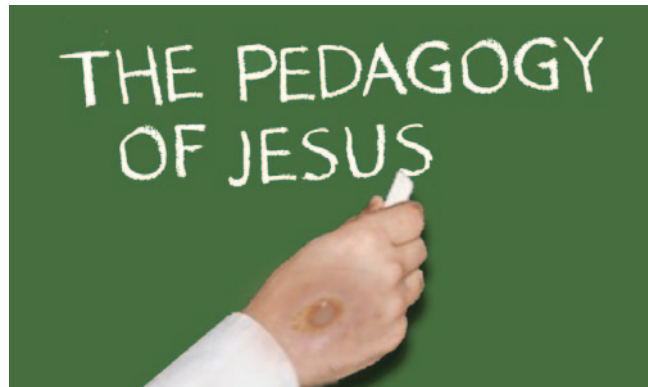




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Lessons for Teaching in Luke 24:13-43

As the incarnate God who came into this world to instruct and save humanity, Jesus is the model for Christian education. In the book *Education*, Ellen G. White stated: “In the Teacher sent from God all true educational work finds its center.”¹ The parables, conversations, and sermons of Jesus are pearls of heavenly wisdom teachers who wish to educate for the kingdom of God must constantly seek out.

With that in mind, this article analyzes the text of Luke 24:13 to 43, where Jesus gave a lesson to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, a small town seven miles (about 11 km) outside Jerusalem (vs. 13).² This analysis aims to extract principles of Jesus’ teachings in dialogue with modern authors that can be useful for teaching in Adventist schools.

The Biblical Account

In the Gospel of Luke, we read that after the crucifixion of Jesus, two disciples were talking to each other as they walked toward Emmaus. Saddened by what had happened in Jerusalem, they spoke intently, fully absorbed in conversation. They thought Jesus would be the promised messianic king who would free the Jewish nation from foreign rule (vs. 21). In this context, verse 15 informs the reader that Jesus Himself approached the disciples, but they failed to recognize Him; their eyes were blinded to the truth regarding His identity (vs. 16).

Like a successful teacher, Jesus first asked a question: “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?” (vs. 17, NLT).³ With crestfallen heads, the two

stopped, and Cleopas, one of them, answered, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days?” (vs. 18).

After asking another question and listening to the disciples’ point of view, Jesus rebuked them for their hardness of heart and went on to teach them everything said about Him in the Scriptures, from the books of Moses to the prophetic literature (vss. 25-27). In other words, Jesus gave them a glimpse of the role of the Messiah in the Scriptures.

The biblical account says that as they approached the small town, the disciples insisted that Jesus not continue His journey but stop with them, for it was almost evening (vss. 28, 29). Jesus complied with their request and accepted their hospitality. When they were at the table, He blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to them. At that moment, the eyes of the two disciples were opened, and Jesus disappeared from their presence (vss. 30, 31).

Amazed at what they had just seen, the disciples said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” (vs. 32). Then they returned to Jerusalem and went to meet the 11 apostles and the group of disciples who were with them, to tell them that they had recognized Jesus when He blessed and broke bread (vss. 33-35).

Characteristics of Jesus’ Approach to Teaching

Luke’s brief account presents several characteristics

of Jesus' way of engaging with His disciples. In this recorded encounter, Jesus used prior experiences to build knowledge, asked open-ended questions to guide the conversation, and incorporated a wholistic approach to integrating knowledge and experience. Adventist educators can use these approaches modeled by Jesus as they interact with their students throughout the process of learning.

Build on Prior Knowledge

Jesus could have simply revealed His identity to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Instead, He decided to transmit this knowledge by building on what the disciples already knew and had experienced. He asked them to tell Him what they knew about Him (vss. 19-24) before adding to their body of knowledge (vss. 25-27). Like Jesus, teachers can focus on building knowledge by seeking ways to build on students' experiences.

The simple transmission of the content does not guarantee that students will assimilate knowledge. In speaking about the teacher's role in this learning process, Ellen White commented: "Teachers should lead students to think and clearly to understand the truth for themselves. It is not enough for the teacher to explain or for the student to believe; inquiry must be awakened, and the student must be drawn out to state the truth in his own language."⁴ Jesus listened intently to what the disciples were saying and then followed up with questions that challenged what they thought they knew. And, once they were challenged and curious, He had them right where He wanted them and added more to their understanding.

Ask Open-ended Questions

Asking open-ended questions was the second strategy Jesus used. He demonstrated that this is one of the most efficient and effective ways to build knowledge. As observed by Ken Bain, the president of the Best Teachers Institute, "Questions help us build knowledge. They target the gaps in our memory structures and are critical for indexing the information we retain as we develop an answer to that question."⁵

Along the same line of reasoning, Sonia Krumm, in her book on teaching the Bible at the middle and high school level, observed that "The type and quality of

questions the teacher asks is directly reflected in the type and quality of student learning."⁶ According to Krumm, one of the characteristics of good questions is that they generate more questions.⁷ This is verified in Luke's account as the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples occurs through a series of questions (vss. 16-19, 26).

