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OCTOBER 1998

# The Lutheran Educator



The WELS Education Journal



# The Lutheran Educator

The education journal  
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
edited by the faculty of Martin Luther College

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## A Bulletin Board Suggestion

I am sure your classroom sparkled with new bulletin boards when school began. You (or your spouse) put up bulletin boards that encouraged your students to begin the year with the Lord, to walk in his footsteps, to consider the one thing needful, or some other appropriate message. These are fine thoughts. I trust you have bulletin boards like that and I am certain the Lord will bless and empower those sentiments.

But now I want you to think about another, perhaps more challenging, bulletin board.

In that space above the front chalkboard (or whiteboard), above those Zaner-Bloser (or D'Nealian) letters marching so resolutely and neatly across your room, put 1 Corinthians 11:1. You will need a nice large, bold letter face because the words are, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

Yes, indeed, you are telling your students to imitate you, to do what you do, say, and think, to be like you.

I can hear myself saying: "Ah, but that's arrogant and proud to suggest I am better than my students and that I can be a model to them! My culture, my upbringing taught me humility and this bulletin board would say that I am proud. There is one thing I take pride in, and that is my humility."

Or, I hear myself saying: "When I consider what I am and my life of failings and fallings, there is no way I would want anyone to imitate me. I wouldn't even want to imitate myself."

Now pause a bit and wait for the next thought to come; it sometimes takes a bit longer: "If I tell my students to follow me, that means giving up those pet sins, those harmless and "minor" (to me) peccadilloes, becoming a more regular reader of the Bible, striving more diligently to meet my called responsibilities ... and I can't (or don't want to) do that." What you are hearing now is the law.

Pause again, and you will hear the voice of the gospel. Paul, who gave you the words for your bulletin board, also tells you, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Ph 4:13). (These words can be a bulletin board on your desk.)

Yes, you can tell your students to imitate you, just as you follow the Savior. This Savior lived, died, and rose to give you the power, the desire, and the will to both follow and lead, to imitate and be imitated.

Don't be afraid; tell your students to follow your example, and then look to Christ as your example and Savior.

God's blessing on a great school year.

JRI

# On Being Stewards of Our Old Age

Geoffrey A. Kieta



I WONDER IF YOU could find a culture that is more concerned about growing old than ours is. After all, not since the time of Abraham have people lived as long as we do. Especially in the Western world, issues relating to our “graying society” are taking on ever greater prominence. The chief reason the social security reform is such a touchy issue is the large number of voters who either receive payments now or will receive them within a decade or so. There is a growing problem of extremely elderly parents being a burden on their retired children. The issues of an aging population promise to present challenges for which our society is not well prepared, especially in the opening decades of the new millennium.

The question of aging is not just one of what we will do with our parents if they live to be ninety. For most of us, the question also takes on an immediacy that is related to the probability that we may live well into our seventies or even our eighties. Mutual funds are so popular at least in part because there is a widespread fear in our society that we will not be able to live in the way that we have become accustomed after we retire. In a similar vein, I don't think I

am alone in getting a cold shiver down my spine when I come into personal contact with someone suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Those of us who regularly visit nursing homes get an up close and personal view of what aging can mean in the United States today, and I can tell you, it is often not a pretty sight. For these reasons, I was struck by the fact that two periodicals to which I subscribe carried articles on the issue recently. In the November 1997 issue of National Geographic there was a feature story on the aging process. And in the January 1998 issue of the Northwestern Lutheran, there was a brief note on a research study that found that religion helps to ward off serious physical and mental illness. In my case, especially the lengthy National Geographic article provoked a great deal of thought about the subject of the Christian and aging. This article is the fruit of my reflection.

## Good stewardship, not fear

The first thing that struck me about the National Geographic article was the evident fear that the author felt as he explored the aging process ever more deeply. The author, Rick Weiss, spent time at a convent in Mankato,



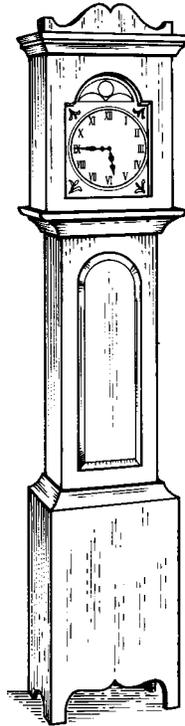
How can we be faithful ministers of God's people if we allow our health to deteriorate because we don't take the time to care for our bodies properly?



Minnesota, where David Snowden of the University of Kentucky is doing a study on aging with a group of elderly nuns who reside there. He also went to Madison, Wisconsin, where he found that in a study conducted by Rick Weindruch of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, near starvation diets actually increased the life span and general health of rats. When diets were cut by sixty percent, the mice lived as much as fifty percent longer and were healthier. He made reference to Daniel Rudman, a researcher in Milwaukee who had done studies on hormonal injections in aging men and talked to many other experts and researchers on aging. Throughout the article, the tone is one of fear. It is clear (and not at all surprising) that for the vast majority of people, the issue of

aging focuses on two central questions: How long will I live? and What will the quality of my life be?

For a Christian the questions are (or at least ought to be) a little bit different. I will confess that there is a part of me that asks exactly the same questions with exactly the same fears, but God answers both of those questions for us in his Word. How long will we live? "My times are in your hands," King David says in faith (Ps 31:15). "The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away," Moses tells us in Psalm 90:10. The believing child of God accepts that the Lord of heaven and earth has decreed when we will live and when we will die; he trusts that God's will is best. He also knows that his quality of life will be determined by that same gracious God. The possibility surely exists that as we age we will experience "trouble and sorrow" and that even after eighty or ninety years, we will look back with Moses and see that our years have flown quick-



ly by. But we also know that God promises us that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Ro 8:28). Thus, even if our quality of life turns out to be lonely years in an impersonal nursing home, confined to a wheelchair and struggling to remember exactly why we are there, we trust that God will still enable us to ask with St. Paul, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or



famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” (Ro 8:35). Thus for us, the question is more one of stewardship. God will do what he knows to be best.

But God also calls us to be faithful stewards of each blessing that he has given us. To those of us who have the privilege of serving in the ministry, this call to be faithful stewards of God’s blessings takes on a special urgency. How can we be faithful ministers of God’s people if we allow our health to deteriorate because we don’t take the time to care for our bodies properly? The question really has two aspects: first, the energy and creativity that we lose by being ill, or in bad temper, limits our ability faithfully to discharge our calls. Secondly, we are to be examples to God’s flock. If we are poor stewards of our own bodies, how can we teach children that gluttony is a sin or that sub-

stance abuse is not in keeping with God’s Word?

Because the key question for us as ministers is really one of stewardship, I would like to describe what I learned from my reading in the context of stewardship in hopes that all of us can glean something of value for our own lives.

#### Four practical thoughts

According to the research that is being done today, it would seem that there are four ways that one can extend one’s life or at least better its quality, statistically speaking. Again, we accept that our times are in God’s hands, but these four areas can be helpful in maintaining our productivity for years to come.

