

## **Blast from the past**

*A series featuring abridged versions of past articles from the Journal of Christian Education (JCE).*

**Caring As the basis of teacher-pupil relationships**, Norman E Amundsen, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia. JCE Papers 62, August 1978.

All levels of education planning avoid the issue of classroom relationships. The school curriculum will just somehow happen. Teacher training programmes reflect this mentality by over-emphasising content and method preparation. There is very little systematic analysis or discussion of the nature of relationships.

Teacher-pupil relationships have traditionally been construed as being either teacher or student dominated. Christianity offers a new alternative to the power domination hypothesis which if implemented would completely revolutionise the teaching process.

Jesus gave verbal instruction on the nature of relationships and demonstrated in his own life the principles that were being put forward. Jesus instructs us in the need for developing virtues such as compassion, humility, stability, righteousness, submission and discernment in our relations with others. It is difficult to maintain an authoritarian system when virtues such as humility and submission have to be included.

Both Christian students and Christian teachers should be urged to structure their actions and thoughts in accordance with Christian principles. Furthermore, the modelling process should be supplemented by actual instruction and discussion about the nature of relationships.

All learning occurs in a network of relationship and we can either choose to deal with it openly or we can satisfy ourselves temporarily by denying its very existence. Christian educators are challenged to become involved in the development and integration of instructional materials that reflect a Christian understanding of relationship as well as modelling these behaviours.

The concept of caring in teacher-pupil relations helps to operationalise the Christian basis for relationships. In the holistic Christian approach, man and God are brought together in a spirit of love. The fundamental threat to human life is the fragmentation of these relationships. There is a turning away from God and the attempt to focus solely on man (humanism and liberal theology). The second instance is.....rather than turning away from God there is an attempt to focus on God to the exclusion of others. Both forms of fragmentation results in excesses, which negate the unified Christian perspective on relationships.

We are able to love ourselves because our basic worthwhileness is not tied solely to our actions (pride), but rather to God (humility). If we are unable to see our basic worthwhileness and love ourselves for who we are (in Christ) then this will be reflected in our relations with others.

If we are to love ourselves and others we are called upon to love (social) with all our heart (affective), with all our soul (spiritual), with all our mind (cognitive) and with all our strength (physical).

In the spiritual realm we are called upon to share our faith with students. Humanists and others make ample use of their freedoms within the classroom and

Christians need to make the same kind of concentrated effort. Education is a moral enterprise and reflects the nature of our Christian commitment.

In the cognitive.... Real learning occurs more by fascination than by rote memory. Affective development must also be promoted. Teachers must facilitate the expression of feelings and an awareness and acceptance of self and others. The social need for attention and recognition... students need to feel that they belong and can make a contribution to a group. Poor nutrition, poor lighting and lack of exercise all contribute to a negative learning environment - the physical dimension.

The Christian teacher is called upon to address the ....comprehensive development of possibilities within each dimension.

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