

“God’s Eternal Truth in A Changing World and Your Servant-Leadership Role”

International Conf for College and University Presidents
General Conference Headquarters
Tuesday, March 25, 2014

The world is changing so fast every day and we are, at times, desperate to keep up. Time will not permit us to identify the change factors but we see them in continued economic instability, societal patterns that go against Biblical principles, recent and alarming ecumenical developments, rampant political unrest internationally, and certainly changing educational trends. Change agents are surrounding us.

How do you cope as a Seventh-day Adventist college or university president realizing that your servant-leadership role in the proclamation of the three angels’ messages is more vital than ever in our educational system? Since God’s truth is eternal, how do you preserve, proclaim and pass on that truth to Seventh-day Adventist young people and the greater public in a changing world?

It is not an inflation of your importance as a Seventh-day Adventist institutional servant-leader president to say that you hold in your hands the ability to literally shape the thinking of young developing leaders helping them to know who we are and what our mission is in these last

days of earth's history. On behalf of the world church, I want to thank you for your great commitment to your work and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Your opinions, your actions of hiring, your words of instruction, your personal and corporate influence on campus, your words in weekly chapel convocations, your personal religious and Biblical beliefs will help shape the opinions and beliefs of the young minds of this worldwide church. You are essential to the life-blood of God's precious remnant church. As a president, your own daily connection with Christ, your personal understanding of His righteousness, His sanctuary service, His Sabbath, His authority in recently creating this world, His three angels' messages, and His soon return will have a profound impact on your faculty, staff and student body. Your relationship to the authority and convicting power of God's Holy Word and the vital role of the Spirit of Prophecy in God's last-day church as portrayed in Revelation 12:17 will have a lasting effect on thousands of young people in the most critical period known to the human race-----the end of time.....and we are in it. Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

Quite simply, you will help determine what young people and many others believe through the leading of the Holy Spirit in your work. It is so important that you base your beliefs and actions on the Bible as the Word of God. The devil is extremely busy attempting to neutralize the plain Word of God and it will get worse. Your understanding of

the authority of Scripture and the long-standing Seventh-day Adventist historical-biblical hermeneutical approach will determine whether you assist or detract from God's final mission for the Seventh-day Adventist Church of which you are a vital and irreplaceable part. God and we need you.....and we need you to be strong in proclaiming God's eternal truth in a changing world. We can rest assured that God's principles never change because He never changes. Malachi 3:6---“....I am the Lord. I do not change...” Hebrews 13:8---“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Make no mistake, God will ensure that His mission succeeds and that it will reflect His eternal truth. If necessary amidst various circumstances, and He has done it before, He will raise up uneducated people to champion His eternal truth. But, He intends to use His precious educational system to nurture His prophetic mission for the Seventh-day Adventist movement. That's why He established your educational institution and this marvelous worldwide educational system and that's why you are where you are-----a servant-leader president for such a time as this. Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

You are fully familiar with Seventh-day Adventist educational foundations in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Gems such as the following:

Proverbs 22:6---“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 3:13---“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.....”

Proverbs 4:5---“Get wisdom! Get understanding!”

Proverbs 9:10---“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

Luke 2:52---“.....Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Matthew 11:29---“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.....”

II Timothy 3:15---“.....that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

James 1:5---“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

MH 409---“A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service.”

Fundamentals of Christian Education 202---“With the great work before us of enlightening the world, we who believe the truth should feel the necessity of thorough education in the practical branches of knowledge, and especially our need of an education in the truths of the Scriptures....We realize that education is not only necessary to the proper fulfillment of the duties of domestic life, but necessary for success in all branches of usefulness.”

FCE 82---“The true object of education should be carefully considered. God has entrusted to each one capacities and powers, that they may be returned to Him enlarged and improved.....The fear of the Lord lies at the foundation of all true greatness.

Education 13---“True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study.....It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student fort the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”

At this unusual and unparalleled International Conference for College and University Presidents organized by the General Conference Department of Education, let me unburden some important concerns for the future as you weigh your role in proclaiming God’s eternal truth in a rapidly changing world. In this process, I will refer often and unapologetically to Spirit of Prophecy counsel, which

is based on Biblical principles, without which we would have no worldwide Seventh-day Adventist educational system. Actually, I read so many wonderful Spirit of Prophecy quotations in Fundamentals of Christian Education, Education and Counsel on Education. Practically speaking, it is not possible to cover all those marvelous instructions, but they are available to all of you in every format imaginable. We will focus on just a few.

