t may seem curious that we are coupling the words education and spirituality in this special issue. There seems to be a growing movement toward embracing the term spirituality, which has more personal and psychological connotations, rather than the term religion, which connotes the institutional.

But how does this relate to the goals of Seventh-day Adventist education and its hallmark, the integration of faith and learning? If our schools are to be distinct and “value added,” then it is essential that there be something that sets them apart from all of the others. What is this singular rationale for the existence of our system of education? Presumably it is to share with the next generation the faith we live by and the relationship we have with God, which includes our religious beliefs as defined by the church.

However, genuine spirituality requires more than just teaching doctrine by inserting it into the various disciplines and asking children to “behave in a Christian way.” To effectively teach and model spirituality, we must demonstrate a spiritual lifestyle and provide our students with experiences that enhance their spiritual growth—and that lead to a life of personal joy and fulfillment, as well as a commitment to serve God and humanity.

A case in point is the children of many people reading this guest editorial, who attended Adventist schools K-12 or even K-20, but after growing up, came to view the church and its beliefs in very different ways as adults. Many of them now shun anything labeled religious or spiritual, even though they attended Adventist schools during a period when the teachers sought to integrate faith and learning in their classrooms.

These young adults say that church is irrelevant and offers nothing that is meaningful to them. If our schools had helped them to develop a personal connection, a relationship with the spiritual, a depth of meaning that would allow them to feel the need, the love, and a sense of hope for their lives, then perhaps the body of Christ would not continue to experience the loss of young people who choose not to stay connected. I’m not blaming our schools for this problem; it seems to be a chronic part of how young people see our faith lived out at home and church as well.

This is not an easy discourse because the definitional and practical edges are blurry. What is spirituality? How do people acquire an interest in spiritual things and live a spiritual life? The description of spirituality seen in most of the literature reflects values and practices many Adventists view as dangerous, even mystical. It is difficult to separate religiosity and spirituality, although research is searching for common denominators between the two. Both spirituality and religion seek the sacred, and both participate in creating the doctrine, beliefs, and rituals that bind believers to religious organizations and to one another. It would seem that one cannot exist without the other. However, it also seems that in many cases, the emphasis has been on ensuring young people’s indoctrination into the church’s doctrines and rules, which has often come at the expense of emphasis on helping them to develop a vibrant relationship with God.

It is the hope and prayer of the coordinator, authors, and Editor that this issue will renew the vigor of teaching to ensure the distinctiveness of our schools, create in our students the desire for a personal relationship with God, and help teachers to make spirituality attractive and meaningful for their students.

One of the best ways for this to happen is through observational learning. Albert Bandura’s research shows that we learn to do what we see and experience. The teacher must model and teach how to have a spiritual relationship with God. Spiritual development is a process of transcending to something greater than ourselves. It propels us to search for connectedness with God, purpose in life, and meaning through service. Romans 8:6 (last part) states that to be spiritually minded is life and peace. What a gift to share with our students—to help them embrace Jesus as their Friend and Savior, and to seek His guidance in choosing the best paths throughout their lives.

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After a busy day of absorbing lectures and studying in the library, I dropped my things at the front door of our home and followed my nose directly to the kitchen. There I greeted my wife, Bernie, who was busy preparing supper for the family. A few moments later, we heard our 3-year-old exclaim excitedly from the living room, “Look! Look at me!” Not knowing what to expect, Bernie and I quickly poked our heads into the living room. There we saw our young son shuffling across the carpeted floor, wearing my pontoon-like shoes overtop his tiny ones and dragging my textbook-laden Samsonite briefcase along beside him. When he saw us, he broke into a broad, toothy grin and proudly declared, “Look, I’m Daddy! I’m Daddy!”

At that moment, I was struck, in a simple and yet profound way, by the seriousness of the responsibility Bernie and I had assumed when we chose to have children. We had created three little sensory sponges that were hard-wired to imitate human beings who served as role models in their young lives. And whether or not we fully realized it at that time, during their formative years, we, along with their teachers, were their most influential role models.

By Beholding We Are Transformed

Social learning theory—alternately termed observational learning, vicarious learning, or modeling—is historically associated with Albert Bandura and continues to be a very influential theory of learning and development. Bandura’s contribution to this theory is only a half century old, but the principles of the theory are ancient. Nearly 2,000 years earlier, Paul confirmed, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that by beholding the glory of God—that is, His character—we become transformed into His image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit has much to do with this transformation. Still, it seems to me that the principle that our observation of others results in our being transformed, at least in part, into their...
image is a divinely ordained mechanism of human development. Children learn “by internalizing the activities, habits, vocabulary and ideas of the members of the community in which they grow up.” Their attitudes and beliefs are also formed through this modeling process. How important it is then, that as adults with an interest in the growth and development of young people, we carefully consider and monitor the “community” in which our young people participate. Obviously, a critical component of every child’s “community” is the school he or she attends and, within the walls of that school, the teachers who interact on a daily basis with students.

The Christian Teacher’s Solemn Responsibility

James wrote in his letter to the early church, “My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1, NCV). While the context of this passage was religious teachers in the fledgling Christian Church, the principle applies equally well, I believe, to educators at all levels in Adventist schools today. We need to reflect seriously on our responsibility as teachers because our students are seeking out role models, consciously or subconsciously, to assist them in defining who they are and who they will become. It is because of the potential influence that teachers have over their students that James declares we will be judged more strictly. Long-time Adventist educator George Akers reminds us not to “ever underestimate the impact of a teacher! These youngsters are hero-worshippers by nature, and the influence of godly teachers on their emerging characters is incalculable.” And while Akers’ use of the term youngsters may imply application to lower levels of education only, I believe that college-age young people continue to look for positive adult role models to guide them on their journey to becoming mature Christians. Although I had assumed this for a long time, it became clearly evident to me recently, coincidentally enough, during the writing of this article.

A college student sat down beside me after one of our mid-week community worship services and inquired if he might ask me a personal question. Although I had no idea where this conversation was heading, I replied, “Sure, go ahead!” “How old are you?” he inquired. When I told him, he explained that he was encouraged to see that it was possible for someone, such as me, to fall in love with Jesus and to stay in love with Him over the years (at least to the ripe old age of 59)! I quickly explained that my “marriage” to Jesus was not perfect, and that I was not exempt from the spiritual warfare raging around me—however, I was committed to building my relationship with Christ on a daily basis.

I don’t know this young man very well—I’ve never had him in any of my classes at the university —so I don’t know what he had seen or heard to make him say what he did. But apparently he had been watching and listening to whatever I was modeling on campus day after day, which had had an impact on him.

Likely, there are a few teachers in Adventist schools who have no desire to be anyone’s role model or to be viewed as an example of what a life committed to Christ might look like. They simply want to teach their subject matter and keep their personal lives to themselves. But for any teacher, and especially a Christian teacher, to say, “I have no interest in being a role model for my students and, furthermore, I refuse to assume this responsibility” would be like my saying, after my children were born, “I don’t want to be a father, and I certainly don’t want to assume the responsibility of being a parent.” It’s too late at that point! And for teachers at an Adventist school, it is too late the moment they step into the classroom.

Fortunately, most Adventist teachers recognize as central to their calling the impact that they can have on their students’ personal lives. In fact, when I ask freshman education students their reasons for choosing teaching as a career path, the majority of them cite the desire to positively influence the lives of young people for Christ. When teachers keep this lofty goal in mind, they fulfill the expectations that most parents, the church, and God place upon them—as summarized in the following General Conference policy statement: “The teacher holds a central place of importance. Ideally, the teacher should be both a committed Adventist Christian and an exemplary role model of the Christian graces and professional competencies.”

The Teacher as Role Model

Serving as a role model for students of all ages is a profoundly important part of our vocation. It is not merely a recommended “add on” that we might accept if we are so inclined. Instead, it is a fundamental and central component of teaching.

Years after studying with a teacher
who had an important impact on our lives, most of us have forgotten most of his or her subject matter, but we remember the person. Some 25 years after enrolling in her classes, I remember little of the specifics in her graduate lectures, but I do remember Ms. Henderson (not her real name). I recall her pleasant smile and friendly, welcoming ways. I remember how she taught without pretense; how she valued all students as individuals and praised their contributions to the class. I remember wanting to teach like her; to be like her. And most of all, I remember her humble declaration that one day she would like to sit as a student in one of my classes.

Ever since then, from time to time, on days when I think a lecture I’ve presented has gone particularly well—and on those days when I know it has gone horribly wrong—I have asked myself, “I wonder what Ms. Henderson would have thought if she’d attended my classroom today?” A quarter of a century later, she continues to help mold me as a Christian teacher.

**Held to a Higher Standard**

As teachers, we share in the responsibility of guiding human beings for good or for evil by our actions, our words, and our very looks. This is why “we who teach will be judged more strictly.” People in positions of power over others are held to a higher standard—and rightly so. Whether or not I choose the responsibility, when I stand in front of my class in a church school, I stand in the place of Jesus. And thus the consequences of my teaching extend far beyond whether or not Johnny learns to read or Suzie understands how to solve differential equations, or how to solve differential equations, or do we prepare ourselves for undertaking this magnitude?

“Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together.”

Parker J. Palmer points out this vital truth: “we teach who we are. Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together.” In light of this, each of us who teach should reflect seriously upon who we are. What is the condition of our soul? Is there harmony between what we’re saying and what we’re teaching— between what we want our students to become and who we really are?

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian believers, referred to his conduct and that of his companions during an earlier visit to the church. “We did this . . . in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate” (2 Thessalonians 3:9, NIV). Taken out of context, this statement could easily appear arrogant and pompous. However, Paul simply wished to make it very clear to his readers that there was no contradiction between his teaching and his actions.

Christian teachers are called upon to meet this same standard; to ensure there is congruence between what we teach our students—what we want them to become—and what we model for them. Only when we reveal in our own characters the principles that we seek to teach will we be able to have a permanent influence for good on our students.

The success that Jesus enjoyed as a teacher with His class of 12 students reflects this principle. “The most complete illustration of Christ’s methods as a teacher is found in His training of the first disciples. . . . To them, above all others, He gave the advantage of His own companionship. Through personal association He impressed Himself upon these chosen colaborers.” As a signet ring impresses its seal upon the warm wax, so the Savior impressed His character upon the disciples. Or in Palmer’s words, He projected His soul upon them. While they ate together or walked along the seashore; as they sat on the mountainside reflecting upon eternal truth or went about providing for a needy family; whether worshipping in a synagogue or fellowshipping at a wedding feast, Jesus modeled for His disciples, His students, who He was in His innermost soul and who He wanted them to become.

**The Teacher’s Mandate**

As Christian teachers today, our mandate is similar, to impress the person of Christ upon our students. We may do this in the classroom by seeking ways to effectively integrate our faith into the academic content of our lessons. However, opportunities may just as easily present themselves in the lunchroom or playground, on field
By Beholding, We Are Changed

Do you desire to reflect Christ in your character, even as John and his fellow disciples did? Do you wish to impress Jesus upon the young people you teach? How can you do this? Behold the Savior, and you will be changed. Two factors are important: the amount of time we spend beholding and the quality of that time. Of John it is said he beheld the Savior until the change took place. We aren’t told how long it took, but John continued to behold Jesus until the transformation occurred. If we sense that our characters have not been completely changed, perhaps we haven’t allowed sufficient time to observe His lovely character.

Ellen White suggests “it would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life.” What do you suppose would happen if we beheld the Savior for a thoughtful hour each day, allowing Him to model His perfect character to us? Based on research by Bandura or other social learning theorists and the testimony of Scripture, I believe we would begin to reflect the character of our Master. Then, as we model the beauty of Christ to our students, they too will be transformed. “This is the secret of power over your pupils. Reflect Him.”


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As Christian teachers, we invariably want more for our students than solid scores on national exams and success in earthly careers. Despite our busy schedules—overflowing with the routine tasks of grading papers, classroom management, and lesson preparations—we work with the underlying hope that students’ experiences in our classrooms will make a difference in the people they become. We want to help our students, whether they are 5 or 25 years of age, to develop their gifts and realize their potential as human beings made in the image of God. We are proud when we hear that former students have become occupationally accomplished and have achieved positions of respect in their disciplines, and even more gratified when we see evidence that they are happy, healthy, integrated members of their faith community. Teachers and parents alike want the education students receive to prepare them for both a joyful life of service during their years on this planet and the unknown wonders that stretch into eternity.

While our goals are clear, the task of spiritual development can seem mystifying. We know that we are co-workers with God on this project, dependent upon both the working of the Holy Spirit and our students’ receptivity, yet we are not always certain about our own contributions to the process. We start the day with prayer, write Bible texts on the whiteboard, incorporate intentional religious instruction, read character-building stories, insist on kind behavior in the classroom—asking students to think about what Jesus would do in various situations—yet the questions still remain. We wonder: Am I truly educating for eternity? Are these the things that have the most impact? How can I cooperate most fully with God’s project of

**BY GINGER HANKS HARWOOD and BEVERLY BEEM**
redemption for these students? How can I assist them in developing their spiritual as well as academic aptitudes?

While spiritual development is many-faceted, we can feel assured that we have the power and tools to effect spiritual growth. One particularly significant aspect of this venture is helping students to cultivate a spiritual voice, to develop the confidence and ability to articulate (verbally and/or in writing) their own religious and spiritual experiences. This is a dimension of spiritual growth that fits well into strategies and lesson plans that are already being used in the classroom and one that every teacher can successfully cultivate. The great news is that successful strategies for student spiritual development do not require that teachers sit through long in-service training sessions or design elaborate new lesson plans. Much of what will stimulate and establish spiritual voice is already part of good teaching practice.

