

The Integration of Christ back into Adventist Education

Love the Lord your God with all your heart... soul and mind.

This is the first great commandment. –Matt. 22:37-38

Lesson from the Rich Young Ruler:

And someone came to Him (Jesus) and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And He said to him ... "if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." ... The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. –Matt. 19: 16-22

The ability to compartmentalize is a skill needed for youth to survive and prosper in today's world. In an age of multi-tasking and immediate gratification they must be able to instantaneously distribute the things that impact their lives into classes or categories. The primary focus of their lives is to remain in control while creating a thin layer of veneer to reflect to others that they have all things under control.

The lives of our children and youth today very much parallel that of the rich young ruler. Their lives depend on things like cell phones, iPods, the Internet and text messaging. Like the young ruler they too "own much property" and must control it, lest they lose their place in life's hectic race. It is in this setting that Christ knocks on the hearts door of each student, admonishing them to deny themselves and "come follow Me."

It hurts me to say that we as Adventist educators have played a part in contributing to this "control or be controlled" environment our students' live in. While at school, students' rush through the day, going from Math to English to Science to Social Studies and on and on it goes. In most classes there is a tiny compartment for spiritual education, but then it's back to the great priority – the curriculum.

While we have very clear council that the Word of God should be at the very heart of every subject taught, we have even compartmentalized the teaching of Bible into its own time slot during the day. It has been reduced to being just another piece of the curricular "pie," when God's intent was that the study of the Bible be integrated throughout the pie filling.

So what can we do now?

Schools of Refuge:

“Now among the **cities** which you will give to the Levites you shall appoint six **cities of refuge**, to which a manslayer (who accidentally kills someone) may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two **cities**. –Numbers 35:5-7 (NKJV)

God gave Moses a practical solution to a real life problem that faced the children of Israel and He will do the same for our children. No longer can our schools allow the curriculum to be the primary reason for their existence. We must return to the original objectives for which Adventist education was created: 1) To help each student grow in their relationship with Christ; 2) To equip them with the skills needed to serve God and their fellow man; and, 3) To protect them from a sin infested world and world view.

In short, this means a return to a holistic approach to education that integrates: worship, Bible study, prayer and service throughout the academic day.

- It means teaching students how to, “Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart... and soul and mind. For this is the greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38).
- It means challenging students and nurturing them as they grow into spiritual maturity. “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, ... and of faith in God.” (Hebrews 6:1).
- It means encouraging students to earnestly seek God’s CALL for their lives. “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10). “Your attitude must be like My own, for I did not come to be served, but to serve...” (Matthew 20:28)
- It means explaining to students that while God has a specific call for their lives, He also has a mission for all His children to participate in. “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. (Acts 20:24)

Conclusion:

For Adventist education it’s time to get back “into the box.” Far too long have we allowed the god of curriculum to stand above the God of all creation in our schools. Far too long we have categorized Bible and spiritual concepts into their own tiny

compartment during the school day. Now it's time to discover the abundant life God has promised for our students and ourselves as we courageously step out in faith and follow our Father's admonition to, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all other things will be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

In closing, consider God's faithfulness to Joshua who was called by God to step into a new land.

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide:

"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses... **5** No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

6 "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. **7** Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **8** Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: **11** "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.' "

16 Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go." –Joshua 1:1-16

**Adventist education
It's time to get back "into the box!"**