

# “REBIRTH” Christ-Centered Values Education

**T**eaching values to children has become much easier with a new set of materials recently completed by the Southern Asia-Pacific Division Education Department. These materials are entitled REBIRTH and are part of a set of resources designed to help teachers

achieve the ideals of Christian education.

Almost everyone will agree that teaching values is one of the most important tasks of a parent or teacher. Values may be expressed as character traits, virtues, fruits of the Spirit, Adventist lifestyle, beliefs, or faith. But they go to the heart of what we want our children to believe and the kind of people we want them to be.

But what values should we teach? When you list them, or harder yet, try to teach them; it's easier to speak in generalities than to be specific. But what could be more important

than finding ways to inculcate them in our youth?

This was the challenge that led to the REBIRTH Christ-centered values-education materials. Dr. Stephen R. Guptill, director of education for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and Martha Johnson, curriculum coordinator for the division, recognized the need while

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**By Stephen R. Guptill**





## ***What values should we teach?***

preparing textbook supplements for Adventist primary and secondary school teachers. They identified one of the approaches teachers can use in making their classes Christ-centered as “teaching specific values or beliefs of faith.” But what were these values? They were not as clearly defined as the subject content. A search for the values to teach produced a number of partial lists, with certain favorite values amplified but no systematic approach for teachers.

Guptill and Johnson began to compile a list of virtues and beliefs considered essential to Christian education. The list grew very large and included many synonyms and overlapping virtues. It was clear that some organization and grouping was necessary. In the end, 89 of the most central Adventist values and Christian character traits were selected and

grouped into seven categories. Each of these categories or groups addresses the great issues of life and helps set children on the right path of salvation and successful living. Each letter of the REBIRTH name represents one of these virtue groups.

The *Religious* virtues help us be like Jesus and respond to His perfect character. The *Ethical* virtues help us make wise decisions in life. The *Biblical* group includes core scriptural beliefs that form the basis for our faith and experience with God. The *Individual* virtues help make us become people with noble, God-like characters. The *Relational* virtues help us build wholesome relationships with others. The *Temporal* values relate to time and Adventist lifestyle. And finally, the *Healthful* values help us take good care of our bodies.

Each virtue is expressed in terms of its relationship with God. This is how Christian values are different from secular ones. Despite having a similar name, a Christian value may be completely different from a value taught from a humanist or secular

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perspective. Also, it may be valued for a totally different reason.

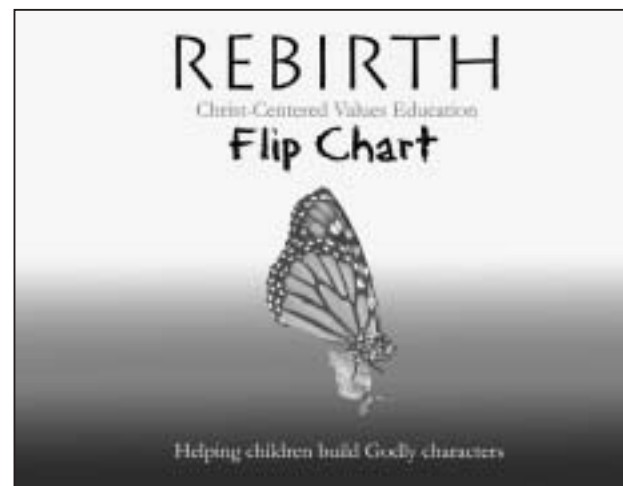
With the core virtues identified, the next challenge was how to teach them. Visual aids and resources were needed. How could teachers help students progress from knowing what is right and wrong to owning and affirming the value as part of their character?

A beautifully illustrated flip chart was created. Finding artwork that illustrated all the virtues and beliefs proved to be difficult. Fortunately, Marvin Marcelino, a local pastor and artist, offered his talents. He and two other artists produced a

wonderful set of illustrations for each of the core values.

In developing the curriculum materials, we sought to provide a simple definition of each value that helps students understand what is right and good and how it came from God. "Choice statements" for each value help the children express their desire to embrace that value or belief as their own.