Whenever teachers invite students to make prayer requests, share statements of gratitude, choose a favorite hymn, or read a favorite Bible text, they are helping students develop a spiritual voice. These exercises prepare students to speak openly about their personal spiritual experiences and help them become familiar with the forms the church community uses to express faith.

An open and accepting atmosphere in the classroom creates a space where spiritual beginners can learn to recognize their personal responses to God and the universe. A group acknowledgment of the spiritual dimension, along with the encouragement to own and articulate personal religious experience, raises students’ spiritual awareness and contributes to the development of mature faith. Over time, as such practices are repeated in the classroom, students become more comfortable describing the meaning and role that religion plays in their lives. They also learn how to apply what they have learned in order to encourage others.

As an added bonus, the spiritually active classroom helps create a community that values the individual voices within it, including those young or inexperienced voices seeking to find their places as involved, contributing members of the church. Through these concrete, everyday activities, spiritual voices are identified and trained, the “cloud of witnesses” expands, and the goals of Christian education are realized.

Adventist Heritage and the Development of Spiritual Voice

When teachers encourage their students to develop a public spiritual voice, they are continuing an established Adventist religious tradition. The pioneers of the early Advent movement expected individuals to speak about their religious struggles, victories, and beliefs. The *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* published frequent appeals to readers to write “spirited and interesting articles,” and stressed the importance of having all believers speak to the community as an act of discipleship. The magazine’s solicitations to write helped shape a membership that was convinced of the value of the individual voice, a group of people who were empowered to describe their personal spiritual experiences and testify publicly to their faith. The resulting articles and letters offer a lively picture of the faith and experience of these pioneers. Their descriptions provide us with raw material that we can use to gain insight into early Adventist spirituality and the language that Seventh-day Adventists continue to use when speaking about their faith.

For the early believers, the *Review* became a substitute spiritual family, replacing the congregations the “scattered flock” had left behind. By providing a forum for diverse and distant
voices, this journal helped to create the expectation that all believers would participate in the new community of hope. Because they were Christ's disciples, believers were called to share their faith and their experiences to encourage others along the way. This expectation helped to create a spiritual ethos that valued the voice of every disciple.

Even women, who were largely excluded from the public sphere, were encouraged, even expected, to overcome the limitations of silence imposed on them by society and their previous religious training. This was not always easy. Sister A. C. Mackey referred to both the opportunity to enter into the public discourse and the responsibility as a disciple to do so when she wrote: “I have for a long time felt it duty to write to you through the Review, but I have excused myself because my talent is so small. But will God excuse the one that has but one talent sooner than the one that has ten? I think not.”

The setting may be different today, but the task of developing a community of believers that can testify to their faith is similar. While this is no easy task, an examination of early Adventist spiritual life and the language the believers used to describe it can inform our practices today. Adventist pioneers understood the importance of believers’ speaking publicly of their experience—both for their own spiritual growth and for the encouragement of others.

The 19th-century Review and Herald and church hymnals provide accounts of the believers’ spiritual experiences through open letters, articles, poetry, and hymns. Through these, the men and women of the Advent movement found their voice and developed the language that Adventists continue to use when describing their commitment to their community and their relationship with God. This is an important part of the spiritual heritage bequeathed by the pioneers to the current generation.

In this documental heritage, teachers can find resources to connect students with the imagery and themes characteristic of Christian spirituality in general and Adventist spirituality in particular. Of the several themes that can be derived from these sources, the prominent motif of “the journey” may be used successfully to help students bridge the gap with the past and
Family Album: Pictures of Pilgrims on the Road

By bringing together the varied voices of the early Adventist community, the 19th-century Review serves as the Adventist family album, preserving the portraits of those who journeyed before us. James White established the journal in 1850 to provide a public voice for those believers who, despite the Great Disappointment in 1844, continued to believe that God was behind the Second Advent movement and had moved forward in their faith journey to embrace the seventh-day Sabbath. This group was both scattered and small, consisting of individuals who had sacrificed much, including membership in their various church communities. While recognizing their error in setting a date for Christ’s return, these disappointed ones maintained their faith in the soon coming of Christ and their longing to draw near to God. Even though the proposed date for Christ’s return had passed, they continued on the pilgrim road, seeking to better understand God and to achieve a closer union with Him.

The Review soon became a central part of the early Adventist experience. Its letters to the editor frequently allude to the role it played in the believers’ spiritual lives, giving us glimpses of Adventist life during the embryonic stages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This weekly journal brought scriptural exegesis, testimonies of faith, and news about the progress of the work to each believer’s home. Readers personified it as an itinerant teacher or a welcome visitor, and “servants who are giving meat to those who are hungry and thirsty, and to those who have fed on husks long enough.”

Throughout the paper, one finds comments that testify to the believers’ breaks with the larger society, the loneliness of their situation, as well as their hunger for truth and a deeper understanding of the will of God. Whichever metaphors or biblical allusions the writers used in relating their experiences, they shared an understanding—either articulated or assumed—that they were journeying to Zion, the kingdom of God.

Thus, readers saw the Review, as well as all other things in life, as integrally related to that journey: what they wanted, needed, and prized was whatever would aid them in their progress along the road to God’s kingdom. The Review was a help indeed, creating what amounted to a virtual classroom that overcame the constraints of distance and fostered spiritual conversation. This journal provided theological discussions with a sophisticated rationale to refute objections that “outsiders” posed to Adventist beliefs, but just as importantly for the pilgrims, it challenged and assisted its readers in their spiritual walk.

The Journey and Pilgrimage Motif in Literature

Just as the journey is an ancient and classic theme in literature in general, pilgrimage is a major motif in the literature of spirituality. Essentially, a pilgrimage is a journey with a specific purpose: to move toward God. A pilgrimage requires a destination of great significance, a place where God and humanity can meet, where people go to encounter God—whether it is Mt. Sinai, Jerusalem, or their bedside. Union or unimpeded communion with God stands as the greatest goal of the spiritual quest. Because the pilgrimage is a specific type of journey narrative, pilgrimage accounts share the major features common to the genre. In short, in a journey narrative, the hero leaves the safety of the familiar and ventures into the larger world to gain what cannot be found at home. The journey may be long and difficult, with unforeseen obstacles blocking progress or frustrating his or her success. It poses risks and requires separation from comforts and friends. The pilgrimage requires sacrifice and clarity, for the traveler can carry only the bare essentials. Preparation requires careful focus and discernment in order to outfit oneself with travel necessities and discard whatever would impede the journey. It also requires the pilgrim to collect and organize resources, as trips are expensive, and unforeseen expenditures must be anticipated.

On the journey, new acquaintances are made, some of whom prove to be boon companions, while others are sources of danger or betrayal. Along the way, the pilgrim gains knowledge, but his or her character is sure to be tested in negotiating the trials and temptations of the road.

As the pilgrimage is separated from other travel narratives by the identified intention to gain spiritual ground, pilgrims can be distinguished from people who travel as tourists. Tourists go to see the sights. They come home with stories to tell and souvenirs to put on their shelves. Sometimes tourists learn much, and they may report enthusiastically that the trip was worth the effort. Some even come to prefer the anonymity
of the traveler or the excitement of the unknown to the predictable patterns of stable community life. Most importantly, whatever benefits the tourist expects, the intention is to return home and resume his or her former life without any major disruption or change in character or lifestyle.

Pilgrims may share delight in the changed scenery or the new experiences and people they encounter on the journey, just as tourists do, but they are far more than sightseers. They differ radically in their expectations for the outcome of the journey: They go to be changed. They travel lightly with the full intention of jettisoning any habit or possession that would keep them from the goal of fellowship with God. They, too, pick up souvenirs, but instead of reminders of places they have been or things they have seen, pilgrims collect symbols of internal changes. These travelers see themselves as citizens of another realm who are moving outside and beyond the accepted boundaries of this world. They acknowledge a higher authority that replaces old authorities and rules. They find community with other travelers who seek the same destination and are guided by the same light. They have no intention of returning to their starting point to resume their former lives.

The pilgrimages depicted in the Bible include the stories of Abraham and Sarah’s journey from Ur to Canaan, the Exodus from Egypt to Canaan, Jesus to the cross, and the corporate journey of humanity from Eden to the New Jerusalem. In Christian literature, John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, an enduring spiritual classic, describes the journey of one named Christian from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. It is difficult to overstate the influence of *Pilgrim’s Progress*—it is one of the most widely read Protestant books on spirituality, and has long been considered a fundamental primer on the nature of the Christian experience. Bunyan’s metaphors and analogies have been picked up and utilized by incalculable writers, preachers, and teachers.

The first vision of Ellen Harmon (later White) shares the same pilgrimage motif; she saw the Advent believers traveling toward the heavenly city. Her representation of Adventists as travelers on a “straight and narrow path” that is “far above the dark world” depicted them on a journey led by Jesus. Her vision drew on the believers’ self-understanding: Adventists were a pilgrim people journeying in uncharted territory who depended on the light of God’s truth to guide their steps.

**Pilgrims and Strangers: The Journey Motif in Early Adventist Thought and Writing**

The literature of the early Adventist Church abounds with mini-narratives that fit into the Christian tradition of spiritual autobiography. The pages of the *Review and Herald* presented a steady stream of individual faith declarations filled with allusions and imagery comparing the writers’ experiences with those of the biblical pilgrims. The journey metaphor provided a lens through which the early Adventists could view their experience. Like Abraham and Sarah, or the New Testament disciples, they would leave behind much that was dear and familiar in order to follow God. They could expect disappointments, suffering, and setbacks along the way. But the God who called was the God who blessed and enabled the willing to make the trip to the land He had promised to them.
Believers shared portions of their journey in the Review and encouraged others to be faithful in their own walks. Corporately, they developed a language that enabled them to talk about their experiences “on the road” and created a nurturing spiritual space. When they found themselves on unexpected terrain, during “the waiting time,” the sojourners incorporated the delay and their personal grief responses to it into a comprehensible part of the ongoing spiritual journey. Similarly, they identified the forced separation from the affection of family and friends, and even their rejection by other Christians, as necessary losses they would suffer along the way. Using the archetypal language of wandering and home, desert and garden, loneliness and community, light and dark, along with frequent biblical allusions, they described life as a pilgrim people. They testified to the work of God in their lives and publicly committed themselves to continuing the journey. They encouraged others on the road as they sacrificed cultural approval for the more precious goal of “drawing near to God.”

Today’s Adventist hymnal retains some of the songs of those early believers. Even a cursory perusal of these hymns yields ready evidence of their spiritual experience. Of the 17 hymns included in the “Early Advent” section of the hymnal, 12 contain some aspect of the pilgrimage motif. Mary S. G. Dana captured the urgency of the journey in her refrain, “I’m a pilgrim, and I’m a stranger, / I can’t tarry, I can’t tarry but a night” (No. 444). The hymns of Annie Smith, whose poetry appeared frequently in the early Review, caught the eagerness of the pilgrim and the longing for home that transcend the weariness and hardship of the road. “How far from home?” the wanderer asks,
and receives the watchman’s assurance that “The long, dark night is almost gone / The morning soon will break.” Impelled by hope, the travelers watch for the morning star that guides them to “the realms of light, / In everlasting day.” The only response to such encouragement is to “weep no more, but speed thy flight.” Their goal is the land where there will be no more sorrow or crying, but with “joys complete, / Safe in our Father’s home.” The imagery of light contrasts with the night of the earthly journey, the struggle of the Christian’s warfare with the victory won, and the loneliness of the road with the community of the Father’s house (No. 439). In their songs and writings in the Review, Adventists consistently articulated their break with their cultural setting and their identification with the life of the spiritual pilgrim.

Teachers should not underestimate the value of presenting stories depicting pilgrims on their quests when trying to facilitate student spiritual sensitivity and growth. As students study the archetypal journey stories in the Bible, spiritual classics such as Pilgrim’s Progress, and the writings of Ellen White, they will recognize the elements and patterns of the motif. This will enable them to embrace spiritual life as an acceptable arena of human investigation and interest. They will start to identify the common aspects of spiritual life and the ways humans have communicated their subjective, internal processes, insights, and conclusions to others.

Hearing and analyzing the stories that wrestle with spiritual topics written by others can stimulate spiritual growth and students’ desire to consider their own journeys. Further,

### MARKING THE MILES

**Questions on the Pilgrimage Motif**

While developmental level determines the vocabulary used and ways in which a teacher introduces the ideas of pilgrimage and spiritual journey, the following questions can be selected and adapted to give students ways to reflect on their spiritual life and begin to articulate their spiritual goals.

**Thinking of the Journey in Religious or Spiritual Terms:**
- Have you heard a call from God to move from where you have been to somewhere new?
- What parts of the call forward seem difficult or even impossible?
- What people, things, ideas, relationships, and experiences tug on you to stay within the familiar instead of journeying? How do you resist these forces?
- What price may you have to pay for moving forward?
- What obstacles do you place in your path to make it harder to move forward?
- In what ways are you being asked to step out in faith?
- How have you been blessed by following God in the past?
- Have you been disappointed, disillusioned, or hurt when you have tried to move forward in faith in the past?
- What do you imagine that you must leave behind you in order to progress?
- In what ways are you ambivalent about the journey or afraid that it will entail missing something that is important to you?
- Why embark on a pilgrimage that takes an entire lifetime? What’s wrong with staying put?

**Packing Your Bags:**
- What do you find essential to take with you in your journey?
- Are you ready for the undertaking? What do you need yet to acquire?
- What have you chosen to leave behind as extra baggage?
- What might you still need to jettison along the way?

