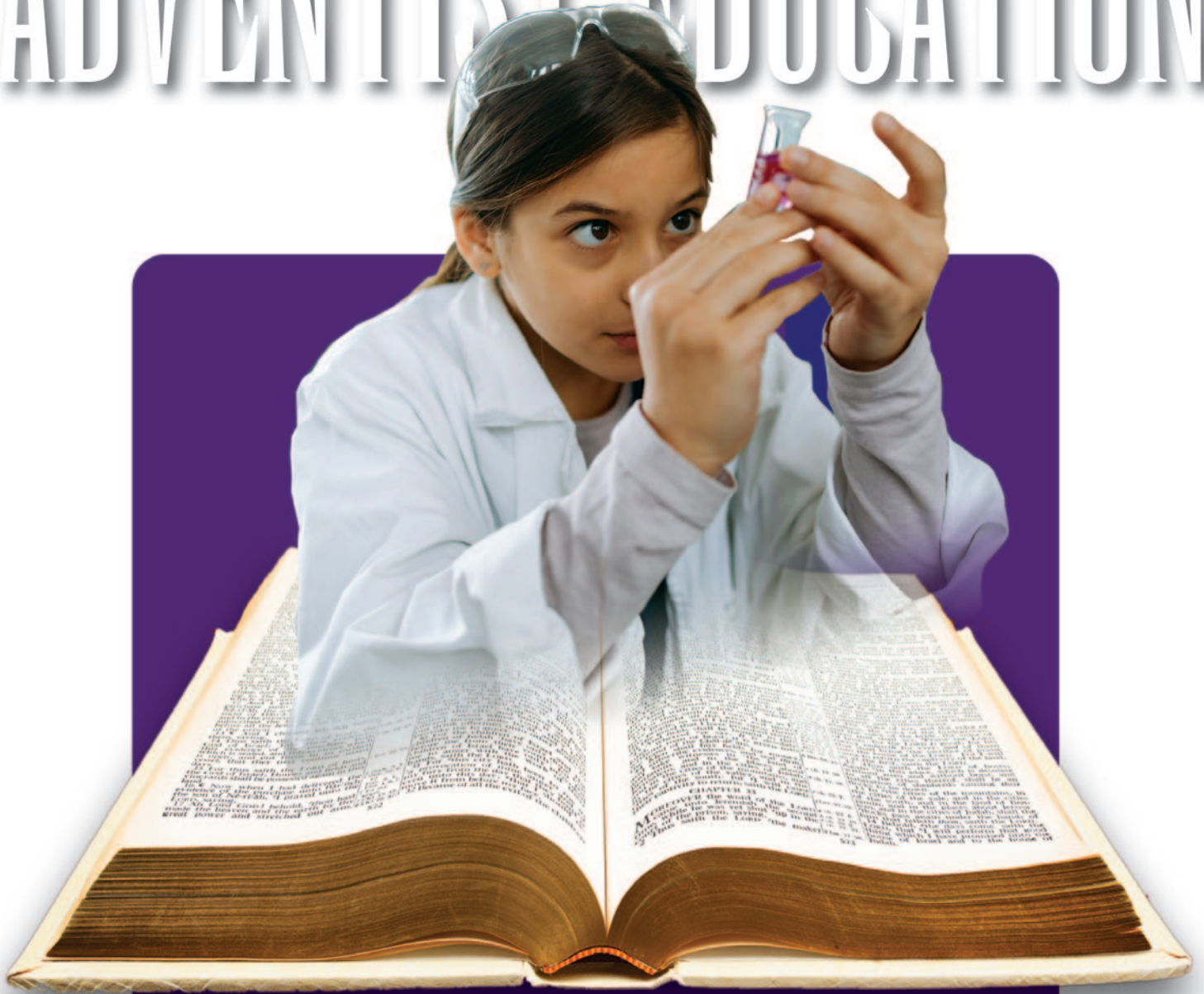


ADVENTIST EDUCATION



Critical Thinking,
the Bible, and the
Christian



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Hudson E. Kibuuka

The story of Moses is a familiar one among Bible students. He is referred to as one of ancient Israel's greatest leaders. Despite initially making excuses, he led a multitude of difficult people through a trying journey—mostly in a desert land. At the same time, he is referred to as “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3); this combination of strength and meekness is rare among leaders.

In the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White describes the life-transforming moment when Moses encountered God in the wilderness and received his life's assignment. She wrote, “Amazed and terrified at the command, Moses drew back, saying, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” The reply was, “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”²

Yet this assurance was not enough. As Moses contemplated the task before him and how challenging it would be to lead a large group of people who had experienced so many difficulties and had little to no knowledge of God, he was overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task before him. Moses said to God “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? What shall I say unto them?” The answer was—“I AM THAT I AM.”³

Still, this was not enough. Ellen White wrote that “In his distress and fear he now pleaded as an excuse a lack of ready speech: ‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.’ He had been away from the Egyptians for so long that he no longer had a clear knowledge of their language, nor could he speak it readily, as he had when he lived among them.”³

Ellen White went on to say that when people accept the responsibilities God entrusts upon them and wholeheartedly seek to become qualified to accomplish the tasks, they can be assured that God will grant “power”

and “efficiency.”⁴ Regardless of ability or how seemingly modest the position, if the person trusts in divine power and works conscientiously and faithfully, he or she can attain much for God. “Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work.”⁵ God's work is bigger than what one individual can accomplish in his or her own strength. In acknowledging weakness and the need for God's divine intervention, each person opens the way for God to demonstrate magnificent power.⁶

Moses went on to become a giant of faith and performed miracles before the pharaoh of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness among the children of Israel. He is credited with having written the first five books of the Bible, as well as the Book of Job.⁷ God counted him a friend (Exodus 33:11, Numbers 12:8, Deuteronomy 34:11); a representative (Exodus 1:1); and, He gave Moses the Ten Commandments and several ceremonial laws for relationships, order, prosperity, and hygiene.

Humble and Precarious Beginnings

But Moses' life did not begin in such a glamorous fashion. He was born to Hebrew slaves, Amram and Jochebed, at the time when the pharaoh of Egypt had ordered all male Hebrew babies to be killed. Moses' parents tried to hide him in

the house but after three months, and as he grew, he did what babies do best—babble, cry, gurgle, and squeal; and it became dangerous for him to be hidden in the house any longer. Driven by love and a desire to protect her child and save his life, Jochebed decided to make a basket for Moses and take a risk by hiding him among the reeds by the river Nile.

Miriam, Moses' sister, “stood at a distance to see what would happen to him” (Exodus 2:4; NIV).⁸ We do not know how long Moses stayed in the reeds, nor does the Bible give details about how his mother fed him or took care of his other needs. We do know, however, that Someone who loved and cared for him, watched over him.

The Unusual Discovery

Today, when one visits Cairo, Egypt, one sees many

One Small Suggestion and the Making of a

GIANT

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:24, 25, KJV).¹

Continued on page 35

Nurturing Faith Through Online Learning

Part 2: Implementing Faith Integration

Faced with escalating trends globally in the utilization of online modalities for teaching and learning, perhaps one of the greatest challenges for Adventist educators is this: How can we shape online modalities to nurture the faith of students? How can we provide online experiences that incorporate a clear Seventh-day Adventist identity and mission alignment?

In the previous article of this two-part series (see **Nurturing Faith Through Online Learning, Part 1**), we explored how Adventist teachers can incorporate faith-nurturing experiences while planning online learning. This intentional planning for faith integration begins with determining the instructional design and preparing the course syllabus, which then drive the presentation of the course modules and learning materials. Of equal importance is the personal preparation of the teacher, who must bring a God-centered biblical perspective to the course of study.

We now turn from the design and development of online learning to its implementation. While various delivery strategies can nurture the faith of students enrolled in online courses, we will consider representative teacher-tested strategies that can be grouped within three clusters: Contextual, Conceptual, and Experiential.¹



Contextual Strategies—Building Learning Communities That Lead to Communities of Faith

In online learning, building a learning community is a prime goal, the achievement of which will determine the safety and success of the online experience.² This can take place in various ways, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, group research, and student mentoring.

One primary goal of Adventist education is to proactively build caring, connected communities of faith. Achieving this goal contributes directly to the spiritual development of students, as belonging often precedes believing. Stephen and Mary Lowe observe, for example, that “a Christian cannot achieve a whole person reflection of the fullness of Christ without vital connections to a vibrant and healthy ecosystem such as the body of Christ.”³ These communities of faith, which nurture developing Christians, are essential to effecting whole-person transformation into the image of Christ.⁴ It is

vital, then, in both face-to-face (FTF) and online classrooms, for educators to create learning communities that lead to the formation of faith communities.

Community building is often best accomplished by strengthening communication among members of the class and by nurturing care for one another. In an online statistics class, for example, the teacher created an activity called “2 a.m. Friends’ Circle.” The students were paired and were asked to encourage each other early each morning for one week. “Two a.m.” was just a symbol of sacrificing one’s time to offer a prayer relating to a friend’s prayer request. Students remarked that they appreciated the time spent, which drew them closer to each other.

Another way to strengthen the online faith community is through worship and devotional experiences. Beginning class with a spiritual activity

BY LENI T. CASIMIRO and JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V

is typical in Adventist schools. Worship or devotional time sets the spiritual atmosphere of the class as students and teachers sing, pray, and read/listen to God's Word together. As classes move to the online environment, the personal touch of fellowshiping together may be more difficult to achieve but, with some adjustments, it is possible. In fact, the separation created by physical distance in a virtual classroom highlights the importance of interactive, engaging, and creative online devotionals.⁵

Various aspects of worship can provide meaningful faith experiences for online students:

1. *Prayer*: Scripture enjoins, "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker" (Psalm 95:6, NIV).⁶ Paul inquired, "Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand" (1 Corinthians 14:15, NLT). Invite your online students to share prayer requests, then pray together for those requests and celebrate answered prayers. Also, pray with and for your students. A prayer that you post in a discussion forum or in a private message to a student has an enduring quality.

2. *Praise and Thanksgiving*: We are invited, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:4), and "Let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name" (Hebrews 13:15, NLT). Share with students specific reasons for which you praise God, and ask them to share experiences from their lives for which they are grateful.

3. *Music*: A faith-focused life finds expression through music. "Sing to the LORD with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp" (Psalm 147:7). "Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves; make music to the Lord from your heart" (Ephesians 5:19, NLT). Spiritual songs, especially if connected to the topic and/or life experiences, are powerful ways of im-

pressing God's truth on the minds of students. While it may be more difficult to sing together in an online space, you can post links to inspirational music. You can also invite students to provide personal recordings, which you can review and then share with the class, as fitting. The goal is to maximize the impact of music with creativity and joy.

When we involve our students in online devotionals and worship experiences, spiritual life develops, and

Many of the benefits of online discussions are achieved through well-crafted discussion questions and carefully facilitated interactions. Leading the class to faith-strengthening discussions is an important task of a Christian teacher and a guiding principle in effective facilitation.

faith is strengthened. An online student, for example, stated, "I really like the online devotionals. This is my first time to join an online class and I find the online devotionals a lot better than the classroom devotionals . . . because of the interactions among classmates. We spend enough time to discuss God's Word, we share burdens . . . in the discussion area—something that doesn't

happen in classroom devotionals that last only a few minutes."

As you engage, then, with your online students, ask yourself frequently: What can I do to build and nurture the community of faith in my course?

Conceptual Strategies—Inviting Students to Think Christianly

One way in which we can engage our online students in thinking Christianly is by designing and implementing rich, faith-strengthening discussions. Maddox, Estep, and Lowe remind us that "the success of effective online courses is dependent on the quality of interaction in online discussion forums."⁷ The discussion area of an online course serves as the hub of almost all the learning activities of the class. It is where interactions can contribute to the development of higher-order thinking skills, socialization, and community building.

Whether the discussion is in real-time or asynchronous, the benefit from these interactions can surpass what is read in books or gained through traditional assignments, as it involves connecting course content with one's experience, expressing it, clarifying dissonant ideas, making resolutions, and possibly changing one's course of action. Because spiritual transformation is the goal, students should be given opportunities to talk about their faith, their experiences with God, and biblical principles, not just read about them.

Many of the benefits of online discussions are achieved through well-crafted discussion questions and carefully facilitated interactions. Leading the class to faith-strengthening discussions is an important task of a Christian teacher and a guiding principle in effective facilitation. Through faith-strengthening discussions, online students can:

- *Discover biblical principles in class topics.* A lively interchange of ideas among members of the class can provide students with practical applications for biblical principles,

help clarify unclear areas, and confirm the value of looking at the topics through the lens of Scripture. Jesus modeled the use of questioning to raise important points. He asked, for example, “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15) to clarify His students’ views and expectations regarding the Messiah.

- *Clarify assumptions, evaluating how they align with a biblical worldview.* Discussion topics can include: the nature of the discipline and how it should be examined; the origin, meaning, the purpose of life; and the nature of truth and reality; as well as our relationship with God, with other human beings, and with the world around us.

- *Trace the Great Controversy.* Every dimension of life is affected by the conflict between good and evil. The Great Controversy theme is, in fact, the sense-making narrative for life. Here we explore the ways that our discipline has been shaped by this cosmic conflict.

- *Create solutions to problems using biblical principles.* Problem-based learning provides direct application of theories and principles. Students can be asked to solve real-life problems using biblical principles and the tools learned in class.

- *Develop awareness and commitment to engage in God’s mission.* Through the discussion forum, we can raise our students’ awareness regarding opportunities to engage in mission as an extension or outcome of the class topic. Participation in and the sharing of missional experiences can lead participants to make a life commitment to participate in the Gospel Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).⁸

Another important way to invite your students to think about life and learning from a Christian frame of reference is to examine real-life issues. Ethical issues exist in every discipline and every subject area. Some of these issues are cross-disciplinary, such the right to privacy, vegetarianism, discrimination, freedom of speech, exploitation of natural re-

sources, and plagiarism. Other issues may be more discipline-specific, such as immigration policies, squatter settlements, foreign aid and national debt, and waste disposal in geography or social studies; global warming, cloning, animal rights, euthanasia, and nuclear energy in science; or piracy, hacking, netiquette, and intellectual property in technology courses.

When we consider an issue, perhaps presented as a case study, the goal is to help our students to develop ethical reasoning from a biblical framework. In this area, there are two primary considerations: (1) What purposes did God intend for this area of human activity? and (2) What biblical response is called for? Throughout our study, we need to seek to identify guiding principles and moral values with the intent to “teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23).

As you implement online learning, ask yourself: What are the critical issues in the subjects that I teach? How might I address these issues in such a way as to contribute to the moral development of my students?

Experiential Strategies—Encouraging Students to Live a Life of Faith

Joanne Jung notes that “at the heart of a great teacher is the desire to invest in students, to make an impact toward observable differences in their lives.”⁹ As we teach our courses, both FTF and online, learning must connect to life. Faith must link to experience.