In preparation for this presentation, I came across some tremendous counsel found in FCE 534, “The question is asked, ‘What is the higher education?’ There is no education higher than that contained in the principles laid down in the words I have read to you from this sixth chapter of Second Corinthians. Let our students study diligently to comprehend this. There is no higher education to be obtained than that which was given to the early disciples, and which is given to us through the word. May the Holy Spirit of God impress your minds with the conviction that there is nothing in all the world in the line of education that is so exalted as the instruction contained in the sixth and seventh chapters of Second Corinthians.”

As we review those two chapters we see some marvelous counsel for this convocation of college and university presidents. In 6:1, Paul reminds us we are all workers together with Christ. One of the greatest tasks of life is to participate in training young people in all aspects of life and most importantly their spiritual life. Counsels on

Education, page 205, says, “The management and instruction of children is the noblest missionary work that any man or woman can undertake.” As a president, you are a co-worker with Christ in training young people. What an honor! Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

In verse two, Paul emphasizes that “now is the day of salvation.” If ever there was a time for Seventh-day Adventist college and university presidents to be serious about the work of true Christian education for the saving of young people, it is NOW! You don’t have time to be distracted from your true mission-----the coming of the Lord is soon! Verse three focuses on giving “no offense in anything.” The need for selfless educational service in an age of selfishness is paramount.

Paul spends verses 4-10 sharing all the contrasts of how workers as educators can be God’s agents for good regardless of what you face. As college and university presidents who are servant-leaders, you can commend yourselves as such through the “word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness.....” FCE page 470 indicates, “The great lesson to be given to the youth is that, as worshipers of God, they are to cherish Bible principles, and hold the world as subordinate.”

Then, verses 11-16 get to the heart of God’s plea through Paul----don’t be influenced by the world. Don’t be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Paul says in

Romans 12:2, “...do not be conformed to this world....” In J.B. Phillips’ translation, it says, “...don’t let the world around you squeeze into its own mold.....” Be careful not to get too big as a college or university. The temptation is to add more majors or courses which necessitates hiring or contracting with non-Adventist professors to teach because you can’t find an Adventist. Is it worth it? The non-member may be a fine person, but what are the Biblical texts telling us? There are institutions which are being tempted to even put non-members on their governing boards. God says “don’t be unequally yoked....” As your institution grows, many add more and more non-member students which can create an unusual situation when it comes to Seventh-day Adventist influence on campus. Pay careful attention to the spiritual influence on your campus. FCE 535-536 says, “The light has been given me that tremendous pressures will be brought upon every Seventh-day Adventist with whom the world can get into close connection. Those who seek the education that the world esteems so highly, are gradually led further and further from the principles of truth until they become educated worldlings. At what a price have they gained their education!.....there are some who, having secured this worldly education, think that they can introduce it into our schools. But let me tell you that you must not take what the world calls the higher education and bring it into our schools and sanitariums and churches. We need to understand these things. I speak to you definitely. This must not be done.”

Let's carefully and thoughtfully touch on some of those tendencies. Be careful not to move into competitive sports. There is so much Spirit of Prophecy counsel on this subject and is an area where the world attempts to link up with God's institutions. There is a General Conference Annual Council action from the 1980's urging schools to avoid this competitive sports and focus on things of more eternal consequence. There is no reason to vote more resolutions at an Annual Council on this subject. The most important appeal is to request you as a servant-leader president to review your own understanding of the counsel on this important subject and then act on it. Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

Another area of the world's attempt to infiltrate is to depend too much on student and institutional government loans. There is a negative cost to become too closely connected with and dependent on government funding for our educational structure. Many of today's students have far too much debt load than is prudent. Easy student loans are far too easily obtained in some places. There was a time when Seventh-day Adventist higher education institutions provided considerable student labor opportunities. Thank you to the colleges and universities that still do. Rather than reduce the work opportunities, increase them as opposed to encouraging students to take government loans. Of course, many of us went to school in a different age when educational costs were lower, but

we worked hard to put ourselves through school rather than take loans. Because of higher costs today, it makes that much more difficult, but do everything you can to help students reduce dependence on loans as well as the dependence that your institution will feel on that funding source. Be careful to avoid piling up large institutional loans whether they are from the government or bank funding. God wants His church, various church-related funding sources and its students to fund Christian education. Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