**Traveling Companions:**
- Who are your traveling companions? How do they help you along the road? How do you help them?
- Are your closest friends and family on the road with you? Are they supportive of your journey? If so, what do you say to them about what you are up to with this “road trip”?
these accounts provide the students with written models to use when experimenting with constructing stories about their own spiritual experiences.

Assignments based on these accounts can sharpen awareness of personal spiritual life. The act of writing is in itself a way of coming to know. Just the discipline of attempting to find words to express one’s inner reality brings clarity to the understanding of God’s work in our lives. Similarly, creating a piece of art that represents an experience or conveys a feeling invites the student to stop, reflect on, and relate to specific spiritual events or times. The time that teachers devote to exploring the issues and the seriousness with which they respond to students’ work will encourage students to strengthen their voices and join spiritual conversations in various ways. Quality classroom time spent reflecting on spiritual life can increase students’ confidence about their ability to articulate their experiences and empower them to participate more fully in church life.

**The Spiritual Journey and Telling Our Stories Today**

The stories found in early Adventist literature are now the artifacts of the lived spirituality of another time and place. They serve as models of vibrant spiritual life and reminders of Adventist heritage. Yet as helpful as these accounts are when incorporated into the curriculum, students also need to hear stories from their own time and place. The voices of our pioneers are not substitutes for hearing firsthand accounts of spiritual life and growth from people who occupy the same historical terrain, or for learning to articulate one’s own spirituality. And

- Are there others you wish would join you in your journey?
- If so, how do or would you try to interest them in the trip?
- Does the road seem lonely to you at times, and if so, how do you deal with the loneliness?

**Maps and Guides:**

- How do you find your way? Are there maps or signposts that you use or expect to use along the way?
- Is the path you are taking fairly well mapped out, or are you finding your way through a lot of new territory?
- Do you find other travelers’ stories or advice helpful or useful for your trip?
- What are your most significant sources of information or advice for the journey?
- Are there books or authors that you have found helpful as sources of wisdom for the road?
- Are there any biblical stories that you see as relating to you on your journey?
- Are there any biblical texts that have given you guidance or comfort in your journey?
- When faced with a crossroads, how do you decide which road to take?
- What do you do when you run across conflicting information?
- What do you do when you get lost?

**Rest and Refueling:**

- Where do you look for fuel?
- What do you do when you are running low on fuel?
- How do you know when it is time to stop for rest, refueling, or reassessment?
- What kinds of stops do you make to get ready for the next segment of the journey?
- What roadside rests do you find most helpful, most enjoyable?
- Where do you find encouragement or strength to continue, to not turn back?
- What is your experience of the Sabbath, and what role does it play in your journey?
- What provides the hope or encouragement that keeps you on your journey in times of disappointment?

**Arrival:**

- How do you envision your arrival? Who is there? How will you be welcomed?
- What does your new home look like?
- How did Jesus depict homecoming in His parables?
- What is your favorite biblical picture of homecoming?
- What have you experienced in your pilgrimage that gives you a taste of what homecoming is like?
they are not substitutes for small-group sessions where each student learns to cultivate his or her spiritual voice and helps create an open and comfortable spiritual environment for others to do likewise. When students tell their stories and experience their own voices as heard and valued, they begin to own a part of the conversation on spirituality. Inviting them to use the metaphor employed by church pioneers creates an opportunity for them to draw connections between their personal experiences and their Adventist heritage. It also encourages them to understand their experience in the wider context of the biblical story and the Adventist story.

In addition to hearing their own stories, students need to hear the stories of their wider community: church members, teachers, principals, pastors, and youth leaders. Unfortunately, many people feel hesitant about sharing their personal spiritual life. Few of us have received encouragement to find and develop our own voices. Many of us have spent large portions of our life in social settings where spirituality was considered a private and suspect matter, and in religious settings where the emphasis was on doctrine rather than spiritual development. Most church members have had relatively little instruction on spiritual growth; thus, teachers may not think to devote time to helping students practice how to relate their spiritual experiences. Indeed, even teachers with an active spiritual life may feel unprepared to describe or discuss personal spiritual experience. Where does one start?

It is at this point that the journey metaphor can be as helpful for the teacher as it is for the students. This motif provides a framework in which to organize our spiritual experience and provides a framework for telling our stories. The archetypal stories of the journey give us the language and framework to tell our own stories and to understand our own spiritual experience. The journey metaphor allows us to present ourselves as people who daily respond to God’s call and are walking toward Him, and denies any projected claim to already have arrived at one’s final destination. It gives us permission to be honest about where we are, which is always short of erasing the distance between self and God.

Ellen Harmon White gave the church a tremendous gift when she relayed her first vision. The image of the pilgrim band

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

A ge-appropriate classroom activities and assignments can invite students to write for specific purposes and audiences in the church community. Discussion can relate to the needs of particular audiences and the characteristics of the forms of writing appropriate to their purpose.

**Interview:** To gain an understanding of the different experiences in the church, students can interview older family members or church members who either grew up in the Adventist tradition or converted to it, and ask them to tell their stories. How do their experiences both resemble and differ from that of their generation? Notice the imagery and biblical allusions they use, the challenges they faced, and where they found strength for their journey. The teacher can prepare a short list of questions for students to ask. Some of these questions could be pulled from the questions on the journey motif (pages 14 and 15).

**Witness:** As a statement of faith, students can prepare a succinct statement of their relationship with God or their experience with the sacred or their understanding of a biblical text or concept. They can tell of specific events, times, or places in which they have encountered the sacred or grew to a new understanding of God and His work in their lives. Students can be asked to write out a statement of their spiritual experience or understanding and revisit it periodically throughout the year.

**Letter of Encouragement/Letter of Counsel:** Students can write a letter of encouragement to their teacher, pastor, conference president, or other church leader in which they identify something about the church which has been a special blessing to them. The purpose of this letter is to support others in the church by identifying something the church is doing which benefits them or someone they know and expressing appreciation. Or they may write a letter of counsel in which they identify something about the church they would like to change. They can tactfully and persuasively explain why this practice is detrimental to them or someone they know and courteously suggest specific alternative ways they would like to see it done.
led by Jesus’ loving presence encourages us to move forward in hope. It serves as an antidote to the paralysis that can set in when we feel overwhelmed by the difference between where we are and where we expected to be. Her willingness to share her spiritual experience despite her weaknesses still serves as a powerful testimony to God’s ability to bless the faithful efforts of even the “least of these.” It demonstrates the unanticipated serendipity that can result when people share their spiritual experiences and utilize their voices. Her example encourages us as we speak and write our letters and testify to the blessed hope. Our stories need to be added to those in the family album where they will testify to the faith of 21st-century Adventism to our children, thereby adding to the Adventist heritage bequeathed to those who follow until the blessed hope is realized.

From Family Album to Facebook

In the age of Facebook and Twitter, the social and communication landscape is rapidly changing. It can be tempting to assume that the current generations are wired differently than the rest of the family. Yet, beneath the surface differences, the need for spiritual connection is the same. And fortunately, spiritual growth and life exhibit similar patterns of raised awareness, longing, crisis, and response from one generation to the next.

The language of spirituality has its own timeless characteristics as it seeks to express the deepest of human experiences—relationship with God. It is often emotional as it speaks to the commitment of the heart as well as the conviction of the mind. It is personal and confessional in tone as it invokes the authority that comes from personal experience. It is often metaphorical. Spiritual experience is an abstraction that looks to the concrete for expression. For young people nurtured in a Christian (or even post-Christian) environment, the concrete expression often draws on the imagery and narratives of the Bible. The archetypal imagery of the Bible makes the spiritual life accessible to the mind and senses. The language of mountaintop and pit, banquets and famine, broad way and narrow way, weddings and wedding garments, battles and armor, and salt and savor can continue to speak as the concrete expression of the spiritual life today just as it did for first-century Christians and early Adventists.

Evidences of spiritual reality often manifest themselves in the form of specific experiences and stories that we can convey in many different forms. The stories of our journey are the artifacts of our spirituality, the Christian journey as it is lived in this time and place. While customs and costumes are different now from that of our predecessors, as is the specific geography of the road, the landmarks and destination of the journey are the same.

As we share our own experiences with our students, we model the way to deepen personal relationships with God, and when we create opportunities for them to speak publicly to the church community, we embrace Adventist spiritual tradition. It is important to teach our students that the Adventist spiritual heritage values the voices of all believers and endeavors to develop in each the spiritual maturity to speak from a personal relationship with God. As we introduce these themes and experiences in the classroom, we are preparing students for a lifelong spiritual journey and participating with God in the education for eternity that we long for our students to receive.
When I stand in front of a room full of students, or talk one-on-one with them in my office, what can I expect? What can I hope for in terms of their spiritual growth and development?

I will address that question by referring to three specific goals that focus on God, people, and community, and will suggest three specific means for helping teachers reach those goals: the Bible, the writings of Ellen White, and the Cross.

The Goals
1. Commitment to a Personal God
   While conservative Christians tend to talk of spirituality in terms of a “personal relationship,” I have found that not all my students relate well to that language. And if their expectation of a felt “relationship” does not materialize, they can easily conclude that God simply does not exist.

   Ellen White offers some helpful advice in this area: “Do not wait to feel that you are made whole,” she declares, “but say, I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.”

   C. S. Lewis points in the same direction. In the wonderfully backwards theology of _The Screwtape Letters_, where the chief demon, Screwtape, is teaching his understudy, Wormwood, how to draw the “patient” (a human) away from the “enemy” (God), Screwtape declares:

   “He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles. Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.”

   But if that picture of a personal yet seemingly absent God is to be convincing, we need to provide our students with biblical examples. Particularly for those who do not “feel” God’s personal
Diversity of experience is not an easy concept for devout conservative Christians to accept. But the illustrations from Scripture and classwork can combine with a key Ellen White quotation to make the point with emphasis.

Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend.

Ministry of Healing. Ellen White puts it this way: “Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same. There are no two whose experiences are alike in every particular.”

2. Increased Sensitivity to the Needs of People

In Matthew 22:35-40, Jesus summarized His Bible in terms of two great commands: love to God and love to people. Everything “hangs” on these two commands, He said. It is striking, however, that when the New Testament boils these two commands down to one, it summarizes them in terms of the second commandment, not the
first. We have it that way from both Jesus and Paul. “‘In everything,’” said Jesus, “‘do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”’12 Similarly, Paul declared: “The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”13

Jesus deftly brought the two commands together in His parable of the sheep and goats. The sheep serve the incarnate God by helping people. The ultimate decision in judgment turns “upon one point,” wrote Ellen White. “When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and suffering.”14

The Adventist understanding of “spirituality” requires not only attending to the soul, but also to the body. And in that connection I am encouraged by the significant numbers of my students who are intrigued and inspired by the work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Evangelicals have too often focused rather narrowly on the soul, while so-called mainstream Protestants are much tempted to minister only to the body. I want my students to do both. On that issue, Jesus does not allow us to choose sides.

3. Awareness of the Importance of a Community

In America, at least, individualism is so strong that many of my students do not readily admit the importance of “community.” They tend to focus on their own personal needs and renewal without considering how dependent they might be on others for good spiritual health. It is likely that the popular mantra, “I’m not religious, but I’m very spiritual,” is part of that same picture. Freely interpreted, I suspect those words mark a shift away from a cold Enlightenment rationalism and a rigid orthodoxy toward a more meaningful personal experience.

But the New Testament is clear on the value of community. Not only did Jesus call together a group of twelve, He also taught that the ecclesia (church) would be central to the work He left His followers to do. The procedure for reclaiming a sinner, for example, as outlined in Matthew 18:15-20, calls for the involvement of the community, the “church.”

In the Epistles, community also plays a central role with “body” perhaps being the most dominant model. “So we, who are many, are one body in Christ,” declares Paul, “and individually we are members one of another.”15

One of the most striking corporate passages in the Epistles is 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 17, which uses the imagery of the “temple.” Unfortunately, the forcefulness of the corporate image is not obvious in most English Bibles since English has no distinct form for the plural you. But the TNIV captures that point nicely: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”16

Addressing the powerful modern impulse to prefer the strictly personal to the communal, Elton Trueblood quotes Robert Fitch, at that time dean of the Pacific School of Religion: “Of course religion ought to be personal, but if it’s nothing but personal, it’s something brand new in history. There never was any purely personal religion, in the whole history of the world, except for a few isolated mystics.”17

The power of a community to transform society is well illustrated in the work of William Wilberforce and a group of committed Christians known as the Clapham Circle, a community located just outside London that was active from about 1790 to 1830. Not only did Wilberforce lead the heroic campaign that brought slavery to an end in the British empire, but he and his fellow Claphamites also spearheaded a many-pronged movement...
that sought the “abolition of every lesser social ill,” to quote a line from Eric Metaxas’s biography of Wilberforce. At one point, Wilberforce himself was “officially linked with sixty-nine separate groups dedicated to social reform of one kind or another.”

Trueblood captures the essence of the New Testament teaching when he speaks of “a fellowship of consciously inadequate persons who gather because they are weak, and scatter to serve because their unity with one another and with Christ has made them bold.”

In short, the communal focus must be part of the Adventist vision of spirituality, however unpopular it may be at present in contemporary culture. Community is central to Jesus’ vision of what it means to belong to Him.

**Specific Issues**

In discussing spiritual growth, I will focus on three specific issues that relate to the three goals noted above. Two of them are authorities in Adventism—the Bible and Ellen White. The third is the Cross, arguably the most powerful of New Testament symbols.

