

SERMON FOR EDUCATION DAY 2018

PRODUCT SAMPLE

Text: Psalm 37:23-24

The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.²⁴ Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds *him with* His hand.

Introduction

You may have been in the audience of a graduation ceremony at any of our schools and observed a feature in the order of service called 'Product Sample'. Product sample is an alumnus of the institution who has excelled in any one sphere of life. It is a past student who has done exceptionally well academically and or in the profession he or she has chosen. This is somebody who has risen to some level of prominence and who has or is making significant contribution to the society or the world around them. Product samples usually rise from the depth of obscurity to the height of popularity. The University would bring back these individuals from the ends of the earth, dressed them in the appropriate regalia, place them on the platform and at some point in the ceremony take time out to officially recognize their success and their achievements and present them with an award to express the university's appreciation for their ambassadorial work.

The purpose behind this idea may be many, but surely one of them was to inspire the current graduates and those matriculating students in attendance. It is to provide tangible evidence to the impressionable minds of the students of what God can do when they put your life in His hand. It is to demonstrate how God can lead us and take us to heights we can never imagine. It is to show off the difference that a God centered Adventist Christian education can make in your lives.

Implied in the public recognition of the product sample, is the subliminal message that their Christian education at the SDA institution has something if not everything to do with their success. That somewhere, somehow they would not have been where they are right now **but for the fact** that they have been educated, they have been influenced, or trained in a God fearing environment.

The knowledge of God that has been taught to them, inscribed on their cranium, driven down in their consciousness, lodged in their sub conscious, is like a seed planted in the soul that will spring up sometime in the future and bear fruit in their lives. The knowledge of God taught to them is like a software program running in the background of their operational system that keep their conscience alive and dictates what is right from what is wrong. It is the Super-Ego that determines what is moral from immoral, it the compass that will point them in the right direction, it is the GPS that will help them to get back on the right path if and when they ever make the wrong turn in life.

In a world of relativity, where the borders of morality are broken down, where boundaries are displaced, where wrong and right are used interchangeably, where good and bad have no clear definition, it would be negligent if not reckless, perhaps dangerous for parents not to invest in their children this knowledge of God. As such, an education centered on the knowledge of Almighty God cannot be an option, but a requirement to immunize the minds of our children against the new threat of modern evils. Early God centered education functions much like a spiritual vaccination that is given to children in their early age. Solomon declares the need for this spiritual vaccination when he recommended, **“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will never depart from it,” Prov. 22:6.**

Implicit in this text is that a child trained up in the way of the Lord, may depart from the way but never from the training. The training is always with him no matter where he goes. If he finds himself in a far country, if he finds himself in a pig pen, living pig life, eating pig food, the training is there with him. And by the grace of God it is the training that will bring him home. As long as he has the training there is hope of him coming home. It is a prerequisite for product samples.

Product samples are survivors. They have not always been perfect. Their lives have not always been an example. They have not always taken the right path; they have not always made the right decision. In fact, some of them have very checkered lives. Some of them have very sordid past. But they survived because of the grace of Almighty God. They survived because somewhere in their training they were taught to trust in God. They survive because somewhere in their early days they learnt to have faith in God. Their knowledge of God comes to their rescue and like a GPS system recalculates their path.

Product Samples in the Bible

The Bible has selected some product samples, men and women who are the products of God centered education early in their lives. Chosen as ambassadors for the Kingdom of Heaven. The Holy Ghost selected them, dressed them in their regalia and placed them on the stage of life to show off their achievements, their victory, their accomplishment. But when you read their resume, you know they would have a problem being selected by the University board. When you read their resume, you know they would have a problem at the vetting Committee. Let me share three of them with you.

Moses

Without question, one of the greatest leaders of all time. Moses who God had personally hand-picked. With all his deficiencies and his disabilities, God single handedly brought him down to Egypt, the strongest super power at the time, broke the back of Pharaoh and delivered His people. Moses, who God used to split open the red sea and gave a path where there was none before. Moses who struck the rock and water flowed like Dunns river falls. Moses, who prayed to God and manna came tumbling down from heaven like snow. If there was ever a product sample- a man who stepped out in faith, it was Moses.

