

JANUARY-MARCH 1994

COQ

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

**SOUL
WINNING**

EVERYDAY EVANGELISM

“Please don’t let the sun set.”

Till Morning Breaks

by
Elaine Egbert

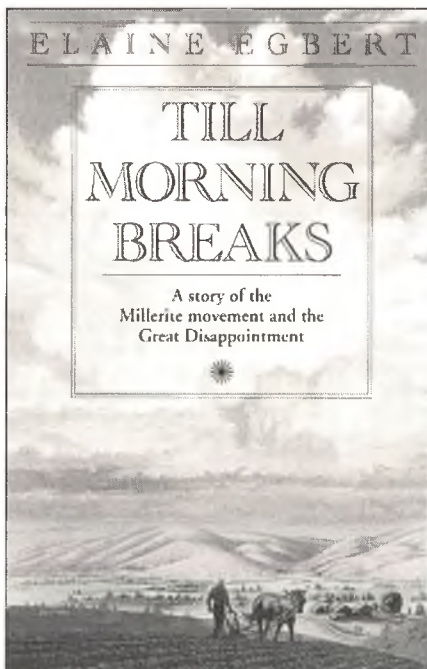
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JANUARY — MARCH 1994

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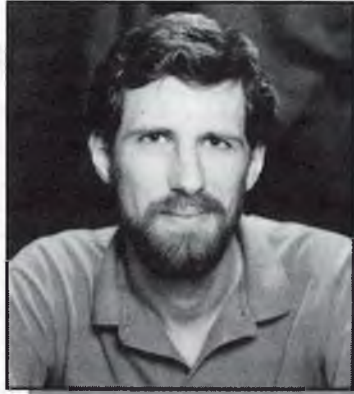


Contents & Contributors

- 1 The Calling** _____ **8**
- 2 How Does a Disciple Dress?** _____ **16**
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
Campus Editor: Bruce Closser
Contributors:
 Susan Cowin Kathy Hutschenreuter Joy K. Pelto
 Michelle Dodge Morris J. Mattson D. G. Rand
 Jim Ford P. B. Morrison Candace Tkachuck
 Janine Freed Edward Pelto Emilie K. Winston
- 3 Getting Caught in the Rain** _____ **24**
Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana
Editor: David A. Thomas
Contributors:
 James Ballard Allan Harper David A. Thomas
 Shelli R. Grimes Bill Jensen Heather J. Thomas
- 4 Son-Burst!** _____ **32**
Sydney, Australia
Editor: Gary Krause
Contributors:
 Jennifer Baldwin Gary Krause Arthur Patrick
 Grenville Kent Elissa Milne
- 5 Friendly Persuasion** _____ **40**
Walker Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church, Avon Park, Florida
Editor: Hazel P. Henry
Contributors:
 John Bennett Johanne Benoit Linda Jiminez
 Alex Benoit Kirk C. Henry Jennifer Seifert
- 6 The Ride of Your Life!** _____ **48**
Bellingham (Washington) Seventh-day Adventist Church
Editor: Ken L. Parker
Contributors:
 Walton Anderson Lisa Jervy Lennox Ken L. Parker
 David P. Lennox Philip A. Nelson C. Helena Venn

- 7 **More Than Words** _____ 56
- 8 **Let's Be Friends!** _____ 64
- La Sierra University, Riverside, California**
Campus Editor: Steve Daily
Contributors:
 Melvin Campbell Cheng Ng Jon and Deane Souw
 Jennifer Cline Iwan S. Ong Stuart Tyner
 Steve Daily Mark Reeves Edwin Zackrisson
 Amy Eva
- 9 **The Right Cleansing Agent** _____ 72
- Boulder (Colorado) Seventh-day Adventist Church**
Editor: Judy Cushman
Contributors:
 Rick Behrens Steven Charbonneau Mary Leanna Lawson
 Delilah Briggs Bob Cushman Nanette Daarud
- 10 **A New Christian's Biggest Problem** _____ 80
- Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England**
Campus Editor: Mary Trim
Contributors:
 Andrea Burt David McKibben Yvonne Watson
 Andrew C. Hewitt Mary Trim Todd Wemmer
- 11 **Getting Involved** _____ 88
- Helderberg College, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa**
Campus Editor: Johan A. Japp
Contributors:
 Johan A. Japp Alan Parker Michel van den Bergh
 Antonio Pantalone Americo Jorge Ramos
- 12 **Bored-Room Evangelism** _____ 96
- 13 **Questioning God's Judgment** _____ 104
- Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California**
Campus Editor: Charles Liu
Contributors:
 Eleanor C. Vince Cruz Rowena E. Luna Lynnetta Skoretz
 Timothy Grigsby Kevin Hellerud Neidhardt Randall Skoretz
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This Quarter's Artist



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Bahnsen has written for *Cornerstone Connections* and has provided freelance photography for *Guide* and *Insight*. He has produced the illustration and graphic arts for the program guide for WGTS, the FM radio station of Columbia Union College.

Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than 200 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 35,000.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Introduction" (Sunday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in the bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"Introduction" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"Testimony" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most scholarly article of the week.

"How-To" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

THE CALLING



“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

Stacy's Calling

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:4-6

Stacy waved vigorously as the Maranatha bus pulled out of the parking lot. "Have a good time," she called.

It isn't fair, she thought as she headed for home.

She parked the car in the driveway and walked up to the house. When she walked in the door, she could hear the ever-present hum of the washing machine and sewing machine. Ever since Stacy's father had died, her mother had kept them clothed and fed by doing laundry and sewing for others. When Stacy walked into the sewing room, her mother looked up from the dress she was making and smiled.

"Did they get going OK?"

"Yes," Stacy sighed.

"Maybe the money will be there next time, dear."

"If I could just get my school bill paid, I could go."

"True. Maybe the Lord has something else planned for you though. By the way, Mr. Ryan was wondering whether you could help him with Mabel. She had

Stacy prayed while she worked on lunch. "Lord, what do You have planned for me?"

another stroke, and he needs some help taking care of her. I told him you had to work at the hospital during the day, but he said he'd be grateful if you could help him at least in the evenings. You could eat supper there every night, and he'd pay you a little bit each week, though it wouldn't be much."

"I'll think about it." Stacy left the room and went to the kitchen. She prayed while she worked on lunch. "Lord, what do You have planned for me?"

The telephone interrupted her meditation. "Stacy? It's Mr. Ryan. Did your mother talk to you? I could really use your help." Mr. Ryan explained that he couldn't pay much. Stacy's heart went out to him as she sensed the desperation in his voice.

"Yes. I'll be over tomorrow evening right after work, OK?"

"Oh, thank you. You've always been so good with helping others. God truly has given you the gift of ministry. I'll see you tomorrow."

As Stacy hung up the phone, she thought about what he said. *Do I have a gift for ministry? Could this be considered a form of mission work?*

Stacy went for her Bible. In it she read how Jesus helped others, healing the sick and comforting the weak. He never went overseas, though He did send His disciples to "all nations." She thought about it. If Jesus ministered to family and friends, she could too. After all, He is the perfect example of what a missionary should be.

By Joy K. Pelto, who recently completed a graduate degree in English at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

What Is Your Mission Statement?

LOGOS

John 4:34-38; Luke 15:1-24

Christ's Example (John 4:34)

Did you know that you have a mission statement? Every rational being has chosen a mission statement modeled after the master in his life. Christ encourages each of us to make Him our Master and to adopt His mission statement (Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:6). All that Christ teaches about missions, preparing men and women for His coming kingdom, is contained in principle in His own mission statement.

A mission statement is designed to be a guide, a statement of purpose, a method of keeping one headed in a certain direction toward goals. A mission statement is like tracks to a train. The tracks guide the train to its destination. The mission statement keeps one's goals in focus.

Christ saw missions as a ministry to those needing the light of the gospel and to those whose footsteps are heaven-bound. He goes beyond the idea of the foreign-land concept, seeing missions as beginning in the home and reaching around the world. Christ teaches that missions is preparing men and women for His kingdom wherever they can be found.

There is no clearer statement of Jesus' teaching about missions than that found in John 4:34: "My food . . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (NIV). This is certainly comprehensive and concise. His goal, His aim, His one desire was that the world would know His Father as He knew Him. Christ lived to express to the world through His own life His Father's love and compassion for every person—missions pure and simple.

Christ is our example. His mission statement clearly expresses His reason for living: to accomplish the work God had given Him to do. When His parents gently chided Him in the temple, His response was, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49, NKJV). Nothing was allowed to distract Him from doing His Father's will.

Christ's Promise

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12, NIV).

Heal the sick, raise the dead, restore sight to the blind, straighten crooked limbs, speak kind words, express sympathy and empathy—this is what Christ did. This is missions being taught in a practical way. And He promises that you and I can do that and even greater things! Through His power we can restore men and women physically and spiritually, and do it on a larger scale than He did.

"And when virtue from Christ entered into these poor souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease, as well as of their physical maladies. The gospel still possesses the same power, and why should we not today witness the same results?"¹

Christ calls all to the task that supersedes any other interests, pointing the way to eternal life and preparing others by God's grace for His soon-coming kingdom. Though our gifts and vocations may be different, they are to have

one purpose: to do our heavenly Father's will.

Human employers may make many promises, but they are unable to guarantee success. "All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command."²

Christ promises the power of heaven to those who become members of His team. "As the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."³

My Mission Statement (Ps. 37:5)

We tend to think that God can use only the talented and educated to accomplish His work. Think of the "little" people in the Bible whose names or deeds have been etched on your mind—people who were not wealthy, famous, highly educated, or upper-class. Peter was a fisherman. The person who sent Naaman to the prophet

We tend to think that God can use only the talented and educated to accomplish His work.

to be cured of leprosy was a slave. To be used by God requires only one thing, and we each have it at our command. All that Christ wants is *commitment* to His *mission statement*.

"Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him" (Ps. 37:5, NKJV). A mission statement without commitment is worthless. A profession of belonging to Christ without allegiance is deception. One's mission statement must be coupled with total commitment to that statement.

"Commitment is not wrapping one's self in a holy web in the sanctuary and then coming forth after prayer and twilight meditation and saying, 'There, I am committed.' Commitment is going out into the world where God Almighty is and using every power for His glory. It is taking all advantages as trust funds, as confidential debts owed to God. It is simply dedicating one's life, in its whole flow, to God's service."⁴ We need only to study and emulate the life of Christ to know experientially what Christ taught about missions.

REACT

1. What merit is there in actually writing a personal mission statement? What are your reasons for your answer?

2. Am I willing to enter into an agreement with Christ to engage actively in a mission project in the next 12 months? What is the reason for my answer?

3. Is being involved in a personal mission activity a part of one's preparation for the kingdom? Explain your answer.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 827.

3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.

4. *The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations*, s.v. "consecration" (with my apologies for substituting "commitment" for "consecration").

By D. G. Rand, chaplain at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Excuses, Excuses!

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Mark 5:19, 20

Ever notice how often we find excuses to avoid witnessing? Here are a few with some thoughtful responses:

Excuse: *"I'm not done with my degree yet, and besides, I'm not a religion major."*

Reply: Education or occupation doesn't matter. Christ chose ordinary fishermen, tax collectors, and tentmakers, not theologians or church officials, to spread the gospel. What mattered was their willingness to be used (see Matt. 4:18-20 and 9:9). "Whatever one's calling in life, his first interest should be to win souls for Christ. He may not be able to speak to congregations, but he can work for individuals. To them he can communicate the instruction received from his Lord. Ministry does not consist alone in preaching. Those minister who relieve the sick and suffering, helping the needy, speaking words of comfort to the desponding and those of little faith."¹

Excuse: *"I can't go overseas."*

Reply: We don't have to travel across the planet to serve the Lord. We can start

When we join with Christ, we become part of a winning team.

at home (see Luke 24:47). "The disciples were to begin their work where they were. The hardest and most unpromising field was not to be passed by. So every one of Christ's workers is to begin where he is. In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. . . . Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest. Then let our efforts be extended as far as God's hand may lead the way."²

Excuse: *"I'm afraid of failure."*

Reply: We are guaranteed success! When we join with Christ, we become part of a winning team. The key to our success is our continued partnership with Him (see John 14:12-14). "Thus Christ gave His disciples their commission. He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail."³

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

By Kathy Hutschenreuter, a graduate student in the School of Education at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Name Bearers

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 20:21

Ironically the word *Christian* was first used by nonbelievers to classify believers.¹ “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26, NIV). As Christianity became more widespread, certain lifestyle traits became associated with the name. “The term . . . came early to describe the type of character appropriate to a disciple of Christ.”² Ignatius, who is said to have died a martyr during the Roman persecution of the early second century,³ wrote, “Let me not merely be called [a] Christian but be found one.”⁴

Jesus commissioned His disciples to represent Him; by professing love for Him, we are noticed, examined, and judged. It is only natural that people judge us by the standards we claim to uphold. This is what He intended. By taking the name Christian, a person accepts the responsibility of representing Christ to others (see John 20:21). Representation of another person is a serious thing.

Suppose you had a friend who claimed that you told him you had single-handedly rescued 100 people from a burning chemical plant. Just think of the

Suppose you had a friend who claimed that you told him you had single-handedly rescued 100 people from a burning chemical plant.

reputation you would get—most likely that of a storyteller. Most of us could not claim such a deed of heroism. That friend would be misrepresenting us. It would not feel good to be betrayed in this way.

“[The Christian] is to live to the Lord, to use for Him all his entrusted capabilities, never losing the realization that he bears God’s signature, that he is a subject of Christ’s kingdom, a partaker of the divine nature. He is to surrender to God all he is . . . employing all his gifts to His name’s glory.”⁵ Our mission as name bearers is to represent Christ to the world in the same way He represents the Father to us.

REACT

1. How can we as sinful humans represent a perfect God?
2. What are the consequences of misrepresenting Christ?

1. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, s.v. “Christian.”

2. *Ibid.*

3. Philip Schaff, *The History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1950), vol. 2, p. 47.

4. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*.

5. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 99.

By Edward Pelto, a master-of-music student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

In Cobwebs and Catacombs

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 4:38

How can I serve God as a missionary in my job? I am an institutional employee working with dusty old documents in a catacomb of rooms comprising an archive in the sometimes frozen northland of Michigan. Hardly the typical idea of a missionary venue.

Be that as it may, I do feel I am doing a missionary job. At Andrews University our student body includes those who are in training to be ministers, administrators, and teachers, among other professions. These students come to this institution from more than 80 countries. They come to receive an education to fit them for more effective service to the Lord in the harvest field of their homeland, whether it be Zimbabwe, Thailand, Germany, Brazil, the United States, or Canada.

My missionary job is to assist students in completing requirements of their various class assignments as efficiently as possible. As the primary source of Adventist materials in the library, my department is needed by many students. As

Your mission land begins at the next desk or the next office.

I help these students in various ways, I am helping them to become better workers for the Lord when they return to their homes.

But how can you, in your particular job or activity, labor for the Lord of the harvest?

One way is constantly to do the best job you can, no matter how menial or important your task may seem to you. This may be especially true for those who work outside church employment. Your mission land begins at the next desk or the next office. Remember Daniel and his friends in Babylon?

Another way is to show a cheerful and helpful attitude, no matter what the situation. This will attract attention to you just as does a job well done. When you are asked why you are always so happy, you can share your love for Jesus.

Most of us will work for the Lord at some time and in some way. It may be by spreading the good news of the love of Jesus to places near and far, or it may be across town in an office building or construction site. Wherever it is, "Let your light so shine before . . . [your fellow workers and those you serve], that they may see your good works and [allow you to] give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, RSV).

REACT

How can I change my work habits to elicit the interest of my fellow workers in Jesus' love?

By Jim Ford, a curator of the Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Heathen or the Hurting

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:4-6

Witnessing is one of those pesky subjects that burrow into my thoughts and give me little peace. A whole cluster of conflicting urges and emotions arises when I begin thinking about what, as a Christian and Seventh-day Adventist, I should be doing to reach the heathen. On the one hand, I am distinctly uncomfortable with the overt tactics most of us associate with witnessing—accosting strangers and asking them whether they know Jesus and want a pamphlet. Yet on the other side, I cannot help but think lassitude is disturbingly revealing about the strength of my faith and the quality of my religious experience.

In some ways I think that I am justified in rejecting certain aspects of witnessing. There is something intrusive and arrogant about spreading the faith with

I am distinctly uncomfortable with the overt tactics most of us associate with witnessing.

Bible-thumping tactics—even to friends and family. Witnessing can imply that I am more enlightened than you, that what I have to say is of God and you ignore me at your peril. What is missing from these scenarios is humility. It is easily forgotten that we cannot know it all. Humans dabble in blasphemy when they think that they have a monopoly on knowledge of God, that God lives mainly in their pet religious construct, when, in fact, no human construct can begin to represent the totality of who God is.

But if it is pompous for me to approach people and pontificate about God, does this justify silence and inaction? No. I believe it is vital that we think about God, that we talk about God in ways that are steeped in humility with the shroud of grace ever before us. When we become aware of and susceptible to this grace, our souls keep their proper orbit. The heathen now become the hurting—and remarkably like us. I cannot know the mind of God, but I also cannot but think that this is what God likes to see—His ignorant and hurting children stumbling together toward the light.

By Candace Tkachuck, who recently completed her M.A. in English at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

HOW DOES A DISCIPLE DRESS?



“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:5, 6, RSV).

My Camp-Meeting Image

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Pet. 2:9

I have always had a love/hate relationship with camp meeting. On one hand I am always refreshed spiritually by the services. On the other hand, camp meeting is the one time I have to talk, dress, and carry myself in a particular manner. After all, I am a pastor's daughter.

This year I had the opportunity to attend camp meeting in another conference—finally, a chance to enjoy camp meeting like everybody else! Sabbath morning I dressed quickly. As I reached for my Bible, Sabbath School lesson, and purse, I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. So what if my skirt was a bit shorter and my lips a bit redder than usual? I won't see anyone who knows my father.

The service was inspirational. The pastor spoke on the three angels' messages, and I learned things I had not learned in Sabbath School and church school.

As I was leaving the main pavilion, an elderly lady caught my attention. In spite of the warm weather she wore a pink sweater. Her smooth, brown hands held

I have always had a love/hate relationship with camp meeting.

tightly to her walker, but her bright eyes were fixed on me.

"Come here," she said. I worked my way through the crowd to her side.

"Are you a Winston?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am." I was surprised and caught off guard. "Do you know my father?" I asked, licking my red lips nervously. My knees suddenly felt exposed.

"No, I don't believe I do," she replied. "Who is your grandfather? Sam?" she asked and smiled.

"Yes, ma'am." I smiled, feeling more comfortable.