One way we can encourage students to live a life of faith is to promote thoughtful reflection. This can take place in various ways, such as: (1) providing time for reflection, (2) posing matters for introspection and contemplation, and then (3) asking students to document these processes.



Reflection, in fact, is a key component in active learning.¹⁰ Active learning occurs when students have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning to clarify their thoughts, confirm their understanding, and eliminate misconceptions. Reflection is even more important when spiritual growth is the goal, as it promotes a deep personal and intimate conversation with God (Psalm 139:23, 24).

In a science class, for example, we might ask students to examine the relationship of faith and science: How does faith inform science? In what ways does science inform faith? What is the Christian to do if faith and science appear to contradict each other? We might also encourage students to explore evidence relating to the processes of creation and restoration in the natural world. To document the contemplative process, students can be asked to record their thoughts in a reflective journal.

In a mathematics class, when studying coefficients, we might ask: “To what would you compare the positive and negative coefficients in your life?” and assign students to “Write in your journal one or more examples of how positive influences have improved your life or how negative influences could reduce the quality of your life.” On the topic of the number line, we might ask our students to consider that there are an infinite number of points between zero and one, yet each of them can be represented by a real number. Then, suggest that they imagine all the people who exist and have existed, pointing out that each is unique and special. Finally, ask them to reflect on this question: “Who am I to others, to myself, to God?” In discussing mathematical symbols, this discussion might lead to the question: “What do I stand for?”

More broadly, we can provide opportunities for students to explore the great questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? How do I know what is right? What is wrong around and/or within me? What are possible solutions?

Regarding an online course in

which students were asked to meditate daily on a set of course-connected Bible passages and record their insights in a reflective journal, a student stated, “One of my most memorable courses taken was the one that asked us to meditate on Bible verses and write our reflections daily. I did it, first as a requirement; but as I relished the Word of God daily, I learned to love it, and eventually it has become part of my daily

In organizing an online week of prayer, it is important to highlight participation. Students should not just listen but also talk about their faith journey; not just read the prayers but also be a part of the divine conversation. Through reflection forums and an online prayer garden, an interactive form of worship can be achieved.

schedule. The course is over now but I continued it and now I’m in the Book of Romans.”

As you teach your online classes, ask yourself: What is something that I can do to help my students reflect on their spiritual life?

Institution-wide Faith Integration

To achieve its most profound effect, the goal of nurturing the faith of online students must become an institutional commitment. Administrators

and teachers together can develop and implement a variety of faith-affirming activities in connection with online classes.

Weeks of Prayer. In organizing an online week of prayer, it is important to highlight participation. Students should not just listen but also talk about their faith journey; not just read the prayers but also be a part of the divine conversation. Through reflection forums and an online prayer garden, an interactive form of worship can be achieved. By carefully selecting the theme of the event, students from other religions can also feel welcome. Students can be given roles such as discussion facilitators and prayer moderators. Most importantly, they must feel that the event is an avenue for them to come close to God’s throne of grace.

Experiencing such an online week of prayer, one student from another faith persuasion said, “I needed a community of prayerful individuals to help me grow out of this infancy stage and really mature in faith. . . . Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us continue to pray, to grow, and to mature in faith.” Another student stated, “I want to praise God for this week of prayer’s blessings. It didn’t only bless me but also my husband who studied the Bible verses with me as well. . . . This not only strengthened our relationship, but most importantly our faith as we both tread our spiritual journey as new couple.” And a student from a non-Christian background wrote, “I feel blessed and privileged to be with you, beloved brothers and sisters. Thank you so much for every single effort that was put for this week of prayer and for sharing our spiritual journey together.”

Because of the faith community that was created, students requested that the week of prayer be extended as a recurring feature of their online learning experience.

Online Chapel. Periodically, an institution can organize an online chapel session where students from different grade levels or degree programs can worship together. To make sure everyone can attend the chapel,

it can be linked in the virtual classrooms of all classes and include participation by students from all the groups. While someone may be invited to briefly speak, to make the program unique, reflection questions can be posed, and students can interact in the discussion forum. A student reflected on these events: “I hope we have more online chapels. I love the interaction with more people other than my usual classmates. This makes it extra special.”

Mission Emphasis Week. One variation of the week of prayer is to convert it to a mission-emphasis week. Here students share missional activities and projects with which they are involved and are encouraged to adopt a missional project in their own communities. This emphasis on mission is integral to Seventh-day Adventist education. Adventist education, in fact, originated in response to mission and continues to exist to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). As a training ground for mission involvement, Adventist schools must not just promote an awareness of the church’s mission activities but also provide students with actual experiences as they develop the personal commitment to engage in lifelong mission.

Conclusion

Paul observed, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Peter added, “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God” (1 Peter 4:11). This is the essence of faith integration: providing our students with a God-centered, Bible-based, service-oriented, and Heaven-directed approach in online education that nurtures faith. Only then will spiritual development and the formation of Christian character take place authentically in the lives of our students. And only then will we have provided the best opportunity for our students to view their vocation as a divine calling, to have solid-

ified a life commitment to witness and service, and to have forged a personal relationship with God.

And only then will we, as Christian educators, have fulfilled the ultimate purpose of faith integration: “In all your ways *acknowledge Him*, and He shall direct your path” (Proverbs 3:6, NKJV, italics supplied).¹¹ ✍

This article has been peer reviewed.



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2. Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Building Online Learning Communities: Effective*

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3. Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Distance Education: An Ecosystems Model,” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 7:1 (May 2010): 90. doi.10.1177/073989131000700106.

4. Ibid. Lowe and Lowe further note that “one of the mechanisms for fostering whole person transformation into the image of Christ individually and corporately is through sustained reciprocal relationships and mutually beneficial interactions of various sorts within the bond of Christian fellowship” (ibid., 94). This whole-person development—mental, physical, social, emotional, spiritual—is the result of interactions within one’s environment or ecosystem.

5. Principles on how to design online devotionals and examples of faith-nurturing devotional ideas can be found in Leni T. Casimiro, “Creative Online Devotionals,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 80:1 (January-March 2018): 35-39: <https://jae.adventist.org/en/2018.1.7>.

6. Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical passages in this article are quoted from the *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Bible texts credited to NLT are quoted from *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

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A D V E N T I S T

CHOICES

The Relationship Between Adventist Culture and Adventist Education

PART 2

In the first installment of this two-part article (available at <https://jae.adventist.org/2020.82.3.5>), readers were introduced to the design and methodology of a study that examined Adventist culture within the continental United States—its roots, its ramifications, and its relativity among church members.

Every community has its own culture—born out of shared experiences, shared language, shared customs—and the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no different. If asked, American adult church members may reference haystacks or wading, but not swimming, on Sabbath. They may argue passionately about preferences for one type of vegetarian meat over another or whether the Rook card should be high or low in this popular card game. They may reminisce about academy field trips, academic decathlons, camping trips, or banquets while they were attending one of the church's higher education institutions; however, as discussed in the first article, these are *cultural* matters.

My research focused specifically on this paradigm of Adventist culture. To begin, I wanted to find out if it even existed.

It's one thing to discuss anecdotes over potluck, it's another to produce empirical evidence. But if Seventh-day Adventist Church members in America do have a shared culture—which is what I hypothesized—I wanted to take an additional step and examine the strength of various individuals' cultural leanings and its effect on behavior—namely, school choice.

This article will share the results and findings of my research, assess the ramifications for school choice, and provide some thoughtful discussion on ways in which to best use this data at the local level. This study was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shift to virtual learning, and so recommendations for application are specific to face-to-face, in-person learning environments.

Results

For a more complete picture of the study, it is helpful to first understand the demographic makeup of those who responded. The criteria for the survey¹ was (a) member of a local Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States and (b) a parent of a K-12 school-aged child in the 2017-2018 school year.

BY AIMEE LEUKERT

Of the total respondents,

- 82.7 percent were between the ages of 36 and 55;
- 86.7 percent were married;
- 81 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher;
- 61 percent had an annual income of over US\$80,000²;
- 75 percent were white, 13 percent were Hispanic, 9 percent were Asian, and 5 percent were African American;
- 19 percent had never attended a K-12 Adventist school, 20 percent had attended a K-12 Adventist school for a few years, and 61 percent had attended a K-12 Adventist school for most or all of their elementary and secondary experience.

Moving past descriptive analysis and into a more granular examination of the data, I referred to my original research questions. First, **How does school choice differ among Adventist parents?** As it turns out, there were several factors that emerged from the factor analysis that proved to have a significant relationship to school choice.

There was a correlation between a parent's own educational context and school choice for his or her children (Figure 1). Of all of those who attended an Adventist school for even part of their elementary or high school experience, more than 60 percent chose to put their child in a K-12 Adventist school. By contrast, only 20 percent of those parents chose a non-Adventist school for their child.³

Income also emerged as a significant factor for school choice. As seen in Figure 2, parents who reported earnings of less than \$40,000 per year were far less likely (6.2 percent) to put their child in an Adventist elementary or secondary school, or to homeschool him or her, than those who made more than \$121,000 (29.9 percent). However, there was very little difference in school choice when comparing the middle-income brackets—\$40,000 to \$120,000.

In the survey instrument, respondents were asked to indicate on a sliding scale of 0-100 percent the percentage of Adventist friends and co-workers they had. In the process of cleaning the data, I categorized the responses as 0-49 percent and 50-100 percent. This proved to be a significant factor for school choice. Parents who were immersed in an Adventist social network were four times more likely to enroll their child in an Adventist K-12 school than in a non-Adventist school (Figure 3). They were also twice as likely to choose an Adventist school as their counterparts who did not have as many Adventist personal or professional relationships.

Another variable (the union where the respondent lived) was also significantly associated with school choice ($p < .01$). This categorical variable separated respondents into groupings using the eight geographic regions in the North American Division that are located in the United States. (See Figure 4.) In general, it appeared that though most American Adventists surveyed sent their children to a K-12 Adventist school, there were variations among the unions.

My second research question focused specifically on the relationship between the strength of cultural identity and school choice: **How does the degree of cultural consonance to the Seventh-day Adventist model relate to consumption behavior as seen in school choice?** The purpose for developing the cultural domain and scale to begin with was so that

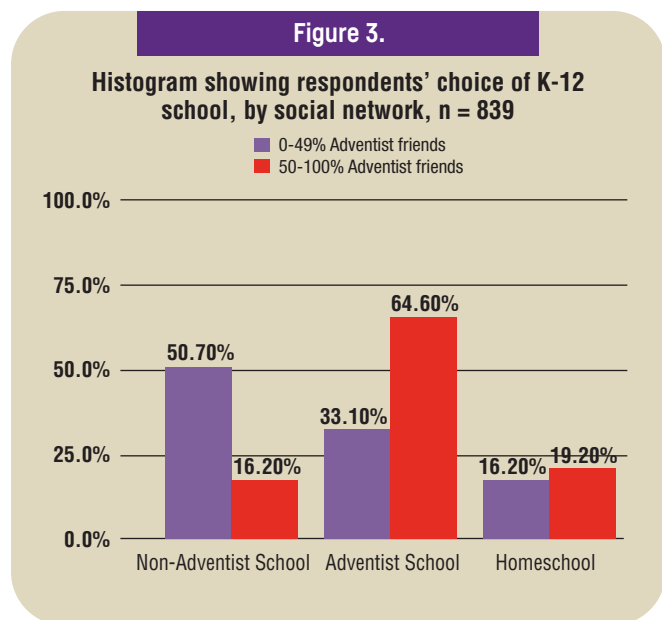
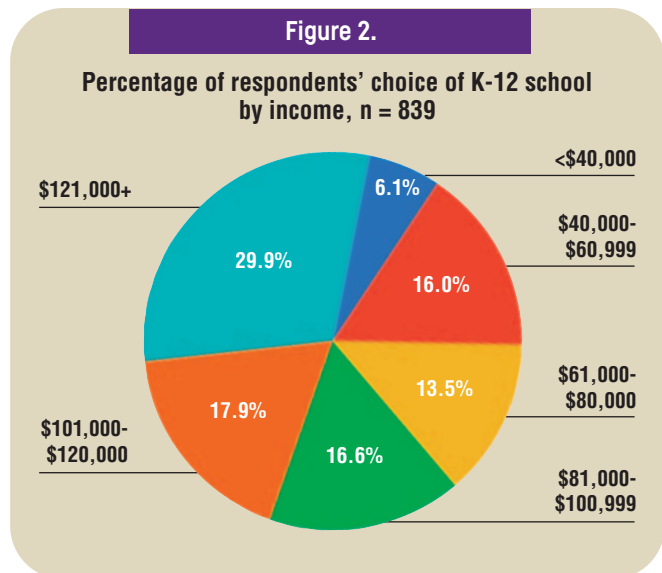
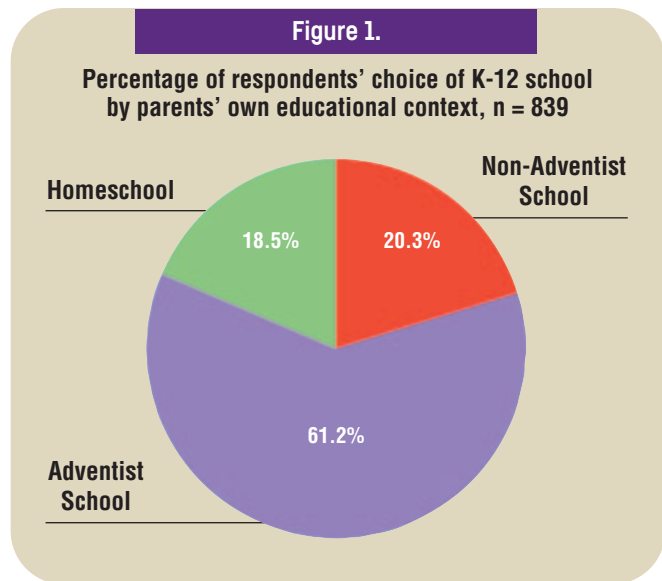


Figure 4.

Histogram showing respondents' choice of K-12 school, by social network, n = 839



I could develop a gauge with which to *measure* cultural identity. But to further discover whether the *degree* of cultural identity is related to school choice, the cultural identity variable was first stratified into three categories—low, average, and high. Respondents in the low category were those who exhibited a low degree of cultural consonance (identity); that

is, they did not often or generally practice or live out the cultural norms, traditions, or expectations of the Seventh-day Adventist culture. The thresholds for each category were chosen by first examining a histogram of all respondents' cultural consonance score. Because of the rough curves noted in the histogram as depicted in Figure 5, it was decided that "low" = < -55, "average" = -54.99 - 34, and < 35+ = high cultural consonance.

With the data derived from the survey results, I could categorize respondents as having high, medium, or low levels of cultural identity. So there *was* a difference between those who had a strong identity with Adventist culture and those who did not.

