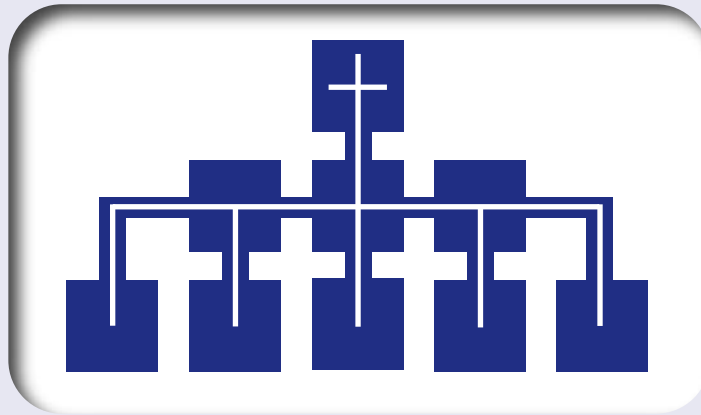




Carol Linda Kingston



Growing Professionally in Christ

Educators often view professional development as attaining outstanding credentials, advanced academic degrees, excellent research, etc. While academic achievement and training are essential, so is attention to our spiritual growth. We must intentionally seek to connect our professional development with our walk with Jesus Christ. This is the most vital part of the Adventist educator's professional life.

Growing professionally in Christ means developing a deep and intimate relationship with Him. Becoming closer to Christ will naturally help us grow a Christlike character, temperance in all things (and wisdom to know what to avoid), a positive attitude, wisdom, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The more we connect with Christ, the more we desire specific qualities and attributes. Let us see how these specific qualities help us as working professionals:

Ethics

The term "Christian ethics" refers to the moral principles and values that Jesus taught and are given in the Bible. Ethics guide Adventist professionals in making decisions and living a righteous life in accordance with Christ and their faith. Emphasis on love, compassion, forgiveness, and service to others should be part of the daily life of the Adventist educator, in addition to hon-

"May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands" (Psalms 90:17, NIV).¹

"Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank" (Proverbs 22:29, NIV).

esty, integrity, and respect for human dignity. Ethics inform the quality of life and are essential for the well being of all individuals.² Philippians 4:8 reminds us, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue,

and if there be any praise, think on these things" (KJV). For followers of Christ, good practice includes living by principles that uplift others, promote social justice, reduction of poverty, care for the environment, and, as Christlike professionals, work that promotes the common good and a just society.

Perseverance

For Adventist professionals, perseverance means to continue to trust in and follow God, even during trying times or when faced with obstacles. Perseverance basically means commitment and engagement in the workplace as professionals.³ However, for the Adventist educator, perseverance means having faith that God is with us every step of the way and that He will see us through whatever challenges we face. Believing this is easier said than done, especially during difficult times when we may feel hopeless. In 2 Peter 1:5 and 6, we are advised that "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to good-

ness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love” (NIV). Prayer, the study of God’s Word, and support from fellow believers and colleagues can strengthen our perseverance and give us the guidance and courage we need to stay on the right path.

Industriousness

Words of wisdom from the Book of Ecclesiastes encourage us: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest” (9:10, KJV). An industrious worker will do his or her best to produce the best work.⁴ There are several ways to be diligent as Adventist professionals. First, we can use our skills and talents to serve others and spread the love of God. Second, we can work diligently in our jobs or professions, treating and valuing them as opportunities to glorify God and positively impact the world. In addition, volunteering our time and resources to help those in need, supporting our church community, and continuously growing in our faith through reading the Bible and prayer will empower us to be effective workers for Christ.

Excellence

For Adventist professionals, excellence means doing everything to the best of our ability as unto the Lord. Distinction shows diligence in work, service to others, and living a life that honors God. We strive for excellence in all aspects of life, including our relationships, personal growth and development, and service to God and others. We aim to be a light in the world by living lives of integrity, kindness, and above all, love: “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9, 10, NIV). As we seek to best use our gifts and talents to serve God and humanity, we must also strive to exceed expectations and bring glory to God in all that we do.

Love

1 Corinthians 16:14 sums up all that Christ asks of those who choose to follow Him: “Let all that you do be done in love” (ESV).⁵ Adventist educators can show Christ’s love to others in many ways. First, practicing kindness and compassion among ourselves. Second, treating fellow Christians, our students, and those who come within our sphere of influence with kindness and compassion, even when this is difficult or uncomfortable. When we are kind to others, we show them God’s love. Third, looking for ways to serve others in the community. Fourth, sharing our faith, respectfully and lovingly, with those around us. We must be will-

ing to listen to others and share our own experiences with them. Fifth, accepting and extending forgiveness: Forgiveness is a powerful way to show Christ’s love. When someone wrongs us, choose to forgive him or her, and let go of any anger or bitterness. Remember, everyone is different and may receive love in different ways. The key is to be intentional and mindful of showing Christ’s love to those around us.