"Well, I know his sister, your Aunt Thelma. We taught together years ago in Chicago. You resemble her a great deal."

That beautiful woman helped me to realize that my motives for dressing and carrying myself were wrong. I may represent my father or family, but more important, I represent Christ. The influence I have on the people with whom I come into contact is of no less importance than that of my father. Just as people see Christ in him, they must be able to see Christ in me.

Since that day my prayer has been: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Ps. 19:14, NIV).

REACT

In what ways do I represent Christ and help draw others to Him?

By Emilie K. Winston, a senior English major at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Levels of Discipleship?

LOGOS

1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rom. 9:24-26; 12:3-8; Heb. 8:10-13; Mark 3:31-35.

The clarion call of this study is to contemplate Christian discipleship. "If Nathanael had trusted to the rabbis for guidance, he would never have found Jesus. It was by seeing and judging for himself that he became a disciple. So in the case of many today whom prejudice withholds from good. How different would be the result if they would 'come and see'!"¹ What does it mean to the late-twentieth-century young adult to be Jesus' disciple? We at least have historical knowledge of Jesus, but the notion of discipleship cannot be only history—it must be current. What can we be—in Christ?

A homespun, partial definition for *disciple* might be "a special follower of a special person." In the case of Christianity, Jesus is the special person and there are many who would be His special followers. It would take all available space and more time than is available in this lifetime to describe fully what sets Jesus apart. We can attempt to discover what sets a disciple of Jesus apart from the rest of His followers. Should all seek to be disciples? Is there another level of following that is permissible? In Jesus' earthly walk the discussions among His recognized disciples often clouded the issue, since they had the notion they should further distinguish a hierarchy among themselves.

James and John naturally incurred the wrath of the rest of Jesus' usual entourage of followers when they sought, with their mother's prodding, to be elevated within the ranks. Were they, in fact, special in any way? Along with Peter, they are always mentioned among Jesus' inner circle. It seems the lesson might be discovered in the parable in Luke 14:7-11. It is contrary to the spirit of Jesus' brand of Christianity to seek elevation of self, so special followers of Jesus should be models of humility. Does this mean all are the same? Or does this mean all are equal? This is a good time to emphasize that equality does not require sameness. In fact, a true picture of Christian equality can be drawn only when apparently unequal entities are accorded the same respect.

In Mark 3:31-35 Jesus sets a standard for inclusion with Him that defies conventional logic. In purely earthly terms bloodlines are the closest human ties possible. In Christian terms family is determined by loyalty to Jesus. Who is capable of this? It was thought in biblical eras that the blood of Abraham in the veins bode well and assured God's special favor. Romans 9:24-26 describes a universal call from God. First Peter 2:4, 5, and 9 make this call a royal and ecclesiastical invitation to join Jesus in building a figurative shrine or temple to the glory of our heavenly Benefactor. Certainly Jesus' place as the cornerstone sets Him apart from the rest, but it is clear that the rest of us are bricks and mortar and have our value only in relation to Him and in interaction with one another. So how do followers interact without posturing for preeminence?

Romans 12:3-8 makes it clear that God makes the assignments, and not all are accorded the same talents or gifts or even faith. Only Divinity is capable of evaluating the degrees of faithfulness and loyalty to assignment. When we elevate or view with condescension based on office or station, we dilute the power of the gospel.

In *How to Disciple Your Children*, Walter A. Henrichsen gives a practical and useful definition for *disciple*. A disciple is not a pupil or a student, though some attributes may apply. The more accurate analogy is one of a relationship with a mentor. Though the mentor is esteemed, there is a definite sense of a measure of equality and collegiality rather than superiority or hierarchy. The mentor sets out with his disciple to bring out his best and, further, "The disciple shares in the life of the mentor."²

As this can be applied to the Christian disciple, it demonstrates real condescension on the part of our mentor—Jesus. When He chose for Himself the title Son of Man, He actually spelled out His willingness to share with humankind in a very un-Godlike way. He set in place continuation of this relationship for followers even after His ascension. John 17 was Jesus' prayer for His followers just before He was to enter the final redemptive phase of His earthly ministry. He affirms

What does it mean to the late-twentieth-century young adult to be Jesus' disciple?

collegiality with the 12 while setting in perpetuity the arrangement so disciples today can enjoy the same benefits and anguish of discipleship (John 17:20).

One last practical consideration: since we have established equality, what of the clergy/laity question? Richard J. Mouw, in *Called to Holy Worldliness*, makes the point that in the church all are laity in the strictest definition.³ All are the people of the church. More important, all are called to minister—some as clergy, others not. If we can accept these points, we have leveled the playing field considerably. The responsibility for carrying out the mission of the church belongs to all. If we could embrace this, leadership could facilitate and coordinate more and officiate and direct less. There is real value in shared ownership of a program—especially if the original vision for this mission comes from our shared Mentor.

REACT

1. How would the church be affected if it reduced its hierarchical forms of leadership?
2. Is Jesus' written counsel enough with a lively prayer life to build a vital mentor-disciple relationship? Explain your answer.
3. How do you build an adequate sense of Christian self-worth without comparing yourself with others?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 140, 141.

2. Walter A. Henrichsen, *How to Disciple Your Children* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1981), p. 12.

3. Richard J. Mouw, *Called to Holy Worldliness* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Fortress Press, 1980).

Inward and Outward Appearance

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Matt. 6:4

Almost all of us live two lives: (1) Our outward appearance, that part of us which we willingly show to others, and (2) what is really going on inside, the part we have developed skillful strategies for disguising. In our school years, for instance, we learn the different behaviors that will please our teachers. Similarly, because we want to please our peers, we tend to choose the right clothing, hair-styles, music, and entertainment. We learn how to impress those around while hiding our personal problems.

Because we judge by outward appearance, many times we are fooled. Maybe you can think of an instance when you were fooled by outward appearance. It could have been by a close friend, relative, neighbor, or just a mere acquaintance.

Peter felt he was a very devoted follower of Jesus. At the Passover supper when Jesus predicted Peter's denial, Peter boldly stated he would never fall away

Because we want to please our peers, we tend to choose the right clothing, hair styles, music, and entertainment.

from the Master. The Lord was able to see his weakness, just as He is able to see our inner weaknesses.

Ellen White says, "I have been shown that the disciples of Christ are His representatives upon the earth; and God designs that they shall be lights in the moral darkness of this world, dotted all over the country, in the towns, villages, and cities, 'a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.' If they obey the teachings of Christ in His Sermon on the Mount, they will be seeking continually for perfection of Christian character, and will be truly the light of the world, channels through which God will communicate His divine will, the truth of heavenly origin, to those who sit in darkness and who have no knowledge of the way of life and salvation."*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us, as His followers, the importance of changing our inner character so that our inside matches our outside. Then we will be able to be the disciples Christ would like us to be.

* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 631.

By Michelle Dodge-Stecker, a 1993 graduate of the Home Economics and Business departments, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Disciples in the Alps

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 2:5, 9

During the Middle Ages, the Waldenses were true disciples. They lived in the Alps, a fortress away from their Roman enemies. Amid the bulwarks of the mountains, they trained their children to be missionaries. They taught their youngsters the Scriptures, and many Waldenses could repeat large portions of the Old and New Testaments. The children were taught the wisdom of silence and caution in speech. Children and parents alike were acquainted with smuggling pieces of Scripture, usually hidden in their clothing.

Their pastors did not lord it over their flock, but ministered to their people as servants. Pastors taught the youth about the Scriptures and trained them to be missionaries. Then the youth would go out into the world, to institutions of learning. These students were not to make good friends and confidants, but to share

Children and parents alike were acquainted with smuggling pieces of Scripture.

truth with those around them. When they found opportunity, these brave youth would cautiously give some portion of the Scriptures to those searching for God. Often whole schools would be permeated with biblical principles, and the papal leaders could not find the source.

The Waldenses also sent out missionaries who peddled goods. As they sold their materials, they would watch for signs of interest in the Scriptures. Then these missionaries would carefully open the eyes of their customers to the truth about God. Often when they would leave, the people would wonder whether the visitor had been an angel.

During this period of time the rest of Christendom looked to their priests to forgive sins, define doctrine, and interpret the Bible. People generally believed that the clergy were superior and the laity were inferior. Therefore, soul winning and witnessing were left to the clergy. In stark opposition to this theory, the Waldenses trained every member of the family and church to be a missionary.

We would do well to learn from the Waldenses. God is calling His church today to awake and work in His vineyard. There is a message to be shared with the world by pastors and parish alike. But this message cannot be given out of obligation. We must feel a burden for souls. And the only way to be concerned about others' salvation is to pray for them. May we be people of prayer and therefore disciples.

REACT

1. If we're not disciples now, how can we become disciples?
2. How can we encourage one another in our discipleship?

By Janine Freed, a theology and English student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

If Only I Could Be a Nurse

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 12:3-8

If only I could be a nurse, then I would really make a difference in the world. This idea shaped my thinking for several years as I watched my R.N. sister perform nursing duties while she soothed hurts and touched lives. My choice—education—seemed less important because the results were less obvious. Her patients got well and went home. My students matured more slowly.

I don't think this way anymore, however. A while back I somehow caught the vision this lesson is promoting: we are all leaders for God, whether we heal bodies, preach every Sabbath, or simply befriend young people in the classroom. My new philosophy includes the following:

- **Be Yourself**—God made us individuals even though we are members of a larger group or parts of a whole. Society promotes competition within that larger group, though it is rarely a good idea to compare our ministry with someone else's.

We leave witnessing to the pastors—they are paid to remain heavenly minded.

Instead, we should use our energies to experience those things God ordains. When we do, we acquire a one-of-a-kind insight that God wants to use.

- **Be Aware**—It is so easy to be blinded to our own potential. We may be deceived into thinking that since our careers are more secular, there isn't much we can do for the Lord. Maybe that's why we leave witnessing to the pastors—they are paid to remain heavenly minded. There is a lot that can be done, however, if we are aware. There are students on campus who are discouraged. We can pray with them. If they just need a ride to the mall, we can take them. There are colleagues at work who are burdened. We can take an interest in their lives and show compassion. Better yet, we can volunteer to run some of their errands! Whoever the person and whatever the need, we can help if we are open to needs around us. Ministry of this type is equal to all others.

- **Be Confident**—In our attempt to be humble Christians, we sometimes signal a lack of faith in God's power, His presence on earth, and His relevance to life. This hinders progress in our spirituality and undermines the effectiveness of our witness. If we can boldly go before God to present our needs, then by His power we can confidently live our Christian experience before others.

When we learn to believe we are all leaders for God, the gospel will no doubt claim increased converts. My sister, the nurse, has been doing her part. So has my pastor. Have I?

By Susan Cowin, who recently completed a graduate degree in English at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Who Are His Disciples?

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 12:3-8

In most Asian cultures, to be part of a group implies more than just membership—it implies responsibility. In Japan when introducing yourself, you state the name of your company first and your own name last. This identifies you as being a representative of your company even if you're nothing more than a first-year file clerk. Your actions—both positive and negative—reflect upon the company.

To be a disciple of God is an even greater responsibility. Our actions are those of the “company.” What we do reflects upon the church. Understanding this concept is critical if we are to develop a strong and healthy church. If a company is to be profitable, it takes all the employees to make it happen, not only the administration.

Many times we feel as Moses did when he was called. We feel incapable. There must be people more suited to the task than I, we say. In Matthew 4:18-20,

If a company is to be profitable, it takes all the employees to make it happen, not only the administration.

what type of people did Jesus call to be His disciples? Try to imagine the picture: Peter and Andrew standing in their boat casting out and pulling in their nets under a hot sun, sweat dripping as they worked. Not exactly a great PR image. But Jesus called them. They dropped their nets and followed Him—two uneducated, strong, sweaty men, reeking of fish. Highly qualified in the eyes of Christ.

All people are equally able to be disciples. “[He] who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, . . . has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” (Rev. 1:5, 6, NKJV). A church of 200 is only as strong as the strength of all 200! To rely upon the strength of the pastor is to rely upon the strength of only one individual.

Discipleship means membership, commitment, responsibility, and service. Through active service we build a foundation of strength. Exercising our discipleship develops our own “spiritual muscles.” To be a passive member is to grow weak and let down the company. Let's hope that we will be known, not as individuals, but as disciples and representatives of Christ.

REACT

1. Compare a church with a business corporation. How are they the same and how are they different?
2. How can a person know what his or her role should be among others in the church membership?

By Morris J. Mattson, who is finishing a B.A. in English with an emphasis in English as a second language at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

GETTING CAUGHT IN THE RAIN



“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory” (Rev. 18:1).

Chief Joseph's Concern

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 10:10

In 1873 a group of commissioners from Washington, D.C., arrived in the Wallowa Valley in what is now Washington State to set up an Indian agency for the Nez Perce Indians. While there, one of the commissioners mentioned the advantages of establishing schools for the Indians. He soon learned that the Nez Perce did not want schools, because the schools would teach them to have churches where "they will teach us to quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that." This insightful statement by Heinmot Toolyalaket, otherwise known as Chief Joseph, demonstrates a deep reverence for the Almighty. More important, it illuminates a flaw in the proselytizing efforts of Christian evangelism. We Christians seem driven to argue in defense of our beliefs about God.

Chief Joseph's statement demonstrates that his understanding of God's mission was clearer than most of us can boast. He may not have been able to give a

"We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God."

lengthy discourse on "The Holy Spirit," but he certainly understood one of the Spirit's prime objectives: harmony. Conversely, we Christians seem to be unaware of the spirit of harmony and find ourselves disagreeing over whose religious convictions about God are the truth. Thus, we rise up in defense of God, or more accurately, in defense of our beliefs about Him.

A person's greatest challenge and honor is, not to defend God, but to let God exhibit Himself in us, bringing harmony into our speech and lives. If this is the challenge, then do we dare hope that our lives can be quickened with a spiritual essence? Dare we hope that in place of our scowls and furrowed brows, our faces can shine with a glow of serenity, with our eyes sparkling and our smiles radiating life to others? Dare we ask for the Spirit of harmony to dwell within?

What would have been Chief Joseph's reaction if the missionaries had come in the spirit of harmony rather than in the spirit of the proselytizer? Today, are we proselytizers or are we dedicated to the Spirit of harmony? Finally, when we consider the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the latter rain, what are our motives, our fears, our hopes, our desires?

* Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1970), p. 318.

By Allan Harper, a psychology major and a Native American Studies minor at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

Power for What?

LOGOS

Joel 2:23, 28-32; Acts 2:1-21, 38, 39; 3:19; Rev. 6:9-11; 14:1-5, 18:1.

Well established in Adventist theology is the belief that the early and latter rains of Joel 2 are symbolic of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in early- and latter-rain power. The fulfillment of the early-rain promise, as seen at Pentecost, is accepted as truth. Today the church waits expectantly for the latter rain, some with fond hope and others with a certain amount of trepidation, not knowing what to expect.

The hope of power and the fear of change prior to the accomplishment of our worldly goals and ambitions can create a certain ambivalence in believers. Inherent in our fallen nature is the desire for power. It can be intoxicating—this power over people, over things. And to think that the Holy Spirit might give us power to overcome sin, to reflect the character of Jesus, and to witness to others of His saving love! It is something that every thinking Christian should desire, yes, even earnestly seek. But maybe we're seeking the wrong thing. It is obvious even to the casual observer that no one except Jesus has achieved the elevated standards we hold up for ourselves. At what point in time can we expect to achieve them? We are led to try even harder, since it must be our fault that we haven't "made it" yet.

Could it be that we are fighting the wrong battle? Our real battle is not only against sin, but against unbelief. Ancient Israel lost that battle at Kadesh-barnea. Paul warns us against doing the same thing in his letter to the Hebrews. Christ has already won the battle against sin, and by faith (belief) His victory is our victory, His righteousness ours. God's message to us is the same as it was to Jehoshaphat so many millennia ago: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chron. 20:15, NIV).

As one gives God permission to act in his or her life, the process of growth takes place, just as a plant grows if placed in the proper environment. By beholding Him, we are changed by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). The changed one then reflects the character of Christ from one degree to a greater degree, all the while being perfect because of Christ's righteousness. This is true righteousness by faith. This is the righteousness that comes from God (Rom. 10:3, 4). This is the message that will brighten the earth with its glory (Rev. 18:1). The emphasis here is not so much on power (*dunamis*) as on authority (*exousia*). Power is the ability to force, while authority is the right to lead, to persuade. God never forces. In fact, He hid His power in the incarnation, and by His Spirit He woos, pleads, heals, and instructs.

The Spirit of Christ, who dwells within, gives strength to believe, to trust in His robe of righteousness, and the power (*dunamis*-energy) to witness. Under His leadership during the latter rain, we will be like Peter after the day of Pentecost, who said, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Let us remember that the power of the Holy Spirit is never given apart from His person. It's the only safe way for a merciful God to deal with fallen humankind.

Nor should we be parochial in our understanding of the latter rain. The promise of Joel 2:28 states, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people." The promise includes all of the human race. The great question is not Will I be ready for Him? but Am I daily listening for His gentle whisper? At Pentecost Peter put it this way: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be

Our real battle is not only against sin, but against unbelief.

saved." "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:21, 39).

REACT

1. What do I look forward to in the latter rain?
2. What exactly is the latter rain?
3. How will we know it when we experience it?
4. How can a Christian be prepared for the latter rain?

Adventist Fire-walking

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Acts 2:17

In 1985 I attended a fire-walking ceremony at a Hindu temple in Singapore. I stood in the front row and watched as hundreds of men walked through a 30-foot-long bed of glowing coals in fulfillment of a promise to the devil-god Kali. Many appeared to be nervous, barely touching the ground as they ran through. A few walked slowly, arms outspread in adoration of a god too grotesque for words.

I tried to be very Western and scientific about the whole thing. Their feet didn't burn, because the specific heat of charcoal isn't great enough to blister toughened feet. Their cheeks and tongues didn't bleed when pierced with knives, because of that yellow stuff they painted on the wounds. Besides, they were in some kind of a hypnotic trance. I felt creepy for weeks.

I've seen real religious fanaticism and I hate it. The image of glassy-eyed zealots straining at their earthly bonds is a horror to me. That image comes uncom-

I watched as hundreds of men walked through a 30-foot-long bed of glowing coals.

fortably close to reminding us that some Adventists seem to think only of the fearful aspects of the time of the latter rain and the time of trouble: a numbing, dehumanizing, terrifying walk through the fires of persecution.

