

July 24th, 2009

Dear Friends

I have been on the 'school run' this month, some might say 'playground duty'! We are frugal in celebrating the transformational work of our educators. Their formative encounter with our youngsters is profound.

For some reason our thinking about teaching and learning has come to focus on institutions rather than the nature of education itself. By contrast we would hardly allow our views on healthful living to become embroiled with the pathology of hospitals. There is a subtle difference between Adventist Education and Education that is Adventist, the latter is a lifelong experience.

Teachers are well known for the questions they pose rather than the propositions they affirm. In this regard I'm drawn to three questions of the Spirit in the book of Acts.

The first was asked of Saul on the Damascus road. "Why are you persecuting Christians?" This loses application when viewed from a sectarian perspective but for teachers and parents, the question may well have been: *Why are you so aggressive with my Children?* For Pastors the question might have been: *Why are you so strident in the reinforcement of orthodoxy?* In the general form, the question is: **Why are you doing what you are doing?** In this context, all of us can regularly experience the guiding light.

The second is Phillip's question on the Gaza road. Undoubtedly, the Ethiopian was schooled with regard to Isaiah's prophecy in a conventional sense, but this disciple seems to have had the chutzpah to jump chariot and ask *Hey mister, do you understand what you are reading?* This is the question that differentiates our educational perspective. The question was really: *Have you encountered God's working in the events of our times?*

Post-Pentecost the question asked of Peter was. "Why do you view outsiders as unclean?" or "**are we not all family**"? How is it that after 2000 years, we fail to see the redemptive image of Christ in every human being? No doubt, we need a nightmare or tragedy that requires us to eat the inedible.

During my travels I have had the pleasure of reading Greg Mortenson's biography – 'Three Cups of Tea'.

Greg is a K2 mountaineer who has been instrumental in building 55 schools for Muslim children in Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan, "Changing the world – one school at a time." To achieve this he has won the confidence of some of the most isolated xenophobes on the planet. He observes that their relationship-building formula is to learn why people are doing what they are doing over the first cup of tea, to make friends and find meaning over the second and then to embrace people as family over the third. And for family, they are prepared to sacrifice their lives. Sharing questions about behaving, believing and belonging over cups of tea somehow appeals!

Thank you for being a channel of God's Spirit. May you be refreshed with new meaning this holiday over a few cuppa's.

Best regards

Victor