With the cultural consonance variable stratified, cultural consonance and school choice were examined within a cross-tabulation. Respondents who exhibited low cultural consonance were less likely to send their children to an Adventist school than those with average or high cultural consonance. However, those who exhibited the *most* cultural consonance did not have the highest percentage of children enrolled in an Adventist school; rather, those in this category had the highest percentage of homeschooled children.

Those who demonstrated an average degree of cultural consonance were the most likely to send their children to an Adventist school. A simple visual representation is provided in Figure 6. Those with low cultural identity tended

Figure 5.

Histogram depicting cultural consonance scores for all respondents, n = 914

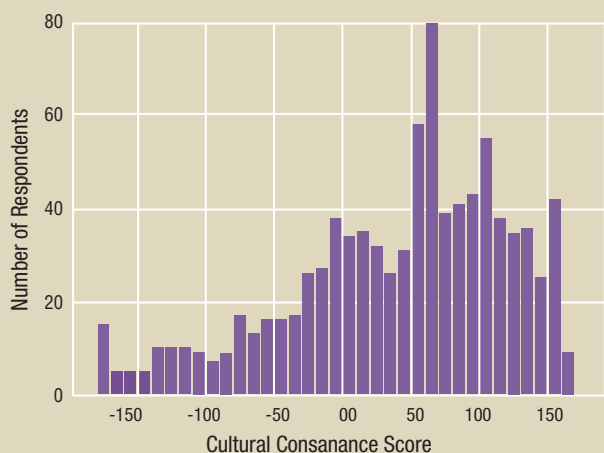
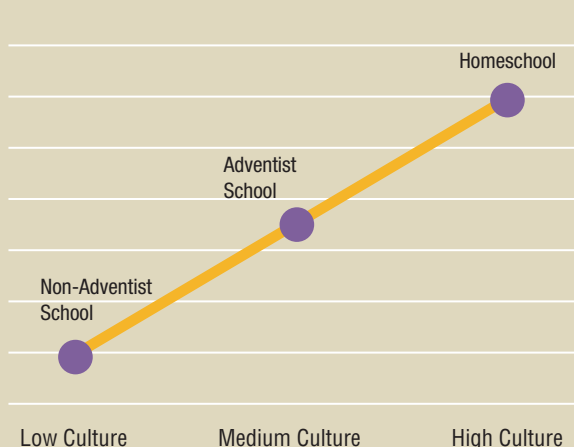


Figure 6.

Line graph depicting the relationship between K-12 school choice and culture, n = 839



to enroll their children in a non-Adventist school, those with average cultural identity chose Adventist schools, and those with the highest levels of cultural identity homeschooled their children.

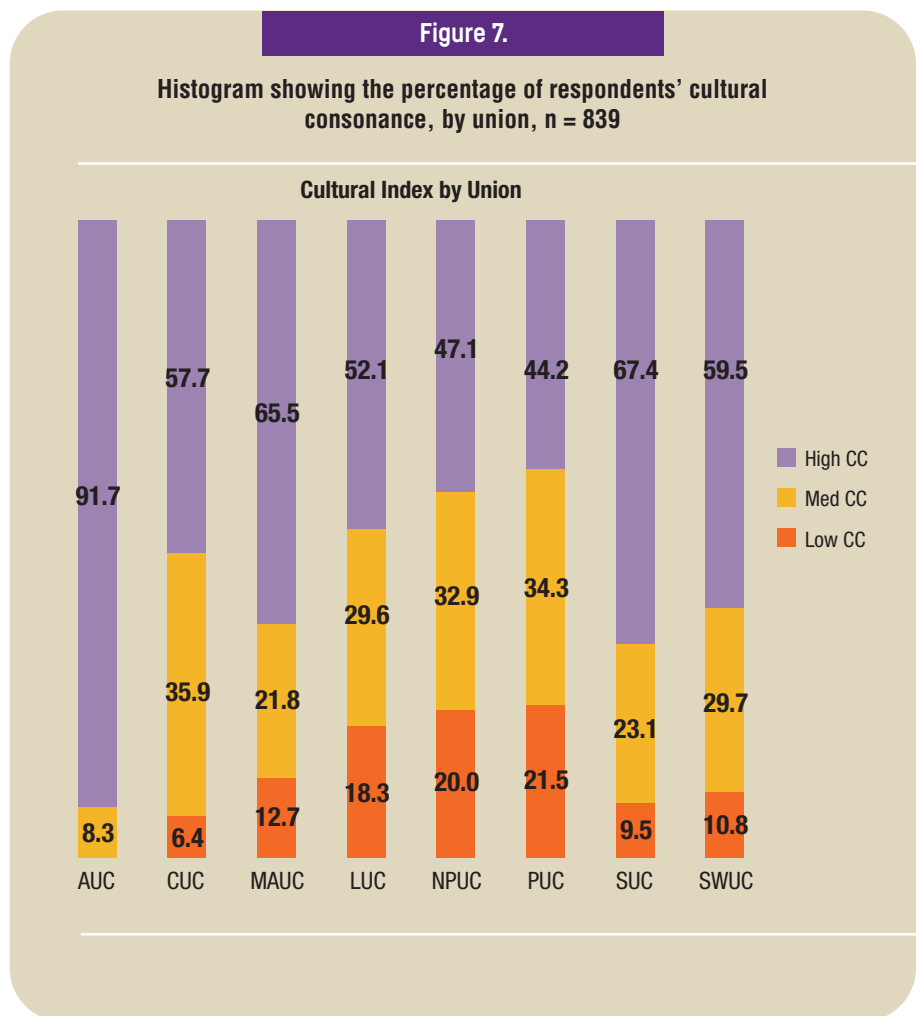
With these findings, we can circle back to the stratification by union and assess strength of cultural identity through this framework. Figure 7 indicates that the Atlantic Union and Southern Union had the highest percentage of respondents with high levels of cultural identity. Looking at Figure 4, those two unions also had high percentages of those who chose to homeschool—which certainly helps to validate the connection proposed by this study regarding Adventist culture and school choice. Furthermore, Lake Union and Pacific Union both had the highest percentage of respondents with low cultural identity—and corresponding high percentages of non-Adventist school attendees.⁴

Discussion

In this study, I posited that school choice is an extension of one’s religious and cultural identity, and so hypothesized that capturing religious and cultural profiles of parents would yield valuable insights into their choice of a K-12 school for their child, as evidenced by the third and final research question: **To what extent does a Seventh-day Adventist parent’s general religiosity, doctrinal commitment, and church identity—as represented through cultural consonance—predict the choice of school for his/her child?** And the results certainly provided several findings to unpack and examine more closely.

When looking the respondents’ *educational background*, the data demonstrated that those who had themselves spent time in an Adventist school were more likely to enroll their child in an Adventist school (61.2 percent) than those who had no previous experience with Adventist education (51.5 percent). Furthermore, there was a significant association between school choice and the respondents’ own educational background ($X^2 = 31.423, p < .01$). This indicates that the more years American Adventists had spent in a K-12 Adventist school, the more likely they were to send their children to a K-12 Adventist school, an observation that aligns neatly with other findings that graduates of other faith-based schools were more likely than their counterparts who attended public schools to send their children to faith-based schools.⁵

There could be several elements involved with this vari-



able. To begin with, it may point to a level of familiarity or inclusion in regard to respondents’ experiences in the Adventist educational system. In 2016, the Center for Research on K-12 Adventist Education (CRAE) conducted an informal poll, asking Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the NAD why they believed in Adventist education. The results were tabulated into a marketing piece that touted the top “100 Reasons for Adventist Education.”⁶ Of the hundreds of answers that poured in to the CRAE office, at the top of the list was the idea of being surrounded by like-minded individuals. Comments to this end included:

- Students are invited into a family of Seventh-day Adventist peers and teachers;
- To be with like believers;
- An extension of the values that are taught in the home;
- Students in Adventist education either share your morals, or understand why you choose to live the way you do;

These statements, albeit collected informally, seem to correspond with the idea that the experiences these respondents had in an Adventist school were comfortable and familiar and that they would want their child to have similar experiences—akin to the “we like what we know, and we know what we like” mentality.

This data also imply that not only was the experience familiar, but that it was positive. One's own attendance in an Adventist school, especially if a positive experience, seems to lead a person to consider that option more strongly for the next generation.

From a marketing standpoint, this also seems to be something worth looking at more carefully. Recruiters for Adventist education need to ask alumni this question: What *were* the positive experiences in your experience at an Adventist school? What types of memories from an Adventist K-12 school should continue to be made and perpetuated? What elements of Adventist education from 20 to 30 years ago should be retained?

Another variable emerged that speaks to the differences in members of the American Adventist Church is the geographic locale, as defined by the boundaries of *unions*. There was a significant association between *union* and *school choice* ($X^2 = 55.311, p < .01$), indicating that there is a relationship between where respondents live and where they choose to put their children in school. North Pacific Union had the highest percentage of respondents who chose Adventist education for their children (68.2 percent) as well as one of the lowest percentages of respondents who opted for a non-Adventist school (14.6 percent). This seems to point to a high level of commitment to Adventist education in the northwest states that make up the North Pacific Union. Interestingly enough, a few years ago, an anonymous donor covered *all* debts owed by any K-12 school in the Oregon Conference, one of six conferences in the North Pacific Union. Sheldon Eakins, a principal at one of the Oregon Conference schools, said, "Someone with a heart for Christian education wanted the school to be able to move forward and build, rather than focus on debt." This one donor's commitment to those Oregon schools seems to align closely with the rest of the union's support of Adventist education.

In the Lake Union, 32.4 percent of respondents sent their children to a non-Adventist school, the highest percentage among the eight unions. This is particularly interesting given that Lake Union is home to Andrews University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, an educational institution that trains aspiring pastors for the world church. Having a constituent base of that nature would lead one to believe that the percentage of those choosing Adventist schools would be higher.

However, one of the emerging topics in the conversation on the declining enrollment in Adventist school in North America is the lack of participation, context, and understanding of the role of Adventist education among Adventist pastors. Recent studies show that many pastors are second-career individuals with little to no background of Adventist education themselves.⁷ For a variety of reasons, many did not attend an Adventist school in their childhood and therefore, had little understanding of or loyalty toward Adventist education as an adult.

Juxtaposed with this idea is a conversation I had with a former principal of Andrews Academy, an Adventist

academy in Michigan. She noted that there is an interesting mentality that exists in that community about Adventist and non-Adventist schools. While many members there are "staunch Adventists"—committed to the church in a variety of ways, including seminary students being educated to one day *lead* a church—they often send their children to the public school within the community because they think it is Adventist *enough*.⁸ There are a number of Adventist teachers who teach in the local public schools, and the estimate is that about 40 percent of the student population in the Berrien Springs public schools is Adventist. There is even a school bus that comes onto the Andrews University campus to pick up students and bus them to the public school in town. In a community like this one, where a school exists in close proximity to a large Adventist university or hospital, or where financing Adventist education might be challenge due to the cost of tuition not only for the children but also for the parents enrolled in higher education, many church members choose to send their children to the public schools because it *feels* Adventist. This context may explain in some part the high percentage of respondents in Lake Union who choose non-Adventist schools.

Another variable that can speak to differences among respondents is that of their net household *income*. The cost of tuition is a problem that is often cited when enrollment issues are discussed. Parents sometimes argue that the reason why they don't send their child to an Adventist school is because the financial burden is far too great. The data do demonstrate a significant association between *income* and *school choice*. Of those who choose an Adventist school for their oldest child, the respondents who reported the lowest income—\$40,000 or lower—had the smallest percentage (6.1 percent), while those who reported the largest household income—\$121,000 or higher—had the largest percentage (29.7 percent). Interestingly enough, though, among the respondents who chose an Adventist school, the \$41,000 to \$60,999 group (16.1 percent) had a higher percentage than the \$61,000 to \$80,999 respondents (13.4 percent) and similar percentages to the \$81,000 to \$99,999 group (16.9 percent) and the \$100,000 to \$120,999 group (17.8 percent).

In other words, income made the biggest difference in school choice when one compared those in the highest and lowest tiers of income, but it was not as noticeable in the middle-income groups. This would lead one to believe that while income might certainly be a determining factor for those who bring in the least income, it doesn't seem to be a significant issue for others.

Another particularly interesting element is the variable pertaining to the *Adventist social network*. The significant relationship that the data demonstrate speaks to the circle of influence that one's closest friends can exert on important life decisions. When the variable was further collapsed, the cross-tabulation showed that of those American Adventists who chose denominational K-12 schools (N = 536), 90.79 percent had a large percentage of Adventist

friends (more than 50 percent). Similarly, among the group whose friends were mostly Adventist, around 65 percent of them chose an Adventist school, while only 16 percent chose a non-Adventist school.

This seems to point to a degree of social pressure or expectation that, in this case, supported Adventist education. Social norms can have internal sanctions—for example, where one chooses to act a certain way even in the absence of others watching, such as kneeling to pray by one's bedside or not belching out loud. Social norms, however, can also exert strong external sanctions—where people behave a specific way because of the expectations of those around them.⁹ In this case, the fact that a large percentage of those who chose Adventist schools were individuals who *had* a large number of Adventist friends provides a robust example of external sanctions at work. It is easy to imagine that Church Member A, someone who lives near a large Adventist university and whose network of friends and colleagues mostly include other Adventist church members, might make different choices than Church Member B, who lives in a rural part of town and has to drive 40 miles to fellowship with other church members at the nearest Adventist church.

It is also interesting to note the converse value—almost exactly *half* of the respondents (50.7 percent) who didn't have a lot of Adventist friends (0-49 percent) chose a non-Adventist school for their firstborn. Framed in a slightly different way, if a respondent's network of friends was largely Adventist, he or she was twice as likely to send his or her child to an Adventist school (64.6 percent) versus a non-Adventist school (33.1 percent).

This social influence within cultural consonance could be particularly significant for church and school administrators interested in enrollment patterns for the Adventist educational system. The data from this study seem to indicate that a church member's adherence to Adventist doctrine is less associated with choosing an Adventist school than his or her cultural consonance score. Consequently, school recruitment campaigns aimed at Adventist church members would be more effective if they focused on fostering social and community relationships as opposed to strengthening doctrinal commitment. In other words, Adventist parents might be more likely to opt for an Adventist school if they make more Adventist friends than if they are suddenly convicted about a doctrine.

There are some aspects of Adventist culture that are more

While homeschooling in America has become slightly more mainstream, breaking from the prior stereotype of being embraced by rural, ultra-conservative, anti-government Christians—it still certainly maintains the underpinnings of alternative, perhaps even radical, mindset.

conservative than others. For instance, modesty in dress and conservative religious beliefs are generally understood as indicators of a conservative Adventist. Those two variables don't, however, show any evidence of stronger association with school choice, leading one to believe that what is understood colloquially may not actually have the expected correlation.