Next, we collected resources and teaching ideas for each value. This



proved to be an endless task. Students and faculty from the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies (AIAS), the General Conference graduate school located near the division office in the Philippines, provided a wealth of materials. A workshop for college education department faculty and secondary and primary teachers produced additional resources. The product was the REBIRTH Resource book, a companion to the flip chart, which included teaching aids for every virtue. It became a model for teachers to use in building their own collection of value resources. The resource book includes art, music, Bible stories, Ellen White comments, value stories from other books, links to school subjects, student activities, applications for student life, and evaluation questions. To assist teachers wanting to create their own value materials for bulletin boards, handouts, and projects, there is a clip art CD with the pictures and drawings for each value.

Looking back on the project, we have several observations:

1. The *process* of selecting values is almost as important as the final decision. When a community focuses on the specific values they want their children to learn, they are more likely

## Each virtue is expressed in terms of its relationship with God.



Values - "Freedom" "Salvation"



Value - "Learning"

to cooperate in the process of teaching the values. Discussing and deciding on which values to teach is an exercise that the board, faculty, church, and parents would do well to consider. It helps highlight what they really want to accomplish beyond conveying the subject content. For instance, what do Christian parents want their 4th graders to learn about a Christian lifestyle, personal devotional habits, health, and Bible beliefs? How can we find out? Should we schedule a brainstorming session where these character traits are identified and expressed in tangible and, if possible, measurable terms? School

leaders, teachers, and parents can work together to make specific plans about how and when these virtues will be taught. This does not negate the work of professional curriculum developers, who also address these values, but it does give focus to local concerns and increases local participation and involvement.

2. We also learned that there will never be a comprehensive or inclusive list of values or resources to support them. The more

you work at it, the more you discover.

3. Finally, values must be owned, not just memorized. Values education must go beyond the primary level where students are taught what to do. As children grow, the values must be addressed at a more mature level. Louis Rath some years ago suggested that for virtues to become values, a person must choose them freely after understanding the alternatives and consequences of the different choice (see sidebar).

If students really value something, they will embrace it and be willing to publicly affirm and act on it. The challenge is to help older students work through this process. They must be shown the consequences of other choices and given opportunities

### Louis Rath's Values Criteria

1. **Choosing freely.** No one can force you to embrace a value. You choose it and act upon it even when you are not being observed.
2. **Choosing from alternatives.** You choose after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative. You choose this way to believe and act, even when you are unable to say so out loud.
3. **Choosing after thoughtful consideration.** You are committed to your choice even after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative.
4. **Prizing and cherishing.** You feel happy about your choice.
5. **Affirming.** You are willing to affirm your choice to others.
6. **Acted upon.** You act upon your choice. Although values are embraced mentally and emotionally, the actions they produce "speak louder than words."
7. **Repeated.** Acting repeatedly on your values creates a pattern of behavior.—Louis E. Rath, *Values and Teaching: Working With Values in the Classroom* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publ. Co., 1966).

to express the reasons for their values. They also need help clarifying their questions and concerns.

The REBIRTH materials are being enthusiastically received by Adventist parents and teachers. Kent George, a teacher from Palawan, Philippines, says: "Our school selects a value from REBIRTH to feature every week. We tell stories about the selected value and bring it into our discussions during the different class subjects. The REBIRTH materials give us a visual and systematic way to talk about the core values we are trying to teach in our school."

Eleanor Roque, associate director

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Value - "Gratitude"



Value - "Creation"



Value - "Church Organization"

of education for the North Philippine Union, says: "The teaching of values is so important and central to the mission and objectives of our Adventist schools that we want every teacher involved. Every classroom has

the REBIRTH flip chart and resource book, and it provides an organizational structure and visual aid for addressing the essential values we want our students to adopt."

The REBIRTH materials are not intended to take the place of the Bible or values classes but serve as a supplement for teachers or parents as they seek to emphasize or teach values. The materials provide a starting place and organization for the work of teaching Christ-centered character traits and beliefs.

The REBIRTH materials are now all on the Web. See <http://www.ssd.org/rebirth>. For more information, contact the Southern Asia-Pacific Division Education Department by E-mail at [edu@ssd.org](mailto:edu@ssd.org)



Value - "Law of God"



**Stephen R. Guptill, Ed.D. M.P.H., M.Div.,** is Director of Education for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division in Silang Cavite, Philippines.