Against that image I would like to offer the following thoughts. First, although the latter rain does not obviate the testing time that will come, it is called "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19, NIV). Refreshment revives and enlivens. So do repentance and forgiveness. God wants us to cast off our burden of guilt and awaken to our true identities as sons and daughters of the King. If He wanted to turn us into zombies, the last thing He would do is refresh us. Second, God Himself is going to provide the power for this transformation. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

I don't know exactly how all this is going to come about. But I am confident that, prior to the final act of the play, God will pour out His Spirit on all who love Him, awakening us for the final battle, which He will wage and win on our behalf. That victory will be His and ours forever.

REACT

1. How can the latter rain be a time of refreshing during a time of persecution?
2. Compare and contrast the Old Testament Day of Pentecost (Deut. 26:3-10) with the apostles' experience in Acts 2:1-21.
3. What are the implications of Pentecost that are spelled out in Joel 2:28-32?

By David A. Thomas, professor of mathematics education at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

Knowing the Secret Signs

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Joel 2:23; Acts 2:1-18

When I was a young Christian, it often seemed to me that we had pet phrases that came from obscure and odd places in the Bible and other sources: the 144,000, the three angels' messages, the Spirit of Prophecy, the 1888 General Conference, the sanctuary, the early and latter rains . . .

In an odd sort of way it gives me comfort to know these terms. It is my assurance that I'm a member in good standing. A friend of mind visited my church with me a few years ago. His initial impression was that we used a lot of odd, incomprehensible terms. I don't think the pastor spoke of the early and latter rains that day. It would only have caused my friend more confusion.

One purpose of the Holy Spirit is to remove the mystery and guide us into understanding as we become followers of Christ and join a church. I know that in Acts 2 the "understanding" was of foreign tongues, but in the rest of Acts,

Knowledge of the terms assures me that I'm a member of "The Club."

much of the Holy Spirit's work seems to be about our understanding Christ.

Knowledge of the terms assures me that I'm a member of "The Club." I know the secret signs and speak the language. The Holy Spirit assures me of my relationship with Christ. It is a matter of faith that Christ died for me. It is also a matter of faith that Washington was the first president of the United States. But because of the Spirit, I do not need faith about my relationship with Christ; for the purpose and work of the Spirit is to assure us of God's friendship. He is the delegated companion and friend sent by God. You can always tell a friend by how he or she treats you, so I know He is a good friend, and He assures me that Christ is also my friend.

This friendship is not a matter of faith. It is a matter of experience. This experience builds faith in Christ and salvation. But again I say: this relationship is not faith. I know the Spirit, and when He wishes it I can hear His voice just as you can hear any other companion's voice. This is why the confusion can be resolved. This Friend understands everything. There is no text or phrase obscure to Him, and as He leads us there will be no part of the Bible and no part of Christ that will remain obscure to us.

REACT

1. How does the Holy Spirit communicate with us?
 2. How can one overcome the human tendency to focus more on mere terminology than on its true meaning?
-

By James Ballard, a doctoral student in mathematics at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

First Be a Friend

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ruth 1:16-18

A woman called Psyche once traveled a dusty road each week on the way to the market. One day she encountered a preacher standing by the side of the road, shouting and waving his arms. As Psyche approached, he verbally assaulted her, crying out things she did not understand. She tried to back away, for she was tired, thirsty, and anxious to finish her business. However, he persisted. After several polite attempts to fend him off, which he ignored, she ran away.

Farther along the road Psyche encountered a woman. This woman, named Christine, was also walking to market. She offered Psyche some water and suggested that they walk together. As they walked, they talked of many things. Psyche felt at peace with Christine, for she sensed that she truly cared about her.

Making the trip every week, the two became close friends. Psyche noticed that Christine had incredible inner peace and beauty. Finally, she asked her about it.

One day Psyche encountered a preacher standing by the side of the road, shouting and waving his arms.

Christine told her of God, His love, and of the Christian life. Psyche felt a deep gratitude that her friend chose to share something precious with her.

This story has several morals. First, when assaulted with the Word of God, people tend to raise their defenses. However, they are open to Him when He is shared as a gift between friends. Second, the Holy Spirit brings peace. It should not make an individual feel threatened. On a secular campus, I often see street evangelists harassing students. Third, one must earn the trust of people before sharing the gospel. Otherwise, we sound like frauds when we claim to love everybody. Fourth, letting God shine through us is a powerful witness.

“‘Do not urge me to go back and desert you,’ Ruth answered. ‘Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. I swear a solemn oath before the Lord your God: nothing but death shall divide us’” (Ruth 1:16-18, NEB).

REACT

1. What is meant by the expression “assaulted with the Word of God”?
2. What witnessing techniques, if any, would you characterize in this way?

Explain your answer.

3. To what extent is trust important in sharing the gospel?

By Heather J. Thomas, a physics major at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

What's Happening Here?

OPINION

Key Text: Joel 2:28, 29

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29, NIV).

Wouldn't you wonder if you came upon a scene such as the one described in the second chapter of Acts? The crowd swells from a few listeners to a multiracial multitude, eager to hear a message of unusual power and authority. But as the realization spreads that these Galileans demonstrate superhuman lingual abilities, the listeners are compelled to ask, “What's happening here?” Against this backdrop of curiosity and even accusation, Peter rises to direct their attention to the words of Joel 2:28, 29.

What do we as modern-day Christians imagine when we read of the Spirit being poured out? Of people prophesying and seeing visions? Is this type of demonstra-

As the realization spreads that these Galileans demonstrate superhuman lingual abilities, the listeners are compelled to ask, “What's happening here?”

tion so foreign to my experience that I can see no applications for these verses in my life?

Often we think of these occurrences of spiritual outpouring as belonging exclusively to two points in history: Pentecost in the first century A.D. and some nebulous date in the future when the latter rain will take place. But where do we get the idea that the Spirit's power should lie dormant between these events? Through His Spirit, God longs to fill our everyday existence with power that will alter our entire perspective. He wants to be an active part of how we deal with every detail of living.

So maybe the real question is this: Am I willing to put my life so under God's control that He is able to express Himself through me in whatever way He wishes? Am I willing to turn the circumstances of my days over to Him to the point that those around me will ask, “What's happening here?”

REACT

In what ways will the Spirit express Himself to me (or through me)?

By Shelli R. Grimes, a graduate student in mathematics at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

SON-BURST!



**“In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again’ ”
(John 3:3, NIV).**

Relentlessly Kind

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 3:17

Dear Simeon,

It is 2:00 a.m., and my brain is seething. Sleep is out of the question. I must share with you the wonderful thing that has happened. I have seen Him and talked with Him! No, don't be alarmed. I wasn't so forgetful of our precious pride as to go in broad daylight. And this was no sudden whim either. I've been waiting my chance for weeks. But I had no idea that one conversation could turn my world upside down.

Nothing worked out as I'd planned it. I began by trying to flatter Him, but He took no notice of that at all. So I tried to impress Him with my superior learning, but with a few words He had me hopelessly confounded. I should have been angry with Him for humiliating me, but I found myself irresistibly drawn.

All my life I have given myself to unswerving obedience; and all my life, without even realizing it, I have been yearning for something more. Tonight I

**All my life I have given myself to unswerving
obedience and have been yearning for
something more.**

found it! It is as if I have been struggling through an impenetrable thicket, with laws upon laws clinging and binding like brambles, to come suddenly into a sunlit clearing. Or as if I have been a prisoner in chains, suddenly released. How many more cliches can I cram into one paragraph? I'm beginning to sound like a third-rate poet! But Simeon, my friend, I tell you, I could feel the Spirit wind in my hair as He spoke.

I can't begin to describe the feelings I have been through tonight. Having one's soul stripped bare and all the conceit and unworthiness exposed is no very comfortable experience, I assure you. I admit I resisted at first. I was deliberately obtuse. And He was relentless—yet so kind. He spoke, not of condemnation, but salvation. As I listened to Him, I could feel the Father's love warm on my face, not the cold judge's frown I had always feared. "God gave His only Son to the world," He said. And then it struck me like a thunderbolt: *this man is He*, the One for whom we have waited for so long. Such amazing good news that I can scarcely contain myself. I want you and all my friends, my colleagues—everyone—to share the joy, the freedom that I am experiencing right now. You must come and meet Him for yourself. Don't delay.

Yours in friendship,

Nicodemus

By Jennifer Baldwin, an administrative assistant at Sydney Adventist Hospital, Sydney, Australia.

Jesus, Demolition Expert

LOGOS

John 3:1-21; 4:1-42; Luke 8:1, 2; 18:18-30; Matt. 10:7, 8

It is light-years in distance from earth to heaven; it is farther than that culturally. Jesus demolished the enormous gulf by becoming a human being, wearing our clothes, eating our food, speaking our language, enduring our sorrows, experiencing our mortality. We label all that *the incarnation*. The practical result: He is forever identified with the human family.

That identification was the founding principle on which Jesus built His entire mission. For centuries God's people had sung, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Ps. 23:4, NIV). But no one could grasp the full meaning of those simple words until Jesus lived here, suffered, and died.

All of us who claim to be Christians are already at first base—we are human beings. But humans have built barriers everywhere. Ethnic factors divide us, and social position isolates us from one another. Our ideas about God and the Bible create hostility among us. Even geography can separate us emotionally: Maine has a different ethos from that of California in the United States; it is Sydney *versus* Melbourne in Australia.

So it was crucial for Jesus to demolish all these barriers, to show us how to get to second base. Think of some of the people with whom He interacted: Nicodemus the Pharisee; the matrimonially experienced woman of Samaria; Mary of Magdala and Bethany; the rich young ruler; the unnamed multitudes.

The Teacher and the Pharisee

Nicodemus was himself a teacher and a member of the Jewish ruling council. Jesus dealt with him on the level of profound ideas: the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, Mosaic symbolism, eternal life, truth and light versus evil and darkness (see John 3:1-21).

The Thirsty Traveler and the Ethnic Enemy

At Jacob's well Jesus faced a threefold problem. To be a Samaritan in Palestine was like being a Catholic in Northern Ireland, a Christian in Iraq, or a Serbian in Croatia. Jesus did not need to be reminded that "Jews do not associate with Samaritans" (John 4:9). Second, the Samaritan person was a woman; Jewish culture had clear guidelines to safeguard Jesus as a male from interaction with a female. Third, this woman was a despised female; she came to draw water alone, isolated even from the other women.

Yet Jesus made a straightforward request for a drink of water, a gesture of trust that demolished the three barriers with one stroke. Then He offered her "living water," a gift appropriate to her needs and interests. She knew that He accepted her as a person albeit she had been five times married and was now involved in an extramarital relationship (see John 4:1-42).

Jesus, the Confronter

Jesus used the finest methods now employed by counselors to assure clients

that they are accepted as persons. But He did more than that: He confronted peoples' destructive life patterns. Thus He did not leave Nicodemus in a maze of philosophy or the Samaritan woman in yet another negative relationship. Nor did He abandon Mary to Magdala, where she had fled to escape shame. With Mary's permission He confronted her sevenfold problem. Thus Mary became a devoted student in His school for soul winners, a person who so identified with His mission that she could be first to proclaim His resurrection (see Luke 8:1, 2; John 20:10-18).

But when Jesus confronted the selfishness of the eager young ruler, the man

It is light-years in distance from earth to heaven; it is farther than that culturally.

of great wealth was deeply saddened (see Luke 18:18-30). He, like many others, rejected Jesus' offer of eternal life.

Jesus, the Demolisher of Walls

The apostles reflected on the impact of Jesus' mission a short generation or more after our Lord's ascension. John emphasized that, in Jesus, God became flesh and "came to dwell among us" (John 1:14, NEB). Now, he declared, we perceive God's glory, that is, His character. Paul declared that Jesus had "destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14, NIV). He also stated that, as well as the wall of race, Jesus had toppled the barriers of social class and gender (Gal. 3:28). Instead of hostility and isolation, Jesus offered identity, genuine fellowship in a community of faith and love.

REACT

1. Are my relationships with the people who are different from me really motivated by the attitudes Jesus demonstrated in becoming a human being?
2. Given the racial walls of the contemporary world, are Adventists best described as maintainers or demolishers?
3. What attitudes in our local congregation exclude people from the circle of fellowship?
4. How can we adapt our soul-winning methods so they will be more sensitive to ethnic, social, or gender considerations?
5. The soul-winning method of Jesus involved *incarnation*, *identification*, and *confrontation*. Which of these is most difficult for Christians today?
6. In what ways do the soul-winning methods of Jesus pioneer the difficult path of Global Mission for Seventh-day Adventists?

By Arthur Patrick, senior chaplain at Sydney Adventist Hospital, Sydney, Australia.

Jesus: The Party Animal

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Matt. 9:11, 12

Jesus went to parties. He “did not begin His ministry by some great work . . . at Jerusalem,” but “at a household gathering in a little . . . village . . . to add to the joy of a wedding feast.”¹ Why? To show His understanding of people and “His desire to minister to their happiness.”² He didn’t hide behind an institution, too busy in committee work to socialize with outsiders.

He was sociable. He used “personal contact and association.”³ He went to so many parties that His enemies tackled Him as to why He ate with sinners. He replied that some people think they are too healthy to need the doctor, so doctors should mix with the sick (Matt. 9:11, 12). Imagine them smearing Him as a glutton, a drunk, a friend of corrupt public officials (see Matt. 11:19). But He wasn’t encouraging sin. He was encouraging sinners to repent.

How many pagans do you know? Many Adventists turn the benefits of church socials and Adventist education (which God intended to train us for service) into

We should be to Los Angeles African-Americans what Christ would be if He lived in Los Angeles.

an excuse never to socialize with non-Christians. The church can design mass programs and spend megadollars on market research to try to understand the average person, but that understanding does not come from academic theory. It comes from doing what Jesus did—mixing. “The example of Christ in linking Himself with the interests of humanity should be followed by all who preach His word. . . . We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are. They will seldom seek us of their own accord.”⁴

Christ did not “mingle with the world from a mere love of pleasure, to unite with them in folly.” He discussed the big issues, including prophecy and the gospel, at parties! But “we should never give to the world the false impression that Christians are gloomy, unhappy people.”⁵

We should be to Los Angeles African-Americans what Christ would be if He lived in Los Angeles. This is making Christianity approachable, attainable, user-friendly.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 144.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

By Grenville Kent, youth pastor of Parramatta SDA Church in Sydney, Australia.

You Can't See the Good News

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Luke 8:1

As soon as Jesus spoke, Lucius Gradus the Elder recognized a potential media superstar. Take Him to Rome, reasoned the Roman tycoon, put Him on TV, and watch Him reach the masses. British writer Malcolm Muggeridge imagined this scenario as a possible fourth temptation of Christ—which, like the others, Christ would have resisted. “He was concerned with truth and reality,” says Muggeridge, whereas the tycoon was concerned with “fantasy and images.”*

Jesus reached out to people’s needs. He understood their drives, but He never exploited them. And unlike today’s advertisers, Jesus wasn’t selling some product that would wear out.

Jesus also knew the value of the personal touch. “He went journeying from town to town and village to village, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom

**“Lord, the way You try to win people is too . . .
I don’t know how to say it, but we have to be
realistic.”**

of God” (Luke 8:1, NEB). It meant He could shape the good news into words and actions that people would understand.

Jesus did minister to crowds of people. But just as often He was meeting a Nicodemus at night, visiting with a woman in a Samaritan village, or touching a blind man’s eyes. It must have annoyed someone as pragmatic as Judas: “Lord, the way You try to win people is too . . . I don’t know how to say it, but we have to be realistic. If You let me organize it, we can reach many more people. I’ve got a friend named Gradus. . . .”

Today we must use effective tools to spread the good news. There’s an important role for marketing and the media. But we must never allow image to overshadow reality or mass evangelism to replace personal contact. The foundation of Jesus’ ministry was personal contact. And within decades His message had spread throughout the then-known world. It would have shocked Gradus. But it happened for one reason—people have to be touched by the Master’s hand.

REACT

1. How is it possible to combine mass communication with the personal touch?
2. How do you think Jesus would conduct His ministry if He were on earth today?

* Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media* (Great Britain: Modder and Stoughton Ltd., 1979), pp. 39-41.

By Gary Krause, creative director, Adventist Media Center, Sydney, Australia.

The Gospel According to Metallica

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 1:51

Jesus compared Himself to Jacob's ladder, which connected heaven and earth (John 1:51). He dressed for the culture in which He lived. He came in sandals, dressed like the working class of His times. "It suited Him to be made like His human brothers in every way, so He could be a faithful, understanding priest" (Heb. 2:17, my paraphrase).

How can we learn from Jesus' example?

1. Enculturate. Daniel and his friends did it. They refused to compromise principle, but they were as Babylonian as they could be in little things. They learned "the language and literature of the Babylonians" (Dan. 1:4, NIV). Often Christian communication needs updating into language that means something. Often Christians go into a jargon or Christian techno-babble, theologo-babble, and the world doesn't say, "Rubbish." It just says, "What?"

2. Take cues from popular culture. We have to show how Jesus is the answer to questions our culture is asking. Paul took cues from the culture of his day. With

That's the equivalent of quoting a rock song from Metallica to prove a religious point.

Jews, who knew the Bible, he "reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2, NIV). But with pagans he had to start on cultural common ground. He even quoted their poets. Acts 17:28 is a direct quote from a pagan love poem to Zeus.¹ That's the equivalent of quoting a rock song from Metallica or Guns 'n' Roses to prove a religious point. But let's remember that Paul "does not necessarily endorse the sentiments revealed in the contexts of the words he utilizes, but merely uses Greek writers to illustrate the higher teaching he presents."²

3. Distinguish principle from culture. If we're going to communicate Jesus, we have to know and understand God's everlasting principles so well that we can change the nonessentials according to the times and culture we are working in. As much as possible we have to be "all things to all types of people, so that by hook or by crook we will save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, my paraphrase).

REACT

1. How can a Christian be "all things to all types of people" without compromising the message?

2. Can you think of any ways Jesus took cues from the culture of His day?

1. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 1-5, 270 B.C.

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 354.

Cosmic Blackjack Table?

OPINION

Key Text: Luke 8:1, 2

Easy though it might be to see the world as some long-running video game that only Jesus can guide you through, when you wake up in the morning and your day begins—it is no game.

Jesus never won a soul. Never.

In fact, Jesus didn't spend much time around souls at all. He spent his life with people—whole, breathing, bleeding, loving, loathing, thinking, and believing people. Jesus' ministry was comprehensive. He didn't separate people's needs into opposing principles. He fed the people both spiritually and physically. He met both the intellectual and the emotional challenges He found in people. His

Jesus' ministry was comprehensive. He didn't separate people's needs into opposing principles.

impact extended to the sex life of the woman of Samaria and the bank balance of the rich young ruler.