The data used for Figure 7 was an average of cultural-consonance (identity) scores for respondents who chose Adventist schools, non-Adventist schools, and homeschooled. Those with higher cultural consonance scores homeschooled, those with low cultural consonance scores enrolled their children in non-Adventist schools, and those with moderate cultural consonance scores sent their children to Adventist schools.

So, what does it mean to stakeholders in Adventist education if those who are highly culturally consonant *and* those who are low in cultural consonance are less likely to send their children to an Adventist school? Schools that are within the bounds of a more liberal Adventist community or whose general Adventist population might be less conservative than the norm may

well need to find ways to promote a positive, enticing view of the school.

For instance, looking at Figure 4, church members in Atlantic Union, a region that has the highest levels of cultural identity, may be more likely to send their children to an Adventist school if one exists, than church members who reside in the Pacific Union, a region that has the lowest cultural consonance mean. School recruiters in the Pacific Union who are looking to increase enrollment on their campus may not find it as effective to promote their school's uniquely Adventist elements such as vespers every Friday night or haystack potlucks at Back-to-School Night. They might fare better emphasizing things that would appeal to a more general consumer shopping around for schools for his or her child: top-notch academics, safe environment, extracurricular offerings, etc.

Another fascinating finding within this context of cultural consonance is the component of homeschooling. The data from this study seem to parallel the generally accepted idea that parents who are more conservative will choose to homeschool. While homeschooling in America has become slightly more mainstream, breaking from the prior stereotype of being embraced by rural, ultra-conservative, anti-government Christians—it still certainly maintains the underpinnings of alternative, perhaps even radical, mindset. This study, therefore, affirms that idea that American Adventists

who are more culturally consonant—more conservative and traditional—choose to homeschool, too. Unlike the families who have lower scores of cultural identity and are seeking a school that is *not* too Adventist, these families may decline to choose Adventist schools because they think they're not Adventist *enough* or because they feel that their more-conservative belief system is not mirrored in the local Adventist school.

As I write, the United States of America is embroiled in political and societal turmoil, with arguably greater fervor and brimming hostility than has been seen in recent years. One might venture to say that the country is becoming more and more polarized—on several different levels. Perhaps the Seventh-day Adventist Church in America is experiencing its own cultural polarization. Members are either identifying more strongly with the cultural elements of the church or turning away from them completely. The window of “moderate Adventism,” it could be surmised, is shrinking. And if the preponderance of Adventist students come from families in said window, the decline in enrollment—viewed in this light—makes sense.¹⁰

Adventist education, therefore, finds itself in an interesting predicament. Should schools become *more* Adventist to draw in those on one end of the cultural spectrum, or should they try to be *less* Adventist to bring in those who have lower levels of cultural identity? What about mission schools, where parents—often not members of the church—want their children to receive an education rooted in Christian values? These are issues that have been debated for the past few decades. Some schools have chosen the former route, emphasizing principles such as healthy living, care for the environment, and other emphases. For example, Needles Adventist School in Needles, California, is unapologetic in instructing the students about the benefits of a vegetarian diet. The impact of this practice is evident in the responses from parents, many of whom are not members of the Adventist Church. On the other end of the spectrum, there are schools that choose to replace *Adventist* in their name with *Christian* or simply remove the word entirely.

It is difficult to comment on which approach is better, and the location of the school would certainly impact the decision. Some argue that moving away from the “core” of Adventism is a betrayal of the church and that schools that choose to *dilute* the Adventist message are missing the point of Adventist education. Others counter this by questioning what that crux of Adventism truly is. Surely, they protest, our church is more than just a jumble of antiquated cultural norms.

These issues raise several questions, and will continue to do so as the world is impacted by seismic economic, political, religious, and social shifts. What *is* at the heart of Adventist education? Is it important to be unique? Or does that make them merely exclusive? What is the best path? Educators could argue that the shifting culture within the Adventist Church is not a school issue, but a church issue. Does the church leadership recognize this change and understand the ramifications it is having on school choice and enrollment? Will—and should—church members find their way back to the middle?

Conclusion

The results of this study seem to indicate that cultural identity does, in fact, play a significant role in school choice. Through various analyses and correlating a number of key variables, it is clear that a parent's cultural identity affects school choice in a myriad of ways. These rough findings have certainly opened the door to examining which factors have a stronger effect on school choice than simply the school itself. As evidenced by the data, the enrollment decline in Adventist and other faith-based schools in America could be related to a change in religious culture and how members identify and live out the culture of their denomination. And while there may be several other factors to consider worldwide, including more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, both educators and church administrators might give attendance to these findings and consider the implications of church culture on their respective ministries. ✍

This article has been peer reviewed.

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Recommended citation:

Aimee Leukert, “Adventist Choices: The Relationship Between Adventist Culture and Adventist Education, Part 2,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 82:4 (October-December 2020): 9-16.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Demographics for this study are described in detail in Part 1 of this article. See <https://jae.adventist.org/2020.82.3.5>.
2. The annual household income reported in this study reflects averages of the respondents for this study. For additional context, see data from the study by Sahlin and Richardson, commissioned by the North American Division, which reported an annual household income of

\$25,000 and below for approximately 40 percent of Adventist households. For 30 percent of Adventist households, the annual income ranged from \$25,000 to \$49,999. For 24 percent, this range was \$50,000 to \$99,999; and, for seven percent, this income was \$100,000 or more (Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson, *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile* [Milton Freewater, Oregon: Center for Creative Ministry, 2008], 19-21). Available at <http://circle.adventist.org/files/icm/nadresearch/NADDemographic.pdf>.

3. In this study, a “non-Adventist school” could be a public school, private non-religious school, or private parochial school.

4. This does not take into account the availability of Adventist schools in various unions, which may mean that parents choose to homeschool.

5. Jonathan Schwarz and David Sikkink, *Blinded by Religion? Religious School Graduates and Perceptions of Science in Young Adulthood* (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2016): <https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/reports/blinded-by-religion-religious-school-graduates-and-perceptions-of-science-in-young-adulthood/>.

6. Center for Adventist Research, “100 Reasons for Adventist Education” (2020): <https://crae.lasierra.edu/100-reasons/>.

7. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Strategic Issues

Emerging From Global Research, 2011-2013,” *Reach the World: General Conference Strategic Plan 2015-2020*: 7 (Item 2). Data from five major global studies beginning in 2011 show that “less than half of all Adventists worldwide have experienced any denominational education, and many pastors have limited Adventist education” (p. 7); Roger Dudley and Petr Činčala, “The Adventist Pastor: A World Survey.” A research study conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University’s Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, May 2013: <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/The%20Adventist%20Pastor%20A%20World%20Survey%20.pdf>; George R. Knight, “Why Have Adventist Education?” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 67:5 (Summer 2005): 6-9: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200567050604.pdf>.

8. Name used with permission. Jeannie Leiterman, personal communication, 2018.

9. Jon Elster, “Rationality and Social Norms,” *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie/Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 32:1 (1991): 109-129.

10. At the time of writing, the impact of COVID-19 on school-systems, church finance, and annual household incomes, are yet to be determined, but will certainly have an impact.



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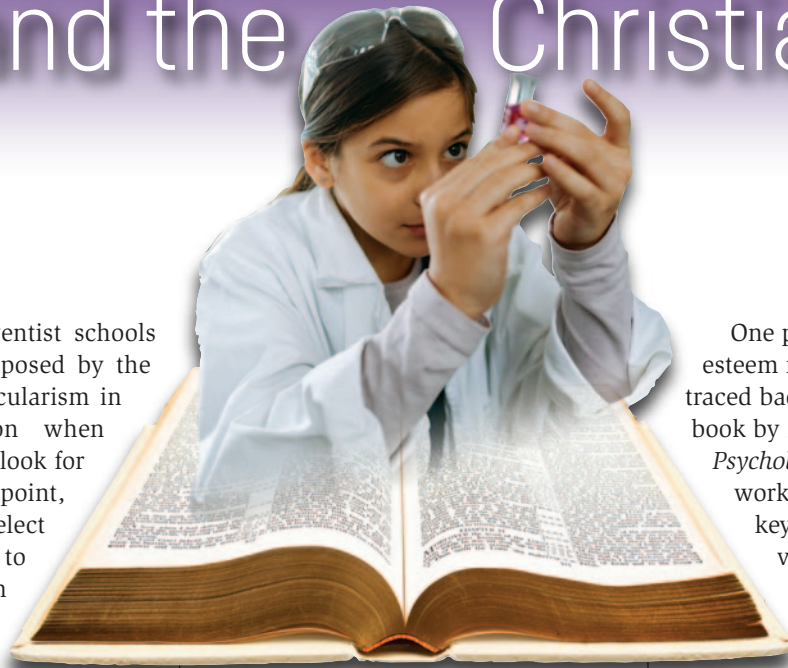
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Critical Thinking, the Bible, and the Christian



Educators in Adventist schools face challenges posed by the influences of secularism in public education when they choose a textbook, look for a video to illustrate a point, and even when they select articles for students to read. The difficulty often comes from the non-alignment of faith with the widely accepted theories of a discipline, leading to the question: “*How do I position my Christian faith when seeking to understand the tenets of the discipline?*”

Christian educators are distinguishable from non-Christian educators in several ways. Christian educators believe the Bible is the Word of God, and they accept as Truth that Jesus is the earthly manifestation of God the Creator and the anointed Son of God. Christians engage with the Bible for understanding, for devotion, and for spiritual growth. They believe Jesus Christ came to earth to save sinners and accept the Truth of the Bible as their guide for thinking and living.

The process of thinking about the Bible can take many forms, such as simple questioning, forming useful self-regulatory judgments,¹ reflective skepticism,² and moving thinking beyond human limitations by seeking God’s understanding and wisdom.³ Educators

are constantly seeking understanding to address issues within their discipline, and Christian educators seek to reconcile their faith in biblical truths with the areas of their disciplines that are influenced by secular thought. In this article, I will discuss the developing critical-thinking movement and the implications of the secular approach for religious faith and practice.

Background and Secular Goals of Education

Over the past several decades, many educational movements have affected education practice and policy. And, as theories become practice, these movements continue to have an impact on Christian educators as they seek to align biblical principles with subject content and with learning issues such as the need to improve students’ thinking and problem-solving skills and motivation, and the impact of students’ low self-esteem on their ability to learn.

One primary example is the self-esteem movement, which can be traced back to 1969 and the seminal book by Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*. In this work, Branden asserted that the key to success in life is to develop children’s positive self-esteem. With the publication of his thoughts, the task of parenting and education morphed into the mission of building confidence in subsequent generations of students. One way to increase this confidence was to teach children to think critically about the world around them.

Later, the 1980s gave rise to new expressions of the self-esteem and critical-thinking movements through incorporating them into the school curricula. Since the early ’80s, I have been pondering what these teachings would mean for shaping a generation that would mature in the 21st century.

Well, now—two decades into the 21st century—critical thinking and self-esteem have converged into a generational expression of the self that is often dismissive of the influence of external authorities. The haste to embrace self-expression and the rejection of limitations on self-expression or opinions seem embedded in the authority of self-knowledge. This

BY PRUDENCE LaBEACH POLLARD

rush to speak “my truth” or “my opinion” suggests that the individual believes he or she possesses full and comprehensive knowledge.

The story of the blind men and the elephant is a familiar one. Many traditions also tell the story of the ant who from the underbelly of an elephant looks up and declares there is no sky because the dark hair of the elephant is all that it can see. Perspective is limited in any context. Whether a limitation is created by the natural limits of individual understanding, lack of awareness, or by contextual constraints on vision, any limitation challenges one’s views, including how Christians think about Scripture and life. It is difficult for the person who overvalues self-expression to engage in meaningful dialog with the person who seeks to engage in thoughtful reflection from different points of view.

A relativistic approach to truth is often joined by another common concept that many think to be new: the concept of “open-mindedness.” For many, a feature of the intelligent mind is the ability to be open-minded, to be available mentally for new discoveries and new ideas. They believe that truth is ever evolving; thus, a closed mind is self-limiting, while an open mind is progressive and ever learning.

Open-mindedness is not a new 21st century concept. It is common within education and particularly so in higher education. According to leading thinkers like John Dewey and Bertrand Russell,⁴ open-mindedness is one of the fundamental aims of education and approaches to critical thinking.

Critical Thinking and Learning

Critical thinking has many definitions, ranging from the ability to engage in useful, self-regulatory judgment⁵ to the broad ability to interpret information and approach problems correctly,⁶ or to the simple ability to analyze arguments.⁷ Educators have called for the teaching of critical-thinking skills; yet results from imple-

Critical thinking is often presented as being in tension with religious faith or any way of thinking that allows for acceptance of the Bible as Truth. At first glance, the terms “critical thinking” and “religious faith” seem quite disparate—especially to the secular mind.

mentation of critical thinking into the curriculum have not shown conclusively that the small gains in critical thinking were not simply the effect of learning in general, and have not shown that these gains resulted from the specific teaching of critical thinking.⁸ Regardless of definitions and the reported increases in critical-thinking skills,⁹ the critical-thinking movement has now replaced the self-esteem movement that swept across schools in America at all levels during the 80s and 90s.¹⁰

Educators and employers consider critical thinking (i.e., thinking, analysis, and problem solving) to be an essential life and workplace skill. This interest in critical thinking is evident in the number of universities,¹¹ including Oakwood University (OU) in Huntsville, Alabama, U.S.A, where I serve, that give focused attention to achieving specific learning outcomes in critical thinking. This is demonstrated through writing¹² and employers’ desire for employees who are competent in these skills for analysis and problem solving.¹³

Approaches to teaching and evalu-

ating critical thinking skills vary. When teaching critical thinking, some instructors guide the process of thinking about one’s thinking with goals varying from fair-mindedness to evaluation. Others take a more discipline-focused approach¹⁴ and guide thinking within a discipline or profession, such as scientific reasoning within the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines. Thinking about one’s thinking is a critical need both to become educated and to be a highly productive employee and an informed citizen. Society’s need for individuals to possess thinking and problem-solving skills is on the increase. However, when it comes to the frameworks of the critical-thinking movement, secular and often anti-religious teachers are pervasive in schools and universities worldwide (see Figure 1 on page 19).

Critical Thinking and Faith

Critical thinking is often presented as being in tension with religious faith or any way of thinking that allows for acceptance of the Bible as Truth. At first glance, the terms “critical thinking” and “religious faith” seem quite disparate—especially to the secular mind. Christians see a relatedness, with the Bible being the source of Truth with which the mind engages to understand the world—and believe that meaning originates from Scripture. With Scripture as the foundation for living, human contributions to thought are to be considered secondary to the principles derived from Scripture. Scripture begins with the beginning of everything and ends with God’s ultimate plan for this life and life everlasting. And in between is found guidance for the Christian’s journey. The Bible addresses the same questions as human philosophy: from the origin to the end of life, and how we should think and behave in between.

