

Faith and Learning

by Chris Famisaran

Growing up in our household, in the garage there was a plaque. I don't know who put it up, but it said, "Ask a teenager, they know everything." Isn't that true? Do you remember when we were so young and so proud and idealistic and thought we knew everything? And then a few years later, you still realize, oh, I still have a lot to learn. Then you get older, and you realize, I don't know if I'm going to learn everything I want to learn. And then at some point, you just come to the point of, I'm not going to know everything I want to learn. But yet the true fact is that life is a commitment to learning.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you Lord for the opportunity to come together to honor our graduates and talk about education Lord. We thank you and praise you for their success, continue to guide them, but not only all of us, help us Lord to be committed to a lifetime of learning, to be humble, to ask great questions and that we may not only know you more, to live a better life in Jesus' name, amen.

I wanna go to the book of Deuteronomy. These are some of the verses that hopefully we'll be able to catch up today. So those of you who are perhaps watching online, you can hit pause or screenshot this. And I wanna go through a couple of these passages. And I wanna start with Deuteronomy six. Deuteronomy six. All right, we all there? And it's here that God has to kind of again remind them of his principles and things that he wants them to follow. Something that is also that we're gonna read. We know we've read in other places. So Deuteronomy 6, let's start at verse one. These are the commands, the decrees, and the laws of the Lord your God directed me to teach you. So these are things that God wants what? He wants them to be taught and to be eventually, of course, remembered. To observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. So I want you to take these teachings, these commands, these principles, take them with you. Don't forget them. Verse two, so that your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all of his decrees. and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy what? Long, not just life, but

long life. So God is telling them, hey, these are the principles. These are the things that I want you to take with you as you journey on, not just for a little while, but for your whole life, that your life may be better.

Verse 3. Hear Israel and be careful to obey so that you may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in the land flowing with milk and honey. When it says milk and honey, what does that mean? It's a term of what? Plenty, goodness, right? Just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors promised you.

Because did not God, we just talked about this recently, did not God promise Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, goodness? And then here is where the meat of what I don't want to talk about. Here is real. The Lord our God. The Lord is what? One. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your what? Your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home. And when you walk along the road, when you lie down, when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads, write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.

And so there's instructions here. Number one, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. It's a very powerful theological statement. But then there's given some practical application. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart. Is it being literal or is there a metaphor to this? Because can you function without the heart? What does the heart do? Pumps out blood so that your brain all the way down to your toes can receive that life-giving, nurturing blood and oxygen to be able to survive. These commands, these principles, may they be so ingrained within you that it flows throughout your whole body is another way of looking at it. And don't just love with your heart, but with your soul of who you are and all of your strength. That's deep. That's profound strength. It's intentionality.

These commandments are to be a gift to give to you are to be on your hearts. But do they just stay with you? Or are you to pass them along? And if so, who especially to impress them on your what? Your children. And don't just say it to them. Talk about them when you sit at home or maybe as you're passing time along the road as you're traveling. When you're sitting down and when you get up. What is Moses trying to point out here is that the commands that God has given us, that really in its nature, we were talking about this in Sabbath school

earlier today, is not to be so much to just bind down your life and make it miserable, but to improve and better your life as a whole. And when it says to impress or talk, be intentional. about sharing these thoughts, these principles, and not just the principles, but the goodness of God. I think we sometimes get wrapped up, okay, we've got to go, got to know the stories of Abraham and Noah and David and Peter and John. But do we talk about the application? What does it mean to love somebody or to forgive somebody when we see that somebody in the Bible wronged somebody else? Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. They're to be impressed in your mind. The things that you do, the things that you do, are they honoring God?

And then finally, number nine, write them on the door frames of your house and on your gates. Why does Moses say that? Because daily you're going in and out of the house. You're going out to go maybe to the market to go work. It's a good reminder.

