children, creates a "quality world" where he or she stores memories or pictures of everything held dear. Certain people, places, activities, and ideas are placed in what could be called a "quality world picture album." People placed in these albums have a great deal of influence on the creator's thinking. How then does a person become a part of another's quality world album? Entrance is allowed only by invitation; no one can threaten, buy, pressure, or coerce his or her way in. Each person is the architect, seeking to create a world where he or she feels loved, safe, understood, free, and content.

For teachers to enter the quality world of their students, they must acknowledge and understand their students' unique language, which can seem as strange as a foreign dialect. A must-read in your "study of teen linguistics" is Gary Chapman's book, *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers*,⁷ where he explains the power of matching the languages—*words of affirmation, quality time, gift giving, acts of service, and physical touch*—to the specific individual involved. This book will open for you a world of understanding and help expand your relationships to new dimensions.

True Listening

Teens expect people who care to translate what young people say and do . . . to comprehend what they *really* mean and feel. For instance, when a teacher asks: "How are you today?" young people want adults to disregard the expected answer of "Fine," to interpret their tone, facial expressions, and body language to comprehend the real answer, which many times is "Terrible. Please help me. I need your time and support."

An example of this unique dialect occurred when I was driving by a spot in town where teens hang out. As I passed a group of teenagers, one of them made an obscene gesture. Many would view that as a sign of disrespect and hostility. In this case, I interpreted the gesture as a masked sign of endearment shown by a "tough guy" in front of his friends. He wanted some attention and knew how to get it. When I pulled my car over to the side of the road, jumped out, and ran toward the group, the boys around the "flipper" weren't sure what to expect, and they were totally stunned as I embraced and affectionately greeted my friend. That moment opened the door into an entire group of teens yearning for affection.

We must see the best in our kids. For me, the results of



The photos in this article depict relationship building between teachers and students as they work, study, serve, and play together.

doing so have been startling. There's a song that says it so well, entitled, "See Me Beautiful," by Kathy and Red Grammer.

*See me beautiful, see the best in me
It's what I really am, and all I want
to be
It may take some time, it may be hard
to find
But see me beautiful
See me beautiful, each and every
day
Could you take a chance, could you
find a way
To see me shining through in every
thing I do
And see me beautiful.⁸*

Divine X-Ray Vision

To understand a hurting child, we need divine "X-ray vision." We must see within, because the outside is often a facade that hides a broken heart. Teen rebellion nearly always begins with emotional pain. In order to develop close relationships with students, and to interlock our quality worlds with theirs, we must read through what they say and see beyond their behavior into their hearts. As educators, we are artisans of cathedrals meant to employ not only the excellence of scholarship, but also the colors and textures of compassion and empathy. We are not just teaching math, science, English, or Bible. We are building cathedrals for the King—sacred temples meant for great things.

The King had something to say about this nearly 2,000 years ago, in

the Beatitudes (Matthew 5), and the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5), where He laid out the elements of building relationships and the criteria for what Glasser calls the Quality World. The Scriptures also tell us that the kingdom of heaven extends deeper than out-

ward appearance (1 Samuel 16:7), and that we are ordained to care for God's sheep (John 21:16, 17). We are commissioned to translate love into living form (1 Corinthians 13). Jesus gave us personal examples throughout His life so that we can *experience* and *demonstrate* three great principles—altruistic love (*agape*), grace, and the freedom of choice.

Powerful Habits

Glasser provides a corollary to the fruits of the Spirit with his description of the Seven Connecting Habits and the Seven Deadly Habits. The Seven Connecting Habits are supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting, and negotiating differences. The Seven Deadly Habits are criticizing, blaming, nagging, complaining, threatening, punishing, and

bribing or rewarding to control. What are our students hearing and seeing from us? Is it the fruits of the Spirit and connecting habits, or a creative twist on the deadly habits? Do they hear stated or implied, "You are lazy"; "If you don't do your homework, you'll suffer the consequences of failure"; or "You can do it. I believe in you, and we will experience success together"? Are we building walls or cathedrals?

We need to be less obsessed with trying to fill our students' minds with information, and less competitive in how we structure our classrooms. We must find creative ways to recognize the sacredness and uniqueness of every student—their experiences, their skill sets, their abilities and disabilities, their personalities, and their dreams. There is a real possibility that as we obsessively focus on and strive for academic excellence, we focus less and less on the spiritual and emotional health of our students. These unbalanced expectations inhibit our ability to touch their lives. The ultimate standard, Heaven's standard, is not based on the sophistication of student projects, nor on how much they memorize, or even on how well they can compete in the workplace. Instead, the ultimate standard is based on whether our students experience and understand the love of God in the depths of their being.

