

IN SCHOOL WITH CHRIST¹

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What is our educational mission as Seventh-day Adventists? Has Jesus given us a unique mission to the world? Or are we merely a “me-too” reflection of other churches’ mission to the world? Is our educational mission the same as the Baptists or Nazarenes or some other Evangelical group?

We as a world church are in fact writing a “book” about education and “discipleship.” The last chapter is about a “discipleship” so mature, so complete that it prepares the “disciples” around the world to be ready for the close of human probation, prepares them to stand during the pouring out of the seven last plagues, prepares them to face the final test of the close of probation. That will be ultimate educational and “discipleship.”

Going to school is something most people want to get out of as soon as possible. Kids love summer vacation; school discipline is arduous; “commencement” is great—class work is finished.

Says Jesus: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt.

5:6). Old age sometimes empties the brain; hunger fills it. Pray for hunger! People who “hated knowledge” are fated to suffer consequences (according to Proverbs 1:29-33).

During the first twenty-five hundred years of this world’s history, the home school was the only means of educating God’s people. From it came the greatest statesmen, the most brilliant scholars, the mightiest intellects of which humanity can boast. The farther we come from creation the more lax was home education. When children were improperly taught by their parents, or when their training was entrusted to others, Satan was not slow to mould the mind and train the children for his service. God brought judgments to show how he regarded these lax disciplinary methods. But this became so common that it lost its effect.

Samuel was given to God before his birth. When weaned, he was taken to the temple of the Lord, and placed for training under the charge of Eli the priest. Instead of finding an ideal home and family, he saw the house of God desecrated, and God’s worship brought into contempt because the home training was neglected by over-indulgent parents. The proper home training of Samuel preserved him in this household, where the members lived in opposition to God’s most

¹ John 5:30-32. 83, 537

positive instruction. Samuel was but a child when God gave him a message, a most solemn warning, for the priest. It prefigured the time when the child Jesus sat at the feet of the learned doctors, and instructors were taught by the pupil.

Eli did not neglect the education of Samuel in those things necessary for the work of a priest, for Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. The impression given by this education clung to the mind of the young prophet. It may have been that which led him, when Saul rejected his testimony, to build schools for the education of those who, later in Israel's history, became leaders and counselors.

The home of Samuel was at Ramah near Bethlehem. At this place he founded a school for the education of young men who wished to become useful in the service of God.

As a judgment of God because Eli did not restrain his children, the ark was taken by the Philistines, and God's providence, after seven months, returned it to Beth-she-mesh, but the people were not prepared to receive it, so the "men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hills, and sanctified Eleazer his son to keep the ark of the Lord" (1 Sam.

7:1). This was in the woods, and here the ark remained for twenty years.

Samuel established another school at this place. The devoted in Israel, young men who were pious, intelligent and studious were gathered here for instruction. They communed with God, studied his word, and his works. They cultivated the soil and supported themselves. These schools were conducted by Samuel for the purpose of searching deeper into the truths of God's word, and to serve as a barrier against corruption that was at that time so prevalent in Israel, and to be a means of saving the nation from future calamity. The instructors were men well versed in divine truth, who enjoyed communion with God, having received a special endowment of the Holy Spirit.

The law of God was the basis of all their study. Sacred history, God's providences, music and poetry were taught. The Bible was written in prose and poetry. Both instrumental and vocal music were taught. In these schools the students learned the first principles of responsive singing as illustrated by David and his company when the ark was taken to Jerusalem, and repeated when Christ ascended to heaven, and which will again be heard when the saints ascend with Christ at his second advent. If the reader will give thought to

the songs mentioned in Holy Writ previous to this time; to the judgments of God that came as a warning from time to time; to the victories gained, the circumstances which called forth these songs: and to the renaming of men and places, with their history, they will find suggestions of a curriculum imparting an education broader than most of the scientific schools of the present day. It was the Spirit of God that directed in the establishment of these schools.

After re-anointing David king of Israel, Samuel died. David developed music, and special features of the education begun by the prophet Samuel. Other prophets came in Samuel's stead; but Israel gradually turned aside from the correct methods of education. The prophets were despised.

Elijah, the fearless prophet, who advocated correct principles of education, had to flee for his life. The effect of wrong principles was so marked that Israel, after one hundred and fifty years of waywardness, came to their senses, and God revived them and sent them help. Elijah and Elisha re-established the schools of the prophets in various parts of Palestine, and the youth of Israel were again taught according to God's plan.

Schools of opposition were also established, for whenever Satan sees any method adopted by God's people that is a success in establishing his kingdom, he introduces a counterfeit which is a mixture of good and evil.

There were schools of the prophets at Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho and near Jordan. The prophets visited these schools and gave instruction in the branches taught, in manual training, and in Biblical etiquette. Every youth was taught some trade. These schools were not designated to take the place of home training. God never delegated parents to place into the hands of strangers the welfare of their children, but these schools were to supplement the instruction given at home.

