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HOW CAN CHRISTIAN TEACHERS LEAD
STUDENTS TO GOD?

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INTRODUCTION

Today our world faces changes that occur in many areas at an accelerated pace. Population density increases every year at an unbelievable rate. Demands of modern life are becoming more and more complex. The level of technology has grown higher than anyone could have predicted. Industries, businesses, government affairs, research and the education field need citizens with technical knowledge and training.

All around the world, teachers from all educational levels including Colleges and Universities must dedicate themselves to produce skillful specialists to successfully meet the world's challenges. How does this affect the Christian teachers on our own campuses? They have the same responsibilities as teachers in secular institutions; however, their challenge as Christian teachers is even greater. They must strive to give quality education with a strong christian emphasis so, the students may maintain a Godly upright status in the earthly society plus, be an expert in their field of study.

More than that, they need to lead their students to God. This is the prime purpose of the establishment of any christian school. Ellen G. White emphasizes that "Our colleges are ordained of God. When I was shown by the angel of God of our youth, I saw that it would be one of the greatest means ordained of God for the salvation of souls."¹

¹Ellen G. White, Child Guidance (Southern Publishing Association Nashville, Tennessee., 1954), p. 329.

Describing the academic excellence that Christian colleges must struggle to achieve, she said: "God designs that the college at Battle Creek shall reach a higher standard of intellectual and moral culture than any other institution of the kind in our land."²

God wants to rescue the youth from the power of Satan. He wants them to witness for Him on earth and to live with Him in His eternal kingdom. His desire is to share this task with those who are dealing with the minds of students; those who are contributing to the building of their character to cooperate with Him in this plan of salvation. God calls for teachers to lead students to Him. This paper is an attempt to answer the question: How can Christian faculty members on a college campus lead students to God?

The answers to this question will be developed through the following ideas:

1. Faculty members in Christian colleges
2. Some characteristics to be developed by Christian teachers
3. Integrating faith and discipline
4. Integrating faith and learning
5. The teachers' active Christian life

It is hoped that this paper will help prospective and current Christian teachers lead students to God through their teaching and deportment.

²Ellen G. White Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View California Pacific Press, Publishing Association., 1948 Volume 4), p. 425.

THE FACULTY MEMBERS IN CHRISTIAN COLLEGES

Staffing responsibility is of crucial importance in a Christian college. The keynote that should direct the selection of teachers is highlighted in the following two objectives: preparation of students for this world and preparation for the world to come.

The staff could ask the following questions to find out the philosophies of a prospective teacher.

What are the human values in the sight of the teacher?

What are the theories that govern his thinking?

What does the teacher think about the origin of man?

What is the purpose of his presence in the world?

What are his responsibilities before His maker?

What does he think of the ultimate end of man?

He must be a teacher with a Christian mind who accepts Christ's divine sacrifice on the cross in order to save the human race. Harry Blamires puts emphasis upon the Christian mind. He says:

The Christian mind surveys the human scene under the illumination of the fact that God became man, taking upon himself our nature for all time and for eternity. Thus, the Christian's conception of the human person is a high one, his sense of the sacredness of human personality being deeply grounded in revealed theological truth.³

That is to say that Christian schools need Christian teachers whose belief can fit into the Christian philosophy of education.

³Blamires, Harry. The Christian Mind (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1978).

Education is God's work. Each student is personally known by God. He gave him life, He helps him grow, He provides for his material, intellectual and spiritual needs. As such, God is the greatest Educator. The teacher should humbly accept that he has received delegation of power from God. The Creator of the Universe chooses men to collaborate with Him. Teachers in Christian colleges are the Lord's stewards. As fellow workers with God, they should exhibit high performance in both, subject matter and in their spiritual life. This is why, those who are responsible for staffing Christian colleges should focus on dedicated as well as well-trained professors. In the light of this thought, Frederick E.J. Harder says:

These institutions must provide an intellectual climate that will foster the most rigorous studies in the humanities, sciences, professions and vocations. Our schools are called upon to prepare high quality graduates⁴ to serve the church and larger society.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS TO BE DEVELOPPED BY CHRISTIAN TEACHERS

It takes a great deal of wisdom to lead students to God. The following are some characteristics Christian teachers need to develop.

1. A Good relationship with God

Christian teachers can lead students to God if their life as a whole can influence the life of the students for better.

The teacher who is a friend of God recognizes the weakness of his/her human nature. He/she learns to evaluate his/her own qualities to find out whether they are acceptable or not.

