



ILLINOIS Focus

Editorial



Focus on Education

John Gryss,
President

Tucked neatly in the backend of the famous section of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, these words speak not just to the question of the "greatest of these" but to eternity: *"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me."* (verses 9-13)

Education recognizes the limitations of humanity, the limitations of the "partial." Powerfully stated by the apostle is this reminder that in life, we must constantly be updating our "cognitive GPS" (love that phrase I came across recently). The cognitive GPS we hold in the formative years of our lives will not sustain the landscape of our adulting years...and beyond.

The power of education continually refreshes the full human and

the Imago Dei. While places like AdventHealth hold to a "whole person care," education must hold to a "whole person development." Education is more than knowledge, more than the amassing of data, more than categorizing and learning STEM. Ultimately, education is truly about developing people to become learners. Sure, there is the need to learn basics related to any number of subjects, especially in those elementary

hour away from where I thought I would be. Improvisation became the theme of that journey. Education in those earliest years provides the opportunity to develop the person so as to know that in the future we will need constant full-human updates.

One of the reasons I've appreciated my life within Adventist education is because I've consistently met people who taught me the power of wonder and taught me to be amazed at the

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Education

and secondary spaces. Yet, even here, it is important for our children to develop elements like civility and treating classmates with dignity and respect.

I don't know if you've ever had the experience of following your GPS to only discover that your destination either a) doesn't exist or b) has moved. I recently went to visit someone and while we were all clear as to where the address was, we discovered there was a lack of clarity and updating with my GPS and it took me to a path well over an

wonder of this amazing God we are called to both follow and serve. I've come to wonder if one of those purposes for education is to continually refresh not just what can and cannot be known but to be held captive by wonder.

Continued on page 8

180 Evangelism	4
Youth Department	5
New Employee Introductions	6

& more



The “J” Word

“We are all priests—educators of the things of God in our homes.”



Pastor Matthew Lucio

I’ll never forget the day my daughter came home from school and told me she wasn’t allowed to say the “J” word.

Now I haven’t always been Adventist, so I started rummaging through my brain trying to think of what bad word starts with “J”.

It turns out, the word is “Jesus.”

My daughter attends our local Jewish school and, for the record, there are a lot of great things going on there. Jesus just isn’t one of them. I can certainly understand why they wouldn’t want Christian kids proselytizing, but I’m still shook that someone thinks the name of Jesus might be a bad word.

“Why don’t you send your daughter to an Adventist school, Matthew?”

I would—except we don’t have one. My church used to have a school back when HMS Richards invented radio (a possible exaggeration). I’ve met the generations of Adventists who were shepherded to adulthood by this little church school. But it, like many other church schools, closed. Then my family showed up with two school-aged children and... had to find somewhere else.

At least once a year, someone shows up at our church with kids and says, “I wish

we had a church school.” I always say, “me too,” and that is that. I don’t pretend to understand all the reasons why running a school these days is so hard, and I know there are people praying and planning a comeback.

In the meantime, when my daughter came home and told me about the “J” word, I realized that I needed to step up. If she was going to get an Adventist education, it would have to be at home.

Turns out, there’s good precedent for this in the Bible. I’m reminded of a text from a different social context: “For a long time Israel was ... without a priest to teach” (2 Chronicles 15:3). Teaching was a priestly role in Israel, and yet the New Testament reminds us that we are “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9).

We are all priests—educators of the things of God in our homes. Having a local Adventist school nearby would be fantastic. I hope by God’s grace that a new one can be refounded around here in order to bless more generations. Until then—and even then—it’s up to us to teach our kids the “J” word.

Estudia, Avanza, Crece, Edúcate



Pastor Miguel Ramos Ramos

Subió a plataforma y se sentó en la silla del predicador. Se dio la bienvenida, cantamos, se ofrecieron los agradecimientos, y presentaron las peticiones. Entonces se levantó a predicar, con voz entrecortada dio gracias a Dios, con gran dificultad, pero con firmeza comenzó a leer su sermón hasta terminarlo, oró, y nos despidió. Esta escena se repetía una o dos veces cada mes durante los años en que pasaba de mi niñez a la adolescencia.

Este ancianito, era según la apreciación de muchos “un viejo sin educación” Pero este viejo, , aunque nunca fue a la escuela, amó a Cristo con todo su corazón, aprendió a leer usando al Biblia, llevó a su nieta a los pies del salvador y fue una gran influencia para mí vida.

¿Será este un ejemplo de la

palabra del Señor cuando dice que “lo necio del mundo escogió Dios para avergonzar a los sabios”? Es posible, aunque en esta cita que aparece en 1 Corintios 1:27-28, me parece que Dios quiere impedir la jactancia personal y no la elocuencia o la educación formal.