Beware of society's influence of behavioral patterns that can become overwhelming on your campus if you fail to carefully guard every avenue of impact. Secularism is rampant. You cannot isolate yourselves from the world but you can lift the standard in sharing what the Bible intends rather than bow to normative societal influence. Practical application to this will be in the area of fashion and dress, amusements and free time, music and lifestyle, service opportunities for the good of others and understanding the real purpose in life as students prepare for God's specific purpose for each individual. Counsels on Education, pages 152-153, says, "The work done in our schools is not to be like that done in the colleges and seminaries of the world.....Our schools must be more like the schools of the prophets. They should be training schools, where the students may be brought under the discipline of Christ and learn of the Great Teacher.....Wise teachers should be chosen for our schools, those who will

feel responsible to God to impress upon minds the necessity of knowing Christ as a personal Saviour.....They should look with pity upon those who have been badly trained in childhood, and seek to remedy defects, which if retained will greatly mar the character.....All who teach in our schools should have a close connection with God and a thorough understanding of His word.....Principal and teachers need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.....Teaching means much more than many suppose. It requires great skill to make the truth understood. For this reason every teacher should strive to have an increased knowledge of spiritual truth, but he cannot gain this knowledge while divorcing himself from the world of God.”

The only guard against the infiltrating of the “world” into Seventh-day Adventist education is that you and I as leaders know the truth, know the One who gave the truth, allow the Holy Spirit to guide us day by day, and stay close to God’s written Word. Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

Paul goes on to share in II Corinthians 6:17-18 that we should “come out from among them and be separate.” Thereby we will be His “sons and daughters.” God is calling you as servant-leader presidents to be the moral compass for your institution of higher learning. You are in a unique position to wield unusual influence over many people and the church itself. God wishes to use you as a

servant-leader to fully open to your administration, your faculty, your staff and your students the fact that Christ is the Master Teacher. FCE 236-237 indicates that “The teaching of Jesus was of an entirely different order from that of the learned scribes. They professed to be expositors of the law.....But the formal tone of their instruction would indicated that they saw nothing in the doctrines of the sacred oracles which possessed vital power.....Christ came to unveil divine truth to the world. He taught as one having authority.....The work of Christ was to give again to the world the truth in its original freshness and beauty.....He gave fresh manna to the hungry soul, presented a new kingdom which was to be set up among men.”

In II Corinthians 7:1, Paul reminds us of the promises he just quoted from Ezekiel and Isaiah-----of God’s promises to be with us. He urges us to perfect “holiness in the fear of God.” Presidents, you above all others on campus, should constantly remind students and faculty alike of our complete dependence on Christ for salvation---- justification and sanctification; that Christ is our All in All; that His love and grace for each of us is boundless and free. As you unveil to your campus the great Seventh-day Adventist imperative to proclaim the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, help everyone to understand that the core of those messages is righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. Education, page 17, says, “The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such

should be given the highest place in education. To obtain an education worthy of the name, we must receive a knowledge of God, the Creator, and of Christ, the Redeemer, as they are revealed in the sacred word.”

Help your students and faculty to focus on the real reason for Seventh-day Adventist education----to prepare young people for Christ’s soon coming and their role in proclaiming that truth. Amidst all the other presentations and materials studied on campus, allow the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy to take the leading role. Avoid humanistic intellectualism that leads away from a humble approach to Scripture. Avoid the perils of higher criticism and fully embrace the biblical-historical approach to a plain understanding of the Word of God. Uplift the plain reading of Scripture that clearly indicates the origins of humankind as being created in the image of God. Be champions of God’s creation of this world in six literal days recently with the incredible importance of the Sabbath not only as a day of worship but as a final sign of God’s people who are faithful to the authority of the Creator. Promote the historicist understanding of prophecy. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was called as a prophetic people in a prophetic movement with a prophetic message propelling it to its prophetic mission. The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, books to be studied intently in these end times, are being fulfilled before our eyes. Education, page 191, instructs, “The book of Revelation, in connection with the book of Daniel, especially demands study. Let every

God-fearing teacher consider how most clearly to comprehend and to present the gospel that our Saviour came in person to make known to His servant John.....”
My friends, Revelation 13 is developing rapidly. Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world.

