

Making Faith a Part of Your Daily Schedule

BY CHARLEEN KURTH-WRIGHT

Every week—every day, in fact—faith should be exhibited in Seventh-day Adventist classrooms. Each time a teacher's heart responds to a child within his or her care, the Lord in His loving concern reaches through that teacher to bring them His peace and understanding.

This year my classroom has 17 students in nine grades, K-8. It is a challenge to achieve the goal of excellence! Success can be achieved only through knowing that the Master Teacher will reward the teacher's faith, and open ways to impart the lessons of faith to His little ones.

Minimize Negatives

"I can't do this! It's too hard. I hate math!" How many times have you heard a child say this?

It is so important to minimize negatives! My second-grade teacher's response as I struggled with math was, "Go to the board. You are going to stay there until you get the problems right!" I faced each day with dread and cold fear of being sent to that chalkboard during math class.

It would have taken only a few moments more to say,

"Let's look at the problems together. I believe we can figure them out. Maybe we can shorten this assignment a little [circling the exercises that are critical to the assignment, and working on those that day]. Do a few more for homework." This response not only cancels the negatives, but also tells the child you have faith in his or her ability to learn.

You could also say, "It's OK to be stuck. Sometimes math is hard, but remember how well you did yesterday in your English assignment. You

can do this work, too. Let's ask Jesus to help us work it out together." It's not hard to say this, but it gives the struggling student faith in God, the teacher, and himself!

Take Time

"Mrs. Wright, my head hurts. My legs hurt. I don't feel good."

Angie* was so eager to learn! She was a constant ray of sunshine in my busy classroom. Then she became ill. Her rosy cheeks became pale, and listlessness stole her energy. She was always cold, and all too often complained of "not

feeling good." Next, she developed chicken pox. Three times she tried to return to school. She would walk in clutching a favorite bear or blanket, but by midday would be too sick to continue.

Angie asked Jesus to make her feel better. My heart broke as the rest of the class prayed unceasingly for their little classmate.

One day she asked me if Jesus still loved her. As I sat in the "story chair" and rocked her, I prayed silently that God would reward our faith as we continued to pray for her restored health.

But Angie only got worse. Her doctor father was baffled by her new complications. She could no longer walk.

The students made Angie a mural. They made cards. They recorded a tape of songs. And we still prayed. All of us felt keenly the loss of our little ray of sunshine. Our faith was on trial, but no one quit praying.

After half of the nine-week period had passed, Angie once again returned to school. This time she was well. I am sure that as our class rang with praise to God, the angels were thrilled to join in our songs! Faith had been put to the test! It had won and the foe had been vanquished.

If you are thinking it took time from the schedule to spend time in prayer bands, making cards and tapes, you are right. But preparing students for eternity is our most important lesson. It is important to look for ways to step out

in faith. If you take the time, the Lord will bless, and the schedule will not suffer.

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"Daddy drinks. Can we pray about it?" asked Andrea.*

"Yes, we can pray about it. God cares about everything and everyone that in-

ple and somewhat vague when mentioning them in front of the classroom. That morning I said, "Dear Heavenly Father, please bless Andrea's daddy in a very special way today." That might be enough said in some situations. But don't miss the opportunity to pray with such children privately. Let them know

how pleased Jesus is that they are praying for Daddy, and that you are glad to pray with them.

This particular story has a happy ending. Daddy is now attending church and has quit drinking. It was pure joy to hear Andrea say, as she held onto her daddy's hand, "Mrs. Wright, we prayed and Daddy is here!" Faith that God would hear our prayers, and faith in Daddy, too, were rewarded—again!

God's Promises Do Work

"Tomorrow we will have a test over American inventors," I told my fifth graders. Test time is a great opportunity to put James 1:5 to work for your classroom.

"If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously, and it will be given you" (NRSV). Be sure students memorize this verse at the beginning of the year. Then when they need the promise the most, it will be there for them. Remind them that God's promises do not fail!

There are, of course, times when faith appears to have been unrewarded. This is the moment to gently and without wavering teach your students that

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terests us," I told her.

Some areas, especially those dealing with family problems, are best kept sim-

God is still with them. Help them understand that because of this imperfect world, prayers are not always answered "Yes"; sometimes they must be answered with a "No" or "Wait awhile." Tenderly turn the children's hearts to their Creator and Father, letting them know they are not alone when they hurt or feel disappointment. Help them realize that God never gives up on any of us. Take the time to share and teach about God's tender care. Show your own faith in God's answers so that your students will grow in understanding through hearing of your relationship with the Master Teacher.

Looking to Jesus

Not every teacher serves in a small multigrade classroom like mine, but there are constants to every teaching situation. Prayer changes all classrooms. Look for ways to pray for and with each child. Give students honest answers tempered with genuine concern. Don't let them feel that you are rushed when it comes to their needs. Don't let them feel foolish or a nuisance. They need your faith in them.

Whether you serve in a mission school, a large one-grade classroom, or in the smallest multigrade school, having faith in God—who placed you in His work—is essential for you to successfully prepare young hearts and minds for eternity. Impart your faith to those precious students who sit at your feet waiting to learn. Looking to Jesus, neither you nor your students can fail! ☞

Charleen Kurth-Wright teaches grades K-8 at Echo Valley Christian School in Wytheville, Virginia.

* Not their real names.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR PRESENTING FAITH

1. "On the Air" Learning Center. Create a study cartel with the words "On the Air." Fasten a red or yellow light bulb from the back that can be plugged in when the student is using the center. Provide a quiet area, a Bible, cassette recorder and tape, pencil and paper, and an old telephone. Students can exercise their faith in prayer by writing a letter or taping a message to God while talking on the telephone to Him. Messages can be sealed, and students encouraged to open them later to see answers to prayer, etc.

2. Prayer circle with prayer chain. For many years I have had students prepare small index cards for a prayer chain during Week of Prayer. Each child writes special requests without signing the card. Twice a day, prayer bands meet to pray about their requests. When a prayer is answered (and there are always answered prayers), the answer is written on the card.

3. An object lesson on faith is al-

ways appropriate. Plant seeds to illustrate how faith grows.

4. Bulletin board. Use the following themes: "If I Were the Only Person in the World, Jesus Would Still Come Back for Me!" Use a trash can lid to draw a circle on an old map. Place a smiling picture of Jesus (you can obtain an excellent felt profile at the Adventist Book Center) next to your map and then encircle the map with pictures of your students. Have students help make the lettering, assigning letters at random. Let the title be a surprise! See photo above.

"Jesus Is My Lighthouse—He Guides My Way." Use black over yellow bulletin board paper. Place the lighthouse near one end of the board. Cut half-moon slits through the black paper to let the yellow show through. Have each student design or color his or her own ship and place the ship out in the "sea" (dark blue paper) facing the lighthouse. You might put a picture of Jesus on the lighthouse for additional emphasis.