En un momento de mi vida en el que quería crecer en mi educación formal alguna persona me sugirió que eso no era necesario, ¿para qué quieres estudiar? Me dijo, y prosiguió con un argumento que yo interpreté así: “todos los que hacen maestrías o doctorados regresan llenos de jactancia y orgullo y no se dejan dirigir; se convierten en ineptos para el ministerio”

Más de una vez he oído personas en diferentes niveles en la iglesia o fuera de esta, señalar a los que buscan una educación formal avanzada y aún hablar en contra de la educación. Usan algunas de estas expresiones: “Dios escoge a los humildes”, “yo no necesito un doctorado para servir a Dios”, “Dios también puede hablar atreves de mi”, “los que tienen maestrías y doctorados se creen...”

Estas y otras expresiones parecidas pueden ser ciertas, hasta un punto. Dios usa a los que no tienen educación formal como al ancianito de la historia o como la mayoría de los 12 discípulos, pero ¿son los únicos a los que Dios escoge?

José de Arimatea, Nicodemo, Zaqueo, Mateo, Salomón, Job, Pablo y otros fueron personajes de buena posición financiera, de alta educación formal o estatus social, que figuran entre los escogidos.

Es que el llamado se hace a todos, (Juan 3:16) “todo aquel que cree”; los escogidos son los que aceptan al llamado, sin importar los niveles de educación o posición social en el que se encuentren.

Ahora “nadie debe sentir que porque no se ha educado no puede tomar parte en la obra del Señor. Dios tiene una obra para ti. El ha dado a cada uno su obra.” CPI 106.1

Dios te llama, y si tienes la oportunidad de avanzar en una educación formal, adelante, no te detengas. “Una vida dedicada a Dios no debiera ser una vida de ignorancia.” MCP 347.2

Continuación en la página 8

180 Evangelism

As the Conference Education Director stood before a sea of eager Adventist educators energized to begin the school year, he uttered these impactful words: "Congratulations, you are about to begin a 180 evangelistic series." These words are forever etched in my mind as the ultimate purpose and focus of Adventist education.

Ellen White shared that "in the highest sense the work of redemption and education are one" (Education, p.30). In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul shares that "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers." The role of "pastor and teacher" are not separated. The pastor and teacher share a common challenge to disciple, train, and equip both children and adults alike. Helping students develop a personal, intimate, saving relationship with Jesus should be the highest aim of our schools.

Recently, as I was scrolling through Facebook, one post immediately grabbed my attention. It simply said that "Jerry spoke in church yesterday." Jerry was a long-time friend and classmate. Jerry went to our Adventist schools from grade school through high school. Following high school Jerry drifted far from God and the church. Fast forward 40 years, through a variety of struggles and hardships, Jerry the ultimate purpose and

focus of Adventist education was sharing his conversion testimony (encouraged by the pastor) in a small rural church in Maine. With the COVID quarantine and bouts with depression, Jerry began to reflect on his life journey. He acknowledged the influence of a loving, praying mother, and how several teachers had disciplined him and modeled Jesus to him. During his testimony he affirmed the powerful influence that Adventist education had on his life. Adventist teachers were a significant part of his spiritual awakening. Jerry is now a devoted follower of Jesus. When home, church, and school are united together, the likelihood of staying connected to God and the church increases dramatically.

We sometimes form a limited view of evangelism as primarily an event. The greatest impact of Jesus' ministry (evangelism) was realized through relational connections and discipleship. Jesus spent most of His three and a half years of public ministry training His disciples. In one year alone, a teacher will spend 800 hours of discipling, training, and modeling to students. The most recent Valuegenesis study (2010) stated that "81% of all students indicated that attending an Adventist school was the most important factor that helped them develop their religious faith." From 2006-2015, 427,313 young people were baptized during the school



Pete Braman,
Ministerial Director

year through Weeks of Prayer and baptismal classes, etc.

John Wesley Taylor wrote these words in the Journal of Adventist Education (April-June 2017, p. 39): "Adventist education is the longest, largest evangelistic event held by the Adventist Church. It is also one of the most effective." Not only is Adventist education vital to the faith development of our Adventist students, but many schools are intentional about reaching their communities with educational evangelism. Many have joined the Adventist church through school ministry. While Adventist education is a significant investment, studies reinforce the powerful impact of school evangelism for both joining, remaining, and serving in our church.

EDUCATION + SUMMER CAMP

TRAIN UP A CHILD

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE YOUTH DEPARTMENT

Proverbs 22:9 says that we should “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” People tend to associate education with school, often tethering it to words like scholars and grade point average, academia, and curriculum. Those words are all important...but what if they aren't the point? What if education wasn't just about performance? What if it was about what we learn about ourselves through the process?

