

# Growing Amidst the Challenges

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# Nurturing spirituality in the classroom

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# My story

- ▶ An adventure into the ever-expanding experience of God's love.
- ▶ This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us – an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!
- ▶ Romans 8:15-17 Message



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In the beginning...Love...



# Important principles

- ▶ When you are growing spiritually you will inspire your students to grow spiritually, too.
- ▶ Help students to develop a strong experience of God's love for themselves, rather than having a fear-based faith.
- ▶ Inspire students to be kind, and to be a blessing to others through life.
- ▶ Reflect on what went well as you nurture students' spirituality, and consider what you might do differently next time.



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# Students' faith development

- ▶ Each student is at a different stage in their spiritual journey.
- ▶ Each student has different worship styles, worship preferences, family experiences of spirituality and cultural ideas of spirituality.
- ▶ Encourage students' growth towards a mature faith that will sustain them through the storms of life.
- ▶ Help students to develop a personal, loving and trusting relationship with God.
- ▶ Help students to explore their spiritual gifts and use them to bless others.



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Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matt. 22:37-40 NIV



# Greatest Commandment

## Heart

loving relationships  
caring, emotions

## Soul

spiritual relationship  
faith, prayer,  
forgiveness, salvation

## Mind

wondering, knowing,  
curiosity, reflecting,  
creativity

## Strength

active response –  
making, doing,  
serving others

## Loving others

because God loves  
them - kindness

## Loving ourselves

because God loves  
us – focusing on His  
love for us





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# Heart - relationships



# He loved us first

God demonstrates His own love for  
us in this: while we were still sinners,  
Christ died for us. Romans 5:8  
We love because He first loved us.  
1 John 4:19





Photo by Karen

# We love because God loves us

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God...No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:7, 12 NIV





Photo by Karen

## What about you?

Which aspects of God's love have you experienced?

What effect did they have on your relationship with Him and others?



# Help your students to experience God's love:

- ▶ Psalm 23
- ▶ Psalm 103
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 13
- ▶ Eph 3:14-21
- ▶ 1 John 4





# Love/connection

Comfort  
Acceptance  
Kindness/Affection  
Appreciation  
Focused attention  
Respect  
Encouragement  
Security  
Being valued  
Support





## Love/connected

Comfort  
Acceptance  
Affection  
Appreciation  
Focused attention  
Respect  
Encouragement  
Security  
Being valued  
Support

## Lonely/disconnected

Being hurt or judged  
Rejection  
Abuse  
Criticism  
Being ignored  
Shame  
Discouragement  
Fear  
Being put down  
Abandonment



Photos by Karen



Everything we do in a relationship,  
with God or others,  
Will either weaken it or strengthen it.



# Sitting in God's lap

- ▶ Invite students to use their imagination to experience God's love for them.
- ▶ Imagine they are sitting on God's lap.
- ▶ What questions would they like to ask God?
- ▶ What would God say to them to express how much He loves them?
- ▶ If sitting on lap is too intimate or 'babyish' – imagine God is going for a walk with them, or sitting with them at their favorite café, 'hanging out' with them.







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# Soul - Spiritual activities



# Looking for God

- ▶ Invite your students to look for God and His love at work in their life.
- ▶ Regularly ask the question: “Where did you see God today?” Share where you saw God, in simple places, to encourage and inspire them.
- ▶ This will help you and your students to become more aware of God’s presence, and the way in which He works.
- ▶ They could journal their experience in 1-3 sentences each day.
- ▶ Or you could gather ideas on a bulletin board.



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# Acknowledging the Presence of God

- ▶ Pause at regular intervals and encourage your students to focus on God's continual presence with them.
- ▶ They can silently do one of the following things, or something similar:
  - ▶ Focus on His love.
  - ▶ Thank Him for His continual presence.
  - ▶ Ask Him for wisdom and help.
  - ▶ Ask Him how to collaborate with Him in loving others.



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# Chatting with God

- ▶ The best way our students can talk to God is to imagine they are talking to the best parent or friend that they could ever imagine!
- ▶ They can use their natural and familiar language to talk about what happened, their feelings, fears and worries, and to ask Him for help.
- ▶ They can press “pause” in a challenging situation and tell God their needs in a couple of sentences.
- ▶ God hears our best prayers whatever we say, because He hears the thoughts and feelings that we don’t have words for yet.





# Listening for God

- ▶ Encourage students to listen for God's voice and learn to recognize it. Teach them how to test its validity – Bible, wisdom, etc.
- ▶ God may communicate with us by putting a picture in our mind, giving us a new idea, speaking to us through a Bible verse, or through another person etc.
- ▶ Help students to spot those moments in their lives and learn how to listen for God's voice.