In this post-cold-war, new-order age, we still insist on claiming that souls are won or lost, in the same way that games or chess pieces can be won or forfeited. It is a reflection of the worldview that has prevailed for so long: in every sphere there is a right and a wrong side—one will win, the other lose. And of course, it is also a manifestation of the idea that we do not own ourselves, that our lives are merely cannon-fodder for the battles of the great controversy.

But at the end of the day nobody can win a soul. Souls don't belong to forces that play games with them. In the great controversy the battle is not determined by the outcome of some final soul tally. "To win a soul" is in itself a problematic notion, reminiscent of slavery, as if the world were a huge casino and each of us chips on a blackjack table.

We cannot be won or lost. We are not passive entities in the battle between good and evil. We are active participants. By bringing those He met to understand the active nature of the tussle between good and evil, Jesus' impact on the whole person was guaranteed. Jesus denied us the complacency of being just another pawn in the celestial game; when confronted with the message and the ministry of Jesus, we are forced to change our lives wholly—not simply to adjust our spiritual inclinations.

REACT

1. What is the effect of thinking of people as potential evangelism statistics?
2. What is meant by the term *comprehensive religion*?

By Elissa Milne, co-president of the Adventist Students' Association in Australia and New Zealand.

FRIENDLY PERSUASION



**“If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”
(Eccl. 4:10, NIV).**

Friendship Evangelism

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: James 1:4

What you are about to read is a true story. It is a story of taking opportunities to witness to other friends by our actions and the words we speak.

Joey quit going to church at the age of 6. At 13 he started drinking with his older brother, whom he looked up to and respected. Attending popular parties with his brother, Joey felt like an oddball when he looked around and realized he was the only one without a beer. Wanting to feel accepted, he didn't even hesitate to say Yes when someone offered him a beer.

At work there was a guy named Chris who often asked Joey in an informal way to attend church with him. Joey would laugh and say No. However, Chris was serious about taking Joey to church, so he continued to ask him. The invitation was there, open, waiting to be taken.

One night at a party with his friends from college, Joey drank so much that, when he went out with his friends to another party the next night, he made a

As he watched the drinking—friends fighting with friends and the loss of control—he realized something was definitely wrong.

firm decision not to drink. As he watched the drinking—friends fighting with friends and the loss of control—he realized something was definitely wrong. With this realization came the conviction that something in his life must change.

The next week Joey approached the work supervisor, a Seventh-day Adventist, seeking information about his church. The supervisor suggested that Joey speak with the church's new youth pastor. Leaving the office, Joey bumped into Chris. Before Chris could extend the customary invitation, Joey blurted out, "Would you take me to church with you?"

Trying to mask his surprise and excitement, Chris replied, "Sure, man, when?"

When the time came for Joey to seek a Christian friend, he didn't have to look far. The Holy Spirit had been preparing Chris to be the friend Joey needed.

In making the decision to develop a Christian lifestyle, Joey has come to realize that family may not always be there when he needs someone to turn to. His choice to stop drinking and change his environment has had consequences. Although his old friends are still friends, he knows he needs to make new friends. For this reason he has chosen to attend Southern College in Tennessee.

For Christian young people it is important to reflect on the fact that our lives are a constant witness to others. There may be times for active witnessing, but just as important is the silent, yet powerful, witness of a consistent Christian lifestyle, as evidenced in the words we speak and our actions toward others.

By Linda Jiminez, a member of Walker Memorial SDA Church, Avon Park, Florida.

The Magic Multiplication Process

LOGOS

John 1:35-50; 2:1-11; Acts 18; Col. 4:3; James 1:19

Loneliness is perhaps the worst feeling any individual could ever experience. It comes as no surprise that one researcher would discover that fewer than 50 percent of the population have ever experienced the warmth of a deep, personal friendship. There are a lot of hurting people in this world, inside and outside the church, who are searching for happiness and friendship in all the wrong places.

The Model

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners.’” But wisdom is proved right by her actions” (Matt. 11:19, NIV).

Jesus was the author of friendship evangelism. He was often a friend to those who had no true friends. Jesus took time to associate with lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, the sick, and diseased. He spoke the language of God’s love and touched their lives with living hope, happiness, and healing.

Jesus was just as effective with those in the upper social classes. The One who truly cared took time for Nicodemus, who, by the way, didn’t totally make up his mind to follow Christ until three years later. He turned water into wine in Cana, raised the ruler’s daughter, and healed the nobleman’s son.

There was no partiality with Jesus. “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, NKJV). Jesus knew of unique ways to reach all who were lost. But how? I can hear Jesus saying, “Meet all individuals where they are. Touch their felt needs. Be their friend. Stick with them.”

Jesus knew the importance of friendships. “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). Jesus is the One whose name is Faithful and True. He is an authority on what it takes to be a good friend. Jesus knows that in a friendship bonding takes place, and that is why Jesus chose such a word to describe our relationship with Him. “You are My friends” (John 15:14, 15).

Jesus simply wants His people to be friends with those around them who don’t know His “amazing grace.” As opportunities arise, believers can share the love of Jesus to help build bridges and lead souls to salvation. It could be a long and tedious process, but faithful friendship evangelism will mushroom into major breakthroughs. God has promised it. “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). If anyone is ever to respond favorably to an invitation to become a Christian, your best results will come because you’ve earned the right to be believable, by proving yourself first, as a trustworthy and credible friend.

The Mission

“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah.’ . . . And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:40-42).

Oh, to be like Andrew! Andrew is a disciple who is not too often talked about. But every time he is talked about in the Scriptures he is always bringing someone to Christ. Andrew is a perfect example of one who looked for practical ways to share Christ with people around him. It's interesting to note that he first began to share Christ with his own brother. Friendship evangelism can very well start in your own family.

The next time we see Andrew he is bringing a lad with five barley loaves and two small fish to meet Jesus (John 6:8-14). His love sprung into action when everyone else saw the impossible. But Jesus performed a miracle, and many believed that day. Andrew simply allowed himself to look for a way to do what Jesus asked.

Jesus has asked each believer to take part in this action. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Your ultimate goal in friendship evangelism is to lead non-Christian friends to Christ by living Christ. The caring relationships you form with those individuals will be the living gospel to lead them to Jesus.

Model your style of friendship evangelism to suit yourself. You can be creative and find something that is comfortable to you. Your mission, then, is to make an intentional move to befriend a few people in your community, hoping to help

If there was anyone who was too far gone, it was the demoniac.

lead them eventually to Christ. Be an Andrew. Be someone who is always eager to bring someone to Christ.

The Magic

"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled" (Mark 5:19).

These words were spoken by Jesus to the demoniac. Now if there was anyone who was too far gone, it was the demoniac. He was possessed by a legion (2,000 to 6,000) of demons. But the magic, that unexplainable mysterious power of God that can transform a sinner's life, gave the demoniac a testimony. Jesus told the demoniac to share that experience throughout his hometown.

Friendship evangelism is friendship in action to influence friends for Christ. The magic spreads. The results can be overwhelming. Friends won to Christ will disciple other friends, and the multiplication process will proclaim the power of God to save. No superhuman effort is needed to start friendship evangelism. It begins with you—a friend of sinners.

REACT

1. In practical terms what draws people to Christ?
2. How can a Christian know when someone is ready to hear about Jesus?
3. What are some specific ways to build bridges to the unchurched?

By John Bennett, youth pastor at the Walker Memorial SDA Church, Avon Park, Florida.

The Power of Friendship

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Heb. 13:16

When I experienced the self-sacrificing love of a friend, it touched me so deeply that it brought me back to God and the church. This great change in my life made me realize how important we as young adults are in witnessing to our friends and to the world.

“As followers of Christ we should make our words such as to be a help and an encouragement to one another in the Christian life. . . . When Christ is thus revealed in our speech, it will have power in winning souls to Him. If we follow Christ’s example in doing good, hearts will open to us as they did to Him.”¹ Once their hearts are open, it may take something as simple as a smile or a kind word to show them God. Your influence on others in your daily actions and expressions sometimes happens without your even realizing it.

“Character is power. The silent witness of a true, unselfish, godly life carries an almost irresistible influence. By revealing in our own life the character of Christ we cooperate with Him in the work of saving souls. It is only by revealing in our life His character that we can co-operate with Him. And the wider the sphere of our influence, the more good we may do. When those who profess to serve God follow Christ’s example, practicing the principles of the law in their daily

Your influence on others in your daily actions and expressions sometimes happens without your even realizing it.

life; when every act bears witness that they love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves, then will the church have power to move the world.”²

This work of spreading God’s love to the world around us may also require some self-sacrificing on our part, but self-sacrificing is not painful when you love God. “Doing good is a work that benefits both giver and receiver. If you forget self in your interest for others, you gain a victory over your infirmities. . . . The pleasure of doing good animates the mind and vibrates through the whole body.”³

Did you ever imagine that befriending others and loving them could bring such great happiness to God, to yourself, and to everyone involved? Our actions always speak louder than words, but when we are in Christ they can move the world!

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 338, 339.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

3. *Messages to Young People*, p. 209.

By Jennifer Seifert, a member of the Walker Memorial SDA Church in Avon Park, Florida.

What Is a Friend?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Eccl. 4:9-12

God has made us as social beings. Imagine what life would be like without your best friend. In whom would you confide? Who would help you through the difficult parts of your life? Terrible thought, isn't it? Scientists have conducted several studies into the human need for companionship. The majority have shown that individuals without human contact do not function as well as others. In fact, some have even gone crazy because of the lack of human support.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 states, "Two are better than one" (NIV). This means that people working together can double the efforts of a single person. In verse 10 the word *fall* is mentioned. It may have different meanings: falling physically or falling into the power of another. "Pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (verse 10).

Matthew recounts the story of the crucifixion. There he tells of the Saviour on the cross enduring tremendous amounts of punishment. During the early parts of His actual crucifixion, Jesus was able to talk and reason with the thieves hanging

Scientists have conducted several studies into the human need for companionship.

on the crosses on either side. But when Jesus lost contact with God the Father, His best friend, He "yielded up his spirit" (Matt. 27:50, RSV).

Think of the friendship between David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 20). These two young men were in contention for the same throne. Instead of being arch rivals, they chose to be friends. Instead of plotting against each other, they chose to let God decide their future.

We can also take a look at the friendship of 12 special men, Jesus' disciples. After His death, God used 11 of these men to spread the news of the gospel. All of this was made possible by Christ's friendship with these men.

Have you ever noticed that difficult or tedious jobs seem a little easier when you have a friend to help you? Think about the struggling new believer. Don't you think it would be a little easier for him if he had someone with whom to share his burdens? "Two are better than one" (Eccl. 4:9, NIV).

REACT

1. What role has friendship played in my life?
2. How should a person respond if he discovers that his friend is doing something wrong?
3. In what ways, if any, does a Christian's definition of *friend* differ from that of the world?

By Kirk C. Henry, a member of the Walker Memorial SDA Church in Avon Park, Florida.

Friendships: Love in Action

HOW-TO

Key Text: Prov. 18:24

We are loathe to help those in distress, and we often think more of our comfort than of their discomfort. We leave the task of comforting the afflicted to those whom we assume will do it, but am I not my brother's keeper, and shouldn't I be sympathetic, weeping with those who weep? And what about witnessing to our friends who need to hear the truth, who in some cases will never hear it if they don't hear it from us? Many of us are scared to death to witness to our friends, mainly because we fear a negative response and thus failure, but Timothy tells us that "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV).

The Spirit of Prophecy also counsels us, "When we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment."¹

Being a Christian friend or witness doesn't necessarily mean going up to people and just preaching to them. That's not what being a Christian friend is about. It is being kind to anyone and everyone with whom you may come in contact.

"The salvation which is offered through Jesus Christ to all mankind is a gift."

It is being available to help someone in need and thinking of others before yourself. It is your attitude that counts.

1. Attitude. Attitude has a large part in this. You may be a nice person or a great Christian, but without the right attitude it is difficult for others to acknowledge those qualities. Make it a point to pray and ask God to instill the right attitude in you. Sometimes it can be difficult to maintain such an attitude throughout a long day, so ask for God's help. Remember that a loving attitude attracts friends. Another thing we should keep in mind about attitude is that "to develop a proper attitude for witnessing, we must indelibly impress upon our minds the biblical teaching that the salvation which is offered through Jesus Christ to all mankind is a gift. . . . Everyone likes to share or give good gifts."²

2. Know your stuff. It is very important to know your Bible principles. When you interact with others, remember that your goal is to be a good and knowledgeable witness to them. Knowing and practicing these principles will help you to be an effective and prepared witness. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV).

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 363.

2. Robert R. Johnson, *You Can Witness* (College Place, Washington: Color Press, 1981), p. 60.

By Johanne Benoit, South Florida Community College, Avon Park, Florida.

Tools in His Hands

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 5:13

“One soul won to Christ, will be instrumental in winning others, and there will be an ever-increasing result of blessing and salvation.”¹ It is wonderful to be a Christian friend. As such a friend, we have the power of Christ within to let others know that God loves them also.

We are friends with a mission. This mission includes influencing friends for Christ by drawing them to God through Christian love and kindness, often by doing little things that show we care. As young people we meet a lot of people at school and work, and this gives us the opportunity to witness.

“He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure.”² “We draw upon His fulness, and receive of that grace which has no limit.”³

Here we see that we have no reason to fear failure, because when we go in the name of God, He takes responsibility. We need only allow ourselves to be tools

We can't just sit back and let our pastors or mass media do our work of communicating the gospel.

in His hands. We can't just sit back and let our pastors or mass media do our work of communicating the gospel. “If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”⁴

“Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel.”⁵ Christ is the greatest soul winner, and we will make giant strides in the work of witnessing when we take the advice of Jesus to “learn of Me.”

REACT

1. How can we rid ourselves of that paralyzing fear of using our talents for witnessing?
2. How can we receive a love for souls that will prompt us to reach out to others?

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 184.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 363.

3. *Gospel Workers*, p. 19.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 189.

5. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36.

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE!



“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28-30).

The Fair

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 11:28

The big Ferris wheel creaked for a moment like a rusty hinge and then was off, easing the moon-beamed faces of the children upward, higher and higher—then over the top, the figures too distant to connect with the wisps of their screams that reached my ears, and, still slowly, down, down, a graceful arc completed and begun again.

“Popcorn!” yelled the candy-striped vendor. “Get your popcorn here!”

I had not come to the fair to find Truth, only momentary diversion. Still—voices beckoned, promising answers.

“Know your future!” Old age cracked the words as they called out to me. “Future of the world!” “Know it all!”

A flap of the palm-reader’s tent was thrown back, but as I stared into the dingy interior, I saw nothing but dim shapes, and I moved on.

“Comfortable seats! Fast action! Right here for the ride of your life!”

“Try your skill!” “Win a bear!” “Win a bunny!” The polyester-stuffed animals hung limply, pinioned to a pegboard behind the caller. All I had to do to win a prize was throw a little ring around the top of a bottle. Others were trying—relentlessly—and I watched as the little ring slid just past the bottle top, as it hung agonizingly against the rim before dropping away, as it bounced cleanly off the neck. I walked away from the man’s voice, which still echoed: “Try your skill!”

“Last chance for the ride of your life!” The roller-coaster track wandered drunkenly this way and that, curling back upon itself in ever-larger loops. “Comfortable seats! Fast action! Right here for the ride of your life!” promised the attendant again, and motioned me toward the surge of people loading themselves into the black metallic cars. I held back, and the cars filled, then jerked and sped along the track. I watched them go; it seemed only moments until they were back again, stopped, and spilling out people, some laughing, some staggering slightly. The ride of your life paused to fill again before abruptly moving out once more.

Beyond the bustle of the fast rides and loud calls, a small tent caught my eye. No loud music or blinking lights announced its appeal. I drifted toward the entrance, curious. Behind me the spokes of the Ferris wheel rose and fell in the night. I lifted the tent flap and heard a whisper: “Come unto Me . . .”

I had not come to the fair to find Truth, so I was surprised when I stumbled upon it—and found Rest there, as well.

By David P. Lennox, a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Biggest Decision of Your Life

LOGOS

Matt. 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 7:9-11; 5:17; Exod. 32:26; Luke 12:8

At some time in his life, every person will make the most important decision. It doesn't matter what part of the world he or she is from, it must be made. You and I too must make the most important decision in our lives. Actually it is a three-part decision. These questions must be answered: (1) Is Jesus a personal Saviour to you? (2) Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour enough to confess your sins and follow the ways of Christ? (3) Will you serve Jesus and share His saving grace with others?

Jesus had been teaching His disciples, fresh from other walks of life. He now turns His attention to "preach in their cities" (Matt. 11:1, NASB). Part of Christ's message in His preaching to their cities was to denounce and reprove the people living there for rejecting the invitation to receive rest in Him (Matt. 11:20).

Jesus certainly knew that to follow Him would bring worldly persecution and hardship, not only on the disciples but upon anybody who would choose to follow the way, the truth, and the life. Yet Jesus says, "Come to Me, all who are weary."

Over and over again in ministry, pastors and active laity have experienced the joy of seeing people coming to Jesus. Certainly, not a few have experienced great difficulty in coming to Jesus, yet they still count the cost worthwhile. Why?

Jesus knew that the time for the Jewish nation as God's chosen people was soon to end. He doesn't take years to get to the point.

"Come" (Matt. 11:28)

Although many had already rejected Christ's teachings, again in urgency the invitation to come is given. It's still urgent today. No one knows the day or the hour of Christ's return, but neither do we know when that friend or loved one or even we ourselves might suffer an untimely death.

"All"

During political campaigns, the candidates hope for popularity. They desire people to like what they say, so they often frame their remarks around what they think people want to hear.

Jesus framed His comments around what people needed to hear, not what they wanted to hear. Jesus invites "all" people to come. He knows, all too well, that for sinful man, "There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death" (Prov. 16:25, NIV). Jesus is not a bigot, a racist, or even one who shows intolerance toward others. He calls *all* to come; that's you and me, friend.

"Give"

Jesus doesn't charge you for His help in carrying life's loads. He offers, as a friend and companion, to share life's burdens. In fact, He will carry them for you when they are too heavy for you. He will never allow anything to come into your life that is too much for you. "And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

“Rest”

The word *rest* almost seems a paradox for many a Christian. When one comes to Jesus, all too often life is turned upside down. At first glance to many, it seems as though the word *trouble* should be used in this text rather than *rest*.

There are at least three kinds of rest: (1) physical rest, (2) mental rest, and (3) spiritual rest. Accepting Jesus does not mean that He will wave some kind of magic wand over your life, and the consequences of past sins and lifestyles, plus future struggles, will suddenly disappear. What Jesus does promise is:

1. Physical rest. Besides the promise to be with us every day, Jesus gives us the Sabbath day for rest. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, NASB). Jesus gives us a 24-hour time period every week to shut out the problems of life, that we may rest in His love, peace, and joy.