How Adventist schools should integrate the Bible with life and living, and teach students to do the same, is what we are addressing in this article. This philosophical orientation origi-

nates from Scripture (see Figure 2) and forms the worldview of the Christian. It is a worldview that says faith is one of the absolutes for living as a Christian, and that faith in the unseen can and does coexist with reason.

Open-mindedness is an element of thought that has reappeared in the 21st century and seems most appealing to millennials.¹⁵ Like all other ways of thought, open-mindedness is a practice that should be critiqued. Most individuals can agree that before

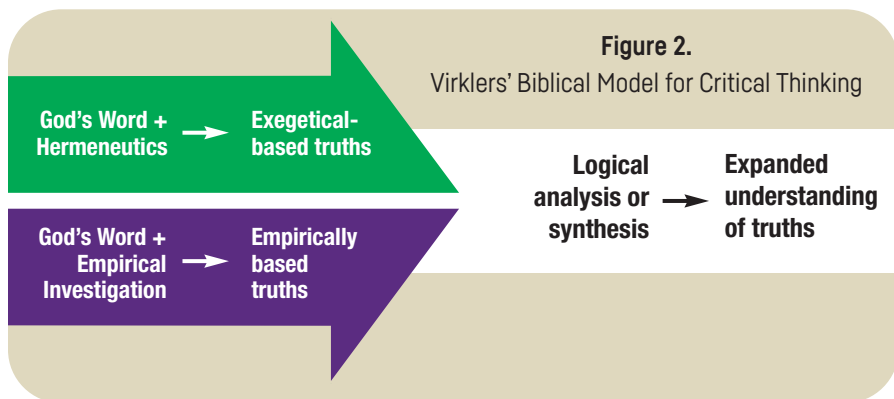
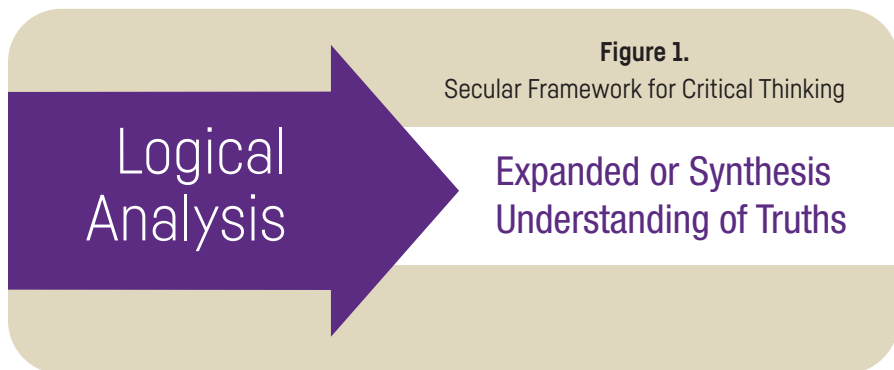
well known for its rejectionist position toward religion. This foundation sees religion as antagonistic toward critical thinking—viewing biblical teachings as dogma and a limitation or barrier to critical thinking. However, Christians who view the Bible as the Truth, the Word of God, are counseled to also practice open-mindedness; an open-mindedness that is open to and guided by divine revelation. In *Messages to Young People*, Ellen White urges that in the “study

come wise unto salvation.”¹⁶ And while this statement primarily addresses misinterpretation of the Scriptures, it is applicable to the level of open-mindedness required of critical thinkers. This approach suggests open-mindedness as a type of intellectual humility necessary to persist and find new solutions to persistent problems such as vaccine development for novel viral infections (such as COVID-19), or other diseases such as cancer or the “common” cold.

Christians are encouraged to conform themselves to the authority of the Word: “Do not read the word in the light of former opinions; but, with a mind free from prejudice, search it carefully and prayerfully. If, as you read, conviction comes, and you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the word, do not try to make the word fit these opinions. Make your opinions fit the word. Do not allow what you have believed or practiced in the past to control your understanding. Open the eyes of your mind to behold wondrous things out of the law. Find out what is written, and then plant your feet on the eternal Rock.”¹⁷ And from that posture, move to understanding the problems being addressed, allowing the foundation of Scripture to guide your thinking about thinking.

Closure is encouraged, a closure that comes from confidence in the Word as Truth when Scripture speaks to the matter. Christians are called to be mindful, to be thinkers always—to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of the thoughts of others.¹⁸ This calling means that Christians, and especially Christian educators, must take care to mindfully engage with what occupies the eyes, ears, and mind. The senses are always engaged—and sometimes assaulted—often without people having decided to screen out or to bring into their psyche the things they desire to influence who they are and will become.

Additionally, when addressing a problem, it is useful to the process of discovery to recognize that closure may be premature. Whether in the laboratory or the field, open-mindedness allows the researcher to remain in a learning posture, even when a method



an opinion is formed, study must be given to the various contributions to the idea. The form of open-mindedness that exists today is one that says rationalism and scientific ways of knowing are superior to belief in the supernatural, and dismisses the Christian Bible as a source of Truth. In fact, the mind is currently conditioned in some educational strategies to accept only evidence-based knowledge and to remain constantly open to novel ideas, ever remaining in the seeker mode.

Among the many leaders of the critical-thinking movement, The Foundation for Critical Thinking is

of the word, lay at the door of investigation your preconceived opinions and your hereditary and cultivated ideas. You will never reach the truth if you study the Scriptures to vindicate your own ideas. Leave these at the door, and with a contrite heart go in to hear what the Lord has to say to you. As the humble seeker for truth sits at Christ's feet, and learns of Him, the word gives him understanding. To those who are too wise in their own conceit to study the Bible, Christ says, you must become meek and lowly in heart if you desire to be-

or triangulation of methods suggests security in the finding.

I posit that critical thinking is desirable for the Christian, now more than ever before. And the call for open-mindedness is not just an intellectual calling, but the believer's calling. However, for the Christian intellectual, open-mindedness is to be subjected to critical analysis so that it can rest on foundational truths of the Bible and be overshadowed by the Bible's call for obedience, love, justice, and mercy. The mind of the Christian is never left to its open-ended journeys; The Bible calls all Christian to think and become. Let me explain.

Scholars are, by nature, integrationists, and Christian scholars are no different. They are first believers in the truth—the essence—of the Bible. With the Bible as their foundation, and the orientation of a believer, scholars examine the world around them from the perspective of the Bible. They question even the innocuous, simplistic, and maybe even the simple things in their world. The Christian scholar sees current-day events and asks, *“What meaning does my biblically based faith bring to this issue so that I can better understand how God wants me to think and to respond?”*

Biblical Foundations for Learning

It is when “Truth” is foundational for “truth” that the foundations of faith are integrated with life. While thinking about thinking (critical thinking), Adventist educators must understand that it is not just the elements of thought that are encouraged but also the philosophical orientation toward thought and behavior. Humanism, rationalism, the scientific method, and their inherent approaches to the construction of knowledge are some of the dominant philosophies that as far back as the 20th century have had an impact on thought and action, especially in the West. The process of education, knowing, and being have foundational principles and approaches to critical thinking.

For example, The Foundation for

Critical Thinking¹⁹ opposes the Bible as the foundation for one's thinking. And although the elements of thought espoused by Richard Paul and Linda Elder, founding fellows at The Foundation for Critical Thinking, can help the thinker to deepen and widen his or her perspective, it is the rejection of the Bible as Truth that is problematic and renders the overall model as inappropriate for developing the mind and heart of the Christian. Life has its source in God, and the Bible is the revealed Word of God. The Word is Truth and records God's purpose of redemption, salvation, and restoration. The Christian²⁰ is no mere reflector of others' thoughts; the Christian should think higher than the highest thought can reach.²¹ And that higher thoughtfulness is, in fact, God's ideal for His people: “Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.”²²

Parents are to be the first teachers of their children, developing mental rigor by cultivating the “moral and intellectual powers.”²³ Yet the school rather than the parent has become the dominant shaper of character with its intentional approach to teaching secular approaches to critical thinking. Therefore, we ought to pay attention to what Adventist schools teach as truth and the possible impact of the teachings on the student's faith in the Word of God.

Teaching, Learning, and Faith

Recent studies²⁴ reveal that when students who espouse religious faith enter college, while they may lose faith, they ultimately regain some faith if they remain connected to their community of faith while attending a secular college. Students who enter without faith do not gain faith while studying in a secular environment. Certainly, we applaud the first group for regaining some faith. Most concerning is the fact that for a significant period, while in a secular college, they lose their personal faith. And upon graduation they have not increased their faith, some have only regained some faith, and others have lost all faith. The maturation of faith many students experience during late adolescence—the formative years

for the adult—can be lost in college. This sad outcome is the result of the secularization of knowledge, a focus on the scientific method as the foundation for truth, and a prevailing anti-God and anti-Bible bias in much secular education.

The purpose of questioning is to drive further inquiry, not to stop discovery; questioning aids discovery. The Christian critical thinker seeks to know: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you” (Matthew 7:7, NIV).²⁵ The desire to know, undergirded by deep study, prayer, and reflection will lead the Christian scholar to a deeper relationship with Christ. “We are called to restore Christ-centered education.”²⁶ That restoration will first lead students into a relationship with Jesus Christ; and, second, effectively input a distinctively Seventh-day Adventist worldview designed to provide the biblical foundations for moral and ethical decision-making.²⁷

An Illustration From Oakwood University

The entire spectrum of Seventh-day Adventist schools—preschool through graduate level—has a stewardship opportunity. Joining forces with the church and home, the school can intentionally offer a biblically grounded education that graduates individuals with strong faith. Leslie Pollard, president of Oakwood University, is known for commenting from time to time that Adventist education prepares students “not just for four years but for 40 years and finally forever.” Yes, the years of matriculation and career preparation are important, but most important are the years where students apply the transformative education received while on Adventist college and university campuses: the years post-college and leading into eternity.

After all, the purpose of education and redemption are one: to save lost souls. The clarion call is for a biblical approach to critical thinking. And a caution is due. The assumption cannot be made that simply being an Advent-

ist school is a guarantee that faith is being developed. A series of questions can help stimulate thinking about faith development. For example:

- Is the mission of the school explicitly Seventh-day Adventist and biblical in its desired outcomes?
- Is the goal of the school and its curriculum to disciple, to transform students, and to strengthen faith in the Adventist message?
- How does the school report to parents, students, and constituents on its achievement of mission and goal achievement?

It is with this missional focus that Oakwood University studied secular models²⁸ and developed what the university administration, faculty, and staff believe is a comprehensive biblical model (see Figure 3) for critical thinking, analyzing, and problem solving (TAPS: **T**hinking, **A**nalyzing, **P**roblem **S**olving). This model's foundation is centered in the Word of God, supporting logic is grounded in the Word, and the process of arriving at an expanded understanding and synthesis is also grounded in biblical truth.

During the university's annual Faculty Development Summer Institute on "Biblical Foundations in the Disciplines," lead faculty are trained to examine the philosophical foundations for the respective disciplines in which they teach, research, and serve. Faculty are invited by institute facilitators to compare the biblical worldview and its presuppositions, assumptions, and teachings with the secular foundations upon which their disciplines often rest. This process of biblical deconstruction of the knowledge undergirding the disciplines and the accompanying reconstruction is liberating for faculty.

Using the TAPS Model, faculty are helped to integrate their secularized careers and spiritual lives. Faculty return to their academic departments and work with the dean to train their faculty-peers on how to think biblically about the disciplines housed in their departments. This is done in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. With the biblical foundation established, faculty learn how to com-

municate the integration of their faith with the academic discipline through modeling and instruction (see Box 1 on page 22).

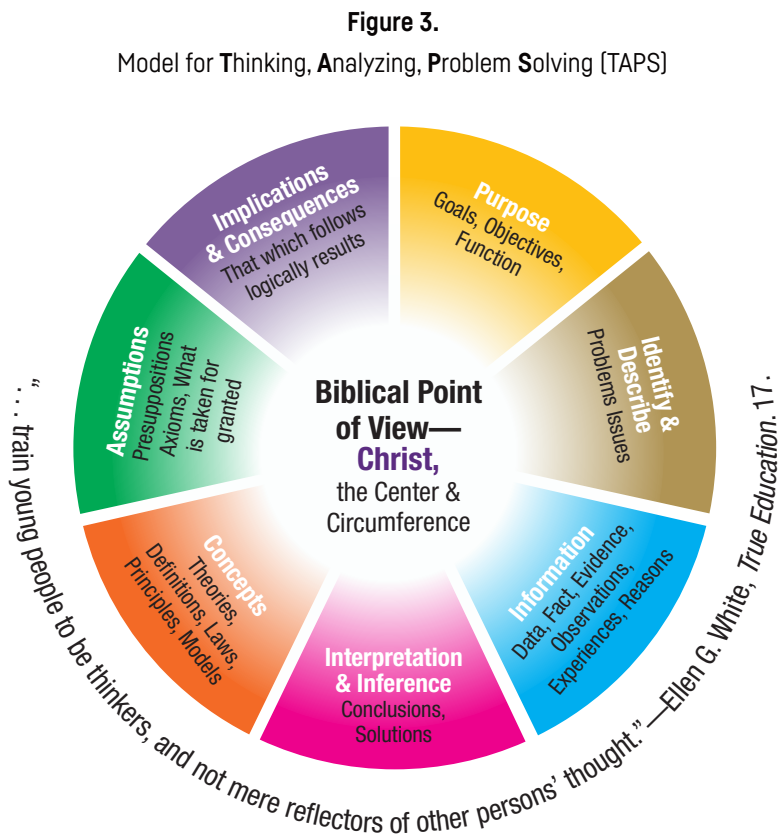
Oakwood University's critical-thinking model originates from the belief and understanding that truth must be grounded in the Truth, both written and incarnate. The model is Christ-centered and based on the principle that "In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one, for in education, as in redemption, 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'"²⁹ Jesus Christ was and is made flesh and was and is the ultimate revelation of God—which points to God as Creator, Savior, and Lord. In *Our High Calling*, Ellen White wrote: "Christ, His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth.

[And because] He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In Him is found the complete system of truth."³⁰

Oakwood University's model (Figure 3) presents Christ as the center and circumference of the thinking process.³¹ During faculty orientation, President Pollard provides a theological orientation and states that Adventist educators are to respond to Ellen White's century-old challenge in a one-question test to higher education, "Is [higher education] fitting us to keep our minds fixed upon the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?"³²

Conclusion

Individual perspective is limited in any context. How Christian educators think about Scripture and life is limited without the guidance of the Holy



NOTE: Key tenets of the biblical worldview are first, the biblical metaphysics/assumptions inform view of the universe and God's relationship to it (Genesis 1:1); second, the affirmation of revelation informing reason (e.g., Psalm 19); third, assumption of God's presence in and through the world (e.g., Colossians 1); and, finally, Christ as the center and circumference of belief structures (e.g., Colossians 1). All analytical thinking (TAPS Model) is informed by these key assumptions.

