



Junjun Manalo Amparo

Using Christ's Method for Reaching Students

I first learned about John Maxwell from a book gifted to me titled *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Maxwell, a prolific author, speaker, and leadership coach, has written several books on leadership and personal development that have sold more than 24 million copies in 50 languages. One morning recently, I had the opportunity to watch his presentation about the “Five Steps to Sharing Your Faith”¹ and became very intrigued by Maxwell’s thoughts about faith and how best to share Jesus’ love with others.

A Passion for Sharing Faith

In his presentation, Maxwell identifies the following five steps to sharing one’s faith: (1) Value people and add value to them; (2) Embrace and hold fast to your faith; (3) Enter their world to know and understand them; (4) Be creative in sharing the good news; and (5) Never forget why you entered the world.² In his ministry so far, Maxwell has spoken more than 12,000 times in locations worldwide. Because of his numerous leadership and personal-development books, everyone expects him to discuss these topics, especially as they relate to the secular business community. However, in one interview, he was asked about his favorite topic. Maxwell replied that he loves to share two topics. First, he deeply loves to share his faith. Second, he is passionate about teaching people how to share their faith. Nothing is more rewarding, he said, than introducing a person to Christ. His belief in the value of each person and his deep love for God has shaped his ministry. I was deeply impressed by his passion for sharing God’s love.

The Science of Soul-saving

Most educators readily discuss research, academic

service, teaching strategies, professional development, and teaching-related tasks. These topics are central to the profession and occupy most of our time. But could we share God’s love in the context of our teaching career? Ellen White offered an interesting insight about reaching others, especially our students: “The highest of all sciences is the science of soul saving. The greatest work to which human beings can aspire is the work of winning men from sin to holiness.”³

If soul-saving is the highest science of all the sciences, it is worth learning how to partner with Christ to do it well. Why is soul-saving considered a science? “In order to lead souls to Jesus there must be a knowledge of human nature and a study of the human mind.”⁴ In other words, we need to deeply understand the condition of the human mind and our nature.

In a school setting, students are confronted with issues such as academic pressure, broken relationships, financial challenges, drug dependency, lack of motivation, video game addiction, homesickness, anxiety, etc. When teachers share their faith, they share truths that can transform people’s lives. However, while the school community, in general, is willing to offer support, some students do not seek help. Some are hesitant to unload their burdens and suffer quietly from the pressures and challenges of life.

Understanding Christ's Method

The secret to successful teaching requires the application of various methods and effective teaching strategies. But what can we learn from the life of a Master Teacher in terms of reaching students and winning them for Christ? Ellen White emphasized the significance of using Christ's method and highlighted the five strategies for reaching people: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"⁵

Christ's ministry has transformed countless precious souls. Christ's method is timeless and universal, and I have contemplated how to contextualize and integrate such an approach on school campuses to achieve a meaningful ministry.

1. Jesus mingled with people.

While positive student relationships are fundamental to success, an important question is this: How do we, as teachers, counselors, chaplains, staff, and school administrators, mingle with students? Do we seize every opportunity to interact with them? This is the first step in Christ's method—to mingle with people. This requires investing valuable time. Unfortunately, teachers are often too busy with deadlines, assessments, grade reports, and lesson planning. The truth is, we often find ourselves so occupied that we don't have much time to meet the needs of students.

However, just as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we must intentionally make time. The Good Samaritan temporarily set aside his schedule to help someone in need. While the man being robbed and beaten along Jericho Road had visible and urgent needs, it isn't easy to minister to students who have less-recognizable needs. We will never discover their actual needs and challenges unless we mingle with them and engage them in authentic conversation through personal dialogue. Mingling with people is the initial step to understanding their personal needs,

whether emotional, financial, or spiritual. Moreover, we can establish great relationships through personal conversations and quality time with our students.

Jesus loved being with people regardless of their background (Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 15:1, 2; John 1:14). This is why He was accused of mingling with sinners and eating with sinners and tax collectors. In *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, we read, "The work of Christ was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience."⁶ While true witnessing entails mingling, the



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love from God should be the driving force and the supreme reason for reaching others.

Along with teaching and counseling, working at the university level allows me to serve as a club adviser and mentor and support student-life activities, providing me with precious opportunities to interact with students. However, for the professor or teacher, interacting with students may require more creativity and intentionality. For example, this may mean visiting students in the dormitory, offering extra sessions to help them with homework, playing sports, joining after-school activities, or even just sitting and talking together at the cafeteria during mealtimes.

2. *Jesus showed sympathy for others.*

Sympathy is an expression of care; it indicates sorrow and understanding of someone else's hardships, suffering, grief, misfortune, etc. Reaching students becomes meaningful when sympathy serves as a bridge that connects two people: the sufferer and the comforter. The sufferer could be academically at risk and/or emotionally disturbed due to a broken relationship or personal issues at home. When an authentic connection is established, it creates a space for understanding, compassion, and healing. We have an excellent example in Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. When He saw Lazarus' family and friends overwhelmed with grief, His heart stirred with sympathy and compassion, and He wept with them (John 11:33-35). Then, He met their need and raised Lazarus from the dead, a foreshadowing of how He would meet humanity's needs in the future when He arose from the tomb, defeating death forever.⁷

In showing sympathy, we must look for ways to relieve suffering. In *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4, we read, "Any human being who needs our sympathy and our kind offers is our neighbor. The suffering and destitute of all classes are our neighbors; and when their wants are brought to our knowledge, it is our duty to relieve them as far as possible."⁸ We often think of sympathy as a feeling of sadness for others because of their situations. However, to sympathize is not just to feel sorry for others but to take action in practical ways. This method is visible in the life of Christ, and He didn't just show sympathy but took that sympathy to the next level—compassionate action. Again, in Matthew 14:14, we have another example of Jesus' compassion: "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (NIV).⁹