1. The Bible

   In the spring of 2010, a special “Sabbath Issue” of *The Collegian*, the student newspaper at Walla Walla University, reported student perspectives on the “authorities” in their life. I was particularly interested in the response to this survey question: “Which of the following hold some authority in regard to what Sabbath means to you?” Choosing from the accompanying list, the some 330 respondents indicated personal experience (91 percent), family (90 percent), Bible (80 percent), and Ellen White (22 percent). I’ll comment on the Ellen White response in the next section. But first, I want to focus on the Bible’s rating in this survey.

   While it is encouraging that students gave relatively high marks to the Bible, my experience over the years suggests that they have difficulty applying biblical teachings to contemporary situations. Surveys I have taken in class repeatedly confirm that about half of my students either consciously or subconsciously hold the view that if God said it, it really should apply to all people at all times and in all places. In short, when we embark on the work of “exegesis,” that is, seeking to interpret passages within their original context, we are already subtly undermining biblical authority for many of our students.

   What did Ellen White mean when she wrote: “The Bible was given for practical purposes”? How can we make the Bible useful in our search for God and for spiritual growth? Recently, I have been emphasizing two passages from Scripture to help my students grasp a crucial truth, namely, that the Bible does not automatically apply itself in our lives.

   The first passage is Isaiah 55:8 and 9: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

   In other words, while the Bible points us to God, it never gives us God Himself. Ellen White suggests the same thing when she declares: “God and heaven alone are infallible.”

   And here, on the authority of Ellen White, let me wax bold and say that everything in the Bible points to God even when it does not sound like God to us. And that last point is a crucial one, for given my conservative nature, I never would have been brave enough to claim that based on my own opinion. But Ellen White’s view of the Bible enabled her to say, without diminishing the authority of Scripture one iota:

   “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. . . . The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind.”

   And that points to a second passage, 1 Corinthians 10:11. In the TNIV it reads: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.”

   Examples—that is the crucial word. In context, Paul is showcasing the story of Israel’s apostasy as an “example” from which the believers are to learn. But we can learn from good examples, not just from bad ones. Thus the whole Bible can be seen as a book of examples, a treasure trove that enables us to solve the problem of “contradictions” in its pages. Once we recognize that God is speaking to different people in different times and places and understand
different circumstances, the truth begins to dawn that the contradictions are not just irritants to test our faith, but are absolutely essential for effective witnessing. They help us work with all kinds of peoples in all kinds of situations. Here the “example” of Paul shines bright. “I have become all things to all people,” he declared, “so that by all possible means I might save some.”

This helps to see the Bible as a God-given compilation of “examples.” One of the best places to observe this compilation at work is in the Book of Proverbs, where we find a host of “contradictory” examples or illustrations that require a Spirit-guided choice. Proverbs 26:4 and 5 offer one of the best “examples” to make that point for us. Verse 4 declares: “Do not answer fools according to their folly, or you yourself will be just like them” (TNIV).

That is good counsel. But then the next verse: “Answer fools according to their folly, or they will be wise in their own eyes.” Also good counsel, but just the opposite. Seeing those proverbs side by side should drive us to our knees to prayerfully consider when it’s time to speak up and when to shut up.

Under the heading of “Tactfulness” in Gospel Workers, some remarkable words from Ellen White expound powerfully on this principle as it applies to ministers. She urges them “to study to be skillful when there are no rules to meet the case.”

Discovering the “example” nature of Scripture has transformed my devotional life. Instead of seeing Bible study and prayer as divinely mandated external requirements to keep God happy, I am driven to seek God’s counsel in Scripture and through prayer so that I may know how to live my life in contact with others. And this is not simply petitionary prayer seeking answers. It is something much closer to praying “without ceasing.” “Purifying prayer” describes that process more fully by identifying its purpose.

I urgently need “purifying prayer” because when I recognize that Scripture provides “examples” or “illustrations,” I am confronted with the reality that I must make choices. And my mind, my reason, is the only part of me that can make such choices. Only my reason can tell me which “examples” to use in writing this article. Even if I were to get a vision, I would still have to use my reason to ascertain whether the “vision” came from God, from the devil, or from eating too many pickles late at night.

But my reason, while essential to the process, is notoriously unreliable; it has been twisted and distorted by sin. So with unceasing prayer I must constantly remind myself that I am doing God’s work, not just my own. I thus become more likely to reflect His will and way. Why just “likely”? Because I am a flawed human being, I need all the help I can get, not only from God, but also from God-fearing human beings. Even then, being human, I still may not get it just right.

In that connection, I am intrigued by some striking words from Ellen White to a brother who was inclined to be too rigorous in his work with others. “You need to educate yourself, that you may have wisdom to deal with minds,” she wrote. “You should with some have compassion, making a difference, while others you may save with fear, pulling them out of the fire [Jude 22-23]. Our heavenly Father frequently leaves us in uncertainty in regard to our efforts.”

In our work for the Lord, we must somehow find a way to be confident—but allow enough uncertainty to allow others to give us wise counsel.

2. Ellen White

One well-known and prolific Adventist author told me that his Ellen White books outsell his books on the Bible by 10 to one. But alongside that high level of interest in Ellen White rages a great angst about the role she has been forced to play in Adventism. The Collegian survey noted above indicated that only 22 percent of the students surveyed granted her any kind of authority at all. We’re not talking about an absolute and final authority, but any authority. How did that happen?

In my view, a key factor is the widespread tendency to impose Ellen White as a final authority on every possible subject. And because we have not done our homework in studying the Bible, the same unevenness that affects our study of the Bible is greatly magnified when we read Ellen White. Very few of my students from Adventist homes have read any of Ellen White’s books, to say nothing of carefully studying what she has written. But they have been told—over and over—what she condemns.

Is there hope? Indeed. Three suggestions:

First, we should view her as an illustrative authority, just as I argued above for Scripture. Not everything Ellen White wrote applies to all people at all times. This is especially evident in the
early volumes of the Testimonies for the Church. Under the heading of “Christian Temperance,” for example, a hard-hitting 1869 sermon on health reform in the Battle Creek Church calls the saints to account. Here is one of the more vivid lines: “I can select family after family of children in this house,” she exclaimed, “every one of whom is as corrupt as hell itself.”

But the very next testimony in volume 2 is entitled “Extremes in Health Reform.” Here she is addressing a curmudgeon of a man who was virtually starving his pregnant wife to death. Mrs. White’s liberalizing counsel is startling, even shocking. The woman should have “a moderate amount of milk and sugar” and “white bread raised with yeast for a change.” “In some cases, even a small amount of the least hurtful meat would do less injury than to suffer strong cravings for it.” Either of these “extreme” counsels could be unhealthful if we apply them as absolutes.

We thus can view Ellen White’s writings as being fully inspired, but not universally applicable. They are full of examples that illustrate how God has dealt with different people in different times and places, but they need to be applied prayerfully, using common sense.

Ellen White once wrote, “Arbitrary words and actions stir up the worst passions of the human heart.” I am convinced that our often arbitrary use of her writings has contributed to the deep antipathy toward her that I see in my students. That needs to change.

My second suggestion is to read Ellen White’s autobiography as found in the first volume of the Testimonies. It covers her life only up to the death of her husband, James, in 1881. But it is a powerful presentation of the “real” Ellen White, one who was often in the depths of despair. “Many times,” she declared, “the wish arose that I had never been born.” And “I coveted death as a release from the responsibilities that were crowding upon me.”

But for all the pain, she remained faithful to her God. Typically, published accounts of Ellen White’s life have removed the pain. The picture has been “retouched.” But experiencing the real Ellen White consistently impresses my students. And the gems in her writings become even brighter against that melancholy backdrop. A few months ago, one of my students wrote these comments in response to a cluster of assignments that dealt with Ellen White: “It almost bothers me how you have collected such powerful, insightful, and balanced quotes from Ellen White. I am always wondering why nobody else seems to notice these things. One particular favorite appeared in this same assignment when she explains what we must agree with: the two Great Commandments. Never until WWU have I read or heard of a helpful Ellen White.”

My third suggestion is simple: Read what Ellen White wrote, especially her five books that focus on Jesus: Steps to Christ (1892), Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing (1896), The Desire of Ages (1898), Christ’s Object Lessons (1900), and The Ministry of Healing (1905). A number of my students have also found Messiah, Jerry Thomas’ contemporary adaptation of The Desire of Ages, to be very helpful. His more recent adaptation of Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing is another jewel.

And here I must report the stunning experience of a colleague who was teaching the university’s sophomore-level class on Christian Beliefs. He required his students to read one of two books. Devout conservatives who might be suspicious of C. S. Lewis were to read Mere Christianity; those with hostile feelings toward Ellen White were to read Steps to Christ. Regardless of the book they chose, in a written response they were to identify the best part of the book and what they would leave out if they were to shorten it.

Most of the 50 students chose Steps to Christ. Across the board, my colleague reported, they were deeply moved. Without exception they identified the chapter, “What to Do With Doubt,” as the most helpful one. It should be “required” reading for every Adventist, they said. Furthermore, they couldn’t find anything they would leave out.

We should not expect such a marvelous testimony in all cases. But I do believe that we can recover our heritage and our students can discover the great blessings that can come from reading Ellen White.

3. The Cross

As the most visible symbol of Jesus’ work on our behalf, the Cross continues to exert a powerful influence. The doctrine of the atonement, however, which seeks to interpret the meaning of the Cross, has proven to be very divisive throughout Christian history. But if we can grasp the idea of diversity in Scripture, the diverse interpretations can be combined to help in nurturing spiritual growth.

I will be tantalizingly brief here because the topic is huge. But I want to capture the essence of the issue because it plays such a crucial role in personal religious experience and in the larger life of the corporate body.

What happened on the Cross? And how is that event to be understood and applied in the life of the believer? Everyone agrees that Christ died for our sins. That’s not the issue. The great divide comes over the question of whether the Cross points heavenward as a sacrifice satisfying the heavenly court (objective atonement) or earthward as a teaching device that shows God’s self-sacrificing love for His chil-
Summary

Three goals: finding a deeper relationship to God, to people, and to community; and three means to help us reach those goals: Scripture, the writings of Ellen White, and the cross of Christ. The goals are the same for all of us, though the intensity of each will vary from person to person. But our greatest diversity will come in our use and understanding of the means for reaching those goals. Some students are not able or willing to read extensively. That will certainly affect their use of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. But even those who do read will gravitate to different passages, to different emphases.

Perhaps the most important lesson is how we relate to Jesus’ death on our behalf. Here the diversity of perspectives in the New Testament should correlate with the diversity of God’s children in our world. Our goals are the same, but the way we reach them will often differ dramatically. If the church can understand that diversity, it can be the home for us all.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

3. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.
5. Philippians 4:6, NRSV.
6. Philippians 4:4, TNIV. Bible texts credited to TNIV are from the Holy Bible, Today’s New Interna-

Tional Version. Copyright © 2001, 2005 by Biblica. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
9. Psalm 88:15–18, TNIV.
10. Matthew 12:20, KJV.
11. Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1942 [1905]), p. 483. The second sentence has been slightly modified. The original reads: “There are no two whose experience is alike in every particular.”
12. Matthew 7:12, NRSV.
13. Galatians 5:14, TNIV.
15. Romans 12:5, NRSV. “Body” imagery is well developed in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Ephesians 4:1–16.
16. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, TNIV.
19. Ibid., p. xvii.
23. NRSV.
24. White, Selected Messages, op. cit., Book 1, p. 37 [The Review and Herald, July 26, 1892].
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26. 1 Corinthians 10:11, TNIV.
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29. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, KJV.
31. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 360 [1870].
32. Ibid., p. 384.
33. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 134 [1901].
34. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 112. Written in 1885, four years after the death of James White.
35. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 25.
36. Ibid., p. 63.
The mandate of Seventh-day Adventist education is to integrate faith, religion, and learning. This is what makes our school system distinct and different from public education. The primary purpose for our schools is to provide spiritual training for children and youth. The classroom is, of course, a location where students acquire practical skills and information, but the curriculum should not be limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic—it must also include reverence and belief.

Adventist educational institutions are privileged to be able to illuminate and indoctrinate their students. But this honor is granted for only the short time that students are enrolled in our schools; therefore, teachers should put greater and more intentional emphasis on the growth of the student’s spiritual life. School staff should not just be concerned about producing graduates and young people who can finesse standardized tests, but also about producing spiritually formed adults who have a vibrant relationship with Jesus. One practical way to accomplish this goal is to incorporate meaningful rituals into the school program.

**Rituas: A Definition**

According to the Oxford dictionary, a ritual is “a prescribed order for performing a ritual ceremony, especially one characteristic of a particular religion or Church.” Or more broadly speaking, the incorporation of standardized values and practices into the activities of a group of people. Rituals usually focus on conventionalized actions that have little practical significance but great symbolic meaning. Often when people face situations whose outcomes potentially have great importance, they rely on rituals to help them feel that they are in control.

Rituals serve many purposes:
1. They give special significance to certain times and places.
2. They create a sense of continuity by linking the past to the present, and the present to the future.

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**BY ROBERT EGBERT AND SARA KUBURIC**
3. They objectify and establish spiritual relationships.
4. They give a sense of legitimacy and value to spiritual concepts.
5. They create a sense that important things in daily life are unchanged.
6. They create bonds between and among people from many lands and cultures.
7. They are expressions and celebrations of belief.
8. They provide solidarity and reinforcement of shared beliefs.
9. They socialize children in preparation for the cultural and spiritual roles they will ultimately fill.