Spirit into all truth.³³ The Christian approach is to first ask, “What does the Word say about this?” and then to thoughtfully reflect from different points of view with intellectual submission to God’s Truth. This thoughtful reflection should be paired with deep study, and prayerful discussions and consultations with peers and colleagues. If higher education does not begin and end with a “God First” foundation, then it is incapable of strengthening faith in God. Adventist schools are to maintain God at the center and the circumference of thinking and produce graduates who not only remain faithful believers, but also become believers, as well. Seventh-day Adventist educators at all levels of education must encourage adults interested in enrolling to question the missional focus of the school and its curriculum before registering in a course of study because there are truths that are eternal.

Every learning experience should engage students in the process of integration, discovering new knowledge and comparing new knowledge claims to already accepted knowledge, attempting to fit the two together into a consistent and coherent whole. Consistency and coherence are the keys to faith integration. The biblical and historical foundations must be established before concepts can be brought together with coherence. This requires conceptual reorganization but ensures that Bible is foundational to learning—and thus should be implemented at all levels of Seventh-day Adventist education. ✍

This article has been peer reviewed.



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University (OU) in Huntsville, Alabama, U.S.A. For five years she led a critical-thinking initiative, and in 2016 she founded the annual OU Faculty Development Summer Institute to explore approaches to thinking and the impact of secular thought on higher education.

Box 1. Resources for Integrating Faith and Learning

Articles

Michael E. Cafferky, “Scriptural Foundations for Academic Disciplines: A Biblical Theme Approach,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 79:1 (October–December 2016): <https://jae.adventist.org/en/2017.1.4>.

Cynthia M. Gettys and Elaine D. Plemons, “A Biblical Foundation Course Design Model That Works: Teaching Millennials in Higher Education,” *ibid.* 79:1 (October–December 2016): <https://jae.adventist.org/en/2017.1.5>.

Michael H. Harvey, “The Importance of Training Faculty to Integrate Faith With Learning,” *ibid.* 81:3 (July–September 2019): 9-16: <https://jae.adventist.org/en/2019.81.3.3>.

John Wesley Taylor V, “A Biblical Foundation for Integrating Faith and Learning,” *ibid.* 74:5 (Summer 2012): 8-14: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae201274050807.pdf>.

Books

David S. Dockery, *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic Press, 2002).

Robert A. Harris, *Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

Prudence LaBeach Pollard, ed., *Biblical Foundations Faculty Resource Guide*, Dwain Esmond, comp. (Dublin, Ireland: OakTree Press, forthcoming).

Websites

Center for Teaching Excellence and Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning

<https://www.southern.edu/administration/cte/>. Resources for new and adjunct faculty on how to build and design courses on a biblical foundation. Includes research support, professional development, and resources for leadership, teachers, and students. Also links to a Biblical Course Design Model for Higher Education: <https://www.southern.edu/administration/cte/BiblicalFoundations/BiblicalCourseDesignModel.html>.

Eva B. Dykes Library, Oakwood University, LibGuides

<https://libguides.oakwood.edu/c.php?g=260605&p=1740560>. A compilation of definitions, websites, books, and journals on the integration of faith and learning for university teaching faculty, administrators, and staff.

The Institute for Christian Teaching: Integration of Faith and Learning

https://christintheclassroom.org/subject_index/integration_faith_learning.html. Monographs in the *Christ in the Classroom* series addressing the integration of faith and learning.

The Institute for Christian Teaching: Subject Search

https://christintheclassroom.org/search_subject.html. A collection of more than 1,400 monographs in the *Christ in the Classroom* series addressing the integration of faith and learning by subject area.

Recommended citation:

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Abrams and others note that identity-building behaviors are developed through self-regulatory judgments. See Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg, "Group Processes and Intergroup Relations Ten Years On: Development, Impact and Future Directions," *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 11:4 (October 2008): 419-425; and Adam Rutland and Dominic Abrams, "The Development of Subjective Group Dynamics." In Sheri R. Levy and Melanie Killen, eds., *Intergroup Attitudes and Relations in Childhood Through Adulthood* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2008), 47-65.
2. John E. McPeck, *Critical Thinking and Education* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 7.
3. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 18.
4. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957).
5. Abrams, Hogg, and Rutland define critical thinking as the ability to engage in useful, self-regulatory judgment.
6. Both McMillan (1987) and Ernest Pascarella (1989) present critical thinking as the ability to interpret information and approach problems correctly. See James H. McMillan, "Enhancing College Students' Critical Thinking: A Review of Studies," *Research in Higher Education* 26:1 (1987): 3-29; and Ernest T. Pascarella, "The Development of Critical Thinking: Does College Make a Difference?" *Journal of College Student Development* 30:1 (January 1989): 19-26.
7. See John E. McPeck, "Stalking Beasts, but Swatting Flies: The Teaching of Critical Thinking," *Canadian Journal of Education* 9:1 (Winter 1984): 28-44; and _____, "Critical Thinking and Subject Specificity: A Reply to Ennis," *Educational Researcher* 19:4 (May 1990): 10-12.
8. Christopher R. Huber and Nathan R. Kuncel, "Does College Teach Critical Thinking? A Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 86:2 (June 2016): 431-468.
9. Lisa Tsui, "A Review of Research on Critical Thinking" (1998): <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED427572.pdf>. Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Miami, Florida, November 5-8, 1998. Tsui reviewed research from a total of 62 studies measuring the growth of critical thinking. Findings showed gains in critical and higher-order thinking skills during the college years. See also James H. McMillan, "Enhancing College Students' Critical Thinking: A Review of Studies," *Research in Higher Education* 26:1 (1987): 3-29.
10. The self-esteem movement in American schools during the 1980s and 1990s emerged from the work of John Vasconcellos, a California senator, and the California Taskforce to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal Social Responsibility. See "Toward a State of Esteem. The Final Report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility" (January 1990): <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED321170.pdf>. Some educational researchers have compared it to the current social and emotional learning (SEL) movement. See the work of Chester E. Finn, "The Social-Emotional-Learning Movement and the Self-esteem Movement," *Education Next* (July 2017): <https://www.educationnext.org/social-emotional-learning-movement-self-esteem-movement/>.
11. There continues to be a global emphasis on the impact of critical thinking in higher education. See, for example, Elizabeth Tofaris, Tristan McCowan, and Rebecca Schendel, "Reforming Higher Education Teaching Practices in Africa." A series paper published by the ESRC-DFID Research Impact, Cambridge, U.K.: REAL Centre, University of Cambridge and The Impact Initiative (March 2020): <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/15197>; Shoko Yoneyama, "Critiquing Critical Thinking: Asia's Contribution Towards Sociological Conceptualization," in *Bridging Transcultural Divides: Asian Languages and Cultures in Global Higher Education*, Xianlin Song and Kate Cadman, eds. (Adelaide, Australia: University of Adelaide Press, 2012), 231-250; Caroline Dominguez and Rita Payan-Carreira, eds., *Promoting Critical Thinking in European Higher Education Institutions: Towards an Educational Protocol* (Vila Real, Portugal: Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, 2019).
12. The most frequent topic for quality-enhancement plans (QEP) within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation region is critical thinking. See <https://sacscoc.org/>.
13. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines career readiness as the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for successful transition into the workforce. These competencies of Critical Thinking/Problem Solving help the individual "[e]xercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to obtain, interpret, and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness": <http://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>.
14. Martha L. A. Stassen, et al. discuss the impact of academic disciplines on critical-thinking definitions. See Judith E. Miller and James E. Groccia, eds., *To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional, and Organizational Development* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2011), 127.
15. Pew Research Center, "Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change" (February 2010): <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>.
16. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1930), 260.
17. *Ibid.*
18. White, *Education*, 11.
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21. _____, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), 374, 375.
22. _____, *Education*, 16-18.
23. _____, *The Adventist Home* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952), 414.
24. Findings from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) study on student spirituality can be accessed at: <http://spirituality.ucla.edu/>.
25. *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
26. Leslie N. Pollard, "Restoration: The Mission of Adventist Higher Education," *Adventist Review* (September 4, 2016): 38: <https://www.adventistreview.org/1609-36>.
27. *Ibid.*, 39.
28. Deril Wood and Jeannette Dulan, "Inquiry Teaching in Higher Education: A Critical-thinking Context," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 78:3 (February/March 2016): 45-51: circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae201678034507.pdf; In L. M. Brown's *General Philosophy in Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), the author argued that the tools of critical thinking are meaning, arguments, inferences, implications, knowing, theories/principles/laws, viewpoint, and evaluation. In Gerald Nosich's *Learning to Think Things Through: A Critical Guide to Thinking Across the Curriculum* (New York: Pearson, 2012), 11 elements for critiquing one's discipline are identified: purpose, question at issue, context, information, assumption, conclusion, implications and consequences, point of view, concepts, conclusions and interpretations, and alternatives (96, 97).
29. White, *Education*, 30.
30. _____, *Our High Calling* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1961), 16.
31. In *Our High Calling*, Ellen G. White wrote: "Christ, His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth. He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In Him is found the complete system of truth" (16).
32. In her address to the 1909 General Conference Session, Ellen G. White challenged all Adventist education—higher education included—with a one-question test: "Is it fitting us to keep our minds fixed upon the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" ("A Lesson in Health Reform," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 87:6 [February 10, 1910]: 7).
33. See John 1:17; 16:13.



Niels-Erik Andreasen

Advancing in a

Thoughts on Adventist Higher Education in Times of Crises

Different Direction

Higher education is struggling for its future, if one is to believe the headlines. The most recent cause is the disruption to daily life and the economy by COVID-19.¹ Troubles began when college students were sent home last spring due to the pandemic. With them went reimbursements for unused room-and-board payments. Some, but not all, colleges cautiously reopened their campuses for students in the fall of 2020. Others will continue teaching online or with a blending of the two.

The safety measures accompanying the reopening of campuses look more like an obstacle course than the familiar warm, welcoming letter to new and returning students. Many faculty are concerned about their own safety and that of their students

and other school staff in face-to-face instruction, at least until a majority of the population has been vaccinated. Meanwhile, across the United States and worldwide, jobs have been lost, and for many, family resources for education have shrunk. To cope with the negative financial impact, many institutions have resorted to layoffs, furloughs, and hiring freezes in an attempt to bring revenue and expenses into line. Some schools have sought public assistance. Governments have appropriated some funds, and generous alumni have given gifts to replace lost revenue.² But it will not be easy for colleges and universities to recover, according to higher education pundits,³ and many expect big financial losses in the months ahead, which will necessitate emergency borrowing for operations.

That current situation is aggravated

by the fact that some segments of U.S. higher education were already struggling before the virus, especially smaller private colleges and some regional public institutions. Adventist higher education is situated among the former. The summit organized by North American Division (NAD) education leaders in Chicago, Illinois, August 2018⁴ had already warned of emerging challenges awaiting NAD Adventist colleges and universities—continuous and widespread enrollment declines and relentless cost increases. The general decline in enrollment is due in part to a drop in the college-age population that has continued into the current decade. It impacts both public and private institutions, especially in the central, northern, and eastern re-

gions of the U.S. For Adventist higher education, additional factors play a role, having to do with demographic changes in our NAD churches (e.g., smaller families and aging membership) in addition to the cost factors.

The Chicago summit proposed concrete action plans in response to these and future trends.⁵ Among them are shared back-office services, a commitment to online teaching, consolidation and segmentation of institutions, and—most difficult of all—slowing the cost increases of higher education. All are promising action plans and would go some distance toward strengthening Adventist higher education, once implemented. The cost of college education, like the cost of housing, has increased more rapidly than family income for most people in recent decades, making it difficult for them to afford private college for their children without scholarships or steep tuition discounts. That has put downward pressure on net tuition revenue and the ability of many colleges to meet their budgets. All this had been known for quite some time, and then came the virus!

Below are some modest ideas in response to the ongoing threat facing our colleges and universities both generally and in light of the virus. They are not new. None of them is easy. But they, or something like them, may be necessary if NAD tertiary education is to survive the next difficult years. The question before us is this: How can we continue to provide the vaunted quality of Adventist higher education during this time of stress, while keeping our institutions financially viable? This essay is joining many others in asking for a recalibration of the way educational services are delivered. And, of course, it assumes aggressive recruitment, despite demographic challenges.

1. “We are not retreating—we are advancing in a different direction!”⁶

How does one respond to setbacks and retreating (advancing in a different direction)? During one of my own

difficult periods dealing with a downturn, a colleague advised: (1) Thank God for crises and setbacks; (2) Do not waste them; and (3) Use them to make necessary decisions, and then implement them. While that sounds clever, it is also troubling. Should one wait for downturns to correct errors made during upturns? What are the potential implications of advancing in a different direction? Might this require an operational retreat in preparation for a tactical advance? Could that even work for education?

“Advancing backward” for a college facing stressful times may mean retrenchment (“right-sizing” is the politically correct term), consolidating, and refocusing the institution instead of merely expanding, extending, and enlarging it. Such steps taken in times of stress generally begin by reductions in faculty and staff because their remuneration represents the largest expense item and is therefore the greatest financial stress factor in the school’s operations. But this by itself may quickly lead to new challenges as the workload increases for those who remain behind, unless the school simultaneously makes different kinds of reductions. This brings up the matter of course offerings in relationship to students enrolled and the institution’s capacity to teach them. And that, in turn, will raise important questions about educational quality. But a major issue is that many smaller institutions (and maybe some large ones, too) simply offer too many courses, majors, and services, with less than a critical mass of students in each course and program. A way to visualize that compares the considerable size of our college or university catalogues, which list all the programs and subjects taught, with the catalogues of much larger institutions. The similarity in size may be instructive. How can smaller institutions afford to offer so many programs and courses, given their modest enrollment levels? And as

a corollary, does the proliferation of majors, programs, concentrations, electives, and course offerings really make for better education?

Of course, good reasons for expanding our educational offerings, as illustrated by our extensive college catalogues, are easy to find—among them, the wish to respond to the many and varied interests of all the prospective students. Add to that our desire to enlarge the campuses and their facilities, and to raise their profile in the community. These are good

The institution hopes that regular costs will be covered by growth, but there is no guarantee. If that growth ever stops, the deficit becomes permanent and difficult to erase. It may end up drowning an institution in red ink, eventually leading to its closure by its boards.

reasons. But they can cost dearly, with the result that some institutions operate with structural deficits.

A regular deficit happens in a year during which expenses outstrip revenue for some reason. A structural deficit is built into the budget as a normal part of operations. It is covered by expected enrollment and tuition increases. The institution hopes that these regular costs will be covered by growth, but there is no guarantee. If that growth ever stops, the deficit becomes permanent and difficult to erase. It may end up drowning an institution in red ink, eventually leading to its clo-

sure by its boards. Such institutions are particularly vulnerable during the current pandemic, which threatens both perennial tuition increases and needed enrollment upticks. Unhappily, this scenario appears to be the situation with some smaller private colleges and universities like ours in NAD, and it probably was the impetus behind the Chicago summit on Adventist higher education in 2018.

