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## What Will Be Your Legacy?

**N**ext semester, or in 10 years, how will your students remember you? What will they say about the ways you influenced their spiritual growth?

In preparing for a sermon recently, an Adventist university chaplain asked people on Facebook: “What is something a professor in college did that nurtured your faith?”

In two days, he received 81 responses that covered a wide range of actions by teachers in different disciplines, not just religion professors. Here is a brief selection of what they said: Science teachers “tied every physics lesson to a Scripture”; “infused spirituality into all his lessons”; and “made it clear that one doesn’t have to sacrifice faith to believe in science, and vice versa.” A finance professor “starts his classes with words of inspiration, a Bible verse and prayer.” Coaches “made sure we had a worship before most practices. It definitely made an impact as far as communicating priorities.”

Other educators, including religion professors, were remembered for specific actions related to faith and doctrine: “he [challenged] my faith in ways that ultimately made it grow”; “helped me see that an unstudied faith was a vulnerable faith”; “infused spirituality into all of his lessons”; “gave great credibility to the idea that faith in practice was compatible with other disciplines”; “inspired me by welcoming tough questions in religion and philosophy classes”; “gave me a vision of God’s constant generosity that has shaped my work”; and “explained grace.”

But perhaps the most compelling and heartfelt testimonies described the personal character traits and caring interest that professors took in the wellbeing of their students, the same conclusion as Carole Kilcher drew in an article she wrote for the JOURNAL some years ago.<sup>1</sup> Respondents to the chaplain’s inquiry recalled the actions of various religion professors. One said: “he humbled himself and apologized to a student,” and as a result, “he showed me the character of God.” Another “answered my questions and showed interest in my faith development even after graduation.” A number of students and former

students remembered professors who took time to “hear my heart . . . my spiritual doubts”; who “took a chance with me, giving me an opportunity to be involved”; and who showed practical caring in many different ways: “taking me home with them, or leaving bags of groceries in my office”; “gave me jobs in and out of school and helped me get scholarships”; “[called] a year later to see how I was doing”; “took time to hear my heart”; “saw the potential in me”; and “sought me out to pray with me about a specific need.”

How does a person prepare to be an excellent Christian teacher who influences students’ faith development? This of course involves both expertise in one’s chosen field as well as a deep personal relationship with Christ that shines through the professor’s daily life (like the clerk in *The Canterbury Tales*: “gladly would he learn, and gladly teach” but also “filled with moral virtue”).<sup>2</sup> As one of the chaplain’s respondents put it: “He nurtured my faith in religion and in the church by not just ‘talking the talk’ but [also] ‘walking the walk.’”

As you reflect on how to influence your students spiritually, I hope that you will take time to write for the JOURNAL on this and other topics that will help empower your colleagues worldwide to integrate faith and learning and positively shape the moral and academic development of the students in Adventist schools.

As I prepare to retire after 42 years of editing the JOURNAL, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all of the wonderful educators with whom I’ve been blessed to work in preparing manuscripts for publication and to my colleagues in the General Conference Department of Education both currently and in days gone by. I encourage everyone reading this editorial to submit articles that will be helpful to readers in the future!

#### REFERENCES

1. <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae199860043405.pdf>.
2. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, Lines 309, 310.