**Diet**  
Not surprisingly, what we eat affects how our bodies age. In the UW-Madison study, it was found that rats that ate high calorie diets had remarkably shorter lives. Researchers believe that free oxygen molecules break down vital systems on a cellular level, and thus we age. If we decrease the amount of loose molecules, we decrease the damage. But the solution was extreme. Even the researcher, Rick Weindurch, admitted that although he had been doing these studies for twenty years, he could not put himself on the diet that he put his rats on.

The practical reality is simply this: While we are probably not going to cut our calorie intake by sixty percent, we need to exercise moderation in what we eat. This is by no means a new thought. Scripture speaks very clearly on the

issue of moderation in our diets. What is somewhat new is the physical result that can come from not following God's Word. We actually can age more rapidly and experience extreme effects of that aging from our immoderation. As good stewards, we will want to practice good dietary habits so that we can remain active in our service for years to come.

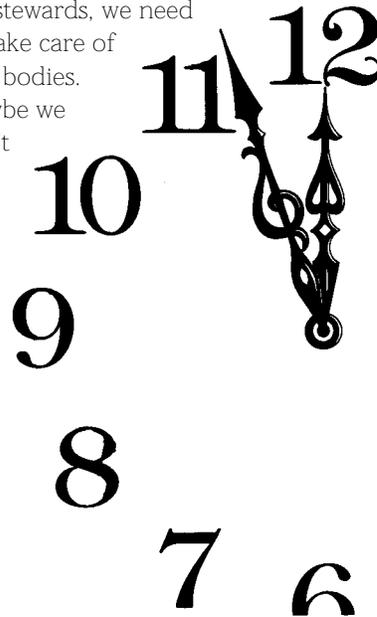
Exercise

Again, it comes as no surprise to anyone that a moderate exercise program can be very useful in maintaining our quality of life. Researchers in Milwaukee found that they could apparently reverse the aging process in men through hormone injections. Unfortunately, they also found that as soon as the injections stopped, the men lost the muscle and the vitality that they had gained and reverted to their previous condition. Additionally, there were considerable side effects (carpal tunnel syndrome, diabetes-like symptoms, and the unexpected growth of breasts) and costs (estimated at \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year). On the other hand, people who remain physically active, in general, enjoy better health and remain more alert mentally. Miriam Nelson, a researcher at the Human Nutrition Research Center (an arm of the Department of Agriculture) in Boston found that even 90-year olds can regain the strength and vitality that they had 30 years earlier through a program of moderate exercise.

All of us can probably think of an elderly lady in our congregation or our families who remained active in house-

work and other physical activities well into an age when we thought she could take it easy. My great grandmother was busy into her nineties. But as soon as she was put in a situation in which she could not remain active, her physical and mental capabilities declined sharply. In reality, the evidence indicates that the activity itself is healthy. Old age is not a time to "rest" and "do nothing." We need physical activity.

We really should start well before we are in our "golden years." Recently, a member of the Administrative Committee for Latin America spent a good hour trying to convince me that I really should revive the practice of exercise that I had when I was single and in school. I argued fiercely that pressures of ministry and family responsibility simply didn't leave me the time to run five or six miles a day. But that really wasn't the point. To be faithful stewards, we need to take care of our bodies. Maybe we can't



work out for an hour a day, every day. But physical activity a few times every week can work wonders for maintaining our health.

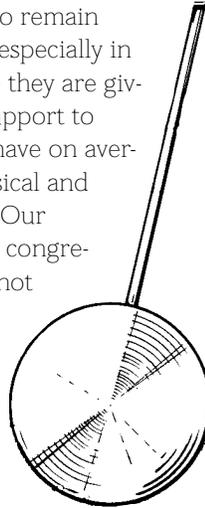
#### Mental activity

One of the most frightening aspects of aging, at least from my perspective, is dementia, or the confusion that many elderly people suffer. On my last furlough, I took my children, who were born in Colombia, to meet my grandmother. It was sad to realize that she didn't even know who I was and was only barely aware of my children's presence. While there are no guarantees, one of the best preventative measures that we can undertake is to continue to keep our minds active. Reading, studying, and learning should be regular parts of our lives until we die. God has given us our "reason and all our faculties," and we need to exercise them. Retirement should not be a time when we no longer read and study, but it will be if we don't get in the habit now of exercising our brains. Again, it is hard to find time to read the newspaper or to study something for the mere joy of learning, but it is in the best interest of the church if we maintain at peak working order these marvelous instruments that God has given us. Once we retire, who knows how many avenues of service God will open to us, if we remain alert and able to serve?

#### Social involvement

The one area of the National Geographic article that was a revelation for me was the importance of social involvement in maintaining our physical and mental health as we age. The

researchers and the writer consider things like church to be social activities, and they actually spent a great deal of time with people who are very active in their churches. They found that people who remain active socially, especially in contexts where they are giving care and support to other people, have on average better physical and mental health. Our involvement in congregational life is not something we want to undertake because we hope that we will live longer and better lives.



We are involved because the church is the body of Christ and his appointed vehicle for the preaching of the gospel to all nations. But isn't it marvelous how God piles physical blessings on top of spiritual ones?

Additionally, and this was not surprising, they found that religious people have better coping mechanisms than non-religious people, on average. They deal better with stress and they are more contented. In the church, we don't talk much about "coping mechanisms," we talk about peace and comfort and strength in the gospel. But aren't these really the same thing? A direct result of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts through the gospel is greater ability to be at peace. Often there is a physical result. According to the NWL

article, the positive effect on our health is greater when the involvement is the result of sincere conviction rather than social pressure. It may seem self evident, but the more faith we have, the greater our peace and thus the more fit we are, even physically, to be faithful servants of the Word.

The application should be obvious. We need to stay involved in the Word, first and foremost, so that our faith grows. With that growth we will grow also in the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We also need to be involved in the life of the church. We need to do these things as children of God out of love for Christ. If we are faithful in these areas, no matter how long we live or what we suffer, we will be blessings to the church.

#### A spiritual focus

Again, all four of the things that I mentioned above are things that we should already be aware of. Our reason for adopting practical measures that may result in improvements in our quality of life is not fear and ought not to be a selfish desire to have more. At the same time, when we read an article like this, how many of us don't begin to feel just a little uncomfortable? We should take time to exercise, we should do personal study, we should be more involved in our families and in our congregations, we should be more disciplined about what we eat. But many of us are not. Now, when we add the spiritual dimen-

sion of good stewardship of God's rich blessings, the clear implication is that if we don't do these things, we are sinning, because we are not being good stewards. If we have reached that conclusion, we are right. Poor stewardship is a sin. I am not going to make any excuses for it. And if you feel guilty after reading this article because it speaks to your poor stewardship, good! You should feel guilty. But at the same time, you already know what God's answer is. Jesus Christ was perfect in his stewardship even of his body. He cared for it as God would have us, for the good of the church. And he did it knowing full well that he would not live to a ripe old age! God has already given you and me that perfect stewardship of Christ. Additionally, Jesus died on the cross to pay for our poor stewardship and all of our excuses for it. We are absolutely forgiven. Now God calls us to change our lives. God calls us to grow first in our trust for him. Let's make our efforts to maintain our health and our mental faculties something that gives glory to God. Let's be good stewards, knowing that Christ will call us home at the exact moment that he should. Until that time, we want to be faithful servants of his church. The healthier we are, the more capable servants we will be.

