

Bible Class: More Than Studying for a Test?

Involving Academy Students in Witnessing

By Victor Brown

How did you do on your Bible test, Mark?"

"Oh, I think I got an 'A,' Mom."

"You must really know your Bible and be ready to share what you know with others!"

"Not really. I've forgotten most of it already. We just learn that stuff for the tests."

Does the above conversation sound familiar? I'm afraid it's all too common in Adventist families. Of course, this problem of studying "just for the test" affects all classes, but in Bible its results can be devastating. The academy Bible curriculum is designed not simply to secure for students a good economic and educated life, but rather to lead them to make a decision for eternal life. The purpose of this article is to discuss the problem of providing more than just "book learning" in Bible classes and to look at some ways this problem can be remedied.

The heart of the problem lies in how the Bible class is perceived. Generally speaking, Bible is classified with the academic subjects (i.e., English, history, math, et cetera), as opposed to the vocational subjects (i.e., home economics, wood shop, auto mechanics). In vocational classes, proficiency

is always tied to performance. In woodworking, for example, it is not enough to know *how* to build a bookcase; you have to be able to actually *do* it.

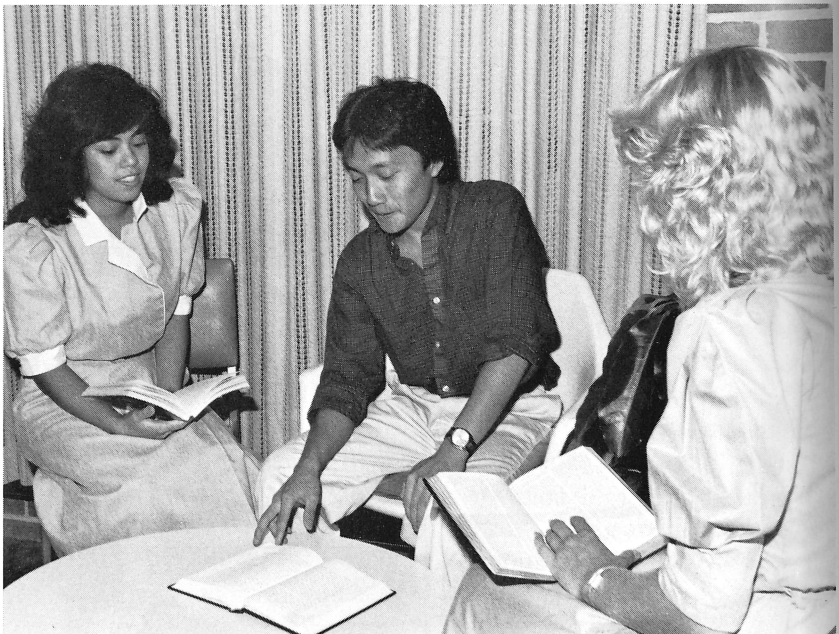
I believe that the same is true of Bible class. One of the major underlying principles of the Christian faith is the sharing and demonstration of the life-made-new through Christ. With this in mind, it is imperative that lab experiences be provided so Bible class involves more than "studying to pass the test."

The difficulty begins when the academy chaplain or religion staff

tries to define what form this "lab" experience will take. The two basic forms usually employed are working the lab directly into the Bible curriculum and grading performance, or providing voluntary inreach/outreach programs that give the students an opportunity to apply the principles learned in Bible class.

Including the Labs in the Curriculum

The first method—working the labs directly into the curriculum—works best when the lab experi-
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In a discipling program, small groups of students meet to study the Bible together.

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reject the child's response. As the school year unfolds she will persistently nurture the child's spiritual experience. In the meantime, his picture takes its place on the bulletin board with the others. If he protests, the teacher removes the picture. If not, the teacher's displaying the picture demonstrates that she accepts it as the product of the child's current response. *Guideline 3: Accept any worship response that represents the child's current level of spiritual development.* That's what you asked for. Don't call it wrong. Give the child an opportunity to grow into a greater understanding of spiritual things.

