



Editor's thoughts

Be careful what you wish for

At the start of the academic year, what are your hopes and aspirations? What are your fears and concerns? And, more significantly, what are you praying for? Perhaps we are tempted to ask God to provide us with students who are always hard-working, well-behaved and appreciative of our efforts. Maybe we would settle for colleagues who are positive, supportive and competent. What is our true heart's desire? Less stress? Less bureaucracy? Less external interference? More pay? Better quality resources? Greater professional freedom?

1 Kings 3:5-15 tells of a conversation between God and 20-year-old Solomon, the newly crowned King of Israel. Verse 5 says: 'At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."'

Solomon recalls God's great kindness to his father, King David; he recognises his own inexperience; and he acknowledges the awesome responsibility with which he is charged. Solomon then makes his request: 'give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong' (v9).

The English phrase 'discerning heart' does not do justice to the original Hebrew. Solomon does not ask for human intellect so that, using his own grey matter, he can make wise decisions. Rather he asks for *lebh shomea* (a listening heart). *The Message* puts

it like this: 'Here's what I want: Give me a God-listening heart so I can lead your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil.'

Solomon could have asked for long life or material wealth or the destruction of his enemies. Instead he chose to ask for a listening heart. Why? Because he wanted to be good at his job. Solomon knew that, to be truly effective, he would need to make workplace decisions based on God's values, advice and insights, rather than his own or those of his human counsellors.

God loves Solomon's answer! He says: 'I'll give you what you've asked for – I'm giving you a wise and mature heart ... As a bonus, I'm giving you both the wealth and glory you didn't ask for ... And if you stay on course ... I'll also give you long life' (1 Kings 3:10-14, *The Message*). God's response to Solomon brings to mind Jesus' teaching: seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and – as a bonus – all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:31-33).

So, at the start of this academic year, let's choose to ask for a God-listening heart so we can fulfil our calling. And, as we focus on listening to our Lord, we may be surprised to find what bonus blessings He has in store for us.

Have your say

Whether you want to write a letter or article in response to an item in this issue; express your views on a topical educational issue from a Christian perspective; share personal testimony about what God has done for you in an educational setting; review a book or film; share a lesson plan or classroom resource; write a poem; or submit a prayer request, please send your contribution to: **The Editor, ACT Now**, 94a London Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 1NX.

Presentation and submission

Individual prayer requests should be 20-40 words in length. Longer prayers, poems and film/resource reviews should be a maximum of 250 words in length. Emails to the editor should be 50-250 words in length; letters should be 250-800 words in length. Feature articles should be approx 500-1,500 words in length. Longer articles may be considered for publication in an abridged form.

All contributions should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document on a CD or as an email attachment. Naturally, all items should have been carefully spell-checked and proof-read by the author prior to submission. All items must carry the author's name and contact details. Feature articles must

also include: (i) a brief biographical note about the author (50 to 80 words in length) written in the third person; and (ii) a portrait photograph of the author.

Photographs and illustrations

Photographs can be accepted in two formats: (i) analogue (ie 'Kodak' prints); and (ii) digital. Analogue photos should be sent as clearly labelled unmounted originals, eg with a sticky label on the back (giving a photo caption/title and contact name). Digital photos should be sent as JPEGs unmodified from camera/scanner and at the highest resolution available (preferably 300ppi). As a rule the minimum file size is 800kb, however files 2,000kb or larger are preferred. Photos that do not meet these criteria cannot be accepted for publication.

Illustrations and logos may be included where these are relevant. Line drawings should be in black ink on white paper. All other artwork should be provided as a plain original without lettering or numbering.

Editing and copyright

All items received will be acknowledged as long as they carry adequate contact details.

The editor's decision to publish or reject material is final. The editor reserves the right to edit or amend the content, grammar and style of all items.

Once accepted for publication, a prayer request, article, letter, etc becomes the copyright of the Association of Christian Teachers unless it is reprinted with the permission of another publication with prior copyright.

ACT Now deadlines

Spring (January) 2009 All prayer requests (for the period 1 January to 30 April 2009), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 October 2008**.

Summer (May) 2009 All prayer requests (for the period 1 May to 31 August 2009), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 February 2009**.

Autumn (September) 2009 All prayer requests (for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009), emails and letters to the editor, resource reviews, articles, etc should arrive at the ACT Office no later than **15 June 2009**.