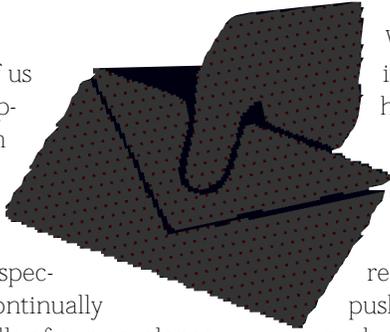
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# Pushing the Envelope

Paul L. Willems

**E**VERY ONE of us has a perception of living in an envelope of time, talents, and treasure. As we work in our respective callings, we continually bump into the walls of our envelopes. We hear each other complain there is not enough time to take students on meaningful field trips, there is not enough time to correct essay questions on tests, there is not enough time to collect and grade student portfolios, there is not enough time to [fill in the blank]. We may also hear each other saying there is not enough money to buy new basketball uniforms, there are not enough funds to purchase computers for every classroom, there is not enough money to expand our facility, there is not enough money to call a needed additional teacher, there are not enough funds to [fill in the blank]. We and our students may complain we do not have the skills needed to complete some project on time, we do not have the gifts to coach a sport or be on a sport team, we do not understand how to accomplish [fill in the blank].



We can easily picture ourselves in this picture and saying, "I have reached the real or perceived boundaries of my envelope and have reached the limits of my ministry." My challenge to you is now that you've reached edge of the envelope, push those boundaries. Strive to push against the limits of your time, talents, and treasures.

The Apostle Paul spoke of "pushing the envelope" in his ministry. "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air" (1Co 9:26). He also asked three times that his "thorn in my flesh" (2Co 12:7) be removed so that he would be more effective. While the Lord denied Paul's request, this shows he was "pushing the envelope" for the Lord. He was also planning to continue his ministry in Spain after his visit to Jerusalem (Ro 15:28). That's Paul. He was always pushing the envelope.

Other disciples of Christ continue to push the envelope today. Several WELS science instructors, strapped for funds, have learned to write for grants and now new instruction occurs at their schools with new equipment and new facilities. A dedicated layman con-



My challenge to you is now that you've reached edge of the envelope, push those boundaries.



cerned about technology in the WELS, contacted his colleagues and encouraged them to donate or sell for a small amount of cash, their old laptop computers to a WELS college. An older instructor on a high school faculty showed a younger teacher that running off worksheets during the summer can free up time during the school year for student conferences. A local contractor was asked to donate a backstop for a school ball diamond, and did. A congregation member approached the stewardship committee of



**I press toward the goal**

his church with a plan to provide funds for home use when emergency repairs are needed. The plan worked. All of these people are pushing the envelope. Local employers and service groups are often able and willing to match funds or donate time for a worthy project. Retired people, members of the OWLS, WELS Kingdom Workers, and others are able and willing to volunteer their time and talents for WELS projects. Local artisans and crafts people are able and willing to help with young people's projects such as tie-dying, plant identification, craft projects, or the like. All they are looking for is an invitation.

And how about ourselves? Can we organize our time and our student's time so more can be accomplished at our school? Can we find that by learning new skills through clinics, workshops, and seminars we can make our classrooms more exciting places of learning for our students? Do we have personal funds we can use for our classroom projects? Maybe it's only enough to buy a few paints for a Christmas project or some vegetables to dissect in science class, or a ball to play four-square at recess. It doesn't have to be a big deal for you to push the envelope. But what it does require is faith.

Each one of us can quickly

and efficiently explain why we have no extra money or time or talents that we can use in our classroom. We can all use our reason to argue against funding



Your successes may  
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small steps, but  
they will be there.



a project, taking the time to work at a task or not beginning an endeavor because we just don't know how to begin. However, faith allows us to see how we can push the envelope when reason says, "No way!" We must remember that we are not alone in our ministries. "Our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2Co 3:5-6). Take courage, for as Paul said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Php 4:13). So can we push the envelope because Christ lives in us.

Take up the challenge. Push the envelope. You don't feel accomplished as a church musician? Then resolve this year to write and direct your school's Christmas Eve service next year. You don't know where the money is coming

from for costumes for the play? Then start a sewing circle of moms or of your students and make them yourself. You are pressed for time to take on the responsibility of a student teacher? Then sign up and work on time management this summer so next year will be the year you finally teach a teacher. And above all else, pray. James tells us, "You do not have because you do not ask God" (Jas 4:2). Jesus tells us that if our faith were as small as a mustard seed, we could move mountains (Mt 17:20). Learn to lean on a great God and not rely on yourself. You have nothing to do with a great faith. It is merely trusting in a God who is great. Learn from Jehoshaphat who prayed, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (2Ch 20:12). Take it to the Lord in prayer. Wrestle with God as did Jacob. Demand a blessing (Ge 32:26).

No, you probably won't see great victories overnight. Your successes may be measured in small steps, but they will be there. After a while it will become second nature for you and for your students to push the envelope. Soon you may wonder why you didn't accomplish more earlier. You will be amazed at how much God can accomplish with your little. Push the envelope. Take the leap of faith.

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# A Response

Renee Reinhard

In the February issue of *The Lutheran Educator* an article appeared entitled "A Survey Regarding Teacher Graduates of Martin Luther College" (Isch 1998). This article sparked several thoughts. What is to follow is a response to the procedure used and some of the results of the survey.

The concern the college has for the quality of its graduates' work is both pleasing and impressive. The instrument used to collect that data was well designed.

There is, however, the question whether more data or more accurate data might have been gathered if a different choice of people or additional people were asked to respond. Since the principal is often so busy with his duties, one might question how much daily observation he has time to do. Also if the building is a large one, the principal may not on a regular basis even get to the part of the building where the new teacher is located. A more accurate picture may be obtained by getting input from the veteran teacher who is next door to the newer teacher or a teacher who team teaches with the recent graduates. These are the ones who see the way halls are supervised, see when new bulletin boards do or don't go up, and see the results of

the extras done beyond the textbook.

The reader of the survey may also wonder who the laypersons were that completed the survey. One hopes that a good share of them were moms who are in the building on a regular basis doing volunteer work, picking up children, and probably doing the vast share of helping with homework. Experience has shown that they often have a better handle on the daily workings of a classroom than a council or school board member.

It is not surprising that the survey found a weakness in organizational skills. These teachers have so much to do in and beyond their classrooms that organization is a must for fulfilling the responsibilities of their calls. When new teachers get to their assigned schools, it can be a culture shock when they realize the workload. The lack of organization can really interfere with their ability to accomplish all they must do, let alone go beyond the text to provide the enrichment that makes learning so special.