People sometimes have a negative view of rituals, regarding them as either meaningless formalities or as dangerous activities used by fanatical groups to brainwash members into mindless submission. However, rituals are an important part of the social system of every society, occurring in the political realm as well as in friendships and family events. Rituals are crucial for cohesion and membership; without them, there would be no unity or unique collective relationships.

How societies function—their social norms—are in reality the outcome of a series of rituals. In general, within each society, people act and interact with one another in a fairly structured and predictable manner. For example, in the United States, children learn that in the morning it is appropriate to greet other people by saying “Hello” or “Good morning,” and to say “Thank you” after someone does something kind for them. Thus, throughout the young people’s lives, these rituals remain part of their customary behavior and help them integrate smoothly into the social structure of their culture.

In like manner, rituals are basic to the fabric of a religious organization. They can play a vital role in the process of helping young people build a relationship and a lifelong connection with Christ. However, for rituals to achieve their desired goals, they need to be carefully planned and orchestrated, and their meaning must be clear to each participant.

Adventists might think of themselves as having few rituals in comparison with other religions, but in reality, we incorporate many rituals and liturgy into our corporate and personal lives. When we invest daily time in worship and meditation with the Lord through reading the Bible, praying, singing, etc., we are incorporating elements of ritual ceremony into our spiritual lives.

**The Role of the Classroom in Developing Rituals**

Incorporating rituals in the classroom might appear to be a difficult task, but in reality, this is something teachers do all the time. A number of administrative rituals occur in classrooms every day. Teaching children good behavior when they are part of a group (society or classroom) is integral to the curriculum and is frequently ritualized. The “good morning routine” is a ritual in which the teacher addresses each student at the beginning of the day with a warm personalized “Hello.” According to Greenberg, in an article she wrote for Scholastic.com entitled “The Value of Classroom Rituals and Routines,” this ritual helps communicate that it is considered good manners to greet each person by name to help him or her feel comfortable. Even though most

Religious rituals, like Christmas pageants and weeks of prayer, play a vital role in the process of helping young people build a relationship and a lifelong connection with Christ.

Christians might not consider this to be a religious ritual, it is a way of combining etiquette with Christian caring. Another suggestion from Greenberg’s article is the “Social Circle,” whose activities include each child’s hugging a neighbor in the circle to say hello, singing songs, finding helpers for the classroom, discussing what each child has made, sharing news from home, etc. These excellent development rituals could have a more spiritual focus—thereby combining worship and enhancing connections between the children.

Rituals are important to various aspects of life for many reasons, not just spiritual. They promote group membership and identity, provide a sense of comfort and safety, and help to shape children’s perceptions and beliefs. Rituals are often connected with the celebration of special occasions that mark the passage from one stage of life to another (birthdays, baptisms, weddings).

The expectation and assumption in Adventist schools is that most children come from good homes, but not all of them have
regular family worship, so morning worship is an important ritual in the classroom. When children enjoy this event and are encouraged to participate, this makes worship a cherished ritual that they will embrace for their own lives and later pass on to the next generation.

**More About the Purposes of Rituals**

Rituals are powerful because they focus on a symbolic meaning, which ultimately contributes to the fabric of a belief system. Below is an expanded discussion of the purposes for rituals:

* Rituals give special significance to certain times and places. I will never forget my baptism or my first communion. I even remember the pastor and his personal comments to me just before my baptism, as well as his favorite Bible chapter (Psalm 46), which he recited to me and which I have often referred to in my own classroom rituals.

* Rituals create a sense of continuity by linking the past to the present, and the present to the future. I will never forget the first baptism my daughter attended and her first communion service. Now that she has children of her own, she has shared these rituals with her own children to enhance the richness of their faith.

* Rituals provide a way to shape spiritual self-image. They have the potential to alter people’s beliefs and actions, thereby giving each participant a new spiritual self-image.

* Rituals create bonds between and among people from many lands and cultures. When people become citizens of a new nation, they participate in singing the national anthem and celebrating the country’s independence day. Likewise, when people join a church, they participate in the rituals of their new spiritual fellowship.

* Rituals objectify, establish, and legitimize the individual's relationships with particular groups, such as churches and schools, which become the individual's primary social group. It’s important for people to participate in a social community that supports their morals and beliefs. Having a strong social support system helps people cope with difficult times. Through meaningful rituals, the group can direct the problems to Christ and offer emotional support with intercessory prayer (for example, anointing of a gravely ill person).

* Rituals create solidarity and continuity in a group's collective spirituality, as well as shared goals and expectations. They provide for a union of interests and purposes among members of a group. Rituals will bring children in the classroom together as a unit and promote coherence and cohesion within the group.

* Rituals provide reference points for developmental transition and help to socialize children for the religious roles they will later play in their church, society, and personal relationships.

To be meaningful and memorable, **rituals must contain rich forms, sensory content (sound, smell, taste, appearance, etc.), and physical action.** Think about Communion with its traditional songs and Scriptures, the bread and wine, the Ordinance of Humility, and the planning that ensures that it occurs on a regular basis.

Rituals must be stimulating and pleasurable. To be meaningful, they need to be more than a passing fad or a brief experiment. In the school environment, rituals must be planned so that all students are able to participate and receive some sort of satisfaction, and plans must be in place to incorporate newcomers in a pleasant way so they do not feel left out or uncomfortable.

**Classroom Rituals**

What rituals other than the glad-to-make-your-acquain-

![key part of a ritual is the involvement of every person, which helps students connect with one another and with the teacher. If used consistently, rituals become part of a predictable routine that can help with classroom management.](image)
Just as children must learn the foundations of reading, writing, and mathematics to be able to further develop and use these skills later in life, the same applies with rituals. Humans rely on their memories every day, and what they know and who they become are determined to some extent by their memories. There are several theories on how rituals affect memory. Some studies state that rituals affect the semantic (working), episodic, and “flashbulb” memory. Czachesz has suggested that rituals in the imagistic mode influence episodic memory, whereas rituals in the doctrinal mode influence semantic memory. The memory of meanings, understandings, and concept-based knowledge are also affected, according to Czachesz.

Singular events in our lives that are connected to a date or time (yesterday I read the Book of Matthew) are episodic; whereas lexical items, which generally involve the acquisition of information that is not directly related to singular events in our lives, are semantic (Matthew is the first book in the New Testament). Czachesz believes that highly arousing rituals generate flashbulb memories; for example, our first encounter with Christ or an emotionally arousing event such as baptism or a first communion service. The best way for children to start forming a healthy relationship with Christ is to have their minds engaged by all three aspects of memory. When the child’s memory is thus engaged, there is a higher likelihood of his or her retrieving the memory and being motivated and influenced by it to become a spiritually guided person throughout life.

Some Suggested Rituals for Classrooms

1. Regular and meaningful worships in which the students participate actively. Schedule a brief program at approximately the same time each day that includes songs, reading, discussion, sharing time, and prayer. A significant portion can be student led.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

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**Example adapted by The J. Paul Getty Museum**

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/visualizing_devotion/

**Websites**


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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
2. Create a unit about rituals, ceremonies, and practices that are important to the belief systems of various groups. This will help students grasp the significance of such events in the lives of others and in their own lives. (See the example adapted by The J. Paul Getty Museum in the sidebar on page 28.) To help students get started, ask questions about rituals and their relationship to religion. For example, “How do people learn about how to participate in religious rituals? Are they taught, or do they learn by observation? Do you think it’s possible for people to understand the spiritual beliefs of another culture? How can you understand your spiritual beliefs better as a result of learning about the rituals of your faith?”

3. Schedule brief prayer sessions throughout the school day.

4. Invite the local pastor to talk to your students about faith and spiritual issues and how they are illuminated by rituals.

5. Create a lesson on rituals in the Old Testament or New Testament, or choose one specific ritual, such as the sanctuary service, and build a unit around it. What rituals did Jesus require and respond to? What rituals did He participate in? For ideas, refer to the Websites cited in the resource section.

6. Have students observe and document rituals that are important to Adventism. Communion, baptism, weddings, baby dedications, vespers, ordination/commissioning services, and anointing of the sick are examples. There are also health rituals and practices, as well as ones relating to tithing and celebration of sacred time. We gather on Sabbath to worship and share, and we observe the Sabbath hours carefully, frequently ritualistically. Ask students to see how many rituals they can list that are involved in worship services and other events during sacred time, compared to how many are a part of spiritual life throughout the week. Students can make oral reports on what they discovered, which can be enhanced with video or PowerPoint presentations.

7. Much of life consists of rituals. Think of the rituals you incorporate into your teaching. With your students, begin to record in daily journals some reflections about the significance of rituals in daily life, and useful changes that might enhance your teaching and religious experience. A suggested theme: “What I do daily (or weekly) and why these spiritual experiences and rituals are meaningful to me.” (Discuss the differences between rituals and habits when you make the journaling assignment.)

8. Be creative as you plan spiritually related rituals. It is important to make the connection between spirituality and rituals, but it is also important for you to model a spiritual lifestyle. Your attitude will have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the rituals you incorporate in the classroom.

It is not just the ritual itself that is important; it is the atmosphere and example. To be meaningful, rituals must have regularity, structure, and depth. Rituals provide hooks for meaning and intentionality in developing spiritual life and commitment. Every student who enrolls in the Adventist education system needs to be exposed to many experiences filled with spiritual meaning and nurtured in developing a lifestyle focused on the Savior. Teachers have the solemn responsibility to create a fabric of spiritual meaning and relationship for each student. What they experience in your classroom may be the only opportunity for many of your pupils to know God and to understand the necessity of choosing a life of commitment to Him.

Challenge your students to think about the rituals in their lives and how they reflect their spiritual beliefs. How can they adapt old rituals to make them meaningful to life in the 21st century? What new rituals might they incorporate to enhance their relationship with Jesus? Inspire them to think of rituals as more than mere tradition—they help in creating a connection with God that can provide hope and the promise of a life filled with grace.

The coordinator for this special issue on Spirituality, Robert Egbert is a Professor of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. He has been a middle school, academy, and university teacher for almost 40 years. Dr. Egbert holds an Ed.D. in Curriculum Theory and Development from Temple University and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology and Anthropology from the Union Institute. The JOURNAL’s editorial staff express appreciation for his assistance in the planning and production of the issue.

A native of Canada, Sara Kuburic is a graduate student in psychology in Australia. Ms. Kuburic has a multitude of interests, including the relationship between religion and psychology, and is a frequent international traveler with family roots in Europe and Australia. During the production of this issue, she served as a psychology intern for Dr. Egbert.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. There is insufficient space in this article to discuss the development of rituals in social and religious groups, their evolution over time, or attempts to use them to initiate changes in a group’s identity and foundational principles. Because rituals are distinguishing features of groups, disgruntled individuals or subgroups may reject or seek to change the shared rituals. By doing so, they are in essence declaring their independence from the group. If many members reject the group’s rituals, this may lead to a splintering of the group and the formation of one or more new groups, which then establish new rituals in keeping with their shared goals and mores. Within a Christian organization, this situation generally arises when there is a lack of equilibrium between rituals and a relationship with Christ. Someone has observed that in religion, rituals without relationship can be deadly.


4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.
at Featherstone is a dedicated Christian who lives to serve others and is a leader in his church. But he hasn’t always been that way. As an adolescent, Pat found himself before a judge in juvenile court. The judge gave him a choice: spend time in juvenile detention or go to the local Seventh-day Adventist school. Though I’m sure that some students might think school is as bad as jail, Pat chose an Adventist education rather than juvenile detention.

While at school, he managed to stay out of trouble, but didn’t give his heart to Jesus. It wasn’t until years later when he was in the military and facing an especially difficult time that God impressed him to take a two-day leave and drive hundreds of miles back to the school where he had first learned about God. He sat in the school’s parking lot, prayed, and gave his heart to Jesus.

Now, decades later, he volunteers his services at Livingstone Adventist Academy in Oregon, not the school of his youth, but nonetheless, a place where he “feels the presence of God”1 in order to fulfill his commitment to give back to the community.

What is the value of Adventist education? Results from the North American Division’s CognitiveGenesis Study2 indicate that academically, Adventist education is as good as, if not better than, its public counterparts. But as Jesus discussed with His disciples,3 the bottom line for anything in life, including academics, is this: Unless it profits one’s spiritual life, there really is no point to it at all. A look at Adventist education’s philosophy4 (see sidebar on page 35) confirms that its distinctive characteristic is, “to restore human beings into the image of their Maker.”

In life, there are many things that can be done correctly in only one way. Spirituality at school is not one of them. This article will describe the journey and process that Livingstone Adventist Academy in Salem, Oregon, has taken and continues to implement to achieve faith integration and authentic spirituality.

BY CHRIS SEQUEIRA
Intentionality

The journey to becoming a spiritual haven for students does not happen by accident. Though Livingstone Adventist Academy has been an institution of Adventist education since 1898, many former students have stated that it has not always focused on spirituality. As occurred in many Adventist church schools until the 1980s, students received the message that they were saved through their behavior. Tied to that concept was the idea that school rules such as dress codes were linked to salvation. I recall from my academy days being told that the length of a boy’s hair was reason for expulsion on the grounds that he was not going to heaven. In the early 1990s however, through the leadership of Principal Jim Roy, the school board and the staff intentionally reoriented the school to bring it into line with the Philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist Education: “to develop a life of faith in God and respect for the dignity of all human beings; to build character akin to that of the Creator; to nurture thinkers rather than mere reflectors of others’ thoughts; to promote loving service rather than selfish ambition; to ensure maximum development of each individual’s potential; and to embrace all that is true, good, and beautiful.” A significant way of achieving this goal is to be intentional in distinguishing school behavior issues from salvation issues. We did this by communicating to our students and parents that violating school rules does not cause God to love us less, but nonetheless is unacceptable.