Their methods of instruction can be gathered only from incidental statements. One thing is evident: they were far different from theological schools of the present day. The grand object was to learn the will of God and every man's duty toward him. As they studied the records of past history, they were taught to trace the footsteps of Jehovah. The types and ceremonies of the law were explained so that faith grasped the central object of that system, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. By carefully studying the prayers

recorded in the Bible, it is evident that students were instructed how to pray.

A wise writer has said, “The study of [God’s] word . . . [develops] minds expanded, elevated, ennobled. . . . They will become strong-minded. Every intellectual faculty will be quickened” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 466). “The highest faculties of the human mind are called into intense activity. . . . The mind occupied with commonplace matters only, becomes dwarfed and enfeebled . . . [and] after a time loses the power of growth. As a safeguard against this degeneracy . . . nothing else can equal the study of God’s word” (*Education*, p. 124). Here’s hope for millions!

The apostle James encourages you to receive this priceless gift of wisdom. It’s one of the biggest “If’s” in the Bible and it makes us wonder why the Lord let it get in there: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:5).

Have you ever met anyone who had all the wisdom he/she needs? It seems we all lack it, even the great King Solomon, said to have been the wisest man who ever lived. He so “lacked wisdom” that like a fool he fell into that awful “deep pit” of “the mouth of

strange women” whom the Lord never intended him to marry; “he who is abhorred of the Lord will fall there,” he himself had said (Prov. 22:14). Those women led him to ruin.

If you have been delivered from arrogance and you realize your emptiness of wisdom, thank God for this clear evidence that the Lord does not “abhor” you. Remember, He can love you dearly and at the same time “abhor” your spiritual stupidity. A good dose of feeling how much the Lord “abhors” one can be a tremendous blessing.

The call to “any of you” means that the Lord puts all of us, educated and not, on a level in His sight: work yourself almost to death getting a dozen doctoral degrees and you can still remain a fool. If you are someone who has never had the chance to get “higher education,” please don’t despair and think of yourself as handicapped. There’s a story in our precious book of Ecclesiastes about a “poor . . . man” who was nevertheless “wise” who saved a city from almost certain conquest (but nobody ever thought to thank him; yet he “lives” in genuine fame, 9:13-15).

You wisdom-needing soul, be happy: the Lord does not bawl you out and make you feel like two cents because you “lack wisdom.” He gives it to you

“liberally and without reproach.” Oh, I love that! No berating, no torrent of reproach. He respects you as well as loves you! His affection for you is not that of yours for your dog. He honors you! He is constantly trying to build your self-respect.

The Apostle Paul writes about “The grace of God which was given to [Paul] for you” is the only source of salvation for any of us. The “revelation He [God] made known to me the *mystery* (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph. 3:4-5).

Therefore the school bells are ringing for all of us. “In other ages” this glorious good news “was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the [Holy] Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.”²

That same gospel is in the Old Testament, but like seeing through cataracts on our eyes it was veiled. Now, since Jesus came, the truth stands sharp and clear. What Paul means is that the gospel has become better good news now than the prophets had ever dreamed that it could be.

² Interesting! Paul puts the apostles on the same level with the Old Testament prophets!

Paul does not teach the popular doctrine of self-love known as the philosophy of “self-esteem.” But he does teach the Christian ethic of self-respect. He sums it up like this: “I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3). Our healthy self-respect is “in Christ.”

To each human being on earth, God has “dealt” a sense of self-consciousness and confidence in what God has given him/her. If the divine Son of God gave Himself for us (Gal. 1:4), we have to be somebody very important. It all depends on that confidence—that Christ gave Himself *for you* and that He honors you as being what He bought with His sacrifice.

If He “gave Himself for us,” then He must value us according to the price He paid. If you buy some goods in a shop, you make a decision to value those goods on an equivalent level with the price you are paying. That says how highly Christ regards you; now you are to look upon yourself in that light. This precludes arrogance and pride, for you know that you would be nothing of yourself if you did not have the Savior who bought you. But forever after, you hold

your head high because you appreciate the price that was paid for you.

“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power” (Eph. 3:6, 7).

Now Paul shows us the sense of self-respect he has learned by understanding and believing this truth of his calling. Without any pride, he rejoices in “the gift of the grace of God given to [himself] by the effective working of [God’s] power.” With no hesitation he claims as an apostle that “effective working.” He will waste no time worrying about whether he is where he should be in the Lord’s plan. The normal human pride that so easily mars all of our service for the Lord is absent, because Paul sees himself as a lowly “prisoner of the Lord.”