Your classroom presents a challenge to reflect Christ's great respect for human dignity. Seize the opportunity to encourage every child to feel competent and worthy during your worship and Bible classes. When children know they are heard and taken seriously, they are not bored or easily distracted. As a result, you have created a climate where Christ can dwell. □

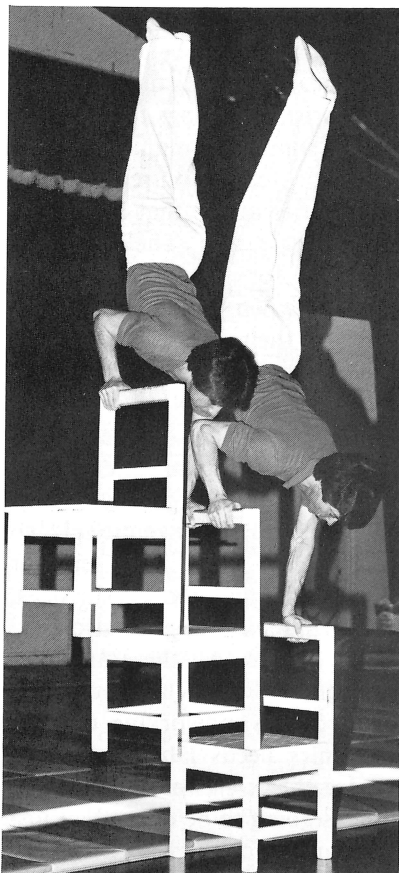
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ences provide the student with options from which he can select what appeals to him. If the Bible class is designed so that students can choose certain lab activities or more conventional homework, the integrity of the witnessing activity is maintained. The motivation for giving a Bible study should not be "I gave a Bible study just so I could pass." (And think of the possible impact on the person to whom the study was given!) While mandatory Bible outreach activities do include more students, the drawbacks of forcing young people to participate outweigh this advantage.

Another method of integrating Bible and witnessing activities is to run programs on campus independent of the Bible class periods. Because it is voluntary, this method more often ensures the right motive for service, love, and concern. It is also more in harmony with the real world. Adults don't get "credit" for service. Unfortunately, it is difficult to get many students involved in such a program. Sometimes students who want to help are overlooked in favor of brighter, more aggressive volunteers. Also, because the activities are extracurricular, many students are unable to fit witnessing labs into their schedules. However, these challenges can be met with planning and cooperation from the staff.

What follows is a brief summary



Tumbling teams can witness for healthful living.

of some of the programs in progress at Shenandoah Valley Academy. Some are unique; others are used by many schools.

In one outreach program, 40-50 academy students present weeks of prayer at various SDA elementary schools and junior academies. The format involves short illustrative skits put on by students, with explanation and homily by the campus chaplain. The academy students also give personal testimony about their experience with Jesus. Topics such as parent-student relations, peer pressure, and self-image are presented.

The demand for such programs has steadily increased in the four years they have been in use, and this year we will present weeks of prayer in nine schools. Comments have been very favorable. One principal said:

I think I enjoyed the week of prayer as much, if not more than my students. . . . Your ministry in coming to schools for activities of this nature does much to unify and uplift.

Students, as well, have been blessed. One student wrote:

I wish Week of Prayer wasn't over. You made it fun. I really liked the skits. They made what you were trying to say easier to understand. . . . Please come back.

Bible Study Project

An outreach program that grew out of the weeks of prayer was a Bible study project. In this program, academy students give Bible studies to elementary students. The studies are designed to prepare elementary students for baptism, or if a child is already baptized, to lead him to a greater understanding of his beliefs. The academy student visits in the homes of those who decide to be baptized, and on the day of baptism leads the candidate down into the waters to the pastor. This project has been appreciated by both teachers and students, as shown by the following comments: