

VESPERS SERVICE – FRIDAY 26 JULY 2019

ADAPTING SDA EDUCATION TO THE TIMES

Change is inevitable, a reality – Heraclitus [Heracláitus] of Ephesus said: “One cannot step twice into the same river, for the water into which you first step has flowed on”

Change requires adaptation and tends to cause pain, difficulty, a challenge. Change is more difficult once it is imposed on us [illness, accident, forced displacement].

Change is challenging, but change brings blessings:

ABRAHAM

Gen 12:1 - The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you”

- Going to the Philippines – books, publications, photos...

Lots and lots of painful changes ahead

But with pain, there came blessings... God brought wealth, relationships, direct contact with God, health to death – Gen. 25:7, 8 – “Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years.”

NAOMI

Ruth 1 – She, her husband, her two boys leaving Bethlehem in Judah because of famine. Moving to a different location with diff culture and diff religion. Death of her husband, marriage of her sons with women from the local religion, death of both sons. Then moving back to her land, alone, defeated.

Lots of change and pain.

But with pain, there came blessings... But lots of blessings. Her daughter-in-law converted, faithful to her, married to a prominent man, with a child, Obed, the grandfather of king David and ancestor of Jesus.

MARY

Luke 1: 30-35 - the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[b] the Son of God.

- . Talking about change...
- . Conceive a child without a man... something that had never happened before.
- . Her reputation, the reputation of her future husband.
- . She would always be different. Nobody would be able to understand or experience something like this.

But with pain, there came blessings... The privilege of raising a little boy that was the Son of the Most High who would receive the throne of David, and would reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom would never end.

However, some avoid change...

RICH YOUNG RULER

“Keep the commandments” ¹⁸ “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, ““You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,’^[c] and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’^[d]” ²⁰ “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

He avoided change and missed the blessings!!!

He could have been one of the apostles, and perhaps the author of a Gospel.

THE CHANGES OF EDUCATION

What to do with change in education? Adventist education goes back to the 19th century. Can we apply its principles in the 21st century? I believe the answer is ‘yes’ as long as we hold onto the essential philosophy, do not get bogged down with detail, and are ready to change and adapt.

This may entail some pain...

But with pain, there come blessings...

Ellen G. White mentions the schools of the prophets several dozen times in her writings. “Our schools should become more and more like the schools of the prophets” (FE 489, CT 252, 548, and others). This is said in several occasions.

What were the schools of the prophets? The Bible calls them “the sons of the prophets” or “the company of the prophets” over the first few chapters of 2 Kings. In her book *Education*, White explains that these schools were not for future prophets, but for future teachers, those called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God. That is how Samuel, under the Lord’s guidance, established these schools to “serve as a barrier against the wide-spreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth” (Ed 46). Samuel founded two of these companies, one in Ramah and the other in Kirjath-jearim. Others were added later, like the one near Jericoh where Elijah and Elisha served.

- Founded by Samuel to serve as a barrier against corruption and to set up a system of training for those who should be holding the prophetic office in the near future.
- Established at about the same time as the monarchy in Israel, the prophetic gift would constitute guidance and restraint of the king.
- Several Bible versions refer to these schools or college as ‘the company of prophets,’ referring to an organized society, apparently dwelling together in the same place, and pursuing the same mode of life, bonded by their common purposes and goals.
- Later on, they decayed during Israel’s apostasy and Elijah reestablished them and Elisha took leadership in this kind of educational work.
- Admission criteria: pious, intelligent, and studious.
- Criteria for teachers: well versed in divine truth, plus having a good relationship with God.
- Predominantly religious and spiritual centers of learning.
- They were self-sustained, for students worked to cover their expenses with their labor, and many teachers sustained themselves.

What were the curricular foundations of these schools? And can we say that such foundations are broadly the foundations of Adventist Christian education?

- Firstly, the core subjects included the Law with a thorough study of the Pentateuch parchment rolls as revealed directly by God to Moses. Other subjects were history, music, and poetry. Secondly, each learner, regardless of class and financial ability, needed to practice manual labor with the double purpose of financing their expenses and learning skills that would make them fully autonomous. Thirdly, prayer and devotion were practiced and taught, that is, students learned how to approach their Creator. And fourthly, faith was central across the whole educational program, and this faith was particularly geared toward the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

How to utilize this foundational example to carry out our educational mission?

Firstly, we need to develop curricula with those subject areas of real need for students to adjust and contribute to contemporary society with the Bible at core. Curricula should not only be produced from the pragmatic criterion, but also considering aesthetics (poetry, music...) and axiology (focus on the truly important as inspired by the Bible) in accordance with the Adventist

philosophy of education. Growing areas: Nutrition, technology, mental and physical health promotion, organic agriculture that fit the principles of our church.

Secondly, students are to become skillful in practical and manual skills relevant to current settings, like planting organically, using electronic devices to preach Christ, acquiring contemporary life skills, like making a good use of digital technology and devices, or becoming an everyday media critic. This is both a learning experience and a way to support oneself while in formal education.

Thirdly, a deep and meaningful relationship with God is to be the center of our educational programs. This may need to go beyond the traditional didactic approach to present devotionals and spiritual experiences using wholly participatory methodology to guide young people into a better relationship with God.

Fourthly, faith must be central across the whole educational program, striving to utilize means to integrate faith into all teaching and learning experiences and making God's principles foundational to any educational effort. In sum, we need to be in constant alert to preserve our ideals and philosophy but doing it meaningfully.

Lastly, we need to go to Jesus, and be inspired in his life and teachings. Jesus, the greatest teacher, the most effective master, portrays great guidelines:

- The use of examples, illustration, parables...
- Reference to the natural world that is familiar to the learner.
- Teaching adapted to the needs of people of all ages, classes, and national origin.
- Clear, distinct, free from confusion instruction.
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- With love and with authority.

Conclusion: Changing and adapting may bring some pain, but with pain, there come blessings...