Our school has particularly concentrated on two elements in the last paragraph of the Adventist Philosophy of Education. First and foremost is our focus on a balanced development of the whole person—physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually, which is at the heart of everything we do. At Livingstone, we are intentional about not letting one dimension overshadow any of the others. This is not an easy task, and requires us to constantly fine tune our program in order to keep things in balance. Second is the three-cord strand of the home, school, and constituent churches. As the old African proverb goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” We realize that we are only one of the agencies that God uses to mold our students’ lives; and therefore, do everything we can to help our students’ homes and local churches to embrace and achieve the same goals.

Role of the Teacher

At the forefront of a school’s spiritual journey are the teachers. They are the ones who minister to each young person with whom they come in contact. The ministry of the teacher should not be underestimated—and it is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. Above and beyond the role of conveying academic information to students, the teacher at an Adventist school is also a spiritual mentor. This is a mission, not a job. To be effective, a teacher must embrace this role fully.

Not that many years ago, Livingstone offered only kindergarten through 10th grade. However, since most students finishing the junior high chose not to continue at another Adventist school, the community, school board, and Principal Barbara Livesay envisioned an expanded and unified K-12 program. Livesay managed to get all the staff to support a unified vision of a K-12 school, rather than separate K-8 and 9-12 programs. When all the staff are unified, it is amazing what God can accomplish. Because of the shared passion and vision, Livingstone Adventist Academy, a quality K-12 program was quickly incorporated.
At the end of every school year, the staff re-evaluates Livingstone’s mission statement. The reason we keep revisiting this document is that it is a living declaration and focus for every classroom.

To develop relationships for now and for eternity with Christ and each other. To help our students develop life skills based upon moral values.

To pursue our educational best.

As a staff, we understand that just as it’s important to develop a relationship with Jesus, when we form healthy relationships with students, this goes a long way to influencing them in a positive direction. We have found that the best way to do this is through various school activities and interactions with students outside the classroom. Every activity that we promote is viewed through the lens of developing relationships for now and for eternity with Christ and one another. The teachers also realize that some of the most important lessons we teach are not necessarily academic. Therefore, life lessons that include Christ-centered morality are taught with intentionality.

To help our students develop life skills based upon moral values.

One of the biggest challenges in creating a culture of spirituality at school is making it relevant to the students. Teachers need to ensure that students know why or how they are going to use academic information. Students also need to know that Jesus is a valuable part of the lives of the school staff and other adults in their lives. One of the most positive results of the actions we have taken is that, for both staff and students alike, our campus is a place where God talk is “cool.” Staff and students pray together often, and students feel comfortable talking to staff about spiritual matters and other non-academic issues.

Another vital element of spirituality at school is student voice. School needs to be a place where students can not only express their thoughts and opinions, but also know that their voices are being heard and respected. Since Livingstone became a full-fledged academy, the high school-level student council has played a valuable role in evaluating and updating the student handbook. Some of the changes may appear to be trivial; however, one of the outcomes of giving students voice in school operations is that they feel ownership of the rules. Issues such as allowing gum chewing and fingernail polish at school are not major items, but nonetheless, allowing input on such matters reassures students that we are listening to their concerns and are willing to be flexible. Students know that if they abuse their privileges, they may lose them.

When we designed our new building, including a chapel area was one of our top priorities. We wanted a location where we could meet for various gatherings, as well as a safe and spiritual place for the students to “hang out” and visit when they are not in class.

One of the most popular ways for our students to express themselves is through music. For our weekly chapels, we have a student praise team that leads out in the singing. Our school invested in a drum set and installed a sound sys-

Student praise teams lead out in singing for Livingstone Adventist Academy’s weekly chapels.
tem for various instruments. When there are no formal meetings in the chapel, students are welcome to play the piano and sing. It is a place the students like and respect. Soon after the completion of our chapel, the student council chose to make it a place of special reverence by having students remove hats and hoodies when in the room.

Small Steps to Change

Spiritually healthy schools do not become that way overnight. Change for the sake of change, however, is pointless. Developing and following a master plan has been very helpful. By beginning with the end in mind, we became aware that to make a lasting and meaningful change in the perspective of our students now, we needed to change one step at a time. That change would be slow. School culture is difficult to change! Our school needed to become a place where all (students, parents, and community members) could seek spiritual insight; not just a place where students acquired academic learning.

We have done several things to facilitate this change. Among the most effective was to change our teaching practices. The teachers transitioned from being a “sage on the stage” to a “guide on the side.” To decrease classroom focus being entirely on the teacher, we implemented practices that made students central to the learning process. To do this, the teachers studied and put into practice various “brain-compatible” learning/teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, Glasser Quality Schools, Integrated Thematic Instruction (now called Highly Effective Teaching), Tribes, and Multiple Intelligences. The modifications in teaching methods made it easier for teachers and students alike to form healthy relationships and thereby produced a better spiritual atmosphere.

Another strategy that we have incorporated to facilitate the desired change is to affirm students’ positive choices. Borrowing the idea from Power of Positive Students International,7 every month we focus on a themed character trait (for example, the fruits of the Spirit) and affirm teacher-chosen students who have modeled that trait. Through the course of a year, we make certain that every student has been affirmed. Every homeroom teacher creates a paragraph or two for each selected student that is read at chapel. Our principal hands the winners a certificate for a treat of some sort (this year they get a giant cinnamon roll at lunch time).

1. Competitive Sports

A rather controversial topic, and one for which we are still seeking to achieve proper balance, is how to approach the area of competitive sports. Though sports provide excellent life lessons, it is easy for a school to allow the sports program to become its main focus. While Livingstone was still a K-10 school, Principal Jim Roy and the school board opted for a non-competition policy. As basketball was the only sport in which the school was involved and the only competitive event was a conference-wide Friendship Tournament, this step was not too difficult to take. Rather than doing away with sports altogether, however, Mr. Roy started a new intramural conference-wide tournament program. Instead of pitting school against school, all players were put into a pool, and based on skill level as assessed by the coaches, the organizers created teams as evenly matched as possible. We discovered that when students played as teammates with young people from other schools, they formed friendships rather than rivalries. An unforeseen benefit was that schools with too few students to field a team for the competitive tournament could now participate. When we transitioned to a full K-12 program, however, this policy changed. In order for our students to take advantage of all the opportunities that Walla Walla College (now University) offered to academies, we needed a competitive sports
program to participate in the soccer, volleyball, and basketball tournaments they host. We are still in the process of finding a healthy balance for this facet of our school program.

2. Group Bonding Activities

Soon after Livingstone began intentionally focusing on spirituality and healthy relationships, we noticed an improvement in students’ relationships with one another and with the staff. So as a result, the staff decided to start the next school year with a special emphasis on group bonding and spirituality. When you ask former students and alumni of Livingstone Adventist Academy what they remember most about their school experience and what had the biggest spiritual impact in their lives at that time, you are most likely to hear about the school’s fall community-building activities.

Our middle school students spend some time at a ropes course getting acquainted, learning to trust God, and developing friendships. The freshmen and sophomores go on a weekend camping trip with the specific goal of building community and constructing a spiritual base for the school year. During Senior Survival, our longest outing, the seniors spend almost a whole week in intense Bible study and collaborative activities. This program starts on Tuesday and lasts until Sunday, with the junior class joining them on Thursday for leadership training. One of the highlights of Senior Survival is putting on the church service at Christmas Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in central Oregon on Sabbath. These campouts also provide a great way to get to know parents who come along as chaperons.

Another tradition that Livingstone initiated was a yearly school-wide family campout at the Oregon coast. Over the years, this early fall event has become a gathering of not just students’ families, but also extended family and other constituent church and school supporters. We invite guest speakers and enjoy the weekend singing and praising God together.

The most meaningful of our intentional spiritual outings, however, is a three-day retreat, mid-year, for the secondary-level students. We pack up after school mid-week and make the 30-minute drive to Silver Falls State Park, where we rent a large ranch house lodge that houses all 75 or so students and staff. There, we spend time playing and studying the Bible to recharge for the remainder of the year. Away from distractions and out of cell service, this location makes it easier to focus on Jesus and our relationship with Him.

3. Weeks of Prayer and Chapels

Another spiritually powerful activity is our weeks of prayer. Like other Adventist institutions of education, we use this time to refocus our attention on spiritual matters. We try to schedule three weeks of prayer in each school year. During the fall week of prayer, we invite a guest speaker. For our winter week of prayer, the staff give their testimonies. We have found these weeks to be a powerful witness and another way of building healthy relationships between staff and students. In the spring, our high school students not only put
4. Service Activities

I believe that service is another litmus test of a school’s spiritual health. Most grades at Livingstone Adventist Academy have a yearly service project. These range from crocheting hats for the local Adventist Community Center to raising funds for drilling wells in Africa, to Toys for Tots at Christmas time, to clearing brush for ranchers in central Oregon. In addition to these class service projects, the high school students, in conjunction with a constituent church, participate in a mission trip every spring break. Lives change when students get out of their comfort zones and are put into a situation of helping others rather than focusing on themselves.

When our first senior class planned their class trip, the students and staff intentionally chose a mission trip rather than a Disneyland-type event. Though we have had the privilege to serve schools and churches in Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Costa Rica, it is the spiritual lives of our students that have been the most affected.

Back to Purpose

“While God presents His infinitely loving and wise character as the ultimate norm for human conduct, human motives, thinking, and behavior have fallen short of God’s ideal. Education in its broadest sense is a means of returning human beings to their original relationship with God. Its time dimensions span eternity.”

For students like Pat Featherstone, the value of Adventist education is not just academics, though that is important, but rather a place where he met Jesus, which has made all the difference. It is my hope and prayer that through Adventist education, we can “restore human beings into the image of their Maker.” This is the journey and process that we at Livingstone Adventist Academy have gone down; we are always watchful for more ideas and would love to hear what is working at other schools to make them a place where people “feel the presence of God.”

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Interview with Pat Featherstone, September 2009.

Chris Sequeira teaches high school-level Bible, history, and physical education/health at Livingstone Adventist Academy in Salem, Oregon, and is currently working on his Master of Arts degree in teaching at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington.
'I don’t have a worship thought prepared for today,” announced a junior pre-service teacher in one of my university methods courses recently. I was puzzled—she had signed up for that time slot weeks before, and the theme for the quarter was well known by all.

“Why not?” I asked.

“I couldn’t think of anything” was the unexpected response from this bright young woman who has many interests and a lively curiosity about how children learn.

As I later worked with this student to build her teaching skills, beginning with modeling another worship/focus event, I put down in writing some of my thoughts about creative classroom worships based on the approaches used by the Master Teacher.

Jesus taught using creative worship methods that went against the educational paradigm of His day, which involved memorization and repetition of worn platitudes of supposedly superior minds that sought to reinforce the tradition of doing everything as it had “always” been done. Jesus used prayer, lessons from the Scriptures, questions, references to noble believers of the past, object lessons from daily life, His powerful and musical voice, and long walks in the mountains and by lakes to create worship events to ensure that His hearers understood and remembered the lessons He had presented. He awesomely argued, notably nuanced, powerfully pointed, colorfully crafted, and delicately delivered lessons that continue to inspire Christian teachers today. By following His methods, teachers, from preschool to university level, can also create memorable worship events.

When we do worship planning, the types of events we plan and how we implement them are intimately connected to our
mental organizational processes, as well as to the demands on our time and energy, but they also are influenced by our own connection with Jesus. I have distilled four “rules” from my 45 years of teaching experience, 20 years of reading the Bible completely through, more than 60 years of nature study: (1) Make your worship memorable by standing up for something; (2) Create unforgettable worships by building on something you feel passionate about; (3) Ask high-level questions that require analysis and synthesis; and (4) Integrate service learning into your worship events.

1. Make Your Worship Memorable by Standing Up for Something

A worship thought, or “event” (if more than just a brief presentation), has become a mandatory part of my routine. I use them to start all my classes with pre-service teachers in the university setting. Scheduling the worship event before class helps to focus the students’ and teacher’s thoughts on the relationships in the factual world of implementation, theoretical concepts, and the reasons why these things matter in heavenly terms. Holmes, in his seminal work *The Idea of a Christian College*, posited, “But if a person is at heart a religious being, then all her activities are animated and informed by her faith.” Further, he claimed that “[a]nother educational goal accordingly follows, to teach values as well as facts.” Poe takes this one step further by stating that “[a]ll knowledge is religious.” Assuming this is true, the Christian teacher then has an obligation to make those values and ethical norms known to students.

In other words, Christian teachers need to be intentional and transparent about their embrace of Christian values. This cannot happen, however, until they are crystal clear themselves about what those values are. That clarity comes from spending more time in the Word and with the Author of the Word.

2. Create Unforgettable Worships by Building on Something You Feel Passionate About

I feel passionate about the need to help children connect with God’s revelation in the natural world. One of my strong interests, which has helped me create memorable worships, is natural history. I began to earn my credentials as an amateur naturalist very early, growing up on a farm in North Dakota where I had time to observe the flora and fauna. Gorgeous displays of the Northern Lights were common during the winter. Memories of surviving a three-day blizzard in an abandoned farmhouse with my family became the basis for one of my favorite quilts and for children’s storybooks. Remnants of my father’s extensive rock collection, including a dinosaur bone, are now augmented by my own fossil finds, such as fish coprolites.
I have raised butterflies and moths from eggs to ethereal flight and have watched the silk-making process from beginning to end. My children had a number of pets through the years (cats, dogs, hamsters, gerbils, frogs, lizards, fish, and spiders), whose adventures became the basis for many worship stories.