Now, Bill mentioned today is we're specifically focusing on education. And I want to talk about Christian education, but I want to talk about learning as a life skill. And so Bill did point out that one of the aims of the Adventist Church is to make sure that our kids, and not just kids, but everyone is properly equipped to go. So there are two things that I guess you could say on the left and the right hands of the church, is health and education. We have a huge, huge education network. And we also are strongly committed to healthy living and its principles. And so for many years early on, I don't think it was formalized until about the 1870s where we started to then build formal education in, but. It wasn't just to learn your ABCs and 123s and fractions and English. But as we've noted in the church that Adventist education was to be redemptive, to understand that we are saved by God. And how do we become faithful believers? And it's ingrained not just in our schools, but here at church, are we teaching God's love? Are we teaching the redemptive nature of God? Are we teaching the principles that God wants to be impressed upon the children, and not just the children, but all people? And so today now, we don't just have schools, we have institutions, we have colleges. And going out, Loma Linda University, they're creating doctors, health professionals. There are many facets of education that the church is being able to equip people, to help better their lives. But to serve God with being a medical professional, what are you primarily trying to do? Help bring people healing. For those who

eventually become lawyers, to help stand up and fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. People creating business people, to be able to help build wealth that money can be generated to serve and help grow the church. These are just very, very basic ideas. But... God ultimately, I think though, wants us to learn, not just from our childhood and not just learn the lessons that we took in Sabbath school and in school, as Bill pointed out, but to be committed to, again, a lifelong commitment to faith and learning.

So life is a commitment to faith and learning. What we sometimes forget is where does learning really begin? Does education begin at kindergarten or preschool? It begins in the home. Before you learned your ABCs, before you learned your one, two, threes, and your fractions, what were you learning? You were learning the principles of love, respect, manners, how to get along with each other. Amen? Amen. And hopefully learning about God. And it's also important as parents recognize that we have to make sure that, just as Moses said, we're impressing upon these stories, these principles to our children.

Now, the thing with, I'm sure, being a parent now, I'm going to be very honest. I am not a parent. Okay, I'm going to put that caveat out there. Not a parent. But I've seen, I've also been a child. And what I'm about to share, I excelled at this very one thing to the annoyance of my mother. and especially my grandmother. The common question, why? If you're a young parent or you've just been a parent, you've probably heard this question, why? A lot. There was a survey, I think it was taken last year, that says there was a poll of 2,000 parents of kids who were under six who find that between being asked what, which was 37%, when 22% and why 11% parents are always on call when their kids are what? Curious. Kids are very curious by nature because they want to know. They're so young. They're impressionable. And so they'll ask commonly asked questions to better understand the things that are around them. Like they'll see a dog, they'll see a cat, they'll see a car, they'll see a home, they'll see the stars. They'll see nature, they'll see things in their home or current events. Maybe you've probably heard that common question, why is the sky so tall? Or why can't fish keep their eyes open? Or why can fish keep their eyes open underwater when we don't necessarily can't keep them open all the time? And sometimes children's questions, they may be frequent and sometimes they're not frequent. And sometimes, parents, have you ever had your child ask a very difficult question?

And sometimes, you know, they actually said that 42% of parents can confidently answer an average of only 42% of children's questions, while 81% of parents learn just as much from their child as their child learns from them. Did you ever learn from your children? Maybe you learned love and patience. Now the average parent learns something new from their child about five times per week, and four in five parents are surprised by their child's knowledge of certain topics. But children, they always tend to ask the who, what, where, when, and especially why. As believers, I think it's important that we never stop asking why. Not just in life, but I would even say, let's apply it to the Bible. We shouldn't just be. We should be asking, who's writing this? Who's in the Bible? What's happening? Where is it taking place? And eventually we'll be able to synthesize and say, oh, that's why this is happening.

Now, I want to go to Proverbs, Chapter one, verse five. Proverbs chapter one, verse five. So my point here is critical thinking is a necessary skill to learn and nurture. Proverbs 1:5. Alright, we all there? Okay. Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let discerning get guidance. What do the wise people do? They listen. How many of you love to listen? Or how many of you are already trying to think ahead? True growth and true learning requires that we be able to listen, to make sure we understand. In verse six it says, for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings of the riddles of the wise. Verse seven, now here's what's also important. Not only should we listen, but the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise what? Wisdom and instruction. To be a faithful believer, we should not only listen, but understand and honor, respect and love, and worship God. Heed God's commands. principles so that we can avoid problems and ultimately destruction.

Real quickly, 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17 says, all scripture is God breathed in is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training and righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Meaning scripture is also vital, not only for our spiritual life, but also can provide practical applications of how we can love one another, treat each other well, and think about the future. And it's important that as we learn, We should also pass the wisdom down.