This organizational weakness can hinder the time and effort put into good communication with parents, colleagues, and others. Martin Luther College likely struggles with a solution to this difficulty of its graduates. Would increasing the students' college load

force them to become organized (a rather sink or swim method), or have formal classes in organizational methods (perhaps taught by an "expert" presently active in the teaching field), or make it a duty of their classroom teachers when they are student teaching (of course, that means that the classroom teacher must possess those skills) help this dilemma?

Perhaps a helpful mindset that graduating teachers need to acquire before they leave campus is that teachers—good teachers—do not take the summer off. While summer offers a change of pace and more flexibility, it is the time that the success of the next year is started. Summer is the time for professional growth. It is the time for attending classes or workshops and catching up on professional reading. Summer is the time to do long range blocking of subjects, bulletin boards, music, and devotions. It is when teachers have a chance to read children's books so they have the background to encourage and help their students in their quest to conquer and enjoy reading. Summer allows for the time to find and design new units that go beyond the text. During summer one can become acquainted with the new text or curriculum that may be used next year, for example, the new ChristLight series. One might even run off worksheets and activities that will be used the next year or actually prepare parts of bulletin boards. It's a great feeling to know there are things filed away ready to use during the year. More importantly, the planning and preparing done during the summer means the

teacher has more time and energy to deal with the daily duties of his call and the individual needs of the lambs in his charge.

It is encouraging to see the concept of mentoring being discussed. This would be so helpful. However, the concern again arises that the principal may be too busy to do that job. Perhaps the principal would do better to assign a veteran teacher in the building the responsibility of mentoring. When it becomes an assigned responsibility, it seems that more ownership is taken. Ideally, part of that mentoring would include room visits by the mentor and regularly scheduled meetings between the mentor and the new teacher. There would be an understanding that those meetings would be a "safe place" for confidential talk and questioning. Really, any teacher new to a school no matter how much experience, should be assigned a mentor for the first year just to get to know the ropes of his or her new school. It would save so much stress and hassle for the new teacher, his students, and the rest of the staff.

It is a joy to see there is a continued effort on the part of the college to send out graduates that are well prepared to do the Lord's special work.

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#### WORK CITED

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# Retaining Our Youth

Gerald F. Kastens

**T**HERE'S THE SOUND of pounding feet outside our homes and churches these days—the sound of teenagers running away from the Christian beliefs that parents and the church have taught them. Some studies estimate that less than one-third of our students who are active Christians while in grade school will still be active when they graduate from high school. Christian churches everywhere are losing about two-thirds of their youth during and after high school. Consider the contributing indicators.

- Today in the WELS, our pastors confirm only 67% of the babies they baptize.
- Only 6% of our WELS homes have daily Bible study or devotions.
- Four out of ten of this year's confirmation class will become inactive by the first Sunday after Memorial Day.
- Six percent of WELS teenagers attend some type of formal Bible study.
- Only 42% of all WELS congregations offer teen Bible class opportunities.
- By age 19, only 38% of our Lutheran elementary school graduates attend public worship as often as twice a month, compared to 32% of public school confirmands.



- Only 45% of WELS members attend church on Sunday.
- Sixteen percent of adult members attend formal Bible study (10% of all Americans go to some form of weekly Bible study—Gallup).

## Solutions

There was a time when just about everyone drove a Ford. In fact, the name Ford was once interchangeable with the word car. Until other manufacturers began the mass production of cars, a Ford was a car, and a car was a Ford. We do something similar in the church when we look for one solution to complex issues. Youth retention is a com-

plex issue and any attempt to find a solution requires multiple approaches.

Every ministry effort begins with planning. Today in the WELS there are three classes of youth—the privileged, the neglected, and the ignored. The privileged are those youth who attend Lutheran elementary schools and area Lutheran high schools. This is the group that gets the lion's share of the budget and attention in our parishes. The neglected youth and families are those who attend Sunday school and then move on to attend public high school. The nurturing efforts in our part-time agencies are often neglected by called workers and church leaders which in turn causes frustration and polarization. Finally, the unchurched and erring are those who are ignored because we lack the energy and commitment to create strategies and develop resources for reaching the lost. It is imperative that we develop plans for ministering to every youth, the privileged, the neglected, and the ignored, in our congregation and community.

Develop parenting programs. Start early by establishing a cradle roll that provides parenting helps and nurturing resources. Cradled in His Arms, published by Northwestern Publishing House will work well until the Christ-Light® cradle roll resources are available. Offer a parenting class to new parents on baptism and parent responsibility. Use the cradle roll to launch your congregation's parenting effort. Don't be satisfied just to put things in the mail. Enlist volunteers to drop by with resources and to provide encourage-

ment through a home visitation effort.

Continue parenting efforts by offering parenting classes for the different developmental stages of parenting. Be sure to teach parents about the meaning and purpose of confirmation in the Lutheran church. Capitalize on the Christ-Light parenting features by showing parents how they can comfortably and confidently teach the truths of Scripture and know the joy of teaching their children who God is and how sure his promises are.

Make ministry to teenagers and parents a priority for the congregation. The contemporary crisis in ministering to youth in today's church has little to do with programming and everything to do with families. The best youth program may not necessarily be one that has a high-powered leader, all kinds of activities for youth, special youth worship services, and multiple teen Bible classes. Rather, the more effective approach to a ministry with teenagers may be to find ways to undergird the nuclear family with the rich support of the extended Christian family of the church and for these two formative families to work together in leading young people toward mature Christian adulthood.

To initiate a family-based youth ministry involves a shift in thinking. It begins by recognizing that youth leaders must not merely do for youth what Christian parents cannot, or will not do for them. The goal no longer is simply to have a "vibrant and exciting youth program" (that is, have lots of teenagers active in many activities). Instead, we must endeavor to equip

parents to communicate the truths of Scripture to their teenagers.

Equipping parents for their work as the primary nurturers of their children's faith remains the best strategy for ministry to teenagers. Just as churches are intentional about developing programs for children and youth, they can be just as intentional about equipping parents.

The first priority is to instill in youth the spiritual value of participating in weekly corporate worship with the entire church family. Then they will not feel isolated from the church once they have become too old to attend the youth group. An additional positive step would be to get the youth actively involved in the weekly corporate worship, for example, ushers, teen and adult choir, greeters, prayers for them, sermon applications for them. In addition, churches can also provide other service activities outside of corporate worship, for example, outreach, benevolence, and visitation.

A second priority is to provide youth with opportunities for significant dialogue and relationships with groups of mature Christian adults. One way to do this is to have a number of Bible classes each year which are of interest to and attended by both adults and youth. That does not mean that we should do away with Bible class opportunities which are separate from adults. The focus of these classes is bridge-building, giving teens repeated opportunities to gather around God's Word and to know an extended family of Christian adults. Topics for such classes could

include communication, decision-making, drugs, and alcohol.

