



Chandra Goff

Remember the

WONDERS

He Has Done

In May 2021, my son, Kaleb, reached one of the big milestones: He graduated from the 8th grade and left his elementary school years behind. The ceremony was simple; the students had wanted it that way. But even so, there was much to reflect on and appreciate.

There was a commemorative presentation displaying pictures of all the graduates from babyhood to their current age, accompanied by recorded speeches of thankfulness from the graduates to those who had stood beside them all the years they were attending Mt. Aetna Adventist School in Hagerstown, Maryland. Students prerecorded their thanks so that they would not have to read it while they were nervous, and instead, could deliver roses to those they were thanking as their words of appreciation were played.

Their principal gave the commencement address. His speech was filled with reflections on the class and their uniqueness. He was not only their principal, but also their homeroom teacher and class sponsor, so he had plenty of amusing anecdotes to share. It was obvious in the way he spoke about the class, and each student in the class, that he cared about them personally.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the celebratory reception was held outside. It was happy and loud, with the popular car parade of graduates (driving through the school parking lot blowing horns while people gathered on the school lawn cheered) making a comeback from the year before. Even my reticent son, who doesn't like to be in large gatherings and had been asking if he had to go, seemed to enjoy himself. (And the next day, when he could have stayed home because he wasn't required to attend the last day of school—since

he was now a graduate!—he decided to go so that he could see some of his friends one more time before they all went their separate ways.) It was a pleasant occasion filled with excitement and anticipation.

Eighth-grade graduation is full of hope. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”¹ Like most graduations, the occasion was full of the students’ hopes about where they will be going next in their educational journeys. It was full of the parents’ hopes that the lessons their children have learned will assist them and lead to success. It was full of the teachers’ hopes that what they imparted to their students made a difference, even if the results might not be immediately known. Whatever the size of the school or the number of students, everyone has hopes and dreams.

As Adventist educators, every year we watch our students prepare to move on to new experiences and—whether we have known the students for only a short time or have been involved in their education from the very beginning—we have grand hopes for each one. And yet, our hopes pale in comparison to God’s plans for them and for us. For each of us, God envisions “infinite possibilities.”²

I graduated from the 8th grade from Mt. Aetna, as well—36 years ago. I’ve experienced two other graduations of my own (and several of other family). I still believe what Jeremiah 29:11 says. God has plans to give me a future and a hope, but I’ve reached an age that I can’t help but think I’ve already reached that future. Watching my son’s 8th-grade graduation, along with

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his excitement and anticipation (What will he do as he goes forward? What will he become?), there was a hint of wistfulness, a sense of nostalgia and what-if's (What if I had done this, that, or the other? How would my life have been different?). I'm certainly not doing what I had seen myself doing when I graduated from college—let alone when I graduated from 8th grade. And this is true for many individuals.

I could let myself get dejected by the fact that I'm not in any of the careers I had considered from 8th grade to college graduation; or that I haven't travelled the entire world—that I haven't done any number of things that I had thought I might one day do. But, while I might think about it occasionally, I have no regrets.

1 Chronicles 16:12 says: "Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he pronounced."³ That makes it easier. Maybe I'm not past the quarter-century mark teaching (I taught only two years before the school where I was teaching downsized and life shuttled me in a different direction), but I found a job working in education, doing what I can to help other educators; it is a profession that I enjoy, with people that I like and with whom I appreciate working. Although I haven't traveled the entire world, I have seen more of it than most people, and working where I do, I'm exposed to people from all over; experiencing ideas and viewpoints that give me a larger picture of the world than I might have had.

I think despite the changes to my plans and future, there were numerous wonders and miracles performed . . . the biggest miracle being my 8th-grade-graduate son. So, maybe a large part of the future God has for me has already occurred (and maybe not—I plan to live a long time!), but if so, that's OK, because I can look back and see how He has blessed me and look forward to how He will bless me and my family in the future. Thirty-six years ago, God knew His plans; He still does. I'm looking forward to finding out what those are. My hope is that we all can look back with gratitude and look forward to the future with hope and trust.

In this issue, the authors address several topics that challenge us to reflect on the past so that we can move forward with hope in the future. In "Does Teaching About Evolution in Adventist Schools Destroy Faith in God?" Stanley D. Dobias and J. Russ Butler share results from a course designed to help prepare students to be factually literate about a Seventh-day Adventist worldview regarding Creation, yet knowledgeable about and tolerant of opposing theories they will encounter as they continue their education (page 4). In

"Motivating Students in the Religion Classroom," Timothy Alan Floyd discusses the need for implementing intentional approaches to motivate and nurture students in the religious-education classroom (page 12). And, in a feature section on Adventist pioneers, John Wesley Taylor V writes about Mahlon Ellsworth (M. E.) Olsen, an Adventist educator whose life and career path exemplify trust in God's promise for a "future and a hope" (page 19). Sócrates Quispe-Condori, Tito Goicochea-Malaver, and Edgard Leonel Luz ask educators to think about ways to modify instruction and access to education post-pandemic in "Opportunities for Education in Times of Pandemic and Post-pandemic" (page 28). In the *Perspectives* feature section, Trisha Higgins-Handy reflects on her worldview as an Adventist teacher, and its impact on her practice (page 35), and in *Best Practices at Work* section, Ike C. de la Peña and Michael C. Pan provide several examples of how to optimize instruction post-pandemic in "Learning During Stressful Situations: Optimizing Evidence-based Learning Strategies" (page 39).

We hope you enjoy this issue, and with each article, find inspiration and hope.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Jeremiah 29:11. *English Standard Version (ESV)*. The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version (ESV)*® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
2. Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 80.
3. 1 Chronicles 16:12, *New International Version (NIV)*, Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.