# Making sense of life and faith

- ▶ Help your students to see that “The Big Picture of Everything” is that God is love, and His love is the purest and most perfect love in the universe.
- ▶ This “Big Picture of Love” is even bigger than the Great Controversy and it helps us to make sense of complex things in a better way.
- ▶ God is looking for the best possible ways to show us His love, every single moment of every single day.

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# Correcting distortions

- ▶ **Distant Father** – busy working in a distant place and not connected with you.
- ▶ **Disappointed teacher** – always writing on your report – “Could do better”
- ▶ **Father Christmas** – a big, jolly person who gives you what you ask for...but only if you're good.
- ▶ **Policeman on the corner** – looking out for everything you might do wrong
- ▶ **Grumpy old man** – angry, irritable and easily offended



# Adjusting the lens

- ▶ Reflect and check whether you, and/or your students, might have any misconceptions and distorted ideas about God.
- ▶ Look for anything that might prevent you or them from having a clearer picture of a totally loving and gracious God.
- ▶ Develop a healthy understanding of who God is, and His loving relationship with you and your students.



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# When God's Spirit is at work:

But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard – things like

- ▶ affection for others,
- ▶ exuberance about life,
- ▶ serenity.
- ▶ We develop a willingness to stick with things,
- ▶ a sense of compassion in the heart,
- ▶ and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.
- ▶ We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments,
- ▶ not needing to force our way in life,
- ▶ able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Gal 5:22-23 Message



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# Checking things out

- ▶ If you're not sure whether something you are hearing or thinking is inspired...
- ▶ Ask God for wisdom - He's happy to share it! James 1:5
- ▶ Check out the result of the teaching, or the relationship. The fruit of God's Spirit is always love, and good things...
- ▶ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
- ▶ Galatians 5:22-23 NIV



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# Make Sabbath a delight

- ▶ Help students and their families to be intentional about having delightful Sabbaths.
- ▶ Invite them to reflect on the effect of their Sabbath routine on their life and relationships.
- ▶ Taking time to have a sabbath rest each week is good for everyone, not just Adventists!
- ▶ Develop simple traditions that bring joy – candles, food, music, time together.
- ▶ Make Sabbath a day when you bless others together.



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# Spiritual pathways

- ▶ Naturalists – Loving God outdoors
- ▶ Sensates – Loving God with the senses
- ▶ Traditionalists – Loving God with ritual and symbols
- ▶ Ascetics – Loving God in solitude and simplicity
- ▶ Activists – Loving God through confrontation
- ▶ Caregivers – Loving God by loving others
- ▶ Enthusiasts – Loving God through celebration
- ▶ Contemplatives – Loving God through adoration
- ▶ Intellectuals – Loving God through learning
- ▶ Gary Thomas – Spiritual Pathways



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# What's the story of your journey with God? Psalm 23

- ▶ How has God provided for you in different and unexpected ways?
- ▶ How has He refreshed you when you were tired and 'thirsty'?
- ▶ How has He encouraged you when you felt like you couldn't take another step/
- ▶ How has He lovingly accepted you and forgiven you when you messed up?
- ▶ How has He guided you in your life?
- ▶ How has He comforted you and helped you through a sad or dark time in your life?
- ▶ How has He made something broken beautiful again?
- ▶ How has He blessed you abundantly?





# Stages on the journey of faith (George Barna)

Unaware of  
sin

Indifferent  
to sin

Worried  
about sin

Forgiven for  
sin

Forgiven  
and active

Holy  
Discontent

Broken

Surrender  
and  
Submission

Profound  
love of God

Profound  
love of  
others



# Creative prayer or reflection space

- ▶ Create a prayer/reflection space in the school or classroom.
- ▶ Make it a beautiful place to be.
- ▶ Set up some simple creative prayers in the space.
- ▶ These ideas can help students to expand their repertoire of prayers.
- ▶ Read a variety of prayers to the students to help them develop different ways to talk to God.
- ▶ Encourage them to write out their own prayers to God, or their own paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer and Psalms.



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on Unsplash





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Mind – learning, reflecting, creativity





Photo by Greg Rakozy on Unsplash

What filled you with wonder this week?  
Create a wonder wall in your school





Photo by Towfiq Barbhuiya on Unsplash

# Gratitude

List thirty things you are thankful for



# Alphabet prayer

- ▶ Create an alphabet prayer of praise.
- ▶ Find at least one aspect of God's character you want to praise Him for beginning with each letter of the alphabet.
- ▶ By the time you get to Z – it's hard not to be happy!
- ▶ Write down the characteristics of God and explore them in the Bible.