“In it you shall not do any work. . . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day” (Exod. 20:10, 11).

2. Mental rest. Jesus desires that our time with Him will bring mental rest in the middle of our stressful, fast-paced lives. “And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.’ (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat)” (Mark 6:31).

There is no time of rest for the wicked heart. Only in Jesus, through confession

During political campaigns, candidates often frame their remarks around what they think people want to hear.

of sin and time spent in meditation and prayer, can the Holy Spirit bring true mental rest to the heart crying out for peace and comfort.

3. Spiritual rest. There is peace and joy when one comes to a complete acceptance of Jesus and when all of life’s burdens are shared with the Creator. There is spiritual rest when one comes to the understanding that God knows all the answers, that He can, through the Holy Spirit, lead you into all truth, including the truth necessary for salvation.

Truly, to rely on Jesus through faith brings rest; whereas, trying to be saved by your own unaided works brings torment and restlessness. Martin Luther found rest once he stopped trying to earn his salvation and began to rest in a trusting relationship with his Lord and Saviour.

In this week’s lesson, take time first to learn and then to experience the rest in Jesus. Then consider how you can better share His rest with others.

REACT

1. Have I found rest in allowing Jesus to help carry my daily burdens?
2. Why do so many Christians today shrink from the responsibility of sharing Jesus more directly with those around them?
3. Whom do I know that I can call to the foot of the cross?

By Ken L. Parker, pastor of the Bellingham, Washington, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Good People or Religious People?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Matt. 11:28-30

An ever-present temptation is the assumption that we have the option of a partial surrender. Our world is complex, and until we can “put it all together” we would like to be flexible in making any commitment, let alone one that is total. Outwardly we may state that we want Christ to take full control of our lives, while we worry inwardly that, were He allowed, our life would be out of sync with the rest of the world. Can Christ truly understand the emotional and mental baggage we must carry from day to day?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). “The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart.”¹

“Christ has purchased you with His own blood; He has paid the ransom money, that you might be united with God, and separated from sin and sinners. When the

“Salt that has lost its savor can never benefit the world.”

heart is opened to Christ, the Holy Spirit will work in it with mighty, renewing power. But in order that we may be laborers together with God, there must be on our part an entire surrender to God.”²

“I wish I could make the church understand how terrible a thing it is to profess to be Christians while, in the place of leading heavenward, their thoughts, their actions, are of a character that suits the plans of Satan, for he can use them as decoys to lead others away from true piety and earnest Christian work. Salt that has lost its savor can never benefit the world.”³

“I entreat you to open the door of your heart and let your Saviour in. Give Him the whole heart—that which He has purchased. Ever bear in mind that it is you who must choose. God forces no man. He has chosen you, and engraven your name in the palms of His hands. Will you not give yourself fully to Him?”⁴

REACT

1. How does a total surrender make life easier?
2. How do we learn to trust God with our everyday life?

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 30.

2. *The Upward Look*, 1982, p. 25.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

By Walton Anderson, a library cataloger at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Summit Meeting

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 3:1-21

He had arrived! He had his doctor of divinity degree, he was a nationally recognized professor, and he was a respected member of the national council. He religiously followed God's law, and he knew he had a guaranteed place in the kingdom of heaven. His proof of his favor with God was his riches. Everyone could see that he had arrived. But his life was about to change. He was going to confront the most important decision of his life.

In his country a new itinerant preacher was gathering big crowds of people. He decided to have a theological discussion with the preacher. To avoid political repercussions, he chose a very discreet meeting.

He started the meeting by giving the preacher a compliment. The implied message was "I am willing to accept you as an equal even though you don't have the credentials." This compliment from such a high-placed person should pave the way for a great theological discussion.

The response was flabbergasting! It was a point of theology he had never considered before. "Education, professional accomplishments, national origin, church

"I am willing to accept you as an equal even though you don't have the credentials."

membership, riches, etc., are not a ticket to heaven. *Only* those 'born of the Spirit' will see the kingdom of heaven!" The shock was so great that his only responses were "It is impossible!" and "How can this be true?"

Throughout the remainder of the meeting, he sat there in stunned silence and listened to the preacher tell him about the plan of salvation. The theological discussion had turned into an in-depth lesson on salvation. After that meeting he went back to his daily life, apparently unaffected by the meeting. But he continued to ponder the teachings of the preacher and watch the events in his country.

Three years after that shocking meeting, Nicodemus showed public evidence that he had made that most important decision to accept Christ as his Saviour. He used his riches to make sure Christ was shown high respect at the internment and to support the early church.

Christ's method in His meeting with Nicodemus was to avoid the theological discussion and talk about real salvation. Although Nicodemus's education allowed Christ to explain His mission in much greater detail than to the average Jew, Nicodemus had to make the choice to accept Christ.

REACT

How can we follow Christ's example in our "outreach methods"?

By Philip A. Nelson, assistant professor of computer science at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Sharing Jesus, Our Fortune

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 11:28-30

The invitation given by Christ in Matthew 11:28 is open to all, as we are all weary and—consequently—very burdened. Every human being has an intense need for rest in his soul, and when we answer Christ's call, our hearts are bonded to His meekness and humble nature. Looking to Jesus and accepting Him as our Saviour isn't a one-time thing though. Every day we labor, and because each day has its own burdens, we're in constant need of rest.

The more we commune with Christ, the more profound His rest becomes to us. We soon find that we can't keep this peace and restful joy inside but have to share our experience with others. It is like having a fortune. Imagine not only being able to make all your dreams come true but actually having the resources to help the dreams of others too! How can we take up Christ's burden and share Jesus with others?

Imagine not only being able to make all your dreams come true but actually having the resources to help the dreams of others too!

1. Pray. Sincere prayer is the most important part of sharing, because it gives us focus. Like a scuba diver in the sea, we always have to know which way is up and where we are in relation to the surface. When we pray, Jesus changes our lives and focus, and this is our greatest testimony for Him. Others will see His rest in our souls and seek its source.

2. Listen when people share their burdens with you. Tactfully tell them that you'll remember them in prayer, and even mention an appropriate Bible promise. Try to focus them on Jesus instead of on their problem.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit for God's timing when you approach your friend about Bible studies, and even the commitment for Christ. Some of the greatest happiness comes when we succeed in making others happy and when we share Jesus. The excitement and joy are never-ending. Christ wants us not only to learn and share in His sorrows but also to participate with all of heaven in their rejoicing when one lost sheep returns to its fold.

REACT

1. In what way can a Christian help others' dreams come true?
2. What does Jesus mean by taking up His yoke?
3. How can taking up a yoke be a restful experience?

Carla Helena Venn is a music-composition major at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Sarah's Journal

OPINION

Key Text: Exod. 32:26

"Everyone treats me as if I'm a fragile doll—as if they can't talk about it around me or I'll crack. How do I make people understand that I'm not afraid?"

The handwriting on the page follows the predictable pattern I've become accustomed to—blue, evenly slanted cursive. I think about the free-writing journal entries that have preceded this one. The first had been dedicated to converting me—her English 101 teacher—to Christianity, and I had mixed feelings as I read it. Sarah, like anyone else, was free to write on whatever she chose, but I did not want her to waste her time reconverting an old Christian. That first set had focused on Moses and the burning bush, so, feeling smug, I xeroxed an old *CQ* article I had written on the same topic and slipped it into her journal.

The entries that followed in the weeks to come changed in only one respect. Sarah addressed me on a more intimate basis as she talked about her life in general and her concept of Christianity in particular. Her writing had an openness that I never could have imagined from her posture in class. But in her journals the barriers

I xeroxed an old *CQ* article I had written on the same topic and slipped it into her journal.

came down—she talked about her mother's death, her father's ongoing bout with cancer, her boyfriend troubles, and now her own diagnosed case of breast cancer.

"I don't have to be afraid, because I have Jesus Christ to trust in. That's all I need. He's seen me through the hard times in my life, and He'll see me through this." I knew her words carried a special message to me. She'd seen the pity in my eyes when she had told me the news. I should have known that pity was the last thing that Sarah would have wanted.

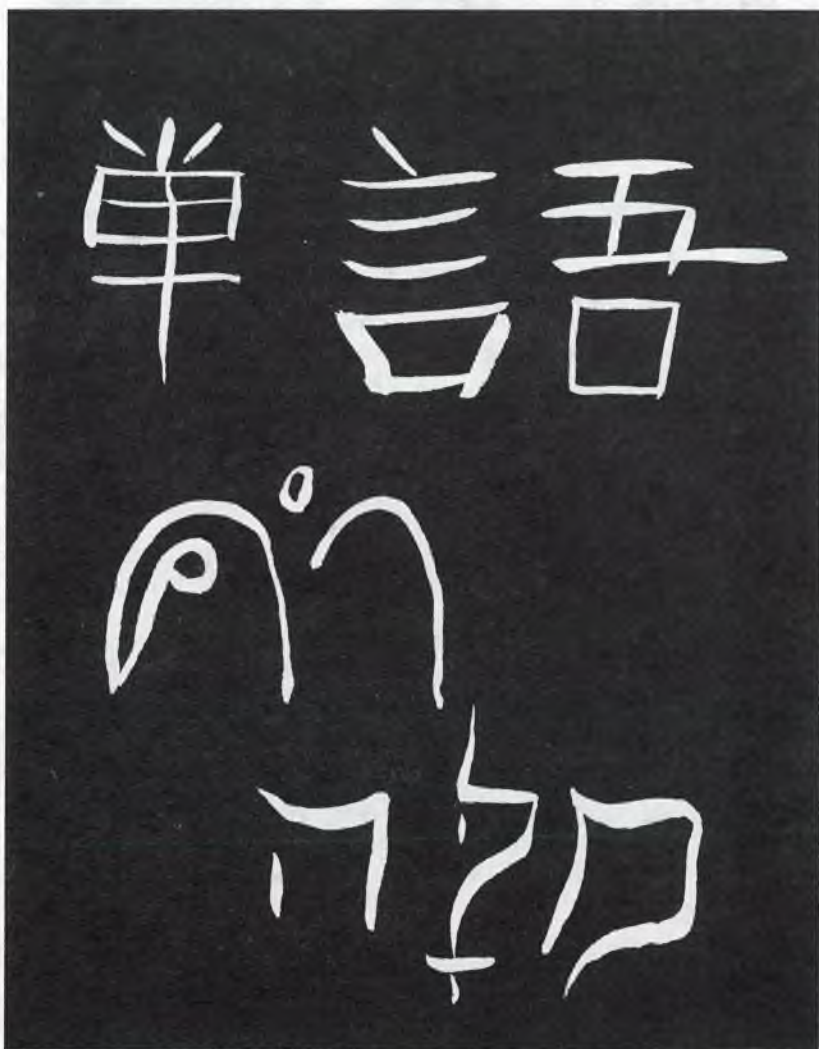
The topic of the *CQ* lesson this week has been that most important decision in life—the acceptance of Jesus Christ. Each time I've thought about it, Sarah has come to mind—an 18-year-old college freshman at Western Washington University (whose religious affiliation I never even thought to ask about) who taught me what faith in God really means.

REACT

1. Is it necessary to "convert" other Christians?
2. How can listening—without condemnation—to the problems others face be a means of bringing them to Christ?
3. What can we learn about evangelism from other denominations?

By Lisa Jervey Lennox, a graduate student in the English-studies program at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

MORE THAN WORDS



“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt. 7:28, 29, RSV).

My Mentor

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 7:28, 29; John 1:14

She was a petite young British woman with gentle, confident poise. Her appearance was always simple, classic—elegant. The male students in my class watched her with mouths gaping as she phrased her eloquent analyses of T. S. Eliot’s imagery or William Golding’s symbolism. I sat in the front row of her twentieth-century literature class in awe, hoping that maybe, just maybe, I would someday emanate that same commanding presence. Her articulate lectures and her extensive knowledge of literature were impressive to me. But it was more than her intelligence and dynamic classroom style that made her my mentor.

I used to come to her office with questions about the novel we were studying or the class discussion that day—any excuse for a chance to have some of her wisdom rub off on me. She was always welcoming, and I’d often end up staying for

The male students in my class watched her with mouths gaping as she phrased her eloquent analyses of T. S. Eliot’s imagery.

at least an hour, often longer. The conversation would soon sway away from the literature to relationships, ideals, goals, and Christianity. I remember leaving her office and her classroom feeling inspired, energized, full of ideas. Although her words were important, it wasn’t merely what she said that made an impact. It was her way of helping us to personalize our ideas and her ability subtly to lead us to our own conclusions. It was this distinctive talent and simply her character that made her words stick.

The scribes and Pharisees were also experts in their subject area. They were well versed in the religious literature of their time. But the way Jesus taught was different. His words were fascinating, inspiring. They activated curiosity: “And when Jesus finished . . . [His] sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority” (Matt. 7:28, RSV).

Although Christ communicated with powerful rhetoric, He knew that words alone are only limited representations of truth. The common person sensed the authenticity of His message because He constantly connected His words with the reality of people’s everyday experience. He spoke to them about things that were close to their lives, their way of thinking, and what they felt most deeply.

Jesus’ teaching was striking and effective because He personified it. He lived His words: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NKJV).

By Amy Eva, a senior English major at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

The Jesus-Model of Communication

LOGOS

John 10:1-18; Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; 16:13-19; Luke 10:25-28; 24:27, 44

A familiar saying among teachers goes, “Those who can, teach. Those who can’t, go into some less significant line of work.” Our society, one that pays its athletes \$1 million a season or more and its teachers \$40,000 a year, does not reflect the sentiments of this saying, but an important fact of life remains: all of us are teachers. Professional teachers are paid a salary for their activity; the rest of our society enjoy teaching for nothing.

This week’s lesson examines ways to succeed in teaching. Far from trying to outline a job description for the teaching profession, the life of Christ forms a model for effective teaching or sharing or—even better—*communicating*. Everybody communicates in some way. We are especially concerned here with communicating the gospel; nevertheless, the elements employed in a Jesus-model of communication will affect every level of our interpersonal relationships.

Conversation (John 3:1-21)

Jesus’ personal interchange with Nicodemus at night is typical of His conversational approach. If you have been dating someone for three years and then decide to break up, how would you tell the other person? Talk face to face? Call by phone? Write a letter? Most people answer, “Talk face to face,” because they sense that personal conversation would show respect for the three-year relationship and ensure a degree of accuracy in communicating their intentions. And they are right.

In an age of mass media we may minimize the importance of conversation. Sharing our experience personally may seem rather trivial next to Phil Donahue or Rush Limbaugh, who can communicate their ideas to audiences of millions every day on TV and radio (would Jesus have a talk show if He were here today?). But notice that the talk shows are popular because of their conversations. As viewers listen to those conversations, they are taught and their outlooks on life are formed.

Transformation (John 3:3; Matt. 16:13-19)

Jesus’ conversations were directional, and they always stimulated a desire for change. Always a controversial figure, Jesus never left people in the same state of mind as He found them. He healed, and lives were redirected. He modeled, and people were enlivened. He brought controversy and people began to think about the possibility of or need for change. Wherever Jesus went, transformation followed in His wake.

You must be born again. In Jesus’ declaration we should see more than a simple theological doctrine of sin and conversion. Effectively communicating always includes disequilibrium—“stirring up your pure minds,” as one of my professors used to say. Jesus’ ministry continually gave evidence that the Christian mission includes the breakup of shallow and worn-out thinking, acting, and speaking. The old cliches cannot meet the modern dilemmas.

Illustration (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; John 10:1-18)

The parable of the weeds forms well-known pictures in our minds. The meta-

phor of the shepherd brings heavenly insight to our earthly life. Picture Jesus' dilemma of dealing with sinful minds bent on self-indulgence. Communicating unknown-but-sensed realities and striking friendly chords of relevance were Jesus' greatest teaching challenges. Theologians call Jesus' words about God "anthropomorphisms" or "analogical language." But these are simply technical terms for "illustration." Thomas Aquinas wrote: "All words used metaphorically of God apply primarily to creatures and secondarily to God." That is to say, every evidence of God finds its expression in common human terms; otherwise, we could not understand anything about God.

Because of this reality Jesus told stories. Look at your favorite people—the best communicators in your life. They all tell stories. Our witness—our pilgrimage—sparkles when it comes in the form of stories. Christ "spoke with authority" *because* when He had finished His stories people *knew* truth. His stories communicated the complexity and the simplicity of truth. That's the genius of a good story. Truth without complexity is simplistic. Truth without simplicity is unduly abstract.

Revelation (John 3:13)

There can be no doubt that Jesus claimed to bring people into contact with revelation—the self-disclosure of God. Divine perspectives on the meaning of life have not always been well received by humanity. Almost immediately upon

Professional teachers are paid a salary for their activity; the rest of our society enjoy teaching for nothing.

hearing an appeal to God, we find a natural tendency to respond, "Who do you think you are?" And Jesus continually suffered that attitude, even though He communicated effectively.

Paradoxically, the hostile response of the world to the gospel contributes to its effective communication. Revelation brings a sword. And out of this disequilibrium God's voice directs us. Not all who receive reproof come to hate God. The Bible chronicles the lives of great men and women who responded positively to revelation. Revelation is what gives authority to our witness. Somewhere in our communicating we must be confident of a "Thus saith the Lord."

Incarnation (John 3:16; John 10:1-19; Luke 10:28)

Incarnation means simply "in flesh." To incarnate truth means to live it. Jesus became human to incarnate truth. When Christians speak of "the Word," they do not refer to Scripture only. They mean also the Incarnation—God in human form.

When Philip requested of Jesus, "Show us the Father" (John 14:8), Jesus revealed the incarnational nature of effective communication: "It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. . . . Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing" (John 14:10-12, NIV). Every Christian can show us the Father as the truth is incarnated—as the principles of truth are consistently internalized and lived out.

By Edwin Zackrisson, associate professor of theology and ministry, School of Religion, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

God-centered or Human-centered Education

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Luke 2:47

Jesus flabbergasted the religious establishment even before He entered His teens. They found it inconceivable that they could be taught by someone so young, someone who was not a product of the establishment. Even at the age of 12, Jesus spoke of implications that were highly threatening to tradition, for this was the same temple that Jesus Himself would cleanse with a whip 20 years later. It had become a symbol for institutional, man-centered religion and education.

Whenever too much power is concentrated in one place, those in positions of authority quickly lose sight of God's will and become engrossed in building their own kingdoms. The story of Battle Creek College is a classic example of this mentality in our own denominational history.

In spite of our prophet's warnings to spread out and decentralize,¹ we continued to concentrate our institutions in Battle Creek. "What actually developed at Battle Creek College was the antithesis of the stated hopes and purposes of its founders.