As educators, our actions and choices will either build or inhibit relationships, which are vitally important



in “building cathedrals.” Relationships lead to intimacy, which provides a powerful opportunity to shape our students’ lives. The question is, are we intentional about this? Are we teaching collaboration or competitiveness, inclusiveness or elitism, service or status? As young people seek relationships to help them meet their need for love and belonging, and power, for freedom and fun, if they can’t find such relationships within our “institutions,” they will look elsewhere. The result may be alienation, with young people separating themselves from their homes, schools, and churches. This may be why so many teenagers are striving to create their own culture and values in an attempt to fill the vacuum within their hearts.

Wake-Up Call

Have our students caught the best of what we want to portray—that people are more important than things? Their silent plea for help should be a wake-up call for us. As materialism, power, and competition permeate society, it may require a group of youth to bring us back to what is most important—family, friends, and time together.

The students who enter our classrooms become our family. We become surrogate parents, and this gives us incredible influence. We thus have an opportunity to model the best in family behavior. Christlike parents train, rather than coerce. They nourish and nurture; they don’t stimulate rebellion. Loving parents don’t pit one child against another. They cherish and treat each child as God treats us, and take their children from where they are to where they were meant to be. As in an ideal family, God celebrates our joy with us and stands beside us, holding us up during our distress and shortcomings. He will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5). These are the reasons He is at the center of a quality world. He has given us the ideal for relationships, intimacy, oneness, and entrance into the quality world of our choice, regardless of the circumstances.

We have a commission to minister

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opportunity to create a legacy in each child. What will it be? Will they remember the facts or the way those facts were presented? Will they remember the projects and lists memorized, or will they remember us as some of the most influential people in their life, because of who we were and who they became because of us?

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is this—Can our students see, hear, and feel Jesus in us? Can they see His grace in what we do, and how we communicate with them? Do they feel that they are more important to us than what we teach or the image of the school? Are we willing to leave the “ninety and nine” for that one lost sheep? Are we willing to resist



to the whole person. Mastery teaching cares for each student as Jesus would. By modeling His love, we can nurture and uplift the weak and heavy-laden, and see beyond the behavior and labels into the heart of a child. By His grace, we will be empowered to love and believe in students even when they are unlovable and unbelievable. He will help us visualize what the power of love can do.

The knowledge teachers impart is important, but the impact upon the hearts of their students is far greater and enduring. As teachers, we have an

pressure from those who urge us to rid our classes of problem children, or raise standards so high that we “naturally” weed them out? Are we willing to do for our students what God does for us?

The Importance of One Person

How many of you reading this article became an educator because someone in your life saw through your failures, your “bad attitude” and poor behavior, to who you were meant to be? I, for one, am writing this article because of people like Louis Norming-

ton, Alice Neilsen, and Jim Roy, who believed in me during the most turbulent times of my life and helped me realize their passion for touching lives. Gary Hopkins in *It Takes a Church* shares how one person, strategically placed and used by God, can make all the difference in the world—and that person is you.⁹

Hurricanes and Cathedrals

Although hurricanes are among the most powerful forces on Earth, they are now fairly predictable, and much of their devastation can be avoided. However, if people don't heed the storm warnings or follow the evacuation plan, lives will be lost, as seen during Hurricane Katrina. Powerful forces can damage our students' lives as well. Winds of strife are pummeling our families, our schools, and our churches. We don't need to look for the crisis. We are in it. Truly, some of you are even now in the eye of the storm.

For those who work in disaster preparedness and relief, there are guidelines that have been established over time and represent the best practice and the research in the field. Similarly, education has established research-based guidelines for best practice. The Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy are the final standard by which our guidelines are measured, but

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we should embrace useful models such as Choice Theory, which help us understand human behavior and motivation. We must develop relationships and strengthen them through use of the connecting habits, and we must strive to become a part of each young person's quality world if we are going to have the desired influence and impact. As Choice Theory advocates, we must focus on the present and future, not the past, and never give up.

The great cathedrals of Europe took well over a hundred years each to build. Using primitive yet ingenious building methods, the great projects grew in stages. Workmen employed during the early stages never saw the completed cathedral, yet they shared their gifts to the fullest. Can the same be said for us as educators? We, too, may touch our students' lives but never see the finished product.

We are fighting for the hearts of all

of our young people. The powers of evil say, "Your children are ours," but we retort, "Not today—not on our watch!" The Great Controversy continues to rage, but the victory is worth all the difficulties, because we have been chosen and commissioned by the King to build cathedrals regardless of hurricanes, in the name of the One who can overcome the fiercest of storms with His love. ✍



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8. From "See Me Beautiful" from the recording *Teaching Peace* © 1986 Smilin' Atcha Music written by Red and Kathy Grammer; distributed through Red Note Records at <http://www.redgrammer.com>. Used by permission.
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