The far-reaching implication of the need for youth to dialogue with mature Christians is the creation of youth mentoring programs that match every one of the church's teenagers with an adult of the congregation. Youth-mentor pairs maintain individual contact on a weekly or monthly basis. The pastor still teaches confirmation classes, but as soon as the teenagers are confirmed, they are matched with adults in the congregation. These adults, along with parents, agree to cultivate a Christian relationship. A member is needed to coordinate the effort, making sure that every teenager in the church has at least one adult friend who is praying for him or her and making contact on a regular basis.

A third priority is to equip parents to be able to nurture the faith of their teenage sons and daughters. A family-based youth ministry offers classes on themes related to the family: "Dealing with Your Parents" (teenagers), "Understanding Your Teenager" (parents), "Communicating in the Home" (parents and teenagers), and for teenagers with other adults in the church.

A family emphasis does not need to replace age-specific youth programming. But unless family is given a higher priority than found in traditional youth programming, it is likely that a congregation will never really get around to the task. There will be obstacles to carrying out this priority. Many parents are often immature Christians

Using the five categories of worship, recreation, Bible study, fellowship, and service is a simple way to get a family-based youth ministry off the ground. It is important to remember that it is more of an attitude than a programming strategy. Here are some ideas that can help move the congregation in the direction of a family-based youth ministry. Remember these are for adults and youth together.

#### Bible Studies

- How to share your faith in the community + Christian freedom and pop culture
- What's hot and what's not (panel of teens answering parents questions)
- What does it mean to be a Christian man/woman?
- How to reach lost and erring members of our church

#### Recreation

- Take a bike trip + Have a dance
- Give a concert or talent show + Plan a progressive dinner
- Any parent-teen competition

#### Worship

- Serve as greeters and ushers + Make banners for special services
- Sit with small children during Lord's Supper + Write special liturgies for Sunday school

#### Service

- Visit shut-ins + Visit the elderly in a nursing home
- Make evangelism calls + Sort food for a local food pantry
- Adopt a missionary (prayer, letters) + Deliver Meals on Wheels

#### Miscellaneous

- Parent/teen newsletter with upcoming events + Adopt a grandparent
- Plan regular parent/teen potluck get togethers + Camping and outdoor retreats
- Bulletin board with current information and pictures from past events

themselves, parents have crowded schedules to meet, and most feel helpless when it comes to nurturing teenagers spiritually. But in my two decades of ministry to youth and their families, I have never seen parents more hungry for help than they are now.

Practice evangelical admonition. Teenagers who neglect Word and Sacrament after confirmation have a spiritual problem. We do not deal with such problems in a legalistic manner. Rather we seek to lead the individual to recognize the opportunity and need for high school youth in our day and age to

continue to be faithful in Word and Sacrament. A high school age youth might even be excommunicated if he or she continued to despise the Word despite the admonition given.

This is elders' work. Most congregations are not organized or do not have the commitment to deal with teenagers who are straying. Perhaps the time has come to retrench and organize the work of the elders to address teens individually or deal with teenagers together with their parents. Could committed teens who have received proper training call on their peers? Perhaps families can be recruited to call upon families. Given the eternal implications and the spiritual milieu that exist, congregations can no longer afford to continue doing business as usual.

Create strong Sunday schools and Lutheran elementary schools by keeping "the main thing, the main thing" Though parents and educators may feel that the availability of the Internet and quality sports programs are the marks of an effective school, Christian teachers are required to do that which they have been called to do; faithfully minister to children through the teaching of God's

Word. Teaching God's Word takes personal preparation. It begins by having an ongoing relationship with the Father. It includes "walking the



talk" by modeling Christ's love and compassion in our life and ministry. It also requires a knowledge of the Scriptures that goes well beyond daily classroom preparation.

We each have a residue of basic Bible knowledge to draw upon, verses and facts we have mastered since the beginning days of our Christian training. But as a teaching minister, I find that what I know is hardly satisfactory when it comes to meeting the challenges and needs of the Christian classroom. The daily study and memorization of Scripture verses, paragraphs, and the content of chapters will better prepare each of us to reach young hearts.

How does your congregation encourage the spiritual growth of its teachers? Are there sufficient funds for participating in summer courses at Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary? When does your faculty spend time in the Word? When do you have your personal Bible study? Do the Lutheran elementary school teachers provide training, encouragement, and support for the Sunday school? Does pastor meet regularly with the Sunday school staff?

There is no room for mediocrity or a lukewarm commitment to the Law-gospel teaching ministry to which we have been called. Ours is a ministry of the Word; that is the divine strategy that God would have us faithfully carry out for reclaiming and retaining souls for eternity.

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# The Book of the Prophet Malachi— Called Servants Take Note!

Conrad Frey



**Y**OU ARE FAMILIAR I am sure, with the words of Romans 15:4. In case your memory needs a little jogging, here those words are: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures—we might have hope.”

In the foregoing passage the word we tend to overlook is the word “everything.” “Everything” is pretty all-inclusive, and is really not open to exceptions. This fact leads to a question. When we read God’s Word, do we look at every jot and tittle as personal instruction and as vehicles for learning? That’s the question which should be lurking in our minds, for example, as we read and study the book of the prophet Malachi because it leads us to take a more subjective approach than we normally do. It boils down to this: Just how much is there for us to learn and to assimilate from that which “was written to teach us”? One thing is for sure. There will be very little for us to gain if our concern just lies in generalities such as, Malachi wrote the last book of the Old Testament which serves as a

link between the two testaments, the book of Malachi concerns itself both with the sins of the people and especially of the priestly class, or it contains a Messianic prophecy and also foretells the coming of John the Baptist. The fact is, if that is all we get out of it, we have not been taught very much that is significant because we appear satisfied with mere encyclopedic knowledge. Certainly “to teach us” involves much more than mere encyclopedic knowledge. For example, in view of its contents, we should be asking: What is the book of Malachi saying to us that affects the ministerial office, whatever the form of that ministry?

Though you have just meandered through a kind of rambling introduction, you’ve likely surmised we’ll be zeroing in on what the Lord Jehovah is saying to the Old Testament priestly class of Malachi’s time which has application for us, the New Testament priestly class.

George Hodges drives to the heart of the matter quite succinctly when he writes, “The offenses which Malachi (and Haggai as well) reproveth were not the robust sins of idolatry or immorali-

ty, but rather the evils of indifference. Haggai rebuked the people because they did not rebuild the temple. Malachi rebuked the priests, after the temple was built, because they went about their duties so carelessly, and accounted their ministry as weariness." In a similar vein Christopher F. Drewes observes, "The priests did not honor and fear the Lord ... but despised His name and profaned it, in that they offered blemished victims for sacrifice on His altar. They had also become mercenary and would do nothing in the temple unless they were paid for it."