Whenever too much power is concentrated in one place, those in positions of authority quickly lose sight of God's will.

The college's curricular focal point was a classical studies program for the bachelor of arts degree that varied in length from five to seven years throughout its history. . . . The administration did not require study of the Bible and the Christian religion or even recommend it in the major courses."² Once it set its sights on worldly recognition, Battle Creek College lost its spiritual vision. Its saga is a solemn reminder that Adventist higher education is not immune from this same temptation.

What a contrast to Jesus, who did not seek to erect a single institutional monument to His name. When asked by the woman at the well which temple was the greatest—the one in Jerusalem or the one on Mount Gerizim—Jesus responded that all such human institutions will fall; God is interested in those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. This is the difference between God-centered and human-centered education.

REACT

If Jesus was a radical teacher, why has the church often been perceived as a conservative or reactionary teaching force in society?

1. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 137, 138, 210.

2. George Knight, *Myths in Adventism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1985), p. 31.

By Steve Daily, campus chaplain, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Nicodemus at Night

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 3:21

- Jesus:** No one can see the kingdom of God without being *born* again.
Nicodemus: How can I be born when I am old?
Narrator 1: Jesus responded by teaching even greater truths.
Jesus: No one can *enter* the kingdom of God without being born again.
Narrator 2: Nicodemus acted confused.
Nicodemus: Surely I cannot enter into my mother's womb to be *born* again!
Narrator 1: Nicodemus knew that bodies can create other bodies.
Narrator 2: But the great truth he needed to learn was—
Jesus: That the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You must be born again.
Narrator 1: Then Jesus likened being born again
Narrator 2: To the will of the wind.
Jesus: The wind blows where it wills—
Nicodemus: I can hear it when it blows.

Nicodemus acted confused. “Surely I cannot enter into my mother’s womb to be *born* again!”

- Jesus:** You are Israel's teacher, and you do not understand these things?
Nicodemus: But—
Jesus: I spoke of what we all knew and I testified to what we all had seen.
Nicodemus: But—
Jesus: And still you and your people do not accept My testimony.
Nicodemus: I have heard You speak of earthly things.
Jesus: But you don't believe them. How will you believe heavenly things?
Nicodemus: What are heavenly things?
Narrator 1: Then Jesus told Nicodemus that the things of the spirit
Narrator 2: Are spiritual things.
Narrator 1: That life consists of more than getting jobs and buying things—
Narrator 2: That life consists of caring and concern for *people*—
Narrator 1: That being truly alive means thinking about eternity.
Narrator 2: And eternity requires the Son of man, lifted up, living, dying, winning, and living again.
Narrator 1: Finally Jesus gave Nicodemus the conclusion of the whole matter.
Jesus: Believe in Me, and you will not perish but have eternal life.
Narrator 2: And so it was on that night in Jerusalem.
Narrator 1: At midnight Nicodemus saw the Light.

By Edwin Zackrison, associate professor of theology and ministry, and Melvin Campbell, professor of curriculum and teacher education, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

The Personal Shape of Empty Containers

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 4:7-15

The water at Caesarea Philippi is cold and clear and refreshing. Springing from an ancient source deep within the mountain, the water flows into shallow ponds near archeological sites thousands of years old, then courses through aged drainage ditches to become the Jordan River.

At the same place where Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say I am?" in the waters where the disciples and their Master washed away the dust of a long, long walk from Capernaum, pilgrims still return to be refreshed. Tour guides say of the site known today as Banias, "Take your empty water jugs with you and fill them up. The drinkable water is the sweetest and coldest in Israel."

And so we come with camping canteens, used Evian containers, drained liters of soda, Tupperware pitchers. With our own warm hands we plunge them into the almost-icy water and fill every container.

There is also an ancient educational principle to be found at Caesarea Philippi. The cold, clear refreshment from the Water of Life is available to each of us. But

We come with camping canteens, used Evian containers, drained liters of soda, Tupperware.

each of us drinks that water from our own container. The capacity of those containers, the size and shape, the style and durability, and even the use we make of the water itself, are all as individual and unique as the women and men who bring their empty vessels to the water's source.

Jesus knew the principle well. To the woman at the well He talked about living water. To the fishermen by the Sea of Galilee He gave an invitation to become fishers of men. Shepherds understood His illustration about being the gate to the sheepfold. Farmers knew what He was talking about when He told them the parable about the weeds. Women identified with His story about the yeast in the dough. Laborers knew immediately the point of His parable about the workers in the vineyard. He talked to the blind man about being the light of the world. And when her brother, Lazarus, had died, He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection."

REACT

1. How can you know the "shape" and "capacity" of the people with whom you seek to share Living Water?
2. If Jesus were to teach the lesson in your Sabbath School class today, what areas of life and labor would He find about which to build the illustrations of the principles of His kingdom?

By Stuart Tyner, director, John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

The Importance of Story

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 13:13

In the past, stories have been used to educate, as well as to entertain the listener. Oral traditions passed on histories. *Humpty Dumpty* and *Beowulf* originally were told as a way of remembering historical events. Today *Humpty Dumpty* is remembered for its rhyme, while *Beowulf* is studied for its contribution as ancient literature. In both, historical events are subordinate to the reason that we read them.

Fairy tales are another example of stories that have evolved. Mothers warned their daughters about the dangers of the world around them in stories like *Little Red Riding Hood*. The warning was to be aware of being mugged or raped. Today, traveling through the woods is an uncommon treat. Danger now exists on our streets. The story of Little Red Riding Hood has had to take on a new meaning of entertainment for children, as the world they live in has changed.

The fact that stories are passed on orally poses another problem. Stories that are told again and again invariably have their details altered or exaggerated from the original. Remember Mom or Dad's story about the morning's walk to school?

Stories that are told again and again invariably have their details altered or exaggerated.

How could it really be uphill both ways? Details were exaggerated to help us appreciate our bike or the bus that took us to school.

The same is true for the stories in the Bible. This week's lesson has focused on the methods that Jesus used to teach His disciples and the people around Him. Jesus' stories were the reason that people were attracted to Him. But the details of His stories, through the translations and many tellings, have been changed.

But does this alter their significance for our lives? Stories give us insight into life that edifies our existence. We gain the value of insight when we vicariously share the experience of other people's stories. Many people assume that the words in the Bible they read today are the same words that Jesus spoke. It is unsettling to them to realize their evolution over thousands of years. But by allowing Jesus' stories to evolve like those of *Beowulf* or *Little Red Riding Hood*, we gain the insight into humanity that is the true purpose of all teaching.

REACT

1. How important is it to know the exact words of Jesus?
2. What do stories provide that simple, direct language does not?
3. What, if anything, does Jesus' use of parables imply about modern-day use of fiction?

By Jennifer Cline, a senior English major at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

LET'S BE FRIENDS!



**“You are my friends if you do what I command you”
(John 15:14, RSV).**

Completely Joyful

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 15:14

“If I can’t be the leader, I’m leaving and taking all my cars!” Tommy’s words rang out with a finality that we knew would never last.

We had assembled the neighborhood kids to celebrate Joey’s fifth birthday. Just the week before, Tommy had celebrated his sixth birthday and had received three pedal cars that were the envy of the whole neighborhood. When Tommy brought his new pedal cars to Joey’s party, they were quickly incorporated into a game of follow-the-leader. Tommy was not chosen to be the leader, but he knew that he had a bargaining chip that no one else could match.

“Mommy, Tommy won’t play fair, and he’s taking his cars home if he can’t be the leader,” wailed Joey.

“They’re his cars, so he can take them if he wants to,” Joey’s mom said helplessly.

So, grudgingly, the kids made Tommy the leader. However, it wasn’t as much fun as Tommy thought it would be. At the age of six, Tommy was learning what

“If I can’t be the leader, I’m leaving and taking all my cars!”

some adults never learn: fruit that is plucked from the tree by a manipulative hand is often shiny on the outside but rotten on the inside.

Now to the text for this week: “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14, RSV). Is this Jesus’ version of “I’m taking my toys home if you don’t do what I say”? It appears that way on the surface. However, closer examination paints a completely different picture.

Why is Jesus so interested in our following His commandments? Does He derive some kind of selfish pleasure from making us do things just to show that He is in charge? Quite the contrary. He tells us that His commandment is simply that we love one another, just as He loves us (John 15:12). And why does He want us to love one another? So “that your joy may be complete!” (verse 11, NIV).

In this week’s lesson, we will study about how Jesus wants us to live. But remember that is *not* a threat from a Manipulator who will take His toys home if you don’t do what He says. Rather, it is good advice from a trusted Friend who knows better than anyone what it takes to make us completely joyful.

By Mark Reeves, a second-year general-surgery resident at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

Points of Light

LOGOS

Col. 2:6; Matt. 5:15-17; 28:19, 20; Rev. 12:17; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16, NIV).

When a person associates with Jesus and becomes a Christian, a lifestyle change takes place. This, Jesus said, is equivalent to lighting a lamp and having it shine on its stand. It is one of the purposes of the Christian life. By loving Jesus and obeying His command (John 15:10, 14), we provide the necessary illumination for a world of darkness.

At one time in our lives, most of us have the experience of finding ourselves in total darkness. Perhaps this occurred during an electrical blackout. In such darkness we were gripped by a natural fear. Getting around posed a great deal of difficulty because we essentially lost the use of our sight. Imagine how much worse is the situation of those who do not even realize that they live in darkness. They are unaware of the dangerous obstacles in their paths, and they continually stumble over them. They continue to put on soiled garments, yet do not appreciate the need for fresh clothes. They live an empty life but do not perceive any need for Jesus.

The world that does not know Jesus lives in darkness and is oblivious to the devastation that sin brings. It may live the misery caused by the natural effects of sin. It may become aware of its unpleasantness, but it cannot grasp the true consequence of sin on its own. Just as individuals in the dark cannot see their own desperate state, those who do not know Jesus cannot comprehend their separation from God. To remove this ignorance requires an external source of light.

Jesus equates the Christian life with a burning lamp, providing a necessary point of light in a dark world. Christ had carefully chosen to use light in His illustration because of its special significance in the Bible. Light was first among all creation on earth, separating the darkness and chaos that existed before it (Gen. 1:1-3). It is often the embodiment of the presence of God (Exod. 40:34). When Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Transfiguration, they witnessed a transformation accompanied by light (Luke 9:28, 29). On the road to Damascus, Paul was converted by Jesus appearing in the form of bright light (Acts 9:3).

The lamp in Jesus' time generated light from the energy released by burning fuel carried in its container. Christians likewise obtain their energy from Jesus, who is the ultimate Source of energy and light. Our light is a reflection of Jesus' way of life. Jesus urges us to renew our fuel diligently and thus keep our lamps filled (Matt. 25:1-13). By maintaining a constant relationship with Him, by learning about Him, and by obeying Him, we keep our light continually shining.

Just as natural light reveals conditions hidden in darkness, the Christian life illuminates the world and reveals the ugliness of sin. By following Jesus' example, a Christian lifestyle draws a contrast between the soundness of God's principles

versus the hopelessness of sin. Hiding this illumination is an unnatural act. It requires a special effort, such as putting the light under a cover. Jesus admonishes us not to hide our relationship with Him, but to obey His command. In doing so we become positive witnesses of God's principles.

A burning lamp in a cold room is a source of warm, steady heat that beckons people to gather around it. However, it does not give out a scorching heat, such as that produced from a burning torch. Likewise, our lives should radiate a warmth that is attractive to others. We should not use our lives as a standard to condemn others, to scorch others, and to drive them away from Jesus. We must learn not to

Just as natural light reveals conditions hidden in darkness, the Christian life illuminates the world and reveals the ugliness of sin.

fall into the trap of the self-righteous Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). Instead, our obedience to Jesus represents a quiet, steady light burning in the dark. This illustrates the soundness of God's principles, convicts others of the wisdom of obeying Jesus, and quietly draws them out of the dark into the light.

REACT

1. In what way does the Christian life illuminate the ugliness of sin?
2. What can I do in my life to shine brighter?
3. In practical terms, what does Colossians 2:6 mean when it admonishes us to "live in" Christ?
4. Besides a lamp or light, what other modern-day metaphor can you think of that would describe the role of a Christian life in the world?
5. Explain why you agree or disagree with the opening statement in today's portion of the lesson: "When a person associates with Jesus and becomes a Christian, a lifestyle change takes place."

By Cheng Ng, associate professor of computer science at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

By Beholding . . .

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Cor. 3:18

We live in a very exciting world. On television we are drawn to “Inside Edition,” “A Current Affair,” “Geraldo,” news, and movies. Movies are even more attractive. We can watch different kinds of entertaining movies, with R, X, and XXX ratings. This is in addition to live entertainment of different kinds.

However, not everything that is attractive is beneficial. What we see and hear affects our thoughts, which in turn affect our character. King Solomon knew this when he wrote, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7, NKJV). Ellen White reaffirms Proverbs 23:7 by writing, “Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day; and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character.”¹

Right thinking requires effort on our part. We need to filter and select information that passes through our minds. We “must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest.”² We need to

Right thinking requires effort on our part. We need to filter and select information.

train our mind to dwell upon pure and holy things. “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

The above description from Philippians can be found in the Word and the character of Christ. And “if we would enter the city of God, and look upon Jesus and His glory, we must become accustomed to beholding Him with eye of faith here. The words and the character of Christ should be often the subject of our thoughts and of our conversation.”³

By beholding we become changed. “We may think of evil, we may continue to keep our minds upon objectionable things, but what does this do for us? It conforms our entire experience to that which we are looking upon. But by beholding Jesus we become changed into His likeness.”⁴ By meditating upon the sacred themes, we “are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 144.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.

3. *The Sanctified Life*, p. 92.

4. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 670.

Jesus' Friend

EVIDENCE

John 15:14

On a casual reading of John 15:14, it seems that Jesus is requiring that we obey Him to earn His favor. Such interpretation cannot be farther from the truth. John 15:14 needs to be examined in its proper context, together with everything that Jesus said before and after, giving particular attention to the timing of His delivery.

When Jesus said those words in John 15:14, He knew that there were only a few days left in His mission on earth. He anticipated the impending storm and awaited with apprehension the trials that He must endure on the road to Calvary. Most of all, the burden of Calvary weighed on Him heavily. Even as He prepared, He was determined that God's plan be fulfilled.

Jesus then turned His attention to the last remaining task to be accomplished. In contrast to Jesus, His disciples were unprepared for the coming events. Still not united, and engaging in internal squabbles, the disciples were not ready to

In His hours of agony over the coming events, Jesus felt an acute sense of loneliness.

assume leadership in God's work. Jesus' remaining task was to prepare the disciples, to help them weather the coming crisis, and to plant the seed that sparked their later regrouping to establish the early Christian work.

In His hours of agony over the coming events, Jesus felt an acute sense of loneliness. In a short time He would experience unprecedented separation from God the Father. At such a time, He felt a great need for friends. Yet those who were with Him—because they misunderstood His mission—did not provide the needed friendship. To dispel these misunderstandings, Jesus told His disciples that they were, not His servants, but His needed friends (John 15:15)—a supreme sacrifice made not only for those close to Him, but for all of us. Jesus is thus reaching out to us to be His friends, even when we are not yet worthy of His friendship.

In response to His love, Jesus asks us to reciprocate by obeying His commands. In asking for this obedience, Jesus' foremost concern is the continuation of God's work. Since He can no longer physically represent God's character on earth, this responsibility is delegated to us. In obeying His commands in the same way that He obeyed the Father's commands (John 15:10), we provide a positive witness for God and draw others to Him.

REACT

1. What can we learn from Jesus' experience in battling feelings of loneliness?
2. Do I feel more like a servant or a friend to Jesus? Why?

By Cheng Ng, associate professor of computer science at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Jesus' Commands

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 6:1-7, 16, 17

In today's key text, Jesus gives some examples of how not to approach religion. The Pharisees were completely amiss in their highly structured form of religion. They placed great emphasis on rituals and strict rules that governed every facet of their religion, such as prayers, offerings, and fasting. Those rules were constructed to magnify public display of piety and to impress others, but were worthless in promoting a close relationship with God.

Jesus is not interested in this external form of piety. Instead, He desires that our religious experience be anchored in a private, personal relationship with Him. Instead of blind adherence to rules and rituals, Jesus prefers that we treat Him as a friend, learn from Him, communicate with Him, and follow His advice.

Young people often complain that Adventism resembles the Pharisees' religion. This is because they were often taught a religion that involves obeying numerous

Rules were constructed to magnify public display of piety and to impress others.

rules, with most of them prohibiting certain actions. This can hardly be characterized as Jesus' approach. Instead, we should seek a more personal form of spiritual experience. As a starting point, I am offering the following restatement of or commentary on the Ten Commandments:

1. I rely totally in Jesus for my spiritual needs.
2. I treasure my relationship with Jesus above everything else. Others may find comfort in their wealth, jobs, power, mansions, fast cars, friends, etc., but my salvation depends on Jesus alone.
3. _____
4. I plan activities for the Sabbath day that enrich my friendship with Jesus.
5. I love and respect my parents, who were chosen by Jesus to guide me in life.
6. I respect all of Jesus' creations and appreciate that He has placed them in my trust. I am careful with the environment because it sustains all of Jesus' creations.
7. I am committed to my spouse and family. They are an important part of my life because they remind me of Jesus' love for me.
8. I respect the property rights of others.
9. I respect the privacy of others.
10. _____

REACT

Supply the missing third and tenth commandments above.

By Cheng Ng, associate professor of computer science at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Score-Card Religion

OPINION

Key Text: John 10:10

The Pharisees used their rules and regulations as a score card to measure one's holiness and righteousness. They practiced legalism and self-denial with no regard for nurturing the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. While externally they upheld the letter of the law, internally they were spiritually empty.

The Pharisees were looked up to for spiritual guidance. However, their emphasis on law keeping was stealing, killing, and destroying any spiritual relationship with the heavenly Father. When Christ was on earth, one of His missions was to show us how to live a life that meets all of our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Christ first sought to meet His followers' basic needs, such as food, clothing, and health. After He had met these needs, He was then able to turn their attention toward spiritual needs. Christ not only met His disciples' needs, He also made certain that His own basic needs were met. He escaped the crowds when He felt overwhelmed and needed time with His Father. He enjoyed eating and fellowshiping with people. He asked His disciples to spend time and to pray with Him.

If we are to be effective disciples of Christ, we would be wise to follow the example of our Leader. We cannot be effective witnesses for Christ if our own

Meeting our own basic needs and fully enjoying life are not selfish sins.

spiritual lives are starving. Following Christ's example, we must take time out from busy schedules to build on our own spiritual lives.