⁴Frederick E.J. Harder, The Journal of Adventist Education (October 1987).

Prayer and meditation of the Holy Scriptures produce self-awareness. The Holy Spirit helps to overcome attitudes and motives that are not Christlike.

Self-improvement in Christian life develops a spirit of forgiveness, patience and love for youth.

The happiness of being a co-worker with God among young people should produce enthusiasm and aliveness in the teacher's personality. A good relationship with God communicates a positive acceptance of self and of others. Christian teachers must cultivate peace of mind and true joy that come from the presence of Christ in their life. Their relationship with the students will be an announcement of the good news that they have.

2. A good relationship with Fellow Workers

Christian teachers should be, as the Bible says, "A sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved...to the other a savor of life from life." II Cor. 2:15,16.

On a Christian college campus, teachers have around them fellow workers who labor for the students as well. They should manifest mutual respect and a team spirit.

They should recognize that God distributes special gifts among the faculty members for the excellence of His work. Each teacher should bring appreciation and give glory to God when these gifts are manifested. Each one should be stimulated in developing his/her own gifts or talents.

3. Teachers' relationship with the students

In Genesis, we read Judah's terrible experience where he had to return to his father without his young brother because the governor of Egypt had decided to keep Benjamin in prison. This event came up with a manifestation of a true love. In a

desperate plead, Judah cried out: "For how shall I go to my father, and the lad be not with me?" Genesis 44:34.

Young people today are those to whom Satan directs his most artful strategies. He wants to make salvation impossible for them. Christian teachers should feel responsible for their students as Judah felt for his brothers' safety. They should deal with them according to the dimensions of their personality.

Young people like to deal with adults that they can trust. So, Christian teachers have to develop honesty, truthfulness and a spirit of justice in their relationship with them.

Existential philosophies of the modern world inspire youth with desire to know, to feel, to experience reality, to push forward. So they need strong and well educated teachers. They need teachers who are able to give them meaningful material, teachers who want eagerly to participate in some future (realization), teachers who are pushing toward new and larger experiences.

In implementing the college curriculum, teachers must make the teaching/learning settings as positive as possible.

Sometimes, young people feel insecure about life. They are subject to emotion, particularly in time when they have to make decisions. According to Colin Standish, "The greatest and most significant decision that humans can make is a decision for Christ. This decision will affect all other decisions and therefore, in the education of young people, primacy should be placed upon it."⁵

During this period of stress, the young people need to find understanding and support. They need to meditate on the

⁵Standish, Collin D. and Standish Russel R., Keepers of the Faith (Hartland Publication, V.A. 1988), p. 184.

ways their elders relate to God. So, those teachers who are ministering to the youth should develop for themselves genuine Christian living in order to lead them to God. Roger L. Dudley makes a description of such a life:

- These adults have a life of basic trust.
- They know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).
- They are responsible and conscientious. By having done their best, they are willing to leave the results with God.
- They have their share of life's problems, but they do not complain. They express gratitude for God's gracious gifts.
- They confess that they are sinners, they are not paralyzed with guilt, for they have committed their salvation to Jesus-Christ. They believe that He has forgiven their sins.
- They daily invite the Holy Spirit to control their life, and they believe that God is working out His character in them.
- They freely choose the life of faith and they live it out.
- They are happy to share their experiences with others, and they do so, not like a high-pressure salesman over-powering a customer but simply and naturally in the course of their daily living.⁶

⁶Dudley L. Roger, Passing on The Torch (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), p. 184.

Many students from Christian colleges are longing to share social and spiritual experiences with their teachers. The staff members who provide such opportunities to them are just fulfilling the goals for which such institutions have been established.

INTEGRATING FAITH AND DISCIPLINE

In a Christian college, discipline may appear an easy task. Many of the students come from Christian homes. Many of them are young adults who are living to some extent an independent life. Some of them are married couples with children. All of them are responsible people, engaged in a professional training program.

Even so, Christian college campus discipline is hard work. There are several reasons for this. Each student is a member of the human family: we are all sinners. Those students come from a vast range of differences in family background. Each one brings with him/her the results of the kind of education that he/she received from early infancy to adulthood.

We are called to deal with respectful, gracious, intelligent and responsible students, but at the same time, with unkind, recalcitrant, haughty and frustrated students. We find that some of them love Christian institutions and yet, hate religion. Obstinance and revolt will be manifested against school regulations.