Paul’s ability to proclaim the good news of the gospel is a gift of the grace of God. Please do not think that gift is limited to certain professional people who spend decades in literary institutions. Anyone who understands the “mystery” Paul is explaining, who appreciates how good the good news message is, can

proclaim it! The Lord gives the utterance. But you must discipline your mind.

Jesus promised us that anyone who “believes” in Him will have a well of sparkling, fresh water of life springing up from his inmost soul to refresh anyone with whom he comes in contact. This is what Jesus said “on the last day, that great day of the feast [of tabernacles] Jesus stood and cried out, . . . ‘He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37, 38). Can you find anywhere a more thrilling definition of what it means to “believe” in Jesus? The “he who believes” is you! Is that “river of living water” flowing out of your heart to everyone you meet? Do you have a word of Good News truth for everyone? Does it “live” in you?

It may be evident when you talk with a child; it may be across the back fence to a neighbor; it may be in the questions he asks in Bible class. Life becomes a glorious adventure!

He is training you to sing a beautiful solo: “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a

new song in my mouth” that “many” will rejoice to hear (Ps. 40:1-3). Be happy! You are “blessed” (Matt. 5:3).

What motivates bullies to push students around? It has to do with education. The answer is—our obsession with the Old Covenant. History is clear: those who love the New Covenant never bully others!

The Apostle Paul himself was a fanatical follower of the Old Covenant who couldn't stand to watch the New Covenant apostles proclaim gospel Good News. He thought their message destroyed his keep-the-law theology. He misunderstood them—their gospel was the only way anyone truly could become a “doer of the law,” but he felt he had to “punish them oft in every synagogue. . . . and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:11). His zeal for the Old Covenant even led to murder. All, supposedly “righteous”! (And highly popular).

When finally he discovered the New Covenant, he saw something he had never seen before: Ishmael, the son of the Old Covenant Hagar, “persecuted him that was born after the Spirit,” that is, Isaac. “Even so it is now,” he added (Gal. 4:29). That brought him to his knees—in his frenzy against the apostles he saw he was acting out the role of Ishmael!

“Even so it is now”! Old Covenant obsession is spiritual poison. If it doesn't outright kill your devotion to Jesus and His church, it weakens it so it becomes “lukewarm.” Many Christian youth lose their way because they have been taught Old Covenant concepts under the guise of “Christian education” in church or school. Lord, please help our blindness!

We must not leave Abraham out, without seeing him through to his grand final victory. It is true that he had failed miserably in his (and Sarah's) unbelief that let them fall into the Old Covenant. While God had given them the New Covenant promise of having a “child of promise” (Isaac), they had disbelieved and assumed they must “work,” themselves, to help fulfill it—hence, Hagar and Ishmael (Paul says they *are* the Old Covenant! See Gal. 4:22-25).

Finally, after decades of heart-bitterness even while they were having daily family worship and doing their Sabbath-keeping, Sarah allowed her unbelieving heart to be melted in repentance (see Heb. 11:11). Her new and different feelings about God made it possible for her to get pregnant, and “by faith Sarah received strength to conceive.” All this time, they were “one flesh” and so Abraham shared the repentance with her.

Isaac came, well named—“laughter.” He grew to be a most delightful teen, the joy of their hearts.

Then the bomb, when Abraham was old and weak: the same voice of God that had made the promises now told him to offer the beloved son as a sacrifice on a hill to be known as Calvary (Gen. 22:1, 2). The years of bonding went further than if he’d been told to do this when Isaac was a baby. Sarah couldn’t take it. Father roused Isaac, left without telling her goodbye (vs. 3).

That three-day journey was the longest and saddest Abraham had ever taken. But when puzzled Isaac quizzed him, he expressed no Old Covenant despair as we would do probably. Instead: “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb.”

A shining tribute to “Christian education”: Isaac then joined in the willingness of the sacrifice. He had learned to believe the New Covenant promises.

Abraham didn’t actually kill Isaac with his knife—but he made the full commitment to make the sacrifice. “You have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me,” said God” (vs. 12). It reflected Christ’s cross. Christ didn’t go into the literal Lake of Fire, but He made the full commitment, and thus He died the

equivalent of our second death. (Let’s say “Thank You!”)

Now Abraham has finally earned his title, “father of the faithful.”

Have you ever thought how weak and helpless Jesus was of Himself when He was with us in the flesh? He received an education and learned. Did you know that He did not work even one miracle “of Himself”? He said, “I can of Myself do nothing.” When He made decisions, He could not make them of any wisdom inherent in Himself, because when He left heaven to come down and become one of us, He laid aside all the prerogatives of His divinity. “As I hear, I judge,” He adds. What He said or taught, He had first to learn. In other words, He did not bring with Him within Himself any wisdom from heaven. His mother Mary had to teach Him to read the Old Testament, but He was different from our children—from the beginning, He loved it. He was *agape* in the flesh.