Moreover, "a good question usually brings with it another question that derives from the answer to the first,"⁸ as it does in Luke's passage. The questions asked by Jesus were linked in a logical sequence, inducing the disciples to express their version of what had just happened in Jerusalem. Christ's questions were neither vague nor apathetic; on the contrary, they were accurate and sensitive, profoundly shaking the disciples' emotions.

Jesus' questions were so effective that, according to verse 19, the two travelers gave a lengthy exposition in response. Jesus let them speak their minds on the matter, only then going on to correct their mistaken perspectives on the mission and identity of the messianic king.

Incorporate a Wholistic Approach

Another notable feature of Jesus' method was His wholistic approach of blending the exposition of content with the experience. The eyes of the disciples, His students, were opened to His teachings only when they were impressed by the way Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. This shows that how the teacher con-

ducts the class is as important as the content presented in the classroom. In the end, the words of the Polish educator Janusz Korczak cannot be ignored: "Each person carries within him a whole world, and everything exists twice: once as it is, the other as he perceives it with his own eyes and feelings."⁹

Students remember teachers and professors who impacted their lives not only by the content of a given course but also through those educators' ways of being. If teachers want to influence their students' lives, they must take every opportunity to leave an imprint on their hearts and minds. One of the points that Ellen White made most concerning the ministry of teachers is their influence on the students:

"The Lord would have the teachers consider the contagion of their own example. They need to pray much more and consider that the convictions which flow from a well-ordered life and godly conversation,

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from a living, decided Christianity, are the preparation of the garden of the heart for the seeds of truth, which are to be planted for a fruitful harvest, and for the Sun of Righteousness when He comes with healing in His beams.”¹⁰

Returning to the biblical account, it is noteworthy that the “opening” of the disciples’ eyes (vs. 31) coincides with the “explanation” of the Scriptures (vs. 32).¹¹ Interestingly, the verb translated as “explain,” from the Greek *dianoigō*, literally means “to open”¹² and is the same one used in verse 31. That means that before understanding what the Scriptures taught, the two disciples were impacted by Jesus. In other words, using the example of Christ, the experience makes it possible for the student to absorb the content presented by the teacher.

Conclusion

Educators working in Adventist institutions can learn much from the Master Teacher and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. After reviewing the passage in Luke 24:13 to 43 and analyzing some of the main characteristics of Jesus’ teaching approach in this passage, at least three lessons can be highlighted for educators teaching in Adventist institutions. First, the teacher should be concerned with leading students to construct knowledge from their own lived experiences and encourage them in this self-process of learning. Second, as demonstrated by Jesus, one of the best ways to construct knowledge is through the use of questions; the quality of the questions will impact the quality of the learning. Third, the teacher’s example and experiences are as crucial to the teaching and learning process as the content he or she communicates in the classroom.

Teaching is a sacred ministry, and educators are entrusted with the challenging duty of preparing new generations to lead the mission of the church. In *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, Ellen White wrote:

“Patient, conscientious teachers are needed to arouse hope and aspiration in the young; to help them to understand the possibilities lying before them. Teachers are needed who will train their students to do service for the Master, who will carry them forward from one point to another in intellectual and spiritual attainment. Teachers must strive to realize the greatness of their work. They need enlarged views; for their work, in its importance, ranks with that of the Christian minister.”¹³

Educators can glean fresh insights into Jesus’ teaching approach through contemplation of His interactions with His disciples and His dealings with each one of us. The diligent study of the Scriptures combined with the work of God’s Spirit will provide an expanded view of this sacred calling. ✍

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 83.
2. It is interesting to note that Ellen White also recognized that the passage in Luke 24:13-43 portrays Jesus as an educator: “He who spoke as never man spake was an Educator upon earth. After His resurrection, He was an Educator to the lonely, disappointed disciples traveling to Emmaus, and to those assembled in the upper chamber. He opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself and caused their hearts to bound with a holy, new, and sacred hope and joy” (*Counsels to Writers and Editors* [Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1946], 80).
3. Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the *New Living Translation* of the Bible New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
4. Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1977), 1:355.
5. Ken Bain, *Lo que Hacen los Mejores Profesores de Universidad* (Valencia, Spain: Universidad de València, 2007), 42.
6. Sonia Krumm, *Pensar, Sentir y Hacer: Hacia una Didáctica de la Biblia Para el Nivel Medio y Superior* (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2015), 76.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Sandra Josephs (ed.), *Voice for the Child: The Inspirational Words of Janusz Korczak* (London: Thorsons, 1999), 123.
10. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1966), 1: 133.
11. Jacques B. Doukhan, *On the Way to Emmaus* (Clarksville, Md.: Lederer Books, 2015), 206.
12. “δianoίγω,” in *O Novo Testamento Grego: Quarta Edição Revisada com Introdução em Português e Dicionário Grego-Português*, ed. by Barbara Aland et al. (Barueri, São Paulo: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil), 814.
13. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1913), 498.