As one reads Malachi, one finds that the foregoing assessments are right on though they may tend to make us squirm a bit. The truth is that the priests did indeed perform the duties of their office in a perfunctory manner and with little evidence of any kind of true dedication and devotion. This kind of spiritual environment could predictably lead only to widespread skepticism throughout Israel. Under these circumstances Malachi, speaking for Jehovah, boldly denounced the attitudes of these priests. As he did this, you detect no move toward repentance and change despite the fact that from the very outset Malachi emphasized the Lord God Jehovah's continuing love for his Chosen People. It is important to note too that, as Jehovah presented his list of charges, the priests shrugged it off by engaging in self-vindication, certainly demonstrated by their responses, "How have we despised your name?" "How have we defiled you?" These types of questions are the responses

characteristic of a truly unrepentant people, masquerading as servants of the most high God. Certainly it's scarcely the attitude one would expect of those who were God's called and anointed messengers. Their attitude, in fact, completely obliterates the scriptural truth, "We love him because he first loved us." These facts leave no question that these priests could never have passed the New Testament test found in Romans, "...by the mercies of



But for you who  
revere my name, the  
sun of righteousness  
will rise with  
healing in its wings.



God...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (12:1).

Despite the fact, though, that it is described simply as "a reasonable service," you and I, unfortunately, will not be fulfilling it perfectly either. Shall we too resort to self-vindication as the faithless priests did? Certainly not! As Charles Simeon put it, "If we rely altogether on Christ's perfect sacrifice for our justification from sin, and then present our imperfect offerings to God, as

Frey

tokens of our love, they shall come up with acceptance on His altar and be truly pleasing in His sight." These observations find validity also in the words of 1 Peter 3:5, "... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." This is what enables us to have as our highest goal the aim to please him and to glorify his name. Obviously self-vindication as practiced by the priests of Malachi's time won't cut the mustard. What will cut the mustard, as a preacher a couple of centuries ago described it, "is to believe everything God says, because He says it; to love everything He does, because He does it; and to execute everything He enjoins, because He commands it." By so doing, as 2 Corinthians 3:3 reminds us, "You show that you are a letter from Christ ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God..." The flip side to this, of course, is found in Christ's own words, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I say" (Lk 6:46)?

Perhaps you may now agree with me that those called into today's various ministerial offices should be reading the book of Malachi somewhat more judiciously and subjectively in order to assimilate the divine truths applicable for the conduct of their respective ministries in this very trying age. That kind of reading is also a means of measuring our faithfulness since, in the final analysis, this is all God requires of any of us, remembering as well that our work in the Lord may not be crowned with equal success but that not one of us will labor in vain.

We'll conclude with the passage with which we began because it is likewise true of the book of the Prophet Malachi, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

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President emeritus Conrad Frey lives in New Ulm, Minnesota.

**WHO CAN STAND WHEN HE APPEARS! ...**



**THEN THE LORD WILL HAVE  
MEN WHO WILL BRING  
OFFERINGS IN  
RIGHTEDNESS.  
(MAL 3:1,3)**

## Music and Literature in the Classroom: A Powerful Combination

Laurie Ann Volpe  
Mark W. Dewalt



**L**ISTENING TO MUSIC and reading quality literature are two of the most enjoyable aspects of human experience. Rarely explored in educational literature, however, is a discussion of the educational benefits and suggested uses of teaming music with classic literature in the classroom. During the last 15 years we have had many opportunities to pair music with literature in schools in New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. We have found these experiences to be very enjoyable for both ourselves and the students. This article will document some of our experiences as well as provide strategies to use in any classroom.

Whether used alone or to enhance other areas of the curriculum, most ele-

mentary and secondary educators know the benefits of literature in the classroom. Similarly, music educators realize the positive impact music has on the creativity, artistry, and general development of children. When music is combined with literature, lessons incorporate a multisensory approach, tap creativity and imagination, foster listening skills, and aid in the development of comprehension and critical thinking skills.

We have used the techniques described herein with children of all ages and ability levels. From gifted to learning disabled to multiple handicapped the strategies have proven to be effective. All of the lessons have had the same results: students enjoy the music, enjoy the book, and have fun while learning a variety of literacy skills.

One of our favorite combinations of music with literature is to use Robert McCloskey's famous book, *Make Way for Ducklings* in conjunction with Mozart's Overture to "Marriage of Figaro." We believe this combination to be a superb example of how music and literature can be successfully used together because the lively music allows the listener to imagine the chaos and confusion of the frightened ducklings

as they journey through the streets of Boston. There are several ways to use the book in conjunction with the music. One is to begin the lesson by introducing the book while playing a CD or tape of the overture. Another is to play the music before introducing the book. In one class, in which the latter occurred, one five year old said, "This sounds like ducks swimming fast in water!" In other cases a teacher might have the children listen to the music after reading the story. We have found that the children enjoy this and are able to recall the story, giving vivid details and identifying the feeling of the ducklings as they make their way to a new home. During culminating activities for this book, children have often asked to listen to the music as they work to help them "remember the story." Almost without exception, this particular combination of music and literature has prompted students to exclaim "Let's do the ducklings and music book again!"

Another highly successful joining of music and literature has been with Chris Van Allsburg's popular book, *The Polar Express* combined with the music from the movie "Chariots of Fire." This book weaves the tale of a child who, on Christmas Eve, boards a train that is filled with children heading to the North Pole. At the North Pole, Santa gives the child a silver bell. The main selection from the film "Chariots of Fire" soundtrack has a pulsating beat, much like a train moving along the tracks. When using this music as an introduction to the book, many students draw pictures of trains when they



We have found that  
as students  
experience more  
music and literature  
lessons, students  
develop their critical  
thinking skills, while  
also learning about  
the beauty and  
power of music.



listen to the music. When one student was questioned about his picture of a train with snow falling around it, he said, "I think that the music sounds like a train and is quiet." One of the most memorable moments of teaching this lesson was when one student yelled out, "I hear the bell! I hear the bell! Don't you hear it? It's there in the music!" The bell in the music is very faint, so faint that even the teacher who first created this lesson never heard the bell until that moment.

We have found that as students experience more music and literature lessons, students develop their critical thinking skills, while also learning about the beauty and power of music.

Reasoning and analytical skills are constantly being employed as they discuss the book and the music. As the children become accustomed to these lessons, they begin to critique the music selections and suggest others. For example, when one class listened to a peaceful selection of music for Ludwig Beethoven's story, *Madeline*, nearly all the students felt the music should be changed. They requested "scarier" music that would "go with the part when Madeline gets sick."

In one second grade class, students experienced a powerful language arts lesson when reading Eric Carle's, *The Grouchy Ladybug* while listening to Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 12, Op. 26. This Beethoven sonata sets the tone for Carle's story about a ladybug who is searching for someone with whom she can fight. To introduce the story, the teacher gave a brief description of the story, and then asked students what music might be appropriate. Several students suggested "music that sounds angry and then peaceful"; others stated, "music that is loud and then quiet." The music was then played as the story was read. This helped the children think critically about the story and music. As they listened to the music, the students were asked to think about how it related to the story. Several children stated that "the music gets exciting when the story gets exciting" and "the music is quiet when the ladybug is asleep."