Can one right-size a small college without damaging the quality of its ed-

Some will say pruning a college should involve only cutting budgets in order to bring them into balance and to avoid deficits, especially structural ones, and leaving everything else intact. That generally involves reducing faculty and staff by right-sizing what is commonly referred to as the student/teacher ratio.

ucation and sending it on a further downward spiral?

2. Aggressive pruning and its impact on quality education

“You will never harvest any grapes from this vine,” my neighbor in St. Helena, California, said, upon seeing how incompetently and timidly I pruned our seedless Thompson grapevine last spring. In fact, only correct and aggressive pruning pro-

duces a good harvest. Can that be true also for small Christian colleges and universities in a time of stress? Clearly, this is not a pleasant thought. So how aggressively do we need to “prune,” and what will that do for the quality of Adventist higher education?

Some will say pruning a college should involve only cutting budgets in order to bring them into balance and to avoid deficits, especially structural ones, and leaving everything else intact. That generally involves reducing faculty and staff by right-sizing what is commonly referred to as the student/teacher ratio. Consider this thought experiment for a moment. How many students do we need to make our courses and programs viable, and how many teachers do we need to employ to teach them within a balanced budget? Place the teachers, 50, 75, 100 or more, in social distance on campus, and distribute an equal number of students around each teacher. That will give a visual student/teacher ratio for the campus. Every college and university should figure out for itself what that number ought to be. It may be different for graduate, professional, and undergraduate students, and it should consider distance and part-time students. Now calculate the net tuition paid by each student (an average will do), multiply that by the number in each student circle, and compare that to the Human Resources budget for their teacher, including salary, benefits, office help, research, conference travel, etc. Multiply this by the number of circles, and that will produce the institution’s revenue and expense budget in the instruction function.

One can do the same for the auxiliaries (room and board). Additionally, the total institutional budget will in most cases include some non-tuition revenue on the plus side, and on the expense side, costs for the operation of the campus, management, financial services, and obligations, academic and student support, etc., all to

be funded by what is left after the instruction expense.

Common percentages of the total budget assigned to each of the functions noted above, including instruction, in a typical four-year private college are readily available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).⁷ These percentages will vary somewhat with the local economy, remuneration levels, and tuition charges. All these numbers and ratios can be put on a single page for most small institutions and will quickly show if a school’s budget is in balance or facing a deficit.

The most important number/ratio and therefore the most crucial is the first, due to its size. How many students for each teacher? Conventional wisdom holds that in traditional residential, private undergraduate colleges with 12-unit teaching loads per term, a teacher-to-student ratio of 1 to 10/11 or below will likely lead to structural deficits and eventual closure; a ratio of 1 to 12/13 may be barely workable; and a ratio of 1 to 14/16 and above will likely work well. The right student-teacher ratio is an important indicator of stability and success. So far, these comments have assumed a typical Adventist residential college or university with a regular fulltime faculty.

During the pandemic, many institutions have taught all or some of their students online and off campus. That has caused a drop in auxiliary income, but little if any cost reduction in the instructional areas, except when colleges share some students, teachers, and tuition revenue, as proposed by the Chicago summit. Virtual colleges, teaching all their students online by mostly contracted faculty, will use a different financial model not considered here. Many of them are for-profit institutions.

The COVID-19 faculty layoffs, furloughs, and hiring freezes throughout higher education are intended to im-

prove the student/teacher ratios at a time of enrollment uncertainty. But what toll will that take on the quality of education, and how can that be mitigated?

3. Management by objectives

Management by objectives is a formula made popular by the late management guru, Peter Drucker. How could that help colleges and universities during COVID-19? Is it one of those things one implements during times of downturn because issues were neglected during times of upturn? Or does it represent what should be standard operating procedures? Educators frequently frown upon this management formula, thinking it is focused only upon money. But for the purposes of this discussion, it deals with the total educational objectives we seek for our students. These include personal development, spiritual, social, and ethical formation, preparation for a life-work, religious understanding, how to relate to the church's mission, acquisition of valuable skill sets, international orientation, multifaceted learning opportunities, even undergraduate research, all concluding with a diploma or degree certifying that quality learning took place. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the college administration, the chief purveyors of all these educational objectives will always be the faculty. They must be hired, supported, and funded, and they are the principal managers of the educational objectives.

Most college programs of study (majors)—and general education, too—begin with teachers determining what students ought to learn in their respective programs. The faculty build the curriculum under the watchful eye of deans and chairs, and keep in mind requirements of accreditation and certification organizations. Occasionally, a class is added to explore a new topic, or to benefit from the expertise of a new teacher. Rarely are classes dropped from the program. When the minds of students

“collide” in a friendly way with the minds of teachers in these courses, education takes place! But how many teachers and courses does it take for these “collisions” to happen with good learning outcomes?

During my lengthy tenure as a university administrator I met with thousands of alumni, many of whom wanted to ask about their old school: Is professor so and so still alive, and how about dean such and such—never did a question come up about the president, nor the size of the faculty, nor the growth of the campus, nor the extracurricular services and support, though they are all important topics! Clearly, individual teachers are the undisputed heroes of education. Further, I concluded that in most cases one, two, or three highly influential teachers attracted students into their classes, helped them select a major, and guided them to graduation and a life calling. That is the alumni testimony.

For this reason, I believe something can be gained for the long-term viability of the institution by redesigning teaching and learning (the curriculum) around a limited number of exceptionally well-taught courses (that is, “just enough”) to help students meet their graduation requirements, keep their credits and therefore costs down, and make it easier to complete their undergraduate degrees in four years. Breadth in learning will occur in the minds of students principally when they interact with their best teachers, not just when they shop around and select additional courses offered in the catalogue. The key here is “limited number,” “just enough” exceptionally well-taught courses enabling students to keep the number of their credits and costs down and graduate on time. Any meaningful adjustment in faculty begins with an adjustment in curriculum de-



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sign. This requires some hard choices when building the curriculum, along with quality and breath of learning when designing each course.

The result of redesigning the teaching and learning curriculum will be a rebalancing between quantity and quality in the students' educational experience. A critical mass of students in each class will also help promote student-to-student learning (a peer-tutoring approach) while keeping the student/teacher ratio at a workable level. In turn, the rest of the campus services and programs will take their cue from the economy and efficiency of the instructional sector. The academic community will set the example of educational efficiency and administrative modesty. In times of budget adjustments, faculty members often feel that the real cost problem is caused by bloated staff levels, while the staff feels that faculty positions are protected unfairly. It is always better for the one who sets the example (in this case the faculty) to call on the rest of the campus to follow.

If that approach is feasible in academic programs of study, can it also apply to the professional programs whose variety and number of courses are often mandated by external accrediting agencies? In this case, the college must determine the viability of each program by testing its ability to recruit enough students to maintain a workable student/faculty ratio throughout its mandated curriculum. Some programs may not be able to meet this expectation, even when adding general-education courses into the mix.

The objective of this sort of management is to create a student/teacher ratio that is sustainable, to rid the school of structural deficits, and to build breadth and quality of learning into the required number of courses without adding more courses than needed for graduation. Thus, the process of re-engineering does not begin with cutting faculty. It be-

Is it possible to maintain a financially viable institution of higher learning that is also educationally viable? Or, put the other way around, can an educational institution that is no longer educationally viable ever hope to become financially viable again?

gins with the curriculum and the critical mass of students in each course of study. That is the objective by which colleges manage the instruction part of the budget, and by implication the budgets for instructional support, administration, the auxiliaries, et cetera.

But even if those practices could help higher education's budgets and stabilize college operations in a trying time, will they not in the end hurt the vaunted quality of our education? That question will not easily go away. It is a "structural question," like a "structural deficit" that returns again and again! In short, is it possible to maintain a financially viable institution of higher learning that is also educationally viable? Or, put the other way around, can an educational institution that is no longer educationally viable ever hope to become financially viable again? That lies at the heart of the structural question. To contemplate that question, consider the following illustration and final point.

4. "Adam I achieves success by winning victories over others. But Adam II builds character by winning victories over the weaknesses in himself."⁸

In this summary sentence of his book *The Road to Character*, David Brooks identifies two aspects of personal development or education, as we may call it. For convenience sake, he calls them Adam I and Adam II, where the word *Adam* means simply "man/human." "Adam I" represents the character traits that help a person

build up a great résumé during a life-long commitment to career development, promotion, achievement, and recognition; "Adam II" represents character traits that culminate in a wonderful eulogy at the conclusion of a life committed to values, service, humility, and graciousness. As we seek to apply these two aspects of personal development to Christian education facing challenges and changes, think of the first as that which students gain from a well-designed, well-taught curriculum of just enough courses to graduate on time and to qualify for their work or professional goals, and the second as the lived experiences that build and shape character as students grow and interact with others within the campus community.

Christian education is blessed by an innate understanding of both these life goals, in what Ellen G. White calls "true education."⁹ We must never abandon either of them, no matter the severity of the crisis before us. How is that possible? Reading the book by Brooks, it becomes clear from his examples of Adam II achievers that they also develop strong résumés. They become accomplished people, but along the way, they add the most important trait—"character development," which qualifies them for the noble eulogy.

Most great résumés begin with education, generally a college degree, with its various courses, major,

grades, and graduation leading to a good job. Character development also occurs in college, but is not generally associated with the courses and majors, grades, and degrees a student may complete. No number of courses by themselves will lead to a noble character. Rather, this happens at moments of interaction between the minds of teacher and student, and often between students themselves; it happens during spiritual-life programs, extracurricular events, community outreach, and service experiences. Character is the part of education that lasts an eternity.¹⁰ To achieve that ultimate goal in our education, it may not help much to fill our catalogues with ever more courses, required or elected, but it does depend upon some very good teachers, committed administrators, and trusted support staff; it takes the entire educational team working together to provide students with the best experience.

In conclusion, is it really possible by curriculum re-engineering to maintain a college education that is both financially and educationally viable? The answer is Yes, but it will be difficult, and each institution will have to find its own way through this. No one size fits all. At the end of the process, the curricula will be slimmer and where possible shorter, each program will be re-examined for viability and modification, the faculty- (and staff) to-student ratio will be pushed into a sustainable range. The faculty (and staff) will take greater responsibility for the personal development of their students. The campus will become more family-like and community oriented and learning more collegial with a renewed commitment to a life of the mind and of faith. ☞

This article has been peer reviewed.

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Jason Ruiter



Ingrid Hernandez

AdventHealth Virtual Internship

During the Pandemic Brings Many Benefits

While many companies canceled summer internship opportunities in 2020 due to COVID-19, AdventHealth¹ created a virtual experience that exposed interns to a wide array of leaders and opportunities.

Tanner Toay,² a senior studying business administration at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, was disappointed when his summer internship with a healthcare system was canceled due to COVID-19. But when he heard from AdventHealth, a system of 50 hospitals that serves five million patients annually throughout the United States, and its offer of a virtual internship that would expose him to a wide breadth of healthcare knowledge, he jumped at the chance. “A lot of the people I know had their internships canceled,” he said. “AdventHealth was the first one to really offer a solid program.”

The summer internship program at AdventHealth is not new. For many years, it has offered as many as 50 to 55 undergraduates from Adventist colleges and universities an opportunity to become embedded within the organization in areas ranging from finance and accounting to nursing, IT, and marketing. These final 50 or so students, from a pool of more than 300 applicants, are offered paid intern-

ship positions at US\$15 an hour for approximately seven hours a day for six weeks. Through the program, they are assigned projects, paired with executive mentors and preceptors, and take part in a variety of social and spiritual events. The limitations imposed by COVID-19, however, made it difficult for the program to proceed in its usual format, so it became necessary to replace the usual travel and accommodations with virtual access.

According to a recent survey, 35 percent of 900 U.S. college students had their internships canceled because of the pandemic.³ With many students missing out on key opportunities to develop future careers during the summer, a few companies pivoted from an in-person to a virtual curriculum. AdventHealth leaders were determined to find the right solution for their company while keeping two considerations in mind: how to ensure the safety of the interns, staff, and preceptors, and how to fulfill the promise that had been made to the interns. Ultimately, the decision to proceed in a virtual format was driven by the health system’s key values and made at the very top by President and CEO Terry Shaw, who felt the organization had made a moral commitment to its interns.

To ensure the interns’ safety and education needs once the decision was made, AdventHealth abridged its internship program from 12 weeks to

six weeks and went entirely digital. The program launched June 22, 2020, and concluded July 31, 2020.

“It felt a bit more like a television production,” said Ken Bradley, director of the emerging leaders program at AdventHealth’s Leadership Institute, describing the changes made to facilitate the virtual internship program. “The quality of the work was incredible.”

Technology naturally played a major role in the pivot. To facilitate the new format, the Leadership Institute’s team underwent online training sponsored by Franklin Covey, a global provider of leadership training and consulting, and set up a production team with a daily producer, a consistent “on-air” host, and staff coordinators who monitored the open chat feed, as well as a private chat that allowed for real-time production adjustments. At the end of each day, the team met to review their successes and opportunities for improvement to ensure they were adequately prepared for the next session. In the end, they found that the digital tools made it easy to connect the interns to their daily meetings and projects and to one another.

“I think something that’s really unique with virtual internships is the ability to quickly break out into groups,” Toay said of his experience. “If you tried to do that in person, it’d be just chaos. It’d be like musical chairs.”

The 55 young adult interns were evenly split in terms of gender, represented 12 education institutions and 42 majors, and had an average GPA of 3.5. About half, 55 percent, were juniors in college, 14 percent were seniors, 4 percent were graduates, and 2 percent were freshman. As a group, they listened to daily devotions, presentations,

and leadership lessons from AdventHealth clinicians and leaders via a Zoom meeting and were placed by the proctor into virtual “breakout rooms” where they grappled with questions posed by the guest speakers.

Ted Hamilton, MD, chief mission-integration officer for AdventHealth, referred to the company’s mission statement “Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ” when he spoke during one Thursday morning meeting. “Patient care does not demand that we have a mission and ministry,” he said during the call. “So, why do we do this?” The interns were then placed into virtual groups where they discussed possible answers.

Bradley said that thanks to the ease-of-use of virtual meetings, many executives were able to provide an hour of their time to speak to the interns. That included Mark Hertling, a physician leadership consultant for AdventHealth and former commanding general of the U.S. Army, and Jeffrey Kuhlman, MD, AdventHealth senior vice president of clinical quality and patient safety, and former White House physician.

Toay said he loved the exposure. In addition to their seminars, he and the other interns paired up with one another to interview leaders across the system about the company’s response to COVID-19. Called *Project Insight*, the endeavor was tasked to the interns by Shaw. “I liked the openness of the project,” Toay said. “Because executives’ feedback was collected anonymously, I feel that as an intern you got to hear candidly.”