Humility

Adventist professionals must show Christ’s humility when interacting with their colleagues and fellow workers. According to James: “But He gives more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but gives favor to the humble’” (4:6, NIV). True humility is a gift from God. As we grow in relationship with Christ, we begin to see our true selves. We learn to recognize our limitations and how to serve others with genuine hearts. When we serve others, we put their needs before our own; we take time to listen to others without interrupting or judging, and we learn how to admit mistakes. When we make mistakes, it’s essential to acknowledge them and apologize. This shows humility and a willingness to learn from our mistakes.⁶ When others wrong us, it can be difficult to forgive them. Remember, humility is not about putting ourselves down or being passive. It is about recognizing our limitations and valuing our colleagues and fellow workers above ourselves. We can build stronger relationships and create a more loving and caring community by modeling Christ’s humility.

Volunteering our time and resources to help those in need, supporting our church community, and continuously growing in our faith through reading the Bible and prayer will empower us to be effective workers for Christ.

Trust

Trust in God is essential for the Christian walk. Well-known guidance from the Book of Proverbs encourages us to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways, submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (3:5, 6, NIV). Trust in God distinguishes us as children of God and not children of the evil one. As our relationship with God is strengthened, we are drawn to God and His Son. The result is that we learn that trust is fragile and must be carefully nurtured, even as we learn to trust others and extend grace to our colleagues, students, and other human beings. Trust is a preservative that every Christian or child of God must embrace. As David said in Psalm 4:5, “Offer sacrifices in the right spirit, and trust the Lord” (NLT).⁷

Time Management

As we grow professionally in Christ, we learn the value of time management. Each day is a gift from God, and we begin each day by spending time in prayer, Bible study, and worship. As professionals, how we order our days is essential to optimal productivity and performance.⁸ And, the Scriptures advise, “Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5, NLT). We cannot presume that time will never run out; our time on earth will eventually come to an end. In the psalmist’s words, “My times are in your hands” (Psalm 31:15, NIV).

So, we must daily commit our time to God. We received the time from God for a reason—not to mismanage or waste it, but to use it for His glory. It can never be recovered once a minute has passed, and we are responsible to Him for how we use our time. With the psalmist we should ask God to “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12, NIV). We must make time for God and others.

As busy professionals, we must learn to carve out time for ourselves and our needs to renew and replenish our reserves. God designed human beings to require rest and recreation. Take that vacation; take a few hours away from work to walk in nature or find a peaceful, quiet place to recharge. Jesus instructed His

followers to “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31, NIV) amid an extraordinarily hectic schedule.

Approaches to Growing in Christ

Growing professionally in Christ involves lifelong learning, growth, and development in our faith. Adventist professionals must grow more in faith, knowing God is there for us. Here are some practical approaches to growing professionally in Christ:

1. *Engage in regular prayer and reflection:* Set aside time for prayer and meditation each day. These can help you deepen your relationship with Christ and better understand your faith. This can be through reading the



Bible, meditating on Scripture, or reflecting quietly.

2. *Participate in church services and community activities regularly:* Attending church and community activities can help you connect with others who share your faith and provide opportunities for learning and growth.

3. *Look for opportunities for education and growth:* There are many opportunities and pathways for Christian education and growth, including workshops, conferences, and online resources. Such opportunities provide learning and development in specific areas of interest, ministry, and spiritual formation.

4. *Seek out mentorship:* Mentors can provide guidance and support as you grow in your faith. This can involve meeting regularly with a spiritual mentor, participating in a small group, or connecting with

a trusted friend who shares your values.

5. *Be accountable*: As Adventist professionals, we are accountable for that which is within our control. We are stewards of God, and each task demands excellence and accountability.

6. *Engage in service to others*: Serving others is essential to Christian growth and development. Service can mean volunteering in your local community or participating in mission work. Serving others helps us develop a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings and grows our faith as we implement our beliefs.

Although these qualities can be learned, we can develop them further with Christ's help. Here are a few basic principles that can guide our growth as professionals in Christ:

- Remember that developing skills requires time and patience. As the Bible reminds us in Ecclesiastes 3:1 to 8, there is a time for everything. We can only grow by setting aside time for the important things and by continuing to work on them patiently, even when it takes longer than we would like.

- Nourish your mind by reading the Bible and quality Christian literature. 2 Peter 3:18 notes that we must "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (NIV).

- Focus on showing love and care to others above all else. Strive to show the characteristics of love to all around you (1 Corinthians 13).

- Have a genuine desire to grow in Jesus. 1 Peter 2:2 urges that readers, "like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (NIV).

Christian professionals are chosen by God to grow in Him and to serve the dying world. Ideally, we grow in Him in all aspects of our lives: spiritually, academically, and psychologically throughout our lives. We should strive to continually gaze upon the life of Christ and keep following His precepts and growing in His grace until He comes again and takes us to His heavenly university.

Indeed, growing professionally in Christ involves a commitment to lifelong learning, growth, and development in our faith. By seeking out opportunities for education and growth, connecting with others who share our values, and serving others, we can deepen our relationship with God and people and grow in our faith. ✍

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