Commercial airplanes are equipped with oxygen masks to meet the contingency of losing cabin air pressure. Airlines instruct passengers, in the case of an emergency, to secure their own masks and make sure that their masks are functioning properly before assisting others. The reason for this is obvious. If an able person is busy helping another who is not able, without first helping himself, both individuals would perish.

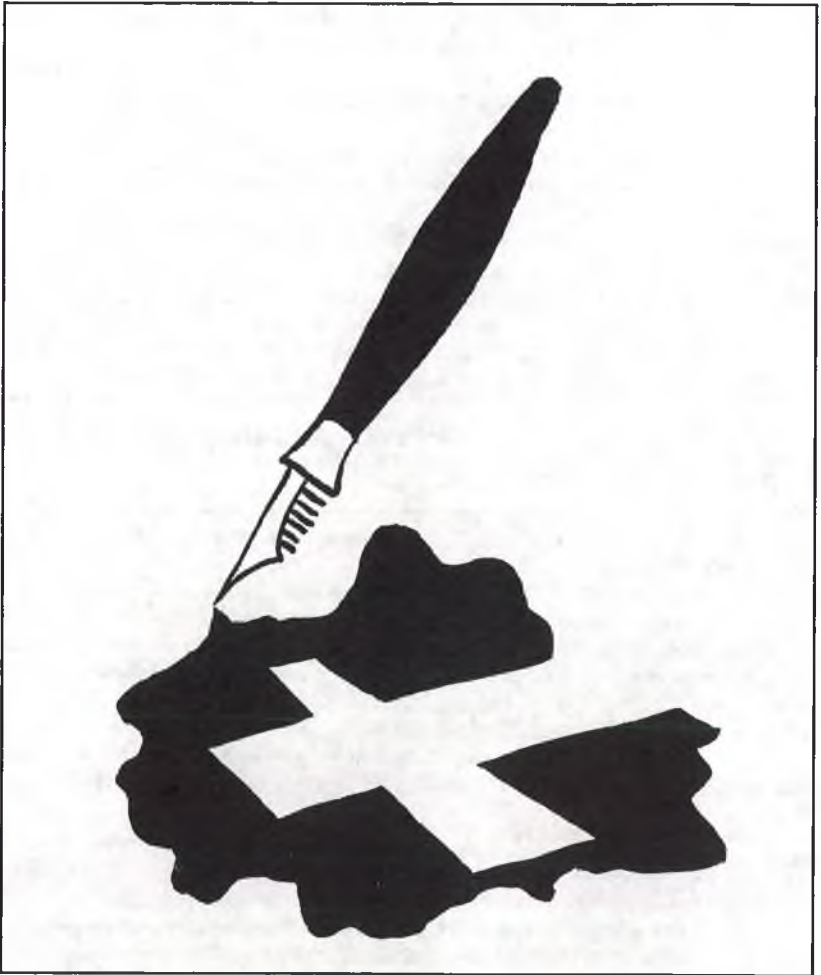
Meeting our own basic needs and fully enjoying life are not selfish sins. On the contrary, Christ came to give us an abundant life despite the fact that Satan is here to steal, kill, and destroy.

REACT

1. What alternatives to rules can we use to measure our spirituality?
2. Is it wrong to enjoy fine food, fine clothes, fine cars, etc., when there are others who are starving and homeless all around us? Explain your answer.
3. Explain why you agree or disagree that "meeting our own basic needs and fully enjoying life is not a selfish sin."

By Jon and Deane Souw, members of the young-adults class at the Loma Linda Chinese Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Loma Linda, California.

THE RIGHT CLEANSING AGENT



“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16, RSV).

Spot Removal for Christians

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 6:3-5

Teachers must have pockets. Where else are you going to put all those colored pens, keys, notes, and mints? So without a thought I slipped the black pen into the back pocket of my new white jeans. I knew I was in trouble when the pen came out of the pocket without the top. There was a black, black spot on my white pocket. To really appreciate the blackness of the spot, you must understand my passion for collecting writing tools, especially ones that work well for material that needs to be reproduced. This pen was not just a ballpoint, but a pen filled with real ink, black India permanent ink.

I had been told that ink could be removed by using hair spray. Carefully, I laid paper towels on the back side of the stain to keep the spot from spreading. After saturating the spot with hair spray, I blotted it with more paper towels. After a garbage sack full of paper towels, and with the spot not a whole lot whiter, I gave up on that theory. Next, I soaked the jeans in chlorine bleach, the real stuff. The spot turned brownish blackish and spread! After a whole night soaking in bleach

I knew I was in trouble when the pen came out of the pocket without the top.

and two trips through the washer, I still had a very noticeable spot, a symbol of my carelessness, of putting the pen in my pocket in the first place, and a symbol of my feeble attempts at removal.

Try as we might, we cannot live a life of whiteness. Because of our sinful nature, we have blots in our lives. Our desire for perfection is strong; we do the best we can to live a life of goodness and righteousness, but our lives still exhibit fear, jealousy, anger, and other fruits of our sinful nature. How can such as we be saved? Sin indelibly blemishes our lives. When we put on our own prized robes of righteousness, we find they are but filthy rags (Isa. 64:5, 6). Baptism is a public symbol that we have given up on our attempts to bleach our own life white! Without help we cannot escape the results of sin. We carefully sew patches of good works and meticulously paint masks of goodwill that may be impressive to human eyes, but God sees the stain of sin in our hearts. With baptism we acknowledge the power of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, giving Him the opportunity to change and cleanse our lives. We accept Christ as our righteousness, His life without blemish, to stand in place of ours. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:27, NIV).

By Mary Leanna Lawson, teacher at Boulder Junior Academy, Boulder, Colorado.

The Big Purchase

LOGOS

Matt. 3:13-17; 20:20-23; John 1:12; 3:5; Rom. 6:3-5

I was so excited! My dad and I had gone to look at the old, red, '56 International pickup. Dad thought it would work, and I had the money. After days of anticipation Dad and I went to get my truck. He had to drive it home because I was only 15. But it was mine! Several weeks later I found the time to register and title my truck. I spent hours hammering out dents, finding used parts, body-filling, sanding, applying undercoats, and finally carefully spraying several coats of the brightest red paint I could find. The day finally came when I turned 16. I could drive my truck. I had bought it, registered it, and now I was driving my new, bright red, '56 International pickup!

This is a fitting analogy for baptism. We receive the water baptism of repentance, forgiveness, and a new life in Christ; we are welcomed into fellowship and family within a body of believers; and we receive the baptism of the Spirit, the integration of Spirit-led ministry in our daily lives.

John the Baptist came teaching and “preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3, NIV). He came teaching and preaching of the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world, of the One who would follow him baptizing you “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt. 3:11). John’s water baptism was a guarantee, “as down payment, the pledge of God to be with mankind faithfully until the Last Day when Christ will come in glory to raise the dead and grant everlasting life to all who believe.”¹ Baptism by water has basically two focal points: it represents a repentance, a conversion of a sinner to God, the redemptive action of Jesus; and it anticipates the baptism of the Spirit and fire.²

Luke tells us that “when all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too” (3:21). Shortly after this he says that Jesus “went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue” (4:16). Jesus read from Isaiah that “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” He also read that “he anointed me” and that “he has sent me” (verse 18). They went out enabled under the power of Jesus to perform ministry to others. When they returned, they ceased to have that same power. It was not until Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the disciples possessed this power for themselves. The baptism of the Spirit was theirs. From that point on they were powerful ministers for Christ.

I believe Christ intends that we individually receive the baptism of the Spirit and that this baptism enables us to minister for Jesus Christ. This is the story of the New Testament church that we read again and again in the book of Acts. “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Sometimes both baptisms seemed almost simultaneous, and at other times they were separated by periods of time. I am reminded of God’s expectations for us in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you [and appointed you] to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”

A third and important aspect of baptism is “incorporation into the eschatological community, the Church or the body of Christ, the new family of God which lives” by the gift of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in anticipation

of His promise to come again in glory at the Second Coming.³

Paul and the other Bible writers have much to say about the importance of incorporation into the body of Christ, His church, and the family of believers (see 1 Cor. 12:12-31). We find strength, encouragement, and support as a functioning part of this body of believers.

Baptism in its different aspects is symbolic of the Christian walk. We are freely accepted, forgiven, and given eternal life through the gift of Jesus Christ. Our baptism of repentance symbolizes our acceptance of that gift. We are challenged to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to integrate obedience and incorporate Christlike ministry to others into our daily lives. And somewhere within the journey that begins with the gift of Christ and a Spirit-led life of ministry,

After days of anticipation Dad and I went to get my truck. He had to drive it home because I was only 15.

we chose to join with the church, a body of Christians who are looking forward to the second coming of Christ.

It is just like my new, bright red, '56 International pickup. I bought it. I licensed it and, finally, I drove it. I am purchased by Christ, I belong to His family, and I minister to others.

REACT

1. How do we receive the baptism of repentance and the baptism of the spirit?
2. Where does church membership fit into my journey with the Lord?
3. What baptism have I received?
4. Where can I minister for Christ?
5. What fruit am I bearing, and will it last?

1. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "baptism."

2. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, s.v. "baptism."

3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "baptism."

Heart Work

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Acts 19:2-6

“When we submit to the solemn rite of baptism, we testify to angels and to men that we are purged from our old sins. . . . In the presence of the three highest powers in heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—we have pledged ourselves to do the will of Christ.”¹

But baptism, of itself, cannot change us. “Baptism may be repeated over and over again, but of itself it has no power to change the human heart. The heart must be united with Christ’s heart, the will must be submerged in His will, the mind must become one with His mind, the thoughts must be brought into captivity to Him.”²

As John the Baptist called the chosen people of God to repentance and baptism, he was actually implying that they “were defiled by sin, and . . . without purification of heart and life they could have no part in the Messiah’s kingdom. . . . In view of

**“Baptism may be repeated over and over again,
but of itself it has no power to change the human
heart.”**

the light they had received from God, they were even worse than the heathen, to whom they felt so much superior.”³

Do today’s chosen people of God have light? Are they in need of purification of heart and life? “We must know our real condition, or we shall not feel our need. . . . We must understand our anger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we should not desire healing.”⁴

When we begin to see our true condition; when we begin to recognize our need, then our prayer will be, “Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, un-Christlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.”⁵

REACT

1. If we’ve already been baptized but feel the need of cleansing, what should we do?
2. Today, who are the chosen people of God? Why do you think so?

1. *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1904.

2. *Ibid.*, Sept. 18, 1900.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 104-106.

4. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

By Delilah Briggs, church secretary at the Boulder (Colorado) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Immersed in the Spirit

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 10:2; Exod. 14

The phrase “baptism by immersion” is redundant. The Greek word *baptisma* means immersion.* The first baptisms recorded in the Bible were performed by John the Baptist, but the concept evidently predates John, since the Pharisees questioned his authority to baptize (John 1:25). Even though baptism is not mentioned in the Old Testament (since the word comes from Greek), it is interesting to look there for events, practices, and ideas that are related to baptism. For instance, Paul refers to the experience of the Israelites during the Exodus as a baptism into Moses (1 Cor. 10:2; Exod. 14).

The symbolic implications of baptism are intricate. It is a visible, active statement of belief in Christ. It depicts cleansing from sin. It is symbolic of partaking in Christ’s death and resurrection, an object lesson in the gospel. One of the more

The first baptisms recorded in the Bible were performed by John the Baptist.

significant interpretations is the connection between baptism by water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Water and the Spirit are connected throughout the Bible, from Genesis 1:2, NIV (“The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”) to Revelation 22:17 (“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ . . . take the free gift of the water of life”). When we read about Christ’s baptism by John, the most striking aspect of the story is the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

Water baptism may be symbolic, but Spirit baptism is real! God says through Ezekiel, “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees.” (36:27) and through Paul, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22).

REACT

1. In what ways does the Exodus parallel the baptismal symbolisms of repentance, new-found faith, forgiveness, cleansing from sin, and partaking of Christ’s death and resurrection?
2. What relationship do you see between baptism and the following Old Testament events and practices: sprinkling (Ezek. 36:25-27; Num. 8:7); ceremonial washings (Exod. 30:17-21; Lev. 8:6); the Flood (Genesis 6-9)?
3. Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit the same thing for every new believer, or is it manifest differently to different people or at different occasions in history?

* *Webster’s New World Dictionary*, Second College Edition.

By Rick Behrens, an electrical engineer and a member of the Boulder (Colorado) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

So What?

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 3:11

Recently a close friend whom I used to work with in the oil industry came by to visit. He was raised very active in the Catholic church. He had recently left his job in the oil industry to work in a Christian outdoor education program in California. According to the tradition of his church, he had been sprinkled as an infant. One of the first things that he wanted to share with me was his recent baptism by immersion. His excitement about his baptismal experience was refreshing and contagious.

Having been raised in the Adventist church, I took baptism by immersion for granted. Later, as I thought back to our conversation, his enthusiasm for his baptism caused me to ask myself what my baptism meant to me. What difference does my baptism make now in my life today? My initial response was that my baptism was not relevant to me day to day. Why?

As an adolescent, I went through the routine of baptismal classes at church school along with the other kids. According to the customs of my church, I con-

His excitement about his baptismal experience was refreshing and contagious.

sented to be baptized along with my friends at age 12. I was baptized because it was expected of me and my friends were being baptized. It was the thing to do. It was the custom in my church! After my conversation with my oil-industry friend, I realized I should have waited to be baptized until I could understand the meaningfulness of baptism. I had missed the excitement and joy that he felt.

Later in my life I came to realize the power of Matthew 3:11. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." My baptism signifies that I have accepted Christ's death and resurrection and His forgiveness of my sins. I can live and even thrive if I know that Christ accepts me. Second, I have seen the Holy Spirit working in my daily life. With the Holy Spirit's help, or daily baptism, I can live by grace and be victorious in my daily activities.

REACT

1. Have I accepted Christ's forgiveness?
2. What difference does my baptism make in my daily life?
3. In your view, what is the proper age (or condition) for baptism?
4. What (if anything) should the church expect of people who ask to be baptized?

By Bob Cushman, a Ph.D. candidate in geology at the Colorado School of Mines, Golden, Colorado.

Just the Beginning!

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 28:19, 20

Did you hear about the 10,000 baptized in Latin America? How about the 1,000 in the Philippines, the hundreds that are “giving their lives to Jesus” each day in Russia, or the 25 just added to the church down the street? Why do we measure our success in spreading the gospel by the number of baptisms? Do schools measure their success by the number who enter first grade?

If we believe, become baptized, and then continue learning and living as Jesus modeled, should our spiritual journey follow a similar progression? Baptism falls in line with a child entering first grade. Learning and growing comes gradually and carefully as we are ready. Just as we do not plunge headlong into trigonometry before we are ready, Christ does not expect spiritual maturity at baptism. Schools are gauged on how many children successfully complete the curriculum and graduate. The church needs to find a better means of determining its success at spreading the gospel. How many remain in the church after 10 years?

Our learning experiences do not happen overnight, nor do they happen in the four, six, or eight weeks an evangelist, pastor, or lay leader spends in Bible studies.

The church needs to find a better means of determining its success at spreading the gospel.

A relationship requires considerable time to build, nurture, and mature.

How many parents are happy when a youth decides to get married immediately? The parents counsel against a hastily made decision. Do those same parents caution the youth on deciding to become baptized in the same amount of time? Probably not. And that is OK as long as everyone remembers this is the beginning of our Christian relationship, not the end.

We have a failure rate beyond my comprehension. Nine years ago, 10 believers accepted Christ at an evangelistic series in our church. Today three remain. Imagine the tragedy if these were marriages that survived. Imagine our disbelief if these were our schoolchildren who successfully made it to graduation. What a horror if our medical system provided only this many healthy deliveries out of this number of pregnancies.

Baptism by immersion is an experience that Christians hold near to their hearts. How do we make the experience following baptism just as special? Jesus urges believers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV).

After we baptize, our obligation continues. The teaching and learning continue. Baptism is the beginning!

By Nanette Daarud, youth volunteer, pharmacist, homemaker, and church activist in the Boulder (Colorado) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A NEW CHRISTIAN'S BIGGEST PROBLEM



“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7, RSV).

News Bulletin From Jerusalem

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Acts 2:41-47

Reporter: Here is a news report from Television Channel JRAD33. More than 3,000 people have now joined the group who call themselves Christians. With me in City Square are some eyewitnesses of the amazing events that are taking place in Jerusalem. First, I want you to meet Crassus, a trader and financier from Parthia. Crassus, I understand you heard the radical reformer they call Peter, a Galilean ex-fisherman, campaign recently to tremendous crowds.

Crassus: Yes, yes. I listen. I understand. I am baptized.

Reporter: But your mother tongue is Persian, and you normally use an interpreter in Jerusalem. How could you understand Peter as he spoke?

Crassus: I hear it all in my Persian language. And I believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. I know it in my heart like I know my business, believe me.

Reporter: Thank you, Crassus. With me also are some tourists from Media who verify that Peter's oration was indeed received in the Persian language, although

With me also are some tourists from Media who verify that Peter's oration was indeed received in the Persian language.

he himself reportedly spoke in Galilean. And we have enthusiastic witnesses who come from 12 other nations. They declare that they each heard in their very own language. Yes, Crassus, you want to add something?

Crassus: We are all brothers now, together!

Reporter: We return to the studio, where the counselor, Jacob, of our inner-city Jewish legislature, awaits. He will make further comment.

Jacob: Thank you. I do not doubt that a supernatural power is at work. Quite apart from some hysteria, I also observe other signs that cannot be denied, signs to which the prophets may have referred. The Christians pray and praise daily, and miraculous things are happening. They are selling their possessions to share so that no one among them—widow, child, pauper, or stranger—lacks food, shelter, money, or even emotional support. And they seem to love one another—so much so that racial and class distinctions have quite disappeared!

Reporter: This ends our on-the-spot news report from Jerusalem, although a seer speaks to us of unknown places called Bosnia, Serbia, Somalia, and Albania, and of London, New York, and Calcutta, all of which, with other places, we may hear more in the distant future. And what of the fellowship of this Christian community? We advise all listeners to stay tuned.

By Mary Trim, professor of literature and communication at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

Christian Community

LOGOS

Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; Phil. 1:3-5; 2:1-5; 1 John 1:3, 6, 7.

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5, NIV).

The essence of the Christian faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The importance of a personal religious experience is unquestionable, but an unbalanced emphasis on spiritual individualism can have unfortunate results.

Concentrating on individual salvation can obscure God's interest in the social aspect of His redemption. To downgrade the role of fellowship is to overlook a basic principle established by God back at the time of Creation.

After Creation man lacked fellowship with a being like himself. All of us need fellowship, and in His love and wisdom God provided the framework in which we can experience it. Relationships determine the rate and the smoothness of our development; we cannot experience our full humanity without it.

