"What am I doing here?"

Teachers share their passion and vision for teaching



Linda Versteynen

Teacher Wellington Adventist Primary, NZ

10 reasons I teach…

1. Because I love it
2. To make a difference in their lives
3. To show them what Jesus is like
4. Because God loves children
5. Because it gives me an opportunity to keep them growing towards Jesus
6. Because I'm passionate about children's learning, and seeing them progress
7. Because children are fun, open, transparent and real
8. Because they teach me about life
9. Because it is rewarding
10. Because they are a mirror and quickly show me my character.

This year God has shown me new things about what it means to be a teacher. After working in state schools for the last seven years, I've seen a wide range of teaching styles and techniques and have grown in ways I never thought I would, both personally and professionally. But the thing missing was Jesus! Now that I teach in a Christian school I can talk about Him as much as I want. I love how their faces light up when we do—the spontaneous comments they make and their simple truths about Him.

The children teach me so much about what it means to know God and be connected to Him. I pray that my teaching will always reflect God's love in action and words. My main objective for teaching now is to draw children close to the love of God, to teach them He is real and powerful and that He cares for each of them. I praise God that my motives for teaching have changed—that it's not just about ploughing through curriculum and never-ending assessments.

I am pleased to say that the reason I'm at Wellington Adventist School is because of Jesus. I consider it a privilege and a huge responsibility to teach His kids. May there be less of self in my room and more of Him. I seek answers, wisdom, knowledge and strength from God so I can do the enormous task put before me. It is only by His grace and saving power that I live. May my life, teaching and whole character be patterned on the Master teacher, Jesus Christ.

I commit every plan, conversation, smile resource, meeting, interview, song, drawing and dance into His hands. May my teaching be effective, authentic, relational and thoughtful of Jesus.

Moments that make it all worthwhile…

1. When they say powerful and spiritually discerning truths about God
2. When they 'get' what you are teaching and are motivated to share what they know with others
3. When they teach other children
4. When we laugh at ourselves
5. When they get excited about what they have learned
6. When you see progress
7. When they hug you and say 'I love you'.



Angelia Reynolds

Teacher, Balmoral Adventist School, NZ

I don't remember why she asked the question—perhaps her lecturer had set it as an exercise for her first practicum or maybe she herself was curious. Anyway, there it was, 'What ten qualities should a great teacher possess?'

I had never made such a list before, so on a summer's evening, I took some time to reflect on those qualities that I felt would be essential for a teacher to be and to practise.

My ten qualities of a great teacher

1. A deep, living relationship with the Master Teacher—Jesus
2. A genuine love for her students
3. A passion for her work
4. An eye set on the 'big picture'—kids for God's kingdom
5. A desire to constantly improve herself as a professional
6. An open, honest and teachable spirit
7. Creative flair

> ***"I consider it a privilege and a huge responsibility to teach His kids"***

8. Orderliness
9. A desire for personal excellence from herself and her students
10. A beautiful smile—on the lips and in the eyes.

What do you think? How does this list compare with yours? What would you change? Our lists will always be unique to each one of us. The qualities you choose for your own list will be benchmarks for you to work towards, ten points to ponder and reflect on. These goals will help you keep your head above the curriculum-driven frenzy that can, at times, eat us all alive.

I find teaching a hugely exciting and demanding mission; it keeps me growing exponentially as a professional and as a person.

Why not grab a pen and paper now and, in the quietness of your classroom, create your own list. Go on. It will be worth it.

Janese Cameron
Teacher, Palmerston North Adventist School, NZ

What inspires me

Knowing I am an incredibly valuable masterpiece because God created me that way, blows me away. It is His grace that makes me priceless.

He gives me the passion to go to school each day. His willingness to work through me (a broken vessel) amazes me. He does it despite me! I can only try to do my best and let Him do the rest.

As a teacher, I endeavour to bring joy into my classroom by using humour, having fun times with my class and allowing the children to pray for each other every day. Thus, we are creating 'golden moments' to be remembered forever.

It inspires and motivates me to see the gains made by students who have struggled with their learning—I love those magic moments when they 'get it!' The hugs from students are special too. As they run to embrace me, I can't help think of the children running to be with Jesus. My prayer is that they get to meet Him and see Him through me.

Kevin Petrie
Principal, Hamilton Adventist Primary, NZ

The secret of success

There are numerous things for which we require constant reminders. In our household you'll find teenagers receiving verbal refreshers to brush teeth or take a shower. I suspect we adults are no better. God Himself patiently reminds us of lessons He intended us to learn eons ago.

A little while back, my year 7-8 class became involved in discussing 'human ways' vs. 'God's ways'. The students were given a number of scriptural scenarios, then asked to provide common sense, logical, 'human solutions'. For example: An axe head falls into the water. The students were adamant that, given long enough, they could have found it. How about the pot of poisoned stew? Well throw it away, of course! As for the well with bitter water—dig a new one. Namaan would have been sent to the infirmary, the Shunamite's son would have received a beautiful funeral, and the boys who teased Elisha about being bald would have received a week of after-school detentions! As for warfare and international policy, a few talents of gold spent on Egyptian mercenaries should suffice to assist against the Syrian invaders.

Yet through each of the Biblical accounts of these events, we find a 'Lord of the illogical', giving scant time to human reasoning and logic. It made me consider how easy it is for individuals and institutions, especially in times of blessing, to subconsciously entertain the ludicrous notion that mortal wisdom somehow contributes to success. How frightening to catch myself making a decision without consulting God, particularly when immersed in a situation that in the first year at this job, would have elicited much prayer. Experience may be a great teacher but it is no substitute for seeking God's will. If you're as fully human as I, you'll possibly see this reflection in your own mirror.

Thorough planning, strategic excellence, and a focus on 'best practice' are of undeniable importance but they're not what really brings success. We need to better understand that God works in wonderful ways in spite of our efforts, not because of them. The Old Testament book of Joshua gets it right when it speaks of the various kings and lands Joshua conquered. The account ends with the reason why, "because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:42).

Looking back over the last few years, despite the myriad of things I could have done better, I can confidently add; "You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." (Joshua 23:14) TEACH



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