Jesus took all our weaknesses upon Himself, “in all points made like His brethren,” not unlike them! The flesh or nature which He “took” was “like,” not unlike, ours. “Morning by morning” He was awakened by His Father, to learn in prayer and study of the Word (Isa. 50:4, 5). In those prayer and study sessions as a

Youth He gained an education that qualified Him to be better than a “Ph.D.” He said, “The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned.” He spoke so beautifully, so clearly, powerfully, succinctly, that people marveled, “How does this Man know letters, having never studied” [that is, in a college or university]? (John 7:15). Jesus took no credit to Himself; He gave all the glory to His Father: “My doctrine [My teaching. My speaking] is not Mine, but His who sent Me” (vs. 16). But that does not mean that He brought that wisdom with Him from heaven: He learned it in those “morning by morning” educational conversation with His Father! And all that super-Ph.D. Wisdom is yours for just the hunger to acquire it—!

We have a choice: we can live under the old covenant (the still popular way as it has been for millennia), or under the new. And if we choose to live under the new covenant, all will go well with us; right?

If we are driving, all the lights will turn green for us; the boss will give us a raise; our spouse will smile sweetly at us; our investments will prosper. Right?

Jesus surely lived under the new covenant, but He also died under it; from His boyhood He met constant opposition and turmoil that led Him eventually to the cross. No, new covenant living is not a picnic.

As a student in the “school of Christ” you are under serious, loving discipline (Heb. 12:5-10). Some setbacks and disappointments may be good for you in the long run. But the Lord tempers our trials, giving each of us the benefit of infinite wisdom. To each of us is given the “measure of faith” that makes life where His providence has placed us a thing of quiet, steady joy.

Even Jesus in His incarnation endured discipline. We read that “He [learned] obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). You will someday thank the Lord Jesus for permitting certain disappointments to come to you; your present happiness can be greatly enhanced by anticipating this through your confidence in His faithfulness. The joy of the future can become yours in the present through faith.

The first message Jesus gave to the assembled disciples after His resurrection was, “Peace be unto you” (John 20:19). This is no vain compliment; peace of heart is what you long for and He gives it to you today. “My peace I give to you,” and that is in the midst of tribulation (John 14:27). The peace comes with your believing the new covenant promises, all seven of them in Genesis 12:2, 3.

You may have to pray the prayer of Mark 9:24: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” A wise writer assures us that we can never perish while we pray that prayer. Every little prayer you pray, making that choice, makes you stronger in the Lord.

We all know that a “student” is someone who follows a teacher. Therefore the ultimate lesson in “discipleship” is the one that the “144,000” teach us: these are they who “stand on the mount Zion, ... having the Father’s name written on their foreheads, ... and who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev. 14:1, 4). “Mt. Zion” is the church, the same as the “remnant church” of 12:17. For “the Lamb “ to “stand on Mt. Zion” therefore is Christ and His people to be fully reconciled; the sacrifice of Christ will at last be fully vindicated in these people.

Through Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, He ministers to His last-days people the “atonement” in this final time of the High Priestly ministry; every buried root of enmity against God or alienation from Him (see Rom. 8:7) will have been cleansed from their hearts; His people are at last “at one” with Him. This is the meaning of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, “Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

The sanctuary in heaven cannot be “cleansed” until first of all the hearts of His people on earth are “cleansed.” Thus the story of the 144,000 is the story of final victory over sin—a victory accomplished only by faith, not by works.

And here is where the message of Christ’s righteousness comes into sharp focus: sanctification is accomplished in the hearts of believers by the ministry of truth. “Sanctify them [Thy people] through Thy Word; Thy word is truth,” Jesus Himself prayed (John 17:17). This is what the 144,000 have heartily submitted to. The slightest hint from the Holy Spirit that something in the life is in opposition to that “truth of God,” and the believer gladly gives it up. Like a healthy heart beating and pumping blood throughout the healthy body, so the Holy Spirit is working throughout the remnant church; God’s people waste no time or energy fighting the leading of the Holy Spirit. There is none of that “1888 spirit” that constantly opposes the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The 144,000 come to the place where it can be honestly said of them, “These are they who follow the crucified Christ [the Lamb] wherever He goes.”

Will it be this generation who open their hearts to this leading of the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: Dear Father, We come to you today and give thanks for all our teachers. Thank you for the way in which they give of themselves each day in the classroom, serving and instructing the next generation. We thank you for them all now.

Father, please fill their hearts with courage now by your mighty Spirit. Fill them with your strength, so they may rise to every challenge and not grow weary.

Fill them with your wisdom, so that they may be able to make good judgments when guiding and helping others.

Fill them with your peace, so that when stress and anxiety comes it will not overwhelm them.

Fill them with your joy, so that the passion they have for their subjects may become an infectious passion that spreads.

We ask all this in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.