



How

Rule into practice. The Valuegenesis research demonstrates that many of the Glasser Quality School (GQS) components are too often missing in Adventist education.⁴ This may be one of the reasons why a number of young people do not stay in the church. Today's brain research generally corroborates that these principles are essential for effective classroom learning. Students learn best in an environment of trust and respect.

At the end of a special one-day presentation by Dr. Glasser to 300 Northern California Conference teachers, I mentioned to him that what he was really talking about in

Choice Theory

Changed My Life

A Personal Reflection

School was a painful experience for me. How I became a teacher is nothing short of a miracle and another story in itself. Because of my experience, I became very sensitive to my pupils' unique needs and styles of learning, even before I had any scientific knowledge of how students learn. Reading William Glasser's work on Choice Theory was a breath of fresh air for me because it explained what I already felt about how a classroom should be conducted. But it wasn't until I actually completed Glasser's basic and advanced intensive training that it all began to come together for me.

Choice Theory is nothing more than a description of the way God treats sinners, or in other words—God's grace. The components of Choice Theory and practical grace are much the same. Glasser advocates that we avoid the "seven deadly habits,"¹ which I call the methods of "un-grace." In their place, he strongly recommends implementing the "seven connecting habits,"² which I view as "grace habits." His five "basic needs"³ outline the way God deals with us and describe what is necessary for successful relationships at home, school, church, or work. For me, implementing Choice Theory is putting the Golden

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Christian terms was "grace." He quickly came back with, "The problem is, you Christians somehow have a difficult time putting it into practice in your classrooms." He is right. We know the way, but do not go there often enough in our classroom practice. Grace is easy to talk about, but it's quite another thing to make it our "default action" in dealing with students and people in general.

I have become convinced that this theory holds many of the answers for our challenges in Christian education. My 18 years as a superintendent gave me many examples of success and failure in teaching. I concluded that many teachers who were having difficulties at rehiring time often lacked the skills identified in Glasser's Quality School approach.

To my dismay, when we gave teachers the opportunity to receive the Glasser Quality School training, often those who were opposed, critical,

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and uncooperative were the very ones who were struggling in their school settings. Some were seemingly “good” teachers, but could not get along with colleagues or members of the community. Glasser’s principles offered simple solutions to their “people problems.”

The Bible and Ellen White provide the answers for life’s relationship challenges. Dr. Glasser has simply organized theories and descriptions of successful relationships as he has discovered them through research and his own professional and lifelong experience. His conclusions often parallel biblical admonitions. We shouldn’t be surprised when scientific research and secular sources validate inspiration. Glasser’s work provides simple methods for putting God’s grace into practice in school and life.

I have re-evaluated my methods of dealing with people, not only professionally, but also in my private life. I appreciate being able to identify where I can improve even good family relationships. It is scary to realize that I have not always provided all of Glasser’s five basic needs for those closest to me. Now I stop to measure myself and make a prayerful effort to ensure that all five are present in my relationship with my family. My wife says she is impressed, and I say “Praise God for clarifying these needed components for happy relationships.”

When I think back to my many years in the classroom and in administration, even though I think I was successful, I wish I had had this information at the beginning of my career. I think it would have made my teaching and administrative ministry much more effective for students and teachers, and for God. I am ashamed that I did not search for this information in the Bible on my own, but glad it is finally available in a practical format for teachers and families.

My prayer is that the grace concepts will be a major

overarching practice in every church school and the default mode of every teacher in Adventist education. I believe it is

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vital that every teacher receive specific training in how to apply God’s grace in the classroom. This is essential to the mission of Adventist education and crucial for the academic and spiritual success of our students. Glasser’s Choice Theory is not the answer, but it is a great tool for implementing “the answer.” Jesus is the answer! ✍



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REFERENCES

1. Glasser’s seven deadly habits: criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rewarding to control (William Glasser, *Every Student Can Succeed* [Chatsworth, Calif.: The Glasser Institute, 2000], p. 7).
2. Glasser’s seven connecting/caring habits: “Caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting, and befriending” (ibid., p. 25).
3. Glasser’s five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (ibid., p. 40).
4. Information on the two Valuegenesis studies is available at <http://www.lasierra.edu/centers/hcyfm> or by e-mail at hcyfm@lasierra.edu.