Responsibilities for the teachers

Christian teachers need a plenitude of God's love in order to deal with disagreeable students. In the matter of shaping students' deportment the Christian teacher needs to exemplify God's love by (using) wisdom, forbearance, humility and patience.

In planning the curriculum for the Christian college, emphasis is to be made upon preventive methods of discipline rather than punishment. The regulations should be reasonable. They should be set in a democratical manner. Through a transparent communication, students should participate in the decision making process.

Ordinarily, people agree with rules because they realize that they are fair and beneficial to them. When there are needs for changes they accept it as necessary for a better social life.

Staff members and students should sit together to discuss the regulations. They should be presented in a written form so that they may refer to them whenever it is necessary. Every spot on the campus should be covered by the regulations: cafeteria, dormitory, classrooms and recreational places. Ellen G. White, gives good advice regarding the way to practice discipline in a Christian school.

The rules governing the school should so far as possible, represent the voice of the school. Every principle involved in them should be so placed before the student that he may be convinced of its justice. Thus, he will feel a responsibility to see that the rules which he himself has help to frame are obeyed.⁷

The rules must be set up with sanctions. When rules have been broken, after acknowledging the implication of his/her deeds, the wrongdoer is to be treated with a spirit of forgiveness and God's love.

⁷Ellen G. White, Education (Pacific Press Publishing Association Mountain View California, 1952), p. 290

Christian colleges are places that are established to help men and women to develop their inner controls in order to attain a mature self-discipline in social life. Teachers should create opportunities to discuss moral, social and spiritual values with the students. And they must keep in mind that it is useless to tell the students how to behave if they do not see their teachers living up to the same standard.

A teacher with a good moral life, who is always on time, whose work is well planned and well done, is giving a valuable training by his/her example although he/she may not realize it. Ultimately, teachers must direct the students' mind toward Jesus their Savior so that their behavior may be changed by beholding Him.

INTEGRATING FAITH AND LEARNING

The first principle started by John Dewey in his educational doctrine is: "Education is Life."⁸ Life concerns people. According to the secular view of the world, the purpose of education is to develop the student's faculties so that he/she may be able to face successfully the practical realities of life. This means that integration is infused in all systems of education. The teacher's philosophy of life in all its components, is transmitted to the students through his/her teaching, whether he/she be aware of that or not.

The fact is inescapable; the world view of the teacher, in so far as he is effective, gradually conditions the world view of the pupil. No man teaches out of a philosophical vacuum. In one way or another, every teacher expresses the convictions he lives by,⁹ whether they be spiritually positive or negative.

⁸Hazan, E., Condenses des Ecrivains Pedagogiques (Fernand Nathan, Paris 1956), p. 239.

⁹Gaebelein, Frank E., The Pattern of God's Truth (Moody Paperback Edition 1968), p. 37.

Some years ago, I was a Christian student in a public teacher training college in my country of Haiti. While I was attending these classes, I was amazed about most of my professors' teaching abilities. They had only prepared me for a better life in this world.

If I were not a Christian student, if I did not have the privilege to make further studies on a Christian campus, if I had never found someone to speak to me about the gospel, I would not have been a Christian teacher today. Fortunately, I was a student with a Christian background in a secular school.

Christian schools are fields in which a splendid harvest is being prepared for the coming of the Lord. The teachers must be eager to introduce Christianity in their teaching of subject matters. They have to make provision for this when they are preparing themselves for teaching, when they are planning their lessons and their syllabi. They have to pray so that the students may be able to acknowledge the plan of God for the human race while learning subject matters. In their life, they must keep a relationship with God through meditation of the Bible, the spirit of prophecy, and the study of great Christian thinkers. They need to accomplish their academic duties in such a manner that the teaching of their subject matters be of the highest qualities.

The integrating faith and learning process is not only a question of relating a certain portion of subject matters to spiritual thoughts. But also the knowledge of God must be passed on through the teacher himself. In His prayer for the disciples Jesus said: "And for them I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John 17:19.

Here are some suggestions:

First, if part of a Chemistry course is difficult for the class to master, then the teacher may give some advice to the

students. He can encourage and motivate them. Then address a special prayer for the entire class. This is a good way to teach students how God cares about their achievement in life. "But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." Phil. 4:19.