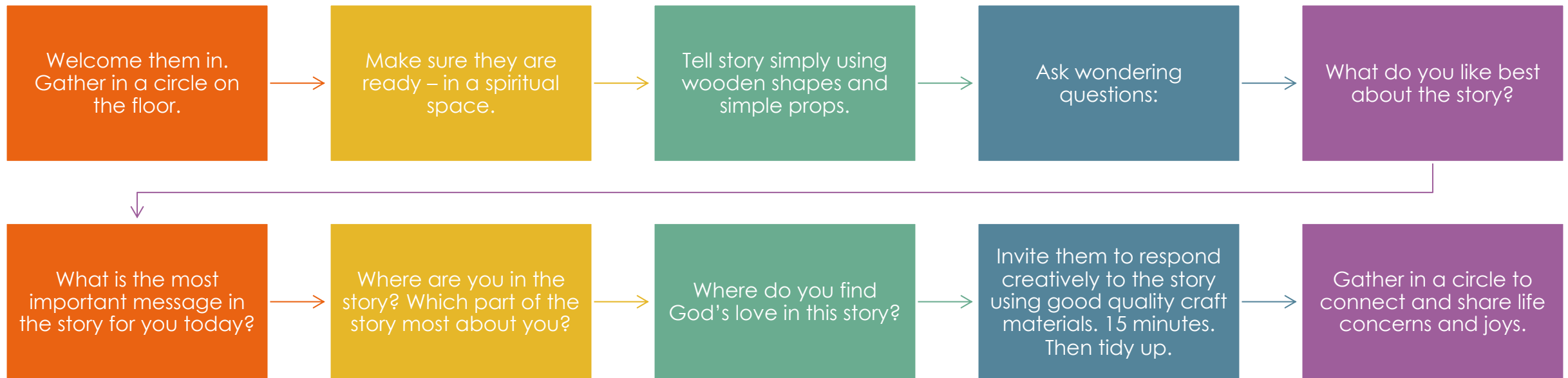
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# Creativity and Faith

Respond to what you are discovering about  
God by creating something



# Godly Play Approach





# Big questions

- ▶ Students often have big questions about God.
- ▶ Welcome them openly, don't be frightened by them.
- ▶ Well-managed doubts can help us grow
- ▶ We don't have to know all the answers, but we can journey together in the discovery.
- ▶ Start from the basis that God is love – that's a given. Now, how do we make sense of this...?
- ▶ Find a spiritual mentor or safe place to explore and discuss questions.







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# Unravelling questions about anything

## What do I think?

- ▶ Why is this question important to me now? What is the context?

## What do I already know ?

- ▶ List what you know about the topic.

## What do I *not* know yet?

- ▶ Research to find out more and discuss your findings with others.

## What does this topic look like for me and others?

- ▶ How will I live out what I learn so that it is a blessing for me and others?





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Strength – actively blessing others



# Spiritual Gifts

- ▶ Help students to discover their spiritual gifts. They are amazing gifts from God for us to enjoy using to bless others!
- ▶ Praying for others, healing, craft skills, hospitality, faith, discernment, compassion, giving, administration, leadership, helping others, serving, knowledge, wisdom, encouragement, teaching, pastoring, evangelism, prophecy, apostleship, communication, and others...



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# Peter's map for spiritual growth

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8



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# Character strengths by category

From [www.letitriipple.org](http://www.letitriipple.org)

## Wisdom

Creativity, Curiosity,  
Love of learning,  
Perspective

## Courage

Bravery,  
Perseverance,  
Honesty, Enthusiasm

## Humanity

Love,  
Kindness,  
Social intelligence

## Justice

Social responsibility,  
Teamwork, Fairness,  
Leadership

## Temperance

Forgiveness,  
Humility, Prudence,  
Self-control

## Transcendence

Appreciating  
beauty, Gratitude,  
Optimism, Humour,  
Spirituality



# Spiritual Intelligence (Kris Vallotton)

You are full of hope

The impossible  
seems reasonable

You live in peace  
and don't worry –  
you have a positive  
outlook

You like yourself and  
rejoice in your  
weakness, knowing  
that where you are  
weak, God is strong.

You are quick to  
forgive, and you  
freely give others  
grace and mercy

You are confident  
and thankful

You believe in  
others and give  
them the benefit of  
the doubt



# Be a channel of God's love to others

- ▶ We are here to be a blessing to others.
- ▶ When we bless others, we are blessed.
- ▶ Leave each person a little more blessed than when you met them.
- ▶ Say only what helps – each word a gift. Ephesians 4:29.
- ▶ In the parable of the sheep and the goats – the sheep are those who pass on the love of God in kindness to others.



Photo by Karen



# The big questions

- ▶ How are my students' pictures of God's love being expanded?
- ▶ How are they growing closer to God and loving Him more?
- ▶ What is nurturing my faith? What is getting in the way?
- ▶ How am I being a blessing to others especially my students?
- ▶ What will I do this week to grow my relationships with God and others?

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# My Prayer

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:15-21