Presidents and educators, the role of character development for Seventh-day Adventist young people is entrusted into your hands. Take seriously your spiritual responsibility as the chief spiritual shepherd on campus. God has given you an unusual degree of heavenly honor to mold the lives of young people and faculty----to help them understand the need for revival and reformation in their lives through Bible study, prayer and the direction of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. Education, page 225, indicates, “True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge of literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle.” Esteemed and honored presidents, be a Biblical anchor in a changing world. Rely on the Holy Spirit to guide and instruct in your incredibly challenging work with demands coming to you from every side. You have all of heaven on your side with the Holy Spirit directed to guide you in your servant-leadership. Education, page 96, says, “The same Spirit that in His stead was sent to be the instructor of His first co-workers, Christ

has commissioned to be the instructor of His co-workers today.....The presence of the same guide in educational work today will produce the same results as of old. This is the end to which true education tends; this is the work that God designs it to accomplish.”

Service to others and the mission of the church must dominate the thinking on our Seventh-day Adventist campuses of higher learning. As servant-leaders, promote “service learning” as many of you are doing. Help students prepare for incredible service to God and the accomplishment of His mission for the church by learning that selfish ambition is not God’s way. Education, pages 225-226 puts it this way, “In true education the selfish ambition, the greed for power, the disregard for the rights and needs of humanity, that are the curse of our world, find a counterinfluence. God’s plan of life has a place for every human being. Each is to improve his talents to the utmost; and faithfulness in doing this, be the gifts few or many, entitles one to honor. In God’s plan there is no place for selfish rivalry.” Be a Biblical anchor in a changing world pointing to true service to God. Encourage young people to get involved in selfless service for others and in working for those in the large cities of this world. Do not isolate yourselves to the point that you lose the opportunity to leave your places of protection and go into the world representing Jesus and His power to save. FCE pages 537 to 538 indicate, “There is another line of work to be carried forward, the work in the large cities. There

should be companies of earnest laborers working in the cities.....The most valuable education that can be obtained will be found in going out with the message of truth to the places that are now in darkness.”

Finally, turning back to II Corinthians 7, Paul makes an earnest appeal for repentance in much of that chapter helping us to understand in verse 6 that we need the “God, who comforts the downcast....” and that in verse 10 we understand that “godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation.....” My dear presidents, you are the leader on campus that can bring about repentance leading to salvation and selfless service as we approach Christ’s soon second coming.

So many of us are products of this incredible Seventh-day Adventist educational system. We are products of those dedicated teachers----the Olsens, the Lopezes, the Sacketts, the Pitmans, the Birds, the Juarroses, the Vanduleks, the Peekes, the Wagners, the Tymesons-----and those are just some of the elementary teachers that influenced me not to mention the incredible influence of secondary school, college, and graduate teachers on our lives. I appeal to you as top leaders of Seventh-day Adventist education today, be a Biblical anchor in a changing world. Point people to Christ, His immense love, His power to change our lives and His mandate to tell the world about His soon coming. Let students be filled with your passion for Christ and His saving message. FCE 450

states that, “In Christ is the fountain of all knowledge. In Him our hopes of eternal life are centered. He is the greatest teacher the world has ever known.....”

Your role as a servant-leader, as a Biblical anchor promoting God’s eternal truth, is of utmost importance to this last-day Advent movement known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Never underestimate your vital role in proclaiming truth on the campus and beyond in a changing world. God has called you for this purpose. He pleads with you and with me to humble ourselves before Him asking in prayer for His direction for the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist educational system. FCE 531 says, “If there were more praying among us, more exercise of a living faith, and less dependence upon someone else to have an experience for us, we would be far in advance of where we are today in spiritual intelligence. What we need is a deep, individual heart and soul experience. Then we shall be able to tell what God is doing and how He is working. We need to have a living experience in the things of God; and we are not safe unless we have this.”

Today, at this unique International Conference for College and University Presidents, are you willing to be a spiritual and Biblical anchor in a changing world? Are you willing to lift high the Seventh-day Adventist standard of education through the leading of the Holy Spirit? Are you willing to help fulfill God’s ideal for His people. We are instructed in Education, page 18, “Higher than the highest human

thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness----godlikeness----is the goal to be reached." Are you willing to claim the promise of Isaiah 59:19-20 which says, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. 'The Redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob.' Says the Lord."

Christ is coming soon! As servant-leaders on Seventh-day Adventist campuses, are you willing to accept your role of proclaiming God's eternal truth in a changing world and help prepare thousands of students and others for the soon coming of Jesus Christ? If you are, would you stand with me in commitment to Christ's unique mission for you and your institution?