Second, in the course Philosophy of Education, the teacher may help the students prepare a survey. Through a questionnaire they can ask a certain number of nonchristian people from different levels of society, personal ideas about their existence, the universe, the Sustainer of the universe, his own relationship to the sustainer of the universe. From the result of this work, the students can find out: (1) To what extent people in today's society still continue to search for a transcendent meaning of life. (2) People from what level of society are more inclined to relate to God, and why.

Third, in the course Psychology of Learning, while studying students characteristics, the teacher can use as enrichment for the lesson, the chapter from the book Education written by Ellen G. White : The Illustration of His Methods (page 84). It explains how Jesus dealt with different types of character among the disciples in order to fit each one of them in the work of the Gospel.

Fourth, in Ellen G. White's writing especially in the book of Education, there are plenty examples of subjects such as: self-concept, modeling, reinforcement, individualization, ability grouping, independant work, group instruction, visual aids, inquiry, problem solving, (use of the out of doors) concrete objects, materials and phenomena. In his Methods of Teaching, the Christian teacher can refer to them or use them as assignments for the students.

I have had a personal experience with my Psychology of Learning class. While studying the development of cognitive function, I gave an assignment to the students. Each of them

had to prepare a research from both an Elementary Church School, and an Elementary Public School. A population of pupils from grade I to grade 6 had to answer this question: What is faith?

The data show that all pupils from Elementary Church Schools gave good answers, 74% of the answers are biblically oriented. 26% are parent-child relationship oriented. There is through the answers a natural progression from the very simple to the more matured ones.

For the Elementary Public Schools, very few pupils from the upper grades gave appropriate answers. Their reaction to the research conveyed evidence that the concept of faith was quite new for them.

The results demonstrate that Bible study associated with materials, pictures and everyday life experiences from Christian homes, Sabbath Schools and Church Schools, positively affects the children's development of cognitive function.

There are many concepts in the Bible that can positively affect our lessons. The Lord can lead the competent Christian teacher to present the secular education to the student through Christian thoughts. This does not mean that he is going to saturate his lesson with Biblical verses either. This could lead the students to distaste religion. But, if by chance he is talking with the class about the characteristics of children, he quotes Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Maurice Debesse etc. He can also quote Jesus, and explain to the class why Jesus said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God..." Matt. 18:1-6. Jesus is the greatest Hero in human history. He created the world. He almost lost it. He came into the world to rescue it. He left

the world in such a way that no scientific knowledge or advanced technology can explain it. And He will come again to close world's history. The Christian teacher must not be ashamed to quote Jesus.

Ellen G. White means the Bible to be the controlling influence of the school, through all the educational experiences of the student. This does not mean, however, that the Bible is to be the only textbook ever used... Wherever possible, allusions to and illustrations from Scriptures indicate that the teacher - both in and out of the classroom - has accepted the Bible as his personal guide.¹⁰

Elder Robert H. Pierson related an account of a young woman who was once asked how she became a Christian. "I loved my teacher first." She replied. "Next I learned to love my teacher's Bible, and then I loved my teacher's Saviour."¹¹

THE TEACHERS' ACTIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian teacher should be interested in Christian services on the campus. It is not to say that he should make spiritual show off. But, if honestly he realizes that he is called to lead the students to God, he will be inclined to be integrated in spiritual services on the campus.

Teachers should make an effort to help the pastor, the deans of the dormitories and all the spiritual leaders on campus make the spiritual services as creative as possible. This is to say that they should be willing to share their

¹⁰Akers, George H. and Moon, Robert., Continuing Education (Volume 42, No. 4 April-May 1980), pp. 19-20.

¹¹Pierson, Robert H., Give Us This Day. (Review and Herald Washington, D.C. 1959), p. 228.

ideas, their talents and their time when they are asked to do so, instead of being critics when things in this regard are going wrong. Young persons dislike religion when it is being practiced in the realm of monotony and formalism.

A student on a Christian college campus once said that he hates to live in the dormitory because of the vesper services. They are too long and too dry. They are a waste of time. And they make him long to go back home where family prayers are one of the sweetest moments.

On the other hand, I have heard students testify about vesper services on a Christian campus. They say that wherever they go in the world, they will never forget this experience. They feel that they have met God in those moments.

There are many ways to help students to be more acquainted with God. Here are a few of them:

1.- Take a special care about the secular life of each student during his/her lifetime on the campus. Don't wait until there is a severe problem to realize that this particular student exists. Certainly he/she is going to share that kindness with his/her parents or family.

2.- On special occasions, birthdays for example, encourage the club on the campus to send a special card to the students.