In order to extend the creative thinking in relation to this book, we asked the children to become New York

advertising executives. Their job was to create a poster advertising *The Grouchy Ladybug* that states at least one reason why someone should read the book and listen to the music. The children were encouraged to create an attractive poster to entice students in other classes to listen to the story and music. The students enjoyed this activity, and cited some very creative reasons on their advertisements:

"Everyone should get it (the book and the music lesson) because the music gets exciting when the book gets exciting."

"It's won four major awards for excellence. It's even been approved by Ronald Reagan, George Bush, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Especially Beethoven."

"The book is colorful and the music is colorful."

We have found that pairing music and literature can be used in upper elementary, middle school, high school and college classes. In a sixth grade reading class, for example, two pieces of music have been used successfully to help define the tone for the novel, *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson. "Titles" from the "Chariots of Fire" soundtrack was used at various times throughout the story especially when the main character jogs or runs for recreation. Played at the beginning of the book and at the very end, the music creates continuity throughout the story as Jesse, the main character, matures.

The use of Chopin's emotional Nocturne in C-sharp was especially use-

ful with *Bridge to Terabithia* most notably at the part of the book in which Jesse returns home from a wonderful day only to find that his best friend has died. Playing this music while reading



Using music to enhance literature will benefit every area of a child's education and will foster a lifelong appreciation of both experiences.



the story aloud helped students understand the tone of these emotional events. Following the reading, the students listened to the music to help them remember the details and to critique why the book and music go together.

We have enjoyed teaching the previous lessons and have included at the end of this article a list of books and suggested companion music. We have found these pairings to be quite successful. We believe that lessons combining music and literature can be easily implemented in the classroom, and we

encourage you to experiment with our suggestions, as well as find music for your favorite literature. Selecting books from the curriculum and utilizing any music you believe represents part or all of the book (classical or popular) forms the foundation of the lessons.

Discussing the music and then adding activities which would normally be used during the lesson (creative writing, art activities, cooperative learning exercises) is all it takes to get started. These types of lessons give the teacher yet another way to utilize literature in the classroom. Using music to enhance literature will benefit every area of a child's education and will foster a lifelong appreciation of both experiences.

#### BOOKS/SUGGESTED MUSIC LIST

- 📖 Book: *Across Five Aprils*—Irene Hunt
- 🎧 Music: "Love theme from *St. Elmo's Fire*" ("For Just a Moment")
- 📖 Book: *Bridge to Terabithia*—Katherine Paterson
- 🎧 Music: "Titles" ("Chariots of Fire" soundtrack)—Vangelis  
"Nocturne in c-sharp minor"—Chopin
- 📖 Book: *Charlotte's Web*—E.B. White
- 🎧 Music: "Morning Mood from the 'Peer Gynt' Suite" No. 1, Op. 46—Edvard Grieg  
"Rodeo: Corral Nocturne"—Aaron Copland
- 📖 Book: *The Grouchy Ladybug*—Eric Carle
- 🎧 Music: "Piano Sonata No. 12, Op. 26 in Ab Major"—Ludwig van Beethoven
- 📖 Book: *In Coal Country*—Judith Hendershot
- 🎧 Music: "Appalachian Spring"—Aaron Copland

- 📖 Book: Jumanji, Chris Van Allsburg
- 🎵 Music: "Piano Concerto in F Major, 3rd movement"—George Gershwin
- 📖 Book: The Little House/Virginia Lee Burton
- 🎵 Music: "Pachelbel's Canon"—Johann Pachelbel
- 📖 Book: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe/C.S. Lewis
- 🎵 Music: "Concerto in d minor for 2 violins" (1st movement)—J.S. Bach
- 📖 Book: Madeline/Ludwig Bemelmans
- 🎵 Music: "Joy of the Children"—Prokofieff
- 📖 Book: Make Way for Ducklings, Robert McCloskey
- 🎵 Music: "Overture: Marriage of Figaro"—W.A. Mozart
- 📖 Book: Mike Mulligan and his Steamshovel/Virginia Lee Burton
- 🎵 Music: "Sinfonia a 8 from 'La Melodia Germanica, No. 3"—Joseph Stamitz
- 📖 Book: The Polar Express/Chris Van Allsburg
- 🎵 Music: "Titles," "Circles" (Chariots of Fire Soundtrack)—Vangelis
- 📖 Book: Saint George and the Dragon, Margaret Hodges
- 🎵 Music: "Morning"—Edvard Grieg  
"Water Music"—G.F. Handel
- 📖 Book: Sarah, Plain and Tall, Patricia MacLachlan
- 🎵 Music: "'Tis the Gift to be Simple" from "Appalachian Spring"—Aaron Copland
- 📖 Book: A Wrinkle in Time/Madeline L'Engle
- 🎵 Music: "Night Fire Dance"—Vollenweider

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- Van Allsburg, Chris. Jumanji. Houghton Mifflin, 1981.
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# REVIEWS

# REVIEWS



VeggieTales (Everland Entertainment /Word, Inc., 3319 West End Ave., Nashville, TN 37203) 1995-

For those (few) who aren't familiar with these videos, they are Bible stories told and portrayed by vegetables (David and Goliath, Joshua and Jericho, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego).

"Dave and the Giant Pickle" It is unclear if a child who did not have any background in Bible stories would recognize this as a Bible story. The video is just silly at times: David has a problem because his sheep tip over and the Philistines have French accents. Sonny Bono's picture is flashed during the Silly Songs interlude. Goliath wears boxing gloves. The medium of the cartoon vegetables overwhelms whatever message the video is trying to tell. The moral of the lesson, if it is understood, is that a little guy did a really big thing. It is hard to see a use for this video either in home or school.

"Rack, Shack & Benny" This video is loosely based on the lesson of the three men in the fiery furnace. The lesson it seems to teach is that kids do not have to give into peer pressure when they know it is wrong. The video is similar to but it does not retell the actual Bible lesson. The three characters are working at a factory which makes chocolate

bunnies. The three decide not to sing a song because it has things in it they don't agree with. Their punishment is to be thrown into a furnace. Credit for them being saved is given to God. It is hard to see how this could be used in a Christian classroom; perhaps it could be used at home for entertainment. It almost seems at times that the videos are making fun of God's Word. The children might end up doubting whether such an event actually happened. There is law presented but certainly no gospel message.

"Josh and the Big Wall" The story itself is quite accurate but there are distractions such as ice cream, cookies, and slushes. The medium of talking vegetables overwhelms the message again. It might be used for entertainment but not to teach religion. It may, however, be an improvement in the message it delivers over such videos as Barney and Teletubies. Adults sometimes appreciate the humor more than children. [The reviewer] did show it to an adult roommate who is unchurched. She was impressed.



The Story of God and His People.  
(Christian Schools International,  
3350 East Parish Ave, SE, Grand  
Rapids, MI 49512) 1997- approx-  
imately \$40 each.

“The Day of the Lord,” “A Light to the  
Gentiles,” “The House of Israel”

This set is part of a Bible study cur-  
riculum from Christian Schools  
International for middle school chil-  
dren. The presentations have video  
footage and still photography showing  
the major locations of events in the  
Bible. The set of three videos covers  
Genesis through the growth of the  
Christian church.