There's a story told of a bus driver by the name of Herman Cruz. He's a 50, well, at the time he was 55 years old and he was a bus driver for a school district in New Jersey. And he was looking around and he saw that there was a kindergartener who was kind of a little sad and a little out of sorts, was acting a little unusual that day. And he asks, hey, are you okay? And the kid said he was having a hard time with his reading assignments because his parents were so busy that they couldn't help him. And the four other siblings were already doing their own homework. And so Cruz, who had some time on his hands, he said, hey, I'm gonna come in to your school. I have some free time. And if you don't mind, is it okay if I read with you? Because when he's not driving a bus, he's just reading a book. So let me just help this guy out. So he clears it with his teacher, he comes in and he helps this young man start to read. Well guess what? When a child sees something that's different, what do they ask? Why? Why does my classmate get special attention? And there was a second child who asked, can I join you? Not just a second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth. Many kids were sitting down with Mr. Cruz to help have them help in their reading assignments. Other bus drivers realized, hey, that guy's making a difference. I could also do that. And several, at least one or two other drivers, to my knowledge, went into classrooms, got permission, sat down with the kids and helped them with their reading assignments. Now what if Mr. Cruz had never done that? This young man would have struggled even further. And I think it's important for those of us who have knowledge, who have something to be able to pass on and to say, it's important that we mentor, just as Mr. Cruz did with these young kids and share the knowledge. Are we mentoring our children? aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors, friends, are we looking out? Because as we say, you know, it's one thing for parents to raise the kids, but do we live in silos? Maybe some people want to do that. But when you look to scripture and you look at other cultures, we realize that raising kids is not just parents.

I'll tell you what, my parents growing up, this was a different time where the neighbors didn't explicitly have permission. But they had the power to be able to say, hey, you need to knock it off. To be able to discipline is a strong word, but to basically inform me that what I was doing was probably not a bright idea or I should not do that. Amen. And so in a sense, it takes a village. One of the kids, she said, I'm going to read with Mr. Herman. And eventually these kids became Mr.

Herman's kids. And what started as a way to kill time had blossomed into a way to make a difference in the heart of a child.

Now, as we pass wisdom down, as we're learning, as we ask questions of not only scripture, but in life, the who, what, where, when and why, it's important that we reflect on what we've learned. and I would dare say record it, whether typing ideas in your phone or better yet taking a pen and paper and writing it out. What are you learning? What lessons have I learned even this week? One of my favorite YouTube channels is called Andy Cooks. And he and his, I think his wife, they'll cook a meal together, or on their second channel actually, on the second channel. And one of the questions that he asks is, what did you learn this week? And it's a way for them to kind of just stop and think about, well, what lesson did I learn? Because if we stop learning, if we stop reading, do we grow or do we start to what? We don't grow and if we stop growing, how can we think more clearly? How can we make better informed decisions if we stop learning and stop reading? So what lessons have I learned this week? Write them down, what did you learn this week?

So my friends, everybody, not just our graduates, but I wanna encourage you with education, it doesn't stop when we quote, graduate. That's just the foundation. to a lifelong commitment of learning and reflection. We could read, but if we don't process it, will we truly learn? There's a famous saying that if we don't learn from our mistakes, what's bound to happen? History will repeat itself. And not only that, I encourage you as parents, and not just parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, bonus aunts, uncles, and parents, take time, spend time, educate, mentor, and help not just the children, but all of us succeed in growing.

So. What in your life... This is something I just learned. I need to proofread what I write. Lesson learned. Huh. Not bad. What in your life can you learn and grow? How many of you want to learn how to cook? How many of you want to learn how to take care of your car? Automotive maintenance. How many of you want to fix something in your house? Times are getting more expensive. Amen. Do you always want to call a plumber when you can do it yourself? Maybe there are some things a plumber should do, but little things, right? The power of the Google and the YouTube is strong. Research it. Ask questions. Where in life can you grow and learn?

And finally, this week, I want to challenge you. Minimum 10, maybe 15 minutes. Reading or learning a new skill. every day this week. Okay? And preferably when it comes to reading, don't be reading romance novels or anything like that. What is something practical, nonfiction that will help you to grow. Leadership, cooking, DIY, home repairs, whatever. Learning how to skip rope. Okay? Challenge yourself. And especially when it comes to scripture, ask the questions of who, where, when, and why. May God bless you.

Father in heaven, thank you Lord, for the fact that you've set a system up to where not only people can have the blessing of being able to know who you are through our schools, but Lord, even then not everybody has that opportunity to go to our Adventist education. Though Lord, it is vitally important, those who still are not able to, who have to go through the public school, may you bless and guide them with these same principles. May they know your love, your grace, but also importantly, help us Lord to never stop learning, to always be humble, to ask questions, think clearly and make great decisions. In Jesus name, everybody said, Amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.