3.- For Mother's and Father's day, have students in advance demonstrate their creative thinking through arts. For instance they can write poetry, drama and songs, draw pictures to express their feelings. Let them be appreciated by an audience.

4.- Sometimes, have special Friday sunset services held by students and invite families and parents around the college.

5.- At least once a year, teachers and students together with the pastors and specialists, may organize seminars or retreats that focus on family life according to the christian philosophy. Invite married students as well as single students and families around the college to take part.

6.- Make the week of prayer a great event on the campus for the school year. Prepare advertisements before hand among the college family. All staff members and administrators must be integrated in these solemn moments. These should gather together a week before to pray for the college. The week of prayer is a solemn occasion through which students make decisions for God or renew their acquaintance with Him.

All faculty members must be present at each meeting. The students have to see them sharing God's spiritual blessing. Let the students be moved by the Holy Spirit if he/she feels the desire to do so. It is not fair to push him/her to take any particular stand. But, if good relationships have already been established between classroom teachers and the students, let God Himself take care of the rest. The appendix is a parable presented by Ann Ratcliff Ph. D. from Loma Linda University during the ICCT held at Nebraska in June 1989. It gives ideas about ways to bring students to God.

Finally, Christian teachers who do their best in this endeavor need not be worried when some students leave the campus after graduation without showing any sign of conversion. They need not worry even if the life of some former students are worse when they leave campus. The Lord knows how to make His work fruitful.

CONCLUSION

The prime purpose of the establishment of any Christian college is to lead students to God. God calls the Christian teachers to cooperate with Him in this plan of salvation. This is why Christian college administrators should select teachers whose beliefs can fit into the Christian philosophy of education. These teachers must have a very good relationship with God, with their fellow workers and with their students.

Their teaching of subject matters must be of the highest quality and at the same time, they need to help their students to be reconciled with God. The integration of faith and learning must be accomplished through their own personality. Their christian life must be active in the sight of the students and the college family.

God's call for this task is the greatest privilege to teachers.

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Holy Bible King Kames, Version.

APPENDIX I

A PARABLE

I took a little child's hand in mine. He and I were to walk together for a while. I was to lead him to the Father. It was a task that overcame me, so awful the responsibility. And so I talked to the child only of the Father. I painted the sternness of His face were the child to do something to displease Him. I spoke of the child's goodness as something that would appease the Father's wrath. We walked under the tall trees. I said the Father had power to send them crashing down by His thunderbolts. We walked in the sunshine; I told him of the greatness of the Father who made the burning blazing sun. And on twilight we met the Father. The child hid behind me - he was afraid. He would not look up at the face of the loving Father; he remembered my picture. He would not take the Father's hand; I was between the child and the Father. I wondered. I had been so conscientious, so serious.

I took a little child's hand in mine. I was to lead him to the Father. I felt burdened with a multiplicity of the things I had to teach him. We did not ramble, we hastened from one spot to another spot. At one moment we compared the leaves of the different trees. In the next we were examining a bird's nest. While the child was questioning me about it, I hurried him away to chase butterflies. Did he chance to fall asleep I awakened him, lest he should miss something I wished him to see. We spoke of the Father; Oh yes, often and repeatedly. I poured into his ears all the stories he ought to know, but we were interrupted often by the wind blowing, of which we must study; by the gurgling of a brook which we must trace to it's source. And then in the twilight, we met the Father. The child merely glanced at Him and then his gaze wandered in a dozen directions. The Father stretched out His hands. The child was not interested enough to take it. Feverish spots burned in his cheeks. He dropped exhausted to the ground and fell asleep. Again I was between the child and the Father. I wondered, I had taught him so many things.

I took a little child's hand to lead him to the Father. My heart was full of gratitude for the glad privilege. We walked slowly. I suited my steps to the short steps of the child. We spoke of the things the child noticed. Sometimes we picked the Father's flowers and stroked their soft petals and loved their bright colors. Sometimes it was one of the Father's birds. We watched it build it's nest. We saw the eggs that were laid. We wondered later at the care it gave it's young. Often we told stories of the Father. I told them to the child and the child told them again to me. We told them, the child and I, over and over again. Sometimes we stopped to rest, leaning against the Father's trees, letting His cool air cool our brows, and not speaking. And then, in the twilight, we met the Father. The child's eyes shone. He looked lovingly, trustingly, eagerly up into the Father's face. He put his hand into the Father's hand. I was for the moment forgotten. I was content.