The Bible is full of reminders regarding action-oriented sympathy, such as feeding the hungry (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-13), clothing the naked (Isaiah 58:7; Matthew 25:35-45), welcoming the stranger (Matthew 25:31-40; Hebrews 13:2), visiting the sick (Matthew 25:36; James 5:14), and prisoner (Matthew 25:34-40; Hebrews 13:1-3), visiting widows (Luke 7:11-15; Acts 9:39), and orphans (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; James 1:27), and comforting those in trouble (Jonah 4:5-8). Every teacher needs to be proactive and sensitive to students' needs to ensure that they receive essential

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support. If we want to become effective educators, we need to understand the emotions of our students and sympathize with their needs, just as Jesus did when He interacted with people. When teachers and staff are more intentional about this, many students on campus will be touched by the ministry of compassion.

3. *Jesus ministered to people's needs.*

The life of Christ is an example of how to meet the needs of people. For instance, Jesus addressed the need to avoid potential

social embarrassment at the wedding feast in Cana. Also, He met the collective physical needs of the more than 5,000 hungry people by feeding them. On another occasion, He addressed the private need for the emotional security of the woman at the well and the personal spiritual needs of Zacchaeus and Nicodemus. Jesus is a perfect example of how to practically respond when a felt need is discovered—and how to meet it in a timely way: "The Savior has given His precious life in order to establish a church capable of caring for sorrowful, tempted souls."¹⁰

However, by nature, we desire for our own good. Just like the priest and the Levites in the parable of the Good Samaritan, none of us likes interruptions. Teachers are busy people. They have committee meetings to attend, grading to do, project proposals to submit, and jobs to get done. They set goals for themselves and want to meet them, sometimes within a short time. That's why when a student requests help or a principal calls an emergency meeting because of a misbehaving student, it can be challenging if the timing isn't convenient. Sometimes, it's difficult to drop whatever one is doing to undertake another urgent matter.

But most of the time, the greatest opportunities to minister to people's needs happen in the midst of interruptions. As we study the ministry of Jesus, we notice that some of the needs He cared for occurred as interruptions, to which He lovingly responded. To minister to the needs of others often entails time and sacrifices.

While God asks us to desire other people's good, we minister to others not just because we want something in return but to show that we genuinely care and love them. I remember visiting a student in the dorm after one of her family members died because of a car accident. She appreciated that I was just there to

listen. Other students have shared with me that just having someone listen to their frustrations and feelings of burnout due to holding various leadership positions on campus or being unable to manage their time assured them that they were seen and heard. In many cases, ministering to their needs means offering a listening ear. The ministry of presence and praying with them are priceless, especially during the most difficult times.

4. *Jesus won people's confidence.*

In any relationship, integrity and open communication are essential to inspire confidence. When there is trust, even if the words aren't perfectly packaged, people will still get your meaning. But without trust, misinterpretation can happen no matter how carefully one crafts the words. A lack of trust and reservation about others occurs when people have been taken advantage of by others. Relationships thrive when there is confidence, and trusting someone requires knowing his or her character. This is why gaining confidence is a long process. It involves character traits such as integrity, pure motives, and good intentions in building relationships with people.

On one occasion, the fishermen who followed Jesus cast their nets unsuccessfully (Luke 5:4-11), yet they trusted the Carpenter's words when He said to try again. The following questions are ones every teacher should reflect on as we strive to build better relationships with students and share our faith. When you're talking with people, do they trust you? Do they put confidence in you? Why would students confide in teachers they do not trust? Can they trust that any sensitive issues they share with you will be kept confidential? What are some of the elements that encourage the growth of such confidence? What causes people to be willing to trust or have faith in someone? The starting point of winning confidence is listening. It's hard to survive in an environment where people do not listen consciously—bosses not listening to employees, students not listening to teachers, young people not listening to church leaders, and spouses not listening to each other.

Students must also know that you, their teacher,

care about what is best for them. This means showing that you care about what happens to them, the decisions that they make, and that you have their best interest in mind. Ethical principles and clear boundaries must guide relationships with students. In many countries, educators are considered mandatory reporters, so while confidentiality is essential, anything divulged that may cause harm to the student or others must be reported. Knowing someone cares about what happens to them is built on consistency and honesty.

As a counselor, I always ask myself, "How do I win students' confidence? Why would they come to my office and listen when they can talk to their friends?" When we listen, we gain trust because it means we value people. Listening is the starting point for winning people's confidence.

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5. *Jesus invited people to follow Him.*

"Follow me," Jesus said to the people He called to be His disciples. The appeal came after He met their needs and won their confidence. This is a vital, sequential step in Jesus' method. It's tough to win students' confidence when you have not mingled with them or haven't met their needs or sympathized with them. Leading people to God is a natural result of using Christ's method as the solid foundation of campus ministry. It arises from the first four steps, during which genuine relationships are built. When students start questioning our motivations and why we live the way we do, we can spontaneously start talking about the source of our spiritual commitment and inspiration.

In my years of teaching and counseling students, I have discovered that educators can genuinely impact students' lives if they intentionally apply Christ's method. When their words are filled with hope and encouragement, students will be drawn to the feet of Jesus.

Final Thoughts

Living a godly life is an integral aspect of Christ's method. Therefore, teachers should model a Christian lifestyle and show evidence of the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. There is no shortcut for reaching students, but Christ's method provides an opportunity

to break down walls and build bridges for true witnessing. In addition to demonstrating profound knowledge of their subject areas, every educator can learn from the Master Teacher and become an effective missionary as they reach out to students who need help. ✍️

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