But there is much doubt as to whether he would pass the vetting committee at any of our universities. Because when they do the background check, they are going to stumble on few things that do not look too good. The most serious of all is that he has a police record in Egypt. He is wanted in Egypt for murder. When he got the call to ministry he was running from a murder charge. When he got the call to lead God's people he was on Egypt's most wanted criminal list.

The vetting Committee will soon discover also that his birth was illegal. He has no birth certificate because he was illegal. The vetting committee will soon discover that he has been a fugitive from birth. Sure somebody on the vetting committee is going to point that out. Somebody is going to point out his past, but glory be to God, we have Savior who is interested in our future. We have a God who looks beyond our faults, looks beyond what we have been and see what we can become. We have a God who can take me as a criminal to day and make me a product sample tomorrow. We can testify with Ronald Michael Payne,

*He knew me, yet he loved me
He whose glory makes the heavens shine
So unworthy of such mercy
Yet when he was on the cross
I was on his mind.*

Moses qualification for product sample is documented in **Heb. 11: 24- 27**. If Moses can be a product sample, you can be one too.

Another product sample is Joseph

Given the type of publicity universities looking for in choosing product sample, this guy fits the bill. Joseph rose to prominence in the government of Egypt. He was an immigrant who rose to the highest position one can reach without being a Pharaoh. He was prime minister in land Egypt and rule the whole nation.

His resume is in **Gen.41:39-44** – if there ever is a product sample this is it. This is a man who have excelled in government, a man who have made his country and is people proud. At the tender age of 30, he was ruling the world. If you get this man as a product sample at your university, you have just placed it in the Ivey League.

But when the name reaches the vetting committee and the background check is done, Joseph may have a problem getting the vote. When the due diligence is done they are going to stumble on a few issues that will to give the committee some problems. The biggest one is that he too had a police record. He serving time in prison for what may have been three possible charges. (1) attempted rape, (2) indecent assault and (3) insulting the modest of woman. If it were now he would be considered a registered sex offender. Even though God knows the man was innocent, the problem was only God and him knew that. The committee will go off the court record. Some body on that committee is going to have a problem with this rap sheet. Some body will surely argue, if we put him forward how do we deal with this if it comes up? Somebody is going to argue; we need to protect the university's reputation.

But Glory be to God, God does not worry about His reputation. Anything you want to say about it Him, you can go ahead. When you are finish, He is still God. If God can sacrifice his Son to save you, He will sacrifice his reputation too. He sacrificed his reputation when he hangs out with woman at the well. He sacrificed his reputation when he allowed Mary “the sinner” to wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair. He sacrificed His reputation when he eats with sinners and hang out with publicans. He sacrificed his reputation when he hangs on the cross with two thieves, one on the right and the other on the left. He sacrificed his reputation. God almighty will sacrifice his reputation to save you and safe me. He has done it before and He will do it again.

Had it not been for God, Joseph would never reach where he has been. For when they do the background check, they are going to find out that this candidate is coming straight from prison. He just changed off his prison clothes. He was not even re-oriented in society. While he was serving time in prison, God laid his hand on him. While he was yet a prisoner, God selected him, God appointed him, God hand-picked to be the most power leader of the country. God chose a product sample from pits of prison. If the vetting committee has problem with his background, if the university board has problem with his background, if the church has problems with his background, God has gone pass that long time. God cannot correct his past but he is surely going to fix his future. God cannot correct your past but He surely wants to fix your future.

He is God’s product sample. He not be yours but he his God’s product sample. You while Joseph was in prison, his God-centered education taught to him by his daddy, kept him. When his life spun out of control, his faith in God kept him. When his brothers sold him as

slave, his trust in God kept him. When his boss's wife accused him for a crime he did not do, his faith in God kept. All his time in prison God kept him. He e would not let go.

Joseph can stand on any graduation platform and declare with Kurt Karr,

*I almost let go
I felt like I couldn't take life anymore
My problems had me bound
Depression weighed me down*

*But God held me close
So I wouldn't let go
God's mercy kept me
So I wouldn't let go*

*I almost gave up
I was right at the edge of a breakthrough
But I couldn't see it*

*The devil really had me
But Jesus came and grab me
And He held me close, so I wouldn't let go
God's mercy kept me so I wouldn't let go*

*So I'm here today because God kept me
I'm alive today only because of His grace
Oh, He kept me, God kept me, He kept me
So I wouldn't let go*

Let me give you another. If you think that Joseph would give your institution the publicity and credibility as a product sample. Then let me introduce you to one which is even greater.