Wild birds have provided interesting insights for a variety of worship talks. When the Bible says, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard!” (Proverbs 6:6, KJV), I take it literally, whether I’m photographing them on the island of Borneo or writing about them in Ghana. The entire 10th chapter of *Education* deals with the importance of children learning to see God in nature. Two of my worship events based on lessons from natural history are found in Appendices A and B. Additional worship ideas have been posted on the Web: http://circle.adventist.org/jae/en/jae/20127502Worship.pdf.

There is, however, one caution—even when a teacher has values to share, a passion to do so, and lively visual aids or other object lessons prepared, he or she needs to drive home the educational points by asking appropriate high-level questions that call for analysis and/or synthesis.

### 3. Ask High-level Questions That Require Analysis and Synthesis

As an example of questions that call for synthesis, during a worship event I’ve asked students to choose a rock/mineral from a hand-carved wooden bowl and then to think for two minutes about what that item tells them about God. This same question works well after a quick trip outside to gather flotsam and jetsam from the campus or a nearby lake. (Quick sketches or photos are allowable in lieu of snapping off live flowers or branches.) Spiders that fortuitously appear in my office become worship fodder as we discuss their advanced silk-making process and product and then question how it is possible for a fossil spider with its silk-producing factory already in place to be found within Devonian rock. My seven-stanza poem on this topic is embedded within a PowerPoint on the Web.

Having shared known values in an interesting fashion and asked questions that draw students farther into the learning process as they discuss potential answers is only one element of the value of creative worship events, however. The other part comes when students actually see their teachers doing/living what they have taught so creatively.

### 4. Integrate Service Learning Into Your Worship Events

Nothing energizes a classroom like a service project that integrates worship talks, academic learning, and reflection about future events. Glasser maintained that one of the constituents...
of the Quality School was service: “There would be an emphasis on community service, but this service would never be pure physical labor. It would always have an intellectual component—something the students learned in school that they could put to work in the community. An example would be studying the local environment and a plan to correct some deficiency that was brought out by the study so that both the students and the community could profit from what the students had learned.” 9 Martin Luther King, Jr., made a related point: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” 10 Students must not be sheltered from real life during their years of Christian schooling—in fact, the two must be integrated in as consistent and as natural a manner as possible. I have developed some ideas for this process in my essay entitled “Heavenly Heuristic: Lessons for Christian Education From the Hebrew Tabernacle.” 11

So, did my university student benefit from this experience? Let’s just say that the next time she was scheduled to present a worship event as part of a service-learning project for another of my classes, she used suggestion one above, incorporating “gracious professionalism” and her strong interest in LEGO coaching. 12 She asked the children high-level questions to tie the Bible narrative to their own experience as the “Awesome Onions” LEGO-project team and modeled service learning by just

Top: As an Illustration of the service-learning connection for worships, the author's students created a quilt for a woman who lost everything in Hurricane Katrina (see Appendix A). The students wrote encouraging Bible texts and statements that were incorporated into the pattern.

Bottom: This boy and girl from the Farm Labor Homes near Walla Walla University (College Place, Washington) were part of the Awesome Onions (LEGO robotics team) mentioned in the article. They enjoyed the class worship events so much that they began to request to do the praying.
being there as part of her classwork requirements. I walked my own talk by attending as one of the coaches, as well. It was a most excellent creative worship event.

Appendix A—Heavenly Values

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV): “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Even though I like moths very much, having raised many of them from very small wormhood, so to speak, I take the above verses to heart when I see the ugly evidence of moth-larvae damage on wool, silk, and other fabrics. Even though the moths I raised were the type that ate only leaves, I understand that Jesus’ spiritual lesson is incredibly valuable.

Let us enlarge the concept of destroyers of our earthly treasures from the “moth and rust . . . and . . . thieves” to focus on the aftereffects of the floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina that overwhelmed the city of New Orleans in 2005. The only person I have met since that time who was able to show me pictures and talk about her losses said that everything she owned was destroyed except her dog and five of her seven cats. Her place of work was destroyed. Her brick house survived the storm but inside, the ceiling tiles sagged downward to rest on the slimy, moldy furniture and rippling blobs of drywall. Papers, books, pictures, clothing, and food were scattered and smeared with mud. Outside, her once-green shrubs and lawn turned a ghastly brownish-yellow, killed by the brackish water of Lake Pontchartrain.

This woman said that as the cold, dirty waters kept rising, until they came nearly to the ceiling of her kitchen, she swam here and there in the filth, grabbing her cats and thrusting them through a hole she had made in her kitchen ceiling. Then she made three desperate attempts to heave herself up through the same hole, falling back twice and nearly drowning. She said she knew that if she didn’t make it on the third try, she wouldn’t have the strength to try again.

Now this survivor of Hurricane Katrina is living with one of her cats in a one-room apartment in Richland, Washington, driving a car donated to her by a local church, sleeping under a quilt made for her by Walla Walla University students, and feeling thankful that her life was spared, along with most of her precious pets. The things she lost simply don’t matter much now.

When we are in heaven looking back, it will be crystal clear which earthly things were of eternal worth and which were a waste of our time, energy, and money—food for moths, so to speak. What constitutes heavenly treasure? Service for children, old people, and others who are unable to do for themselves; working for justice, praying with and for one another; encouraging those who are sad and lonely; sharing our own temporal
and spiritual blessings; studying Bible prophecy and promises with those who are seeking a relationship with God; singing joyful religious songs; telling the world the good news of Jesus’ soon coming—these things cannot be destroyed by moth, rust, thieves, flood, or fire.

For all of us, I pray that our treasures—as well as our hearts—will be in heaven.

P.S. I invited this woman to attend our class with her cat, her pictures, and her story. We gave her a quilt that we had made as a class. We discovered that the thing she missed the most that had been lost in the flood was her great-grandmother’s quilt!

Appendix B—Natural History
Dinosaur Dirge—A Voice Choir for Worship

If I were a dinosaur
And I were trying to run
Away, away, away from the fear
(Echo: Away from the fear . . .)

I would head for the highest hills
Where I see the setting sun
Far, far, far from here
(Echo: Far from here . . .)

I’d flee for my life
For the rocks do stun

Volcanos vomit and heat does sear
(Echo: Heat does sear . . .)

My feet etch a pattern
In a muddy fusion
Of raindrop, blood, and a tear
(Echo: Blood and a tear . . .)

And endless rain does fall
There’s no illusion
The end is near
(Echo: The end is near . . .)

Tamara Randolph, Ph.D., is a Professor in the School of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. Resource material for this article was gathered over a period of 45 years of teaching, both in public and private schools and in Seventh-day Adventist youth groups, sometimes as a volunteer and sometimes as a paid professional, from the preschool through the tertiary level. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Tamara Randolph, Professor of Education, School of Education and Psychology, Walla Walla University, College Place, WA 99324. E-mail: tamara.randolph@wallawalla.edu.

NOTES AND REFERENCES
4. Ibid., p. 32.
8. See http://www.wallawalla.edu/16242. Note that the program will need to be run as a slide show from the beginning in order for this poem to be read in its entirety.
12. LEGO coaching was an activity I had my Technology Tools for Teachers class (EDUC 315) do for a service project in 2011. Prior to that, I had conducted two sequential pilot studies with an education student and an engineering student from Walla Walla University, taking the LEGO robot to the Farm Labor Homes and having them work with two groups of interested students. The WWU engineering program hosts a regional Seventh-day Adventist LEGO tournament each year (see http://www.wallawalla.edu/academic/areas-of-study/undergraduate-programs/engineering/lego/).
Growth is an essential ingredient of life. Whether it be the world of plants and animals or human beings, whether it be the physical, mental, social, or spiritual realms, where there is no growth, decline and decay take over. How true this is in the most significant area of life—that of the spirit—is reflected in the question Jesus once asked: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36, KJV).

As Adventist educators, we should prayerfully reflect on this question: What is the most fundamental aspect of Christian education? Is it not the spiritual growth of the students who attend our schools? “True education,” wrote Ellen White, “means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”

This article deals with the third and most significant dimension in the above definition of true education—spiritual growth. To probe this topic, we will discuss four questions: What is spirituality and spiritual growth? How do students relate to the concepts of religion and spirituality? How is spiritual growth achieved in the school environment? How can we incorporate activities into the day-to-day activities of every Seventh-day Adventist school that will help our students to better understand God and relate to Him?

Spirituality: What It Is

Webster defines spirituality as a sensitivity and attachment to religious values. Theologians and researchers differ...
on their definition of spirituality, even though they generally acknowledge that it is somehow related to and intersects with religion and faith as its essential components. James Fowler, noted for his research on faith development in the Christian setting, says that each person experiences stages of faith growth—from the primal faith of infants, to the intuitive-projective faith of toddlerhood and early childhood, to the mythic-literal faith of middle childhood and beyond, and finally, the synthetic-conventional faith of adolescence. People at each of these stages have an ability to relate to God that is appropriate to their development level, ranging from the very simple faith of children to a more complex and mature relationship to God that develops over time. Thus, the development of spirituality is a lifelong journey.

Spiritual awareness is not possessed only by adults with special training or experience. After studying the spirituality of 6-year-old and 10-year-old children in England, Rebecca Nye found that not a single child was lacking in spiritual awareness, even when his or her experience was restricted by vocabulary and experience. Hay defines spirituality as an innate awareness that is biologically implanted in the human species and undergoes development as people mature. Thus, children do not have to be taught spiritual awareness; it is built into their physiology. However, teachers can help enhance that awareness by offering their students language and experiences that help them to articulate it.

In Western society, there is a tendency to separate spirituality and religiosity. One often hears the statement, “I’m a spiritual person, but I’m not really religious.” Dowling offers a helpful definition and comparison of religiosity and spirituality that connects the two concepts in order to facilitate human thriving. He describes religiosity as the impact of beliefs on self, religious views and restrictions, and the role of church life. By contrast, spirituality is defined as doing good deeds and helping others, but having thoughts and attitudes that transcend the ritual, form, and rules of religiosity.

The two—religiosity and spirituality—are actually complementary because they give children and youth rules to live by and then show them how to live out these rules in daily life. When the rules are mediated through parents, school, and church, they provide young people with a moral compass for developing good personal values and a positive identity, which should help them to successfully cope with life’s problems and challenges.

Having reviewed the various definitions and approaches to spirituality, we now offer a personal definition: Spirituality is using the tools of ritual and religion to nurture human beings’ powerful relationship with God, and all of the emotion that goes with it.

Spirituality: Student Surveys

Schools usually focus mainly on the transmission of information and on pedagogical processes—math, science, English, and so on—rather than on spiritual development. Even Christian schools tend to put their primary emphasis on the acquisition of facts and preparation for employment. Yet schools can be powerful settings for spiritual-life education.

A fairly recent World Values Survey of North America, 18- to 24-year-olds from 41 countries and eight regions were asked three questions: (1) Do you believe in God? (2) How important is God in your life? (3) How important is religion in your life? More than 90 percent said they believed in God, but only about 50 percent thought He was very important, and about 43 percent said that religion was very important.

The National Study of Youth and Religion in a survey of almost 3,300 teenagers (13- to 17-year-olds) found a similar pattern, with 84 percent believing in the existence of God; 65 percent believing in a personal God involved in their lives; 51 percent affirming that their faith was extremely important to them; and 36 percent testifying to a close relationship with God.

These surveys reveal that there is a significant difference between believing that there is a God and actually having some sort of relationship with Him. I have encountered a number of students who claim to be atheists or agnostics. Almost without exception, these students come from a long history of Church–school education—elementary through secondary, and into college. Every year in my Adventist teaching experience, students enroll in my university-level classes who are non-receptive to any mention of God or religion, and some profoundly resent the inclusion of spirituality in class discussions. Some studies have indicated that about one of every two young adults leaves the church after high school. These negative attitudes toward religion seem to have developed early in children’s education and frame the choices they make in academy and college.

Another survey, “Monitoring the Future Study,” has annually asked an
ethnically composite group of 50,000 8th, 10th, and 12th graders across the U.S. in 1995 and 1996, “How important is religion in your life?” Sixty-eight percent of girls and 57 percent of boys found religion very important. Fifty-six percent of the respondents were Afro-Americans; 26 percent were white. While the survey asked about religion, rather than spirituality, and did not include a definition of religion, one can assume that the young people believed that the term included their feelings about God, not just what God could or could not do to/for them.11

**Spirituality: How It Is Conveyed**

What modes of transmission can be used to enhance young people’s spirituality? Crawford and Rossiter point to three influences:12

1. **Family.** Spirituality and religion are positively correlated with marital stability and satisfaction. This makes for strong family relationships.13 When the parents have a strong commitment to church attendance, prayer life, and participation in religious activities, young people generally have a strong spiritual life. They develop more effective methods of coping with adversity and handling conflict.

2. **Peers who share similar values.** When a young person’s friends embrace a faith orientation and communicate that this plays an important role in their lives, he or she is more likely to adopt the same attitudes. This provides an alternative path for identity development in youth susceptible to discovering their uniqueness by riskier means, such as drinking, drugs, sex, and gang membership.14 In fact, these positive peer influences may counteract negative influences and enable adolescents to resist peer pressures to reject religious and spiritual standards.15

3. **Mentors.** The third suggestion is for positive mentors to engage regularly with young people. This could include almost any adult, including teachers, and/or any group that actively supports spiritual development.