“The House of Israel” This video cov-  
ers the period from the beginning of  
the world through the reign of  
Solomon. Only one statement in this  
two-hour video seemed at variance with  
Scripture: “If Abram obeyed God and  
moved ... then God would give him the  
blessings of Genesis 12.” (God’s promis-  
es were not dependent on the obedi-  
ence of any person.) The presenter,  
Neal Bierling, believes what the Bible  
says about his people. He is also an  
archaeologist and presents the locations  
and finds of archaeology relating to the  
Bible. He consistently follows the popu-  
lar late (and erroneous) dating of the  
Exodus (1200 BC rather than 1446 BC).  
The video is very well filmed. The sights  
and treasures of the past are all includ-  
ed. This is the next best thing to visiting  
the sites in person. The video segments  
match the chronology of the Bible and  
vary in length from three minutes to 21  
minutes. They could be used quite easi-  
ly in a class setting by showing only the

portion that relates to the particular  
Bible story you are using.



Noah’s Ark(Lightyear Entertainment  
/Zondervan Publishing House,  
Grand Rapids, MI 49530) 1989

The story is narrated by James Earl  
Jones and uses the pictures from the  
Caldecott award winning book by Peter  
Spier. The video consists of animated  
drawings, but the characters don’t talk.  
The video is suitable for children in the  
early elementary school grades. God’s  
law is proclaimed when the people  
before the Flood are described. The  
description of the ark is accurate. The  
animals obeyed God’s call to go to the  
ark. Some additional things were shown  
which added interest to the story but  
were not part of the scriptural account  
(Noah’s wife is shown doing the cook-  
ing and Noah and his sons are doing  
the cleaning of the ark during the  
flood). There are also some things  
which need clarifying: the story empha-  
sizes the great things Noah and his fam-  
ily did, the video also gave the impres-  
sion that Noah decided when to leave  
the ark, and Noah is shown as closing  
the doors of the ark. The video has no  
gospel and the rainbow is just a nice  
thing to remember. The video could be  
used to reinforce a Bible lesson after it  
has been taught.

## Video reviews



“David and Goliath.” (Rabbit Ears Production, Inc. Rowayton, CT) 1992

This video is a cartoon presentation of the familiar Bible story, narrated by Mel Gibson. The video seems to beef up the story somewhat. It tells of David’s red hair looking like the sun in the east or David calling Goliath “a puffed-up blasphemer.” The account makes no mention of what happened in the battle after Goliath fell or about David’s other battles or Saul’s death. The teacher could have upper grade children review the video for accuracy, but a story like David and Goliath does not have to be enhanced. In addition, Bible stories do not need the help of Hollywood (or Mel Gibson, although he does an excellent job of telling the story) to make them interesting or exciting.



The Amazing Bible Series (Multnomah and Bridgestone Group.) 1991

“The Amazing Miracles” This video is billed as an animated musical about the miracles of the Bible. It has a cartoon format using animals to introduce stories and cartoon people in the stories. Various miracles from the Old and New Testaments are shown. There was no

logical sequence. Bits and pieces of these miracles were shown to a song that was often difficult to understand. Some of the pictures of the miracles had discrepancies with the Bible account; in fact, the Bible is not mentioned by name; it is called “The Amazing Book.” Although the advertisement for this video claims that it will teach children about miracles, it was just a silly song and dance routine, with no dialog in the stories. The segments of the stories are so difficult to follow and it jumps from one miracle to another. There is no Scripture or biblical teaching included. The video ends with the mice and the cat friends; the video called that “amazing,” inferring that it too was a miracle.



The Visual Bible (Visual Entertainment / Visual International, Brentwood, TN) 1995-

This series has two sets of four videos; one covers the book of Acts and the other has the book of Matthew. Both sets are a word-for-word telling (NIV) of both books while persons act out the narrative. The characters say the direct quotes in Scripture and a narrator speaks the descriptive parts. The only “addition” to the video that is not the Bible is in Acts where the video shows Luke on a ship dictating the

book of Acts.

"Acts" The casting is good although it would be preferable to use unknown actors in the roles rather than Dean Jones as Luke and James Brolin as Peter. Paul also had a southern accent and sounded a bit like a southern Baptist preacher at times. The costumes and settings seem accurate. The video is not sensational; the stoning of Stephen and the death of Annanias are shown but not overly dramatized. How an actor delivers his lines and how he uses gestures can bring an interpretation to the text. The video can also provide new (and useful) interpretations. A viewer may not always agree with this interpretation even though it is hard to claim it is wrong. This video has been used in high schools as part of a New Testament course. Students at this level have mixed reactions. The set would also be useful in the upper elementary grades.



That the World May Know (Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995) 1996-

These videos and accompanying materials may be purchased in a variety of formats. There are the videos alone ("home pack") for \$35 for each of two sets; there is a "church pack" which contains the videos, curriculum, and

storage case (\$53 for each set); and there is a "curriculum" set including the videos, discussion guide, and color transparencies (\$98 a set). Each set contains two videos (one hour each) having two to three lessons. There are guided discussion sheets, about 20 pages per lesson, student copies of maps and handouts, and overhead transparencies. Ray Van Laan, historian/archeologist, narrates the tapes. He stands at a particular site in Israel that relates to the topic of the lesson and gives the historical scriptural account. The topics/lessons in the four videos are the following: (1) Standing at the crossroads (Tel Gezer) God wants us to make an impact on our culture; (2) Wet Feet (Jordan River) God desires us to step out in faith; (3) First Fruits (Jericho) God had the right to accept our very best offering; (4) Confronting Evil (The Shephelah) God calls us to be in the world but remain distinct from it; (5) Iron of Culture (Valley of Elah) God expects us to use technology to his glory; (6) The Lord is my shepherd (Negev) God calls us to live one day at a time and listen to his voice; (7) Innocent Blood (Megiddo) God wants us to cherish and protect human life; (8) Who is God (Mt. Carmel) God wants our lives to be the answer to this question; (9) Wages of Sin (Tel Lachish) God judges those who shed innocent blood and ignore his commandments; (10) God with us (Arad) God expects us to be his presence in our dying world.

The attraction of each of these videos is the skill of the narrator and the use

## Video reviews

of the actual site where the events occurred. For example, the lesson on Megiddo includes the archaeological dig showing the altar on which the children were sacrificed to Baal. There is something compelling when the narrator can reach out and touch the very altar on which the terrible things he is describing occurred. Again, as the narrator describes the Lord as our shepherd, a flock of sheep led by Bedouin children circles in the background. The accounts are gripping and exciting; the viewer is held by the drama. Not surprising, however, the videos have the imprint of James Dobson's theology. The point is made frequently and forcefully that the Christian's primary responsibility is to change the sinful culture of this world because when a culture violates the standards of God's

Word, the result is disaster. There is very little in the videos regarding the personal salvation we have through the life and death of Christ. A notable and gripping exception to this is the segment on Arad where the atoning sacrifice of Christ is clearly shown. The videos can probably be best used in adult Bible classes.

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