As part of their self-led work, the interns managed their own time to complete online training courses, take virtual tours, participate in résumé reviews and mock interviews with AdventHealth’s talent acquisition team, and to develop personal video submissions and a group presentation to be showcased during the annual intern expo (see Box 1 on page 32 for an example of the schedule of activities during week one).

At the end of the six weeks, each

participant was evaluated by his or her assigned preceptor and/or resident advisor in a discussion covering ways the intern brought value to the company and department, and areas that could be improved upon. In turn, feedback received from the interns—in the form of both survey and anecdotal evaluations—helped the Leadership Institute team assess the program’s effectiveness. Organizers found that:

- One hundred percent of the interns believed the virtual internship had helped to develop them as leaders;
- Ninety-eight percent believed they had acquired the necessary capabilities to contribute to AdventHealth’s mission; and
- Ninety-two percent were interested in a career with the organization—an especially promising statistic, as one of the key metrics for AdventHealth’s summer internship

program is the number of future and permanent hires it produces.

The AdventHealth summer internship program aims to answer three questions for its interns: Is the healthcare field right for them? Is AdventHealth the right employer for them? And if it is, in what area of healthcare would they like to work? These questions are discussed with interns throughout the program, as they are exposed to real-world experiences and meet with top leaders, and then answered during the final interview with their preceptor.

Toay, who was embedded in a finance project as part of his internship, said he learned how AdventHealth, at every turn, goes back to its mission of Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ in its decision-making. “I think I’m very much leaning toward, ‘I would like to work for AdventHealth,’” he said. ✍



Box 1. Example of Week 1

2020 Summer Internship Schedule
Presented by the Leadership Institute
"Leading in Crisis"

Week 1 - Welcome to AdventHealth
Prework: 1. Complete and Download CliftonStrengths Assessment; 2. Set up your virtual workspace

Self-led work: 1. Assigned ALN Orientation Curriculum; 2. Virtual tours using VR Cardboard Slims

Session	Time (EST)	Objectives	Speakers, Titles	Location
Monday, June 22, 2020	9:30am - 10:45am	Welcome - Opening Remarks	Ken Bradley, Director of Emerging Leaders Program	Zoom
	10:45am-11:00am	Break		
	11:00am-12:00pm	A Patient's Story	An interview with Roy Reid, Executive Director of Public Affairs Communication; Facilitated by Sy Saliba, Director of Leadership Institute	Zoom
	12:00pm -1:00pm	Lunch Break		
	1:00pm -2:30pm	Intern Introductions Ice Breaker	Sy Gallimore, Physician Enterprise Resident	Zoom
Tuesday, June 23, 2020	2:30pm -3:00pm	Break		
	3:00pm-4:00pm	Keynote - State of AdventHealth	Gina Creek, Executive Director of Leadership Institute to introduce our Keynote speaker Randy Haffner, President/CEO, Multi-State Division	Zoom
	4:00pm	Adjourn		
Wednesday, June 24, 2020	10:00am -10:45am	An Introduction to Spiritual Formation	Jay Perez, VP Institutional Ministries	Zoom
	10:45am-11:00am	Break		
	11:00am-12:00pm	Wrestling With Hard Decisions	Ken Bradley, Director of Emerging Leaders Program	Zoom
	12:00pm -1:00pm	Lunch Break		
	1:00pm -2:00pm	Emerging Leaders Panel	Facilitated by Veronica Garcia-Carvajal, West Florida Division Accounting Finance Resident. The panel will include: Brielyn Sampson, Director, Corporate Responsibility; Arleni Calderon, Director, Supply Chain; Elijah Bruette, Executive Director, Business Development Strategic Planning; Emily Johnson, Director, Finance; and Zachary Crane, Director, Anesthesia Operations	Zoom
Thursday, June 25, 2020	2:00pm -2:15pm	Break		
	2:15pm-3:00pm	Your Internship Experience	Ken Bradley, Director of Emerging Leaders; Gina Creek, Executive Director, Leadership Institute; Angela Sechrest, Coordinator, Emerging Leaders	Zoom
	3:00pm-3:15pm	Break		
	3:15pm-4:00pm	AdventHealth Jeopardy	Sy Gallimore, Physician Enterprise Resident	Zoom
Friday, June 26, 2020	4:00pm	Adjourn		
	10:00am-10:30am	Devotional - Leadership Lessons from Peter	Andrew Taylor, AdventHealth Orlando Accounting Finance Resident	Zoom
	10:30am-12:00pm	Internship Professional Etiquette	Amanda Kukich, Director, Finance; Jordan Couch, Director of Hospital Services	Zoom
	12:00pm -1:00pm	Lunch Break		
Friday, June 26, 2020	1:00pm -3:30pm	Introduction to the Pandemic Crisis	Ken Bradley, Director of Emerging Leaders; Gina Creek, Executive Director, Leadership Institute; Amanda Maggard, President/CEO AdventHealth Zephyrhills; Rob Deininger, President/CEO, AdventHealth Fish; Danielle Johnson, VP COO, AdventHealth Fish	Zoom
	3:30pm	Adjourn		
	10:00am-10:30am	Devotional - Leadership Lessons from Joshua	Astrid Monroig-Negron, Corporate Responsibility Resident	Zoom
	10:30am-11:00am	Department Foundations Introduction	Ken Bradley, Director of Emerging Leaders	Zoom
	11:00am-12:00pm	Department Foundations - Management & Operations	Hayden Palm, Shawnee Mission Management Resident	Zoom
	12:00pm -1:00pm	Lunch Break		
	1:00pm-2:00pm	Department Foundations - Supply Chain	Olesia Korchuk, Supply Chain Resident	Zoom
	2:00pm-3:00pm	Department Foundations - Marketing & Strategy	Ashley Seymour, Marketing and Strategic Planning Resident	Zoom
3:00pm -3:30pm	Break			
Friday, June 26, 2020	3:30pm-4:30pm	Department Foundations - Physician Enterprise	Natasha McWilliams-Nasser, Physician Enterprise Resident	Zoom
	4:30pm	Adjourn		
	9:00am-10:00am	Leadership Lessons - Sy Saliba	Sy Saliba, Director Program Development	Zoom
Friday, June 26, 2020	10:00am-12:00pm	CliftonStrengths: What Is Your Superpower?	Gina Creek, Executive Director, Leadership Institute	Zoom
	12:00pm -1:00pm	Lunch Break		
	1:00pm-2:30pm	Weekend Wrap Up	Leah Wooten, Management Resident	Zoom
2:30pm	Adjourn			

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. With a sacred mission of extending the healing ministry of Christ, AdventHealth is a connected system of care for every stage of life and health. More than 80,000 skilled and compassionate caregivers in physician practices, hospitals, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and hospice centers provide individualized, holistic care. A shared vision, common values, focus on whole-person health and commitment to making communities healthier unify the system's 50 hospital campuses and hundreds of care sites in diverse markets

throughout almost a dozen states in the U.S. For more information about AdventHealth, visit AdventHealth.com, or [Facebook.com/AdventHealth](https://www.facebook.com/AdventHealth); Staff, "100 of the Largest Hospitals and Health Systems in America," *Becker's Hospital Review* (2020): <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/lists/100-of-the-largest-hospitals-and-health-systems-in-america-2020.html>.

2. Names used with permission.

3. Yello, a recruitment solutions company, partnered with SurveyMonkey to survey 913 current college students in the United States. The survey was conducted from April 10-15, 2020. For more, see Jason Weingarten and Dan Bartfield, "Virtual Internship Statistics and Trends: A 2020 COVID-19 Impact Report," *Yello* (2020): <https://yello.co/blog/virtual-internship-statistics/>.

Best Practices for Adapting Internship Programs in the COVID-19 Era*

1. *Ensure the credibility and safety of internship programs.* Make sure the internship program is equipped to meet the needs of the students. This means paying attention to issues such as maintaining records of engagement and providing avenues for participants and program directors to evaluate and report on performance.

2. *Go virtual, if possible.* While these are challenging times for companies that employ student interns, as well as for the interns themselves and the schools from which they are selected, the effects of a cancelled internship opportunity can be far-reaching. For this reason, if possible, keep internship opportunities in place rather than canceling. In the education environment, this could also apply to student-teaching experiences. For an example of this, see article by Ryan Teller, "Coronavirus Teaches Student Teachers to Be Adaptable," *Mid-America Outlook* (June 2020): <https://ucollege.edu/20200430/coronavirus-teaches-student-teachers-to-be-adaptable/>.

3. *Communicate with prospective interns.* Regardless of the decision regarding whether to continue or suspend the internship opportunity, maintain timely communication with candidates. Update them on changes such as whether the internship will be cancelled, adjusted to an unpaid experience, and if they will have to work remotely. Regardless of the change, students need a clear and timely explanation so that they can adjust their plans.

4. *Be an advocate.* Many college students are facing anxieties about the future during this uncertain time. For those looking ahead, hoping to get a head start on their career, internships offer a pathway to future jobs and possible job security. Be an advocate for students seeking career support by increasing services to these students, such as continuing to keep them connected with their mentors or connecting them with a new mentor; offering résumé-review services or providing letters of recommendation; or even connecting them with potential employers through the program's alumni network. These services go a long way to supporting students, and it is something they will remember, long-term.

5. *Plan virtual intern events.* Virtual "Meet and Greet" sessions, fun trivia challenges, or career development webinars with the institution's leadership team, potential hiring organizations, or the alumni network of the program can go a long way toward making students feel connected. Virtual events can help interns build relationships with one another and with those facilitating the learning experience.

6. *Provide training and technology resources.* Make sure interns have the resources necessary to connect virtually, as well as training on what is required for the remote learning experience. It may be tempting to assume that given the times in which we live, everyone should know how to connect digitally and has high-speed Internet access. This is not necessarily the case. Adapting to a virtual experience means that every participant should have the tools necessary to be successful.

7. *Ensure that students have what they need to succeed.* Interns will need access to resources on campus, such as library, technology, and student services. They will also need clear guidelines regarding safety online, ethical standards, confidentiality (especially if working with sensitive information), and potential legal liabilities. A helpful resource is Evelyn Villafior-Almocerá, "Authentic Online Assessments (Fieldwork)," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 81:2 (April-June 2019): 18-25. Available at <https://jae.adventist.org/en/2019.81.2.4>.

* Adapted from Jason Weingarten and Dan Bartfield, "Virtual Internship Statistics and Trends: A 2020 COVID-19 Impact Report," *Yello* (2020): <https://yello.co/blog/virtual-internship-statistics/>.

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cruise ships and recreational boats on the river Nile; day and night, from transportation to entertainment, swimming to bathing, life along the river bustles with activity. Like now, it appears the river was not only a source of livelihood for Egypt in Moses' time, but also a place of gathering for life's necessities—bathing, recreation, and transportation. While Moses was hidden in the reeds, the princess—the daughter of Pharaoh—along with her maidservants, came to the river and quickly noticed something in the reeds. On closer examination, they discovered the basket carrying the baby. Filled with compassion in her heart for him, she knew that this baby must have belonged to a Hebrew family and was being hidden from being killed at her father's orders (Exodus 2:6). She also knew that if she took him as her adopted son, her father would also have pity on him. So, she prepared to take him.

The Suggestion

At that very moment, during the flurry of excitement, Miriam, Moses' watchful sister, approached the princess's party and came up with a simple, brilliant, well-thought through, and life-changing suggestion. "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" (Exodus 2:7, NIV).

This seemingly simple suggestion led to a series of events beginning with the baby being given to his biological mother to take care of him until he was "older" (about 12).⁹ She did what she knew was necessary as a Hebrew mother: teach Moses never to forget God or the people of his ancestry. I imagine she narrated the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as how the children of Israel came to be living in Egypt.

Ellen White wrote of Moses' mother, Jochebed: "How far-reaching in its results was the influence of that one Hebrew woman, and she an exile and a slave!"¹⁰ But it is also important to acknowledge that her far-reaching influence also extended to Miriam, who was responsible for making the suggestion that initiated a series of events that led to the making of the great leader that Moses became. Miriam said, "'Shall I go . . . ?'" The confidence and faith with which she stated this was like saying, "I will go"¹¹ It was so compelling in its nature and so full of confidence that the princess had to oblige. Miriam was not intimidated by the princess' status—she did not give up or despair or run home to report to her mother that Moses had been taken by a high-ranking figure, and she could do nothing. Instead, she must have been driven by the Spirit of God to think otherwise.

She also must have had confidence in her mother's care and teaching. Miriam's suggestion impacted Moses' future, and indeed the future of the whole nation of Israelites (Exodus 7:7). Moses accomplished a great mission as the leader of Israel's exodus from Egypt, and this testifies to the importance of the work of the Christian mother who influenced not only Moses¹² but Miriam as well.

This is in sharp contrast to Herodias in the New Testament—whose hatred of John the Baptist was stirred up by her own wrong choices—who advised her daughter Salome to ask for the head of John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-25). What a difference a suggestion can make! One suggestion led to the making of a giant of faith and saved a whole nation while another,

ill-advised and influenced by a hateful mother, led to the killing of John the Baptist, a faithful servant of God.

Great things can come from small suggestions. Moses' life and legacy grew out of one such suggestion. Moses and his siblings, Miriam and Aaron, were influenced by godly parents whose guidance and thousands of small suggestions over time shaped them into individuals willing to trust God and walk by faith regardless of the difficulty or danger. Teachers, administrators, parents, and all who are part of a child's life have the power of suggestion and must use it wisely. The words spoken to these tender hearts, when guided and influenced by God-fearing adults, can make a difference in their lives and even in the lives of nations. And, similarly, as these words shape their trust in God, their words, too, can do the same, enabling them to say with confidence, like Miriam: "'I Will Go!'"¹³

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotes in this editorial are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible.
2. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1890), 252.
3. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 253.
4. *Ibid.*, 255.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Most biblical scholars attribute the authorship of the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch, and the Book of Job to Moses. For more, see "Did Moses Write the First Five Books of the Old Testament?" *KJV Today* (n.d.): <http://www.kjvtoday.com/homedid-moses-write-the-first-five-books-of-the-old-testament>; and "Who Wrote the Book of Job" (n.d.): <https://www.thomasnelsonbibles.com/who-wrote-the-book-of-job/>. See also "Adventist Scholars Organize Key Conference on Origins of Bible's First Five Books" (April 2016): <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story3888-adventist-scholars-organize-key-conference-on-origins-of-bibles-first-5-books>.
8. *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
9. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 244.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Reach the World: I Will Go* is the 2020-2025 strategic plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. It is based on the Great Commission of Matthew 28, which invites all followers of Christ to actively share the good news. For more, see <https://iwillgo2020.org/>.
12. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 61.
13. *Reach the World: I Will Go*.



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