According to Doe and Walsh,16 while as adults we may know how to do and teach everything to young people from nutrition to coaching, from organizing their lives to giving them every advantage, we may be failing to engage the very core of their being: their spirituality. A little girl asked her parents as they drove to church, “What do we get at church? At the library we get books; at the bank we get money; at the grocery store we get milk. What do you get at church?” The child could well have asked the same about her experience in a Christian school: “We get math, science, spelling, history, and Bible, but what else do I get there that will help me spiritually?”

Duncan and Kennedy17 state that teachers struggle with the challenge of including spirituality equally alongside other dimensions of education. I believe that the issue is simpler than what teachers think! The influence of the teacher’s own spirituality will shine through in his or her response to children’s spiritual expressions, if he or she recognizes the spiritual potential of all areas of the curriculum, works to enhance the teacher-child relationship, and intentionally focuses on improving the spiritual climate of the classroom.

When I was teaching elementary school, I found it a struggle to integrate faith and learning. Trying to insert some relevant religious concept into a math problem or extract some idea from a spelling list that made my students think about religious things was difficult for me. But although curricular interventions can certainly play a part in enhancing students’ spirituality, the goal of spiritual wholeness is broader and more inclusive: It requires creating an overall environment of spiritual freshness and connectedness, based on a growing relationship with God.

**Spirituality: Helping Children Understand God**

Where do people’s ideas about God originate? Matthew Alper18 observes that since all human cultures, no matter how isolated, have believed that a spiritual realm exists, this likely suggests that this perception is an inherent
characteristic of human beings and a genetically inherited trait. There have been theories and postulates and even scientific investigations that speculate about the sort of human pre-programming that causes human beings to recognize that there is a God and to desire to respond to Him in a spiritual way.

When asked regarding their views about God, young people often come up with some interesting answers. For example, one 5th-grade teacher in a Christian school asked her children to look at TV commercials and see if they could use them to describe God. These students had no trouble using their understanding of God to come up with statements about who God is and what He is like, though the assignment obviously dictated and limited the scope of their responses. Here are some of the varied answers the teacher received:

- God is like Bayer Aspirin, He works miracles.
- He is like Hallmark Cards, He cares enough to send His very best.
- He is like Tide, He gets the stains out that others leave behind.
- He is like Scotch Tape, you can’t see Him, but you know He is there.
- Allstate, you’re in good hands with Him.
- [He’s like] Dial Soap, aren’t you glad you have Him?
- He is like the post office, neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet, nor ice will keep Him from His appointed destination.

The answers are humorous, but they certainly show that children have an affinity for the spiritual and from an early age desire a relationship with God. Adults need to attend to how children experience and understand God. This will enable ministry leaders, parents, and teachers to help children develop their life of faith.

Stonehouse and May probed these questions by talking to children about their relationship with God, by observing them in worship settings, and by interviewing adults about their childhood faith experiences. The researchers concluded that setting the stage for children to wonder together about God, guided by wise and spiritually mature teachers in an environment that is specifically prepared for spiritual growth, helps children to learn about and to know God. The children will then be able to express what they know and their desire to learn more. As they become more attuned to the spiritual, this makes room for the Holy Spirit to assume the critically important role of teacher in their lives. The authors list important elements that contribute to this process such as worship, Scripture, prayer, and compassion.

So, how can parents, teachers, and church leaders help young people learn to talk and listen to God? First, we need to recognize that as children go through the various developmental stages, their ability to understand abstract concepts changes and matures. Young children have the ability to understand that Jesus is their friend, so simple prayers and stories will keep them connected. Stories are children’s tools for learning about the world around them, coping with adversity, and drawing meaning from life. Yet we persist in presenting them to children as lessons from doctrine or morals rather than as something to be remembered, celebrated, and processed by children in play and art.

School-aged children are very aware of the evil in the world around them, and they need to know that God cares about everything that happens to them and their surroundings. It is important that they feel comfortable asking for God’s help and can express those thoughts. It is essential for schools to provide experiences and time for students to learn that God wants to be personally involved in their lives and that they can take their worries and joys to Him.

We do not need new curriculum frameworks for teaching kids how to have spiritual connectedness. We need committed, spiritually minded teachers who live what they believe and who invite students into a spiritual relationship with God through prayers and...
faith; we need teachers who teach by sharing and by example.

The question is: Will we make room for spirituality in our classrooms? If so, will we do so for the right reasons? We should do this because it is the best thing for teachers and for students. But will we do so for the right reasons? We need teachers who teach by faith; we need teachers who teach by example.

The Coordinator for this special issue on Spirituality, Robert Egbert is a Professor of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. He has been a middle school, academy, and university teacher for almost 40 years. Dr. Egbert holds an Ed.D. in Curriculum Theory and Development from Temple University and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology and Anthropology from the Union Institute. The JOURNAL’s editorial staff express appreciation for his assistance in the planning and production of the issue.

A native of Canada, Sara Kuburic is a graduate student in psychology in Australia. Ms. Kuburic has a multitude of interests, including the relationship between religion and psychology, and is a frequent international traveler with family roots in Europe and Australia. During the production of this issue, she served as a psychology intern for Dr. Egbert.

NOTES AND REFERENCES
Sample lessons for each theme are briefly described below.

**Student-Chosen Themes**

My classes have featured a rich variety of student-led worship events. Two of these are described below:

**“Yellow”**

After the students choose a theme for the quarter, I make the first presentation, after which they take turns giving worships on the same theme. This simple-sounding topic lends itself well to many early literacy experiences. For example, on some days there are gloriously gleaming golden leaves on the ground around campus, just begging to be brought into the classroom to glow for Jesus. We discuss the patterns, variations in color, and textures of the leaves, comparing these to the variations we will find among the preschool children where we do service learning as a class laboratory. During their worships, some of my students have used the yellow rays of the sun to focus our thoughts and prayer requests; others have used butter-yellow dandelions, yellow crayons with clever pictures to color and discuss, yellow apples, etc.

**“Tacos: Layers of Language Learning”**

This student-chosen theme highlighted the expressive and receptive early-language skills emphasized in our preschool lab. The student presenters introduced the theme by giving the teacher and each of the class members a balloon with a mysterious rolled-up piece of paper inside. Following her instructions, we took turns popping our balloons and reading the word on each paper inside. She instructed us to tape the papers to her creatively designed cardboard backdrop (see photo below), which then revealed a list of the fruits of the Spirit. The presenter compared each of us to the taco shell, with the fruits of the Spirit layered inside. After she read Galatians 5:22 and 23 aloud, we prayed together to start the class, as is our custom.
“Nature-Related Themes”

“Frogs and Other Amphibians”

Sometimes I bring vividly colored slices or whole fruits to an early morning class, and, with the aid of toothpicks, knives, and my sample “frog,” ask each student to create his or her own breakfast frog (I make sure they avoid using toxic items such as permanent markers), after which we praise Jesus not only for frogs but also for fantastic food, which we then proceed to eat.

“Sustainability”

For this topic, which is rightfully assuming increasing importance in the field of education in many places (and will likely become the fifth learning goal for Washington State students), my teachers-in-training and I have gone outside and run around the building, picking up any detritus as we go, after which we return to the classroom, where we dis-

A pomelo, a grapefruit, and a lime combined to make a cheery breakfast frog that served as a worship focus when we were studying one of the functions of frogs’ eyes.

This 20-foot-long anaconda was made from several discarded tripod boxes, plastic bubble wrap, and a lot of duct tape. His head was an old piñata armature made of cardboard. I covered him with fabric from Walmart and used him as a learning incentive at the local Farm Labor Home when they were studying the country of Colombia.
play our treasures and discuss ways to teach young students about picking up after themselves and encouraging the rest of the world to do the same. A useful Bible verse I’ve used in this context is Mark 8:8.

“Apples”
To introduce my early-morning literacy class, I tell this simple story: A little boy wants to find a red house with a brown chimney, no doors and no windows, and a star inside. Where should he look? When I bring a shiny red apple from behind my back and cut it crosswise with my special red knife to show the star-shaped seed arrangement inside, my students and I are awed anew at the wonderful mind of our Creator. Everyone in the class gets to admire the apple, and the hungriest one gets to eat it.

“Pomegranates”
For my Philosophy of Christian Education course, I purchase a beautiful red pomegranate for each student and one for myself. At the conclusion of the class period when we discuss a 10-foot tabernacle visual and what insights it gives us into the philosophy of education of the ancient Hebrews, I ask the students to bring aprons or other protective clothing to the next class. At the beginning of that class, I hand out the pomegranates and ask: “What does a pomegranate help us learn about Jesus?” Meanwhile, I make a big deal of putting on a coverall to protect my clothes from the glorious ruby-red spatters that will result as I cut open my pomegranate (and asking my students to cover up also). With a flourish, I reveal the treasures inside my pomegranate to the students, many of whom have not explored this fruit before, and give them the opportunity to produce thoughtful responses as we go around the room, leaving no one out. As we slurp and suck on the arils, we search for serious, saving understanding. For this worship exercise, we pray after we eat.

“Rocks”
I frequently use this theme, along with its conceptual cousin, “The God of the Rocks,” for my Philosophy of Christian Education class. I pass around a large, rough wooden bowl filled with minerals of various shapes and textures. Included are samples of fossils embedded in various matrices from a variety of locales, many of which were discovered great distances from modern major bodies of water. I invite each student to take a rock/fossil out of the bowl and to think of ways that it could illustrate an aspect of God. My students always come up with exceptional connections that I would not have made myself. We rejoice together and pray, and then I begin the short lecture and long discussion of Neo-Darwinism, a philosophy that has impacted Western education.

“webs of understanding”
Every winter for the past three years, a splendid specimen of phidippus audax (Bold Jumping Spider) has leaped into my office. Each time, I’ve scrambled to find a transparent container, gently catching the wandering arachnid, exclaiming over its glowing green fang covers. I use it as an object lesson the next day, then release it near my home, a mile from the university. I like to believe that the same spider hikes back to find me every year when the cold winds blow. My experience has prompted a variety of activities and writing tasks that can be incorporated into worships. The students like to write poems and jump rope to their rhymes, sometimes inviting young students to join in the activity. The children also enjoy the fact-filled science rhymes, which have the additional benefit of teaching literacy.

I incorporate another poem, based on the same spider-guest, into my Philosophy of Christian Education class discussions on Neo-Darwinism during the discussion of Coffin, Brown, and Gibson’s Origin by Design citation of Shear, et al.’s description of a fossil spider with its silk-producing factory already in place found within Devonian rock. This poem has even been used by a multigrade teacher as a jump-rope rhyme during recess.

“I Used to Raise Butterflies and Moths”
This curious but useful title is based on an anecdote from my months of tutoring a young Spanish-speaking girl in English. When I learned how much she enjoyed natural science, I made the above statement. She thought a moment and then asked, without a trace of irony, “Who won?” One of my many worship thoughts based on this theme is reproduced in Appendix A on page 40 of the December 2012/January 2013 issue of

**Dinosaur-Related Worships**

My students usually discuss a range of themes to guide our worship foci and sometimes our end-of-quarter event combines food and literacy activities. One quarter, they voted to use a dinosaur theme, so we brainstormed about what food to feed our guests at the end of the quarter.

“Do Dinosaurs Taste Sour or Sweet—and Who Would Know?”

The visual for this theme was the clip art below. Initially our worship talks focused on what the world would have looked like through the eye of the dinosaur itself. This led to a discussion of whether dinosaurs were created by God during Creation week, and if so, what they might have eaten before sin led to a predation-based world. This gradually evolved into worship talks about what dinosaurs saw and ate after the Fall and if anybody ate the dinosaurs.

To accompany this theme, the students and I created a dinosaur authors’ chair to be donated to a one-room school when we took our annual field trip for a reading/language-arts curriculum-and-instruction class. The chair may be viewed in a construction stage at http://www.wallawalla.edu/academics/libraries/curriculum-library/crafts/authors-chair/. This site was created by Walla Walla University Curriculum Librarian Franice Stirling, who liberally shares the wonderful ideas with which Jesus has blessed her.

**More Dinosaur-Themed Worships**

The theme of dinosaurs has proved to be a rich source of cross-disciplinary activities. We have used our document camera to read each a section each day from creationist texts such as Dr. Elaine Kennedy’s Dinosaurs, Where Did They Come From? and to zoom in on actual dinosaur bones. We have practiced voice choirs such as the one in Appendix B on page 41 of the December/January issue; and built trifold 3-D “stations” containing various dinosaur facts to use for learning centers.

An important caveat: This subject has to be approached prayerfully and from a solid biblical macro view of history, science, and theology, as well as an understanding of the power of narrative to clarify or distort thinking processes.

**Other Themes**

“Green”

This one works well for my social studies curriculum class because there are so many connotations for the word green. For a few worship-focus times, I have brought a U.S. $20 bill to class (which is still more-or-less green), hidden it in one hand behind my back, and held a piece of plain green paper in the other. I then ask a student to choose which hand holds the most valuable piece of green paper. We get a lot of mileage out of that object lesson in terms of heavenly economics—how it is that a piece of paper has come to have so much value in our eyes, what will happen to it when Jesus comes, and where we are putting our real treasure.

“God Is Love”

This voice choir selection combines recitation with action, as it chillingly traces the hypnotic effect of the snake in the tree on the world’s first woman. For the recitation, see http://teacher tammy4ever.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/god-is-love-poem-by-tamararan dolph/february-20082.pdf.

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**