Most people, when they think about summer camp, envision thoughts of sunshine and arts and crafts and horseback riding. We have not found it to be a common occurrence to hear the words “education” and “summer camp” used in the same sentence. However, we would suggest that camp is one of the most educational spaces youth and young adults can find themselves in.

In talking with a few of our camp staff, we asked them to recall some of the greatest lessons they learned while they were at camp. Here were a few of the responses:

“I learned the value of a team. I can do a lot of things by myself, but it's so much better when we work together.”

“Making mistakes isn't the problem. Letting my mistakes define me is the problem.”

“Teaching and helping kids at camp helped me learn so much about myself and the things God can do through me and the other staff we work with.”

These are just a few of the thoughts our staff shared, but each of these answers showed us something. When our young people are at camp, they are in an active learning environment, and while the lessons they learn may not be attached to a letter grade, they are invaluable to the people Christ calls all of us to be. Bearers of His image and reflections of His character. We'd say Ellen White was onto something when she said “*True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character*” (Education, 225). So, the next time someone says they'd like to have a summer experience that is both exciting and educational...point them to camp. We promise to deliver.



WELCOME TO OUR TEAM



Willie Baez

Moline SDA Church, Savanna SDA Church, Galesburg Park View SDA Church, Sauk Valley SDA Church

“ I was born in Ponce Puerto Rico. I have served in different ways: I have been a Bible Worker back in Puerto Rico, a colporteur back in my bachelor years, and I also assisted in a church in Puerto Rico as an assistant Pastor. My first opportunity to be part of ministry in the US was to be a counselor in Indiana at Timber Ridge camp. I worked for another camp in New York and I served there as a Boys’ Director at Camp Victory Lake. One of my most challenging jobs was to serve as a teacher at Carolina Adventist Academy. This job was challenging but it became a blessing. Thankfully, to my degree at Andrews University, I was able to practice and serve at Paw Paw SDA Church. There, I learned many good values and principles that I can apply in my ministry today.

Now I am serving as a Pastor in the Moline District. This is a four-church district. I am excited to serve, because I see a lot of potential for growth. I am glad that I can use my first language that is Spanish to reach others besides English speakers, because there are many Spanish speaking in our community. Mchurch members are interested in reaching out so we can welcome them to our community. My wife and I are excited to serve these churches and help them grow.

”

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM



Desiree Walker

Hinsdale Adventist Academy

I am beyond excited to be a part of Hinsdale Adventist Academy and community. There is so much I hope to learn and share from my professional experiences and journey with Jesus Christ. I believe teaching is a calling God placed on my life, so I am passionate about education that focuses on redemptive teaching, the joy of discovery and equitable access to learning for all students. A part of my work history involved individualized learning to students with communication disorders as a Speech Language Clinician and small group instruction as a Middle School Teacher. I simply love being in the classroom and sharing in students' journey to transformational learning.

I am also a speaker and writer. Currently, I work with various ministries to bring the Gospel to people who have never heard of Jesus Christ or may not have the courage yet to walk into a church. I enjoy sharing about the work God has done in my life, and I pray that my students will come to know Him better from their encounter with me. My favorite Bible text is Psalm 27:4 which sums up how I view the Christian walk: Giving God attention because I greatly need His presence to change my life.



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Continuación de la página 3

Se necesitan de jóvenes y adultos adventistas cristianos educados, bien preparados y refinados que puedan compartir la verdad con el mundo. Muchos no escucharán a los menos preparados, no porque no quieran escuchar sino porque hay una barrera cultural o idiomática entre ellos.

Por lo tanto “Necesitamos hombres y mujeres jóvenes que tengan una alta cultura intelectual, a fin de que puedan hacer la mejor obra para el Señor.” – {CM 42.2} pero al mismo tiempo “mansos y humildes de corazón. 2JT 231.2

Estudia, avanza, crece, edúcate “Elevemos la obra al más alto nivel posible, recordando siempre que si hacemos nuestra parte, Dios no dejará de hacer la suya.” – {2JT 231.2}

Continued from page 1

A few years back Cristina and I drove south of St. Louis to observe the full eclipse of the sun midday. We were not the only ones. What normally takes a five-hour drive took us ten hours on the way back. What I discovered is that so many were obviously filled with wonder...enough to drive such distances to observe something of profound beauty.

Education updates not only the full human to be prepared for “the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of service in the world to come” but to increase our sense of wonder. When I reflect on eternity for a moment, I realize that all three of these “outcomes” are vital for entering into that eternal journey with Jesus. First, ongoing continuous updates of my own person prepares me for what will be. Second, to deploy that continuous update for the purpose of service prepares me for the ultimate eternal service to this God of eternity. Finally, to continuously grow my sense of wonder as a preparation for what will be when we spend eternity in the classroom of God’s creation. I just can’t imagine!

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