King David

This is the greatest king ever sat on the throne Israel. His fame has reached the ends of the earth. His gallantry and military skill has no match. Here, is a man who has risen from the stench of sheep pen to palace of Israel's King. This is a king who put the philistines to flee. Here is boy from nowhere, a virtual nobody, but who single handily severe the head of the greatest giant known to men at that time. Here is a king who ruled God's people for 40 years and the Lord God was with him. A man of might and valor. If you want a product sample to

reflect what God can do with you, check this guy out. If you ever get David on your graduation list as a product sample, you have scored big.

Here is a part of this candidate's resume, **Acts 13:22-23**. According to the text, God did a few things for this man.

1. God raised him up to be their king.
2. God testified, on his behalf, "I have found David the Son of Jesse man after my own heart"
3. God declared. "He will do all my will"
4. From this man's seed God promise to raise up Jesus Christ, the Savior.

Of all the product samples you can get, this candidate will give your university, the greatest mileage. This one will provide the greatest encouragement, the greatest motivation to your matriculating students. You cannot find another like this one. God himself testifies on this one behalf. God himself recommends this man. The Son of God is coming through his lineage. This one comes heaven's approval.

But of all the candidates, he is going to have the most difficult time at the vetting committee. Cause when the background check is done. When the intel comes in, it is not going to look too good. He has a double charge of murder and adultery, abuse of power, and corruption charge to cover up his crime. Is there a member of the committee who is going to ignore these facts and raised his hand in support that this man be put up on the stage as a proud product of the institution?

Yet God did for David even greater than he did for any other. He called Moses to ministry while he was on the run for murder. He chose Joseph while he was serving time in prison for

a charge of attempted rape. But in this case, God chose David before he committed these crimes.

With the foreknowledge that David would have turned down the wrong path,

With the foreknowledge that David would have turned out to be a murderer,

With the foreknowledge that David would have turned out to be an adulterer,

With the foreknowledge that David would bring disgrace and embarrassment to the kingdom of Israel. God had David's history before David made history.

God had the scope on him, he God had the intelligence report written before it happened.

God could have used this information to decide, I can't choose this candidate because down the road he is going to mess himself up. He is going to let me down, he is going to disgrace the church, he is going to bring shame to kingdom, and dishonor my name.

But God is rich in mercy,

God is too amazing; he could have used his foreknowledge against David. But instead when all eight contenders line up for the position of King, God chose the one who the committee would have surely rejected if they ever knew what he would do. Glory to the King of heaven, because of God's grace and mercy, every blood washed born again child of the living God is a product sample. Every sinner saved by God's grace is product sample. Every prodigal son that made it back home is product sample. A product sample is a one who has a testimony, one who can declare, 'I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Sinking very deep in sin, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me now safe am I'.

God is looking for more product samples

Men and women who have been instructed in the way of Christ. Men and women who have been taught how to trust God but somehow you have taken the wrong path of life, made bad decisions. God is looking for you whose life is spinning out of control, who find yourself in a

free fall heading in the wrong direction. God is looking for you. You may not fit the bill for the university's graduation but praise God, He wants you to represent the Kingdom of heaven. You may not pass the scrutiny of the vetting committee, for they can only examine your past, but praise God, He has already cleared you for the greatest graduation in heaven because He specializes in your future. Thanks be to God. There is hope in King Jesus.

Don't miss the message.

Every one of these candidates failed in life, made wrong choices, bad decisions, some committed horrible crimes, let down their parents, let down their churches, let down their alma mater, let down their God. But in their deepest moment, in their darkest hour, God mercy kept them.

When Moses was running on murder charge – God kept him.

When Joseph was serving time in prison for attempted rape – God kept him.

When David was in the cesspool of embarrassment and disgrace – God kept him.

When prodigal was in pig pen, eating hog food- God kept him.

God is still in the keeping business for all who call upon Him. He will in nowise cast out.

Today, irrespective of your past, if you failed to prepare your child according to God's will, you placed your child in places where they were not thought by Him, I encourage you to place your life in the hand of the Keeper. Place your children in the hand of the Keeper, place your child in His school, Place their future in the hand of Keeper.

By His grace and mercy – you too will be a product sample for the kingdom of God.

Amen.

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