The same is true of our spiritual growth. New Testament writers never considered the prospect of individual Christians living in isolation. Such a concept probably never entered their heads. For them, being a Christian meant being part of a community. Peter spoke of each believer's being a living stone in a spiritual house. Paul likened the individual Christian to a member of the human body.

For a lone Christian to remain detached from the fellowship of believers makes as much sense as an organ of the body declaring unilateral independence from the rest of the body members. In the Bible, Christianity and isolation from fellow believers do not go together. They still don't.

"All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Some years ago I heard a middle-aged man giving a moving testimony of how Jesus had saved him from the grip of alcohol and kept his marriage alive. A few weeks later I met him again and asked him whether he had experienced any great difficulties since accepting Christ. His answer shocked me. Fellow Christians had proved to be his biggest problem! "They point out my mistakes," he told me, "and many remind me of the life I left behind."

We often talk about the church's being a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints, but this well-worn phrase often wears thin in practice as well. Too often a new believer is driven out of the church because he does not come up to the standards of some established members. Others may find themselves frozen out because they have suggested changes in the way the church does things.

The word often used to describe fellowship in the New Testament is the Greek *koinonia*. Its basic root meaning is "common." As members of lost humanity we are all part of a common ruin; as members of Christ's church we are part of a common salvation. Fellowship in the church means that all are equal.

From this starting point we are to grow and we are to help others to grow—mistakes and all. Carrying one another's burdens is a fulfillment of the law of

Christ (Gal. 6:2). How good it would be to be known as the church where members love one another!

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Acts 2:42-47 gives a fascinating insight into the life of the early church. It is a snapshot of a day in the life of the new movement. Underlying all its activity and vibrant growth was the remarkable harmony among its members. “All the believers had everything in common” (2:44). This spirit of unity could be described only by *koinonia*, a word created to convey this special kind of fellowship.

Sadly in today’s church the word *fellowship* has been cheapened. Sometimes it means no more than a social get-together followed by a cold drink and biscuits! It is a far cry from the oneness experienced by those early believers.

Three aspects can be detected in the biblical usage of *koinonia*, all containing the element of sharing.

First, this *koinonia*, or fellowship, is something all believers have the privilege

Too often a new believer is driven out of the church because he does not come up to the standards of some established members.

and opportunity to share in. C. H. Dodd, a Greek scholar, wrote, “*Koinonoi* [the plural form] are persons who hold property in common, partners or shareholders in a common concern.”¹ Every Christian shares a common faith as expressed in Ephesians 4:4-6 and a common life in Christ. These promote a distinct fellowship.

Not only is this fellowship something we share in, but it is also something we share out. *Koinonia* conveys the aspects of partnership and participation. In 2 Corinthians 8:23 Paul refers to Titus as his partner in spreading the gospel. The Philippian brethren are described as partners in this work (Phil. 1:5). We are all partners in this great venture: the fulfillment of the gospel commission.

Third, this fellowship is something that we share with one another. It is noteworthy that all the “one another” verses in the New Testament are found in the context of demonstrating Christ’s love. “Because we are one and belong to each other, we are called to love one another, serve one another and support each other in true *koinonia*.”²

REACT

1. What is the relationship between personal salvation and fellowship with other believers? Is the first more important than the latter?

2. How can we be tolerant toward other church members and yet not allow standards to decline?

1. Selwyn Hughes, *Every Day With Jesus: Christian Fellowship* (Walton-on-Thames: CWR, 1986), p. 8.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

By David McKibben, a theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

Enlarge Your Fellowship

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 John 1:7

Ellen White once wrote, “If we will die to self, if we will enlarge our idea of what Christ can be to us and what we can be to Him, if we will unite with one another in the bonds of Christian fellowship, God will work through us with mighty power.”*

But what does she mean by this? Well, let me try to interpret it like this:

1. If we will not be so concerned with what we want; if we will be more concerned with pleasing God and not ourselves . . .
2. If we will be daring enough to realize that God is “All Mighty”; if we will recognize that He is our Friend, Counselor, Saviour, Lawyer, and Judge . . .
3. If we recognize that we can be ambassadors, envoys, peacemakers, and soldiers for Jesus . . .
4. If we will have peace, unity, forgiveness, acceptance, and love in our hearts for others . . .

Then God will be able to do great things in our lives for us, others, and His glory.

It is interesting to note where Ellen White begins in formulating this recipe for successful Christianity. She begins with the individual—with you and me. And

Ellen White begins this recipe for successful Christianity with the individual—with you and me.

how does it begin? It begins with a denial of self. I once saw a caption that read, “Let Go and Let God.” I thought at the time that it was excellent advice but a little difficult to implement. In reality this is where it all begins, because if we cannot deny our will for the will of Christ, how can we ever allow Him to place within us the true principles of Christianity? How can we ever experience true fellowship with one another?

Then notice that Ellen White uses the phrase, “enlarge our idea.” Ellen White is simply saying that we need to enlarge our idea of who God really is. When we do this, our fellowship with Him will become more invigorating and deep. This will also increase the quality and effectiveness of our fellowship with others. Furthermore, in even our casual acquaintances we will leave a touch of heaven’s fragrance that will enrich the lives of others.

But before we can enrich the lives of others, self-centered desires must die. When this takes place, everything else Ellen White mentioned will fall into place; thus God will work with great results in our lives. Therefore, let us fellowship together.

* *In Heavenly Places*, p. 57.

By Andrew C. Hewitt, a theology senior at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

Partners in the Gospel

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Phil. 1:4, 5

In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul praises them for their “partnership [or fellowship] in the gospel” (1:5, NIV), yet in the next chapter he criticizes their lack of unity and fellowship with one another. This seems a contradiction until we realize the dual translation of the Greek word *koinonia*. Although it usually translates as “fellowship” or “partnership,” it also means “almsgiving,” as in Philippians 1:5. Paul’s purpose for writing to the church in Philippi was first to give thanks for their financial support, or “almsgiving,” as he reiterates in chapter 4, and second, to express his concern for their divisiveness.

Today, we sometimes regard disunity as a modern issue among churches; however, it has been a concern throughout religious history. During the early days of Christianity, disunity was the most common and difficult problem. With the influx of Gentiles, the first Christians came from a wide variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. Over an extremely short period, they were exposed to new truths and doctrines. Therefore, it should be of no surprise that they lacked a strong

Disunity is not unique to the Adventist Church, but that is no reason to give in to it.

sense of fellowship. Disunity is not unique to the Adventist Church, but that is no reason to give in to it.

Paul actively fought against disunity in his letters to the Philippians, Corinthians, and many others, and today we still need to work constantly on our fellowship with one another. We need to be “partners in the gospel,” not just in almsgiving, but in our overall attitude. If we are cold and critical toward each other, how can we grow and share our beliefs with others outside the church? As Paul tells us, we need to be “like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Phil. 2:2). We are God’s representatives, and until we stand as a united body we weaken our power to work for God. “Our fellowship with one another is intended in the purpose of God to represent the platform from which the gospel can be preached to the world. . . . The quality of our relationships within the church will determine the effectiveness of our witness outside the church.”*

REACT

In what ways can your relationship with members of your church affect the way you witness to others? Give positive and negative examples of this.

* Bruce Milne, *We Belong Together—The Meaning of Fellowship* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1978), pp. 95, 96.

By Andrea Burt, an English-literature graduate of Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

No Form Nor Comeliness

HOW-TO

Acts 2:47

Rod was born with cerebral palsy, leaving him with severely disfigured facial features. His head was disproportionate to his body, giving him a most ungainly appearance. His speech was also impaired. We had been talking about the weather when Rod said, "I want to go to ma Maker—where you come from." It took a while to decipher what he meant. His statement seemed out of keeping with our conversation. "Ma Maker"? Then it became clear. He assumed that I, being dark, came from Jamaica, and because of his handicap was unable to communicate clearly.

After conversing with Rod I realized that, though unable to speak well, he was not stupid. Behind the mask of disfigurement lay a brain that functioned. Remembering the statement I thought he had made ("I want to go to ma Maker") I asked whether he believed in God. He said Yes, but he had a sad story to tell.

Rod had walked into a church, certain he would be accepted into its fellowship. Joining one of the groups, he sat down to listen to their discussion, noticing nothing

I realized that, though unable to speak well, he was not stupid.

at first. However, after a while, he realized people were abandoning their seats, leaving a vacant area around him.

They don't like me, Rod thought. He was not able to communicate fluently, but he understood the universal language of fellowship—being accepted by other members of the human race, especially Christians. However, his experience had left him feeling worse than ever before. Rejection was the theme of Rod's life and this was another painful chapter. However, he realized that everyone should be welcome in God's house, himself included—disfigurement and all.

On that fateful morning he had taken the promise of God literally: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). But his experience had left him wounded. What was most disconcerting as I listened was the discovery that he was talking about the local Seventh-day Adventist church!

In Acts 2:47 we are reminded of the real meaning of fellowship: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people." Rod still believed in praising God, even though he had not found favor with God's people. Indeed, had a hand of fellowship been extended, would not Rod truly have come "to [his] Maker"?

1. Be sensitive to others' needs. The more unattractive an individual in human terms, the greater the need for understanding and acceptance. Remember: "The common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

2. Pray for the ability to be receptive to others. Remember: even the lepers found Jesus approachable.

By Yvonne Watson, a senior theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

The Visitor

OPINION

Key Text: Acts 2:42-47

The man rubbed his hands together tightly, adjusted his glasses and tie, gritted his teeth, and walked through the door. Why was he nervous? He was very close to getting a membership.

There were more people here than he expected. He had to squeeze to get in. Voices and bodies were swirling around him, and he could hear music loudly coming from another room. *I should have come a little earlier*, he thought.

He didn't really notice anybody although he was looking. Everyone seemed to know one another. There were people of all ages, shaking hands, talking as if they were all long-lost friends. Children were running in and out of the crowd, being chased by mothers and fathers. People were bumping into the man, but nobody spoke to him, and he still didn't see anybody he recognized.

She quickly slapped a sticker onto the man's glasses and ran right into a woman who came out of the women's bathroom.

He nervously shoved his hands into his pockets. He hadn't known it would be this hard! He was staring at the floor, wondering what to do, when suddenly everyone rushed toward the doorway of the large room—or was it a hall—from which the music was coming.

Within seconds he stood alone. What was he supposed to do now? He looked to where the music played on, but the place seemed full, with all the seats taken. He started for the outer door.

On his way a little girl came running in. "Mommy, Mommy," she was calling. "Mommy." She stopped right in front of the man, her arms behind her back, staring at him, whimpering.

The man bent down to her level. "It's all right, little girl. Are you looking for your mommy?"

Puzzled, she said, "You're not my mommy." She quickly slapped a sticker onto the man's glasses and ran right into a woman who came out of the women's bathroom. The woman picked up the little girl. "Jill, what are you doing?" She hurried in to where everyone else sat. As she passed, she gave the man a sharp look.

He sighed, peeled the sticker off his glasses, and looked at it. On a white background it said "Cradle Roll," and in big block letters it also said "Visitor."

The stranger sighed again as he walked out into the street.

REACT

1. What can we do to make new members feel comfortable?
2. Should a new member have to try to break into the church social group?

By Todd Wemmer, a junior at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

GETTING INVOLVED



“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27, RSV).

Waiting for Time

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:7

She stood there, frail, unsure of herself, not knowing what to say. Tracey looked up at me with clear, pleading eyes. I was frustrated. I didn't need this now. *Couldn't this wait?* There was a church-history test to study for, telephone calls to make, an assignment to finish—yet those brown eyes signalled their SOS message, "I need to talk."

She read the agitation in my face and turned away. Somewhere inside me the voice of my favorite lecturer sounded: "Sometimes we can be busier than the Lord wants us to be."

Into my mind flashed a well-known story. Two sons stand before their father. The one is reluctant, obstinate, and rebellious; the other, eager and willing. The father turns to his elder son. "Son, go and work in the vineyard today."

"No way, Dad!" macho boy replies. "I've got other things to do." Dad turns away, and his shoulders sag. The grapes are all ready for the cutting. He repeats

Somewhere inside of me the voice of my favorite lecturer sounded: "Sometimes we can be busier than the Lord wants us to be."

his request to the younger boy. "Yes, sir," this son replies and hurries off with apparent eagerness.

The younger son never makes it to the field. Maybe he was too busy preparing himself for the task—a couple of hours in the gym to get those muscles in shape, an hour or so studying a few textbooks on how to run a vineyard, and then, of course, some time with the laborers to gain their confidence. He'd had opportunity to do this before, but it hadn't seemed important at the time. Or perhaps he just forgot—made the commitment and then got sidetracked in something else. Whatever happened, he never got to the vineyard that day.

What about the elder brother? I can imagine him thinking, *What a bore! I don't have time for this today. There is no way I'll get any of my work done if I go out to the vineyard.* Later he changed his mind. Perhaps he had been unreasonable. Didn't his father need him in the field? Dad had looked tired. What would happen to the grapes if harvesttime came and went and the grapes were still on the vine? Finally, he *did* get to the vineyard.

My mind whirled. Did I have to be like either son? Was there perhaps a third son, to say, like Isaiah, "Lord, send me," and then follow it through? Perhaps *tomorrow* the vineyard would be closed, rotten grapes left lying in the field. I made my decision. "Tracey," I called. "Wait!" Time wouldn't wait, and neither would I.

By Alan Parker, a final-year theology student at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

“As the Father Has Sent Me . . .”

LOGOS

Acts 20:20; 1 Corinthians; Rev. 18:1-4

The Gifts of the Spirit in General (Zech. 3; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:10-16; 1 Cor. 13:4-7)

In Zechariah 3 we have a visionary picture of what it takes to be a qualified priest in the kingdom of God: his sins have been forgiven, he has been clothed in the “rich garments” of Christ’s righteousness, and he has a “clean turban” of dedication to the priestly ministry in the “house” and “courts” of the Lord.

When the New Testament believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit as earnestly as the early disciples did, this “promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train.”¹ The fruits of the Spirit, such as love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, will be experienced by those who live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23; Rom. 8:9). In addition to this, New Testament believers, like Joshua the high priest, are qualified for their ministry not only by the forgiveness of their sins and the renewal of their lives by the fruits of Christ’s righteousness, but also by the gifts of the Spirit that enable them to wear the turban of dedication in the house and the courts of the Lord.

Four facts concerning the gifts of the Spirit are vital for the correct understanding of gifts.

1. *Every* believer will have a gift or gifts. Being a Christian is like being a member of the body of Christ. And like parts of a body, each member is to perform a specific and vital duty for the body of Christ to function normally (1 Cor. 7:7; 12:7, 12-28; Rom. 12:3-5; Eph. 4:7).

2. As body parts are different with different functions, so members of the church will have different gifts to qualify them for different callings in different positions, in different situations, and even in different times in the history of the church (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:8-11, 29, 30; Eph. 4:11). But the church will not lack any gift that will be necessary to prepare it for the coming of the Lord (1 Cor. 1:4-7).

3. The gifts will be for the edification of the church as a whole and not just for any individual member’s personal benefit (Eph. 4:12, 13, 15, 16; 1 Cor. 12:25). Just as the eye does not exist for the sake of the eye, so the gifts of the Spirit to each member are for the sake of the other members.

4. Every one of the gifts must be exercised in the “more excellent way,” namely, the way of Godly love (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1). When this is kept in mind, there will be no jealousy among members, no competition with each other, because each gift will be used within the sanctified ambit of the selfless rules of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. This is the only successful way to nurture church members and have an effective evangelistic outreach to the world around us.

Completing the Work in the Power of the Spirit (Rev. 18:1-4; 14:6-12, 14-16; Acts 20:20)

Revelation 18:1, 2 promises that the gospel message of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12 will be completed in a blaze of glory and with a loud voice sounding throughout the earth. Although different symbols are used, this is in fact the complete fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32.

This prophecy telescoped together both the early and the latter rain of the Holy Spirit on the Christian church.² It is not so much history that will be repeating itself, as the dual nature of the prophecy necessitating a dual fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit.

In fact, the Old Testament prefiguration and New Testament symbolism of the ripening harvest of the earth clearly implies a “germination” of the gospel at Pentecost and a full “ripening” of the gospel before Christ will come to “reap” the harvest of the earth (Joel 2:23; 3:12, 13; Rev. 14:14-16). It is very significant that Peter alludes to the early and the latter rain in two different speeches—the early rain in Acts 2:17 and the latter rain in Acts 3:19, 20.

What will ripen the harvest of the earth? What ripens the harvest of Revelation 14:14-19 is the gospel message proclaimed with the “loud voice” of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. The loud voice of the angel of Revelation 18:1 and the worldwide illumination of the earth by the glory of the same angel is clearly an

As body parts are different with different functions, so members of the church will have different gifts.

intensification of this gospel proclamation—the message of Christ’s saving righteousness: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith” (Eph. 2:8, NIV).³

In practice it will mean that all who have been saved by grace, through faith, will participate in spreading the gospel by word and example: let him (or her) who hears (the gracious invitation of the Spirit and the bride) say: “Come!” (Rev. 22:17). As Paul testified in his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders: “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

The “harvest” of souls can ripen only for the “sickle” of the Second Coming, as people are exposed to “an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God.”⁴ “If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit.”⁵ In fact, it is through the right exercise of the spiritual gifts of each church member that the church would be made to stand “blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:8).

REACT

1. What is the relationship between the “fruit” and the “gifts of the Spirit”?
2. Is reproducing the image of Christ “perfectly” a prerequisite for personal salvation or the salvation of others in evangelistic outreach?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

2. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612; *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 113; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 633.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 19; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 92.

4. *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 52.

5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

By Johan A. Japp, an associate professor of religion at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

Saving Others, Not Self

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Mark 4:26-29

The symbolism of the harvest of the earth in Ellen White's writings must be interpreted with circumspection. If misunderstood, especially in conjunction with the early and latter rain of the Spirit, one could very easily be drawn into the "tar pit" of legalism of an eschatological kind.

Take, for example, the statement in which she says ripening of the grain represents completion of the work of God's grace in the soul.¹ This work is, in fact, perfecting the moral image of God in man. One can compile an impressive list of statements that would seem to indicate that the ripening of the earth's harvest takes place *only and for the first time* when the latter rain brings forth the perfect moral image of God in the lives of His end-time followers. And when this happens, the church is ready for translation at the Second Coming.

But the second and third chapters of *Christ's Object Lessons* portray a more balanced scenario. The ripening of the "grain" of Christ's image in the soul in these

Ellen White states that righteousness by faith in Christ is "the third angel's message in verity."

chapters takes place throughout human history, the one ripening reproducing another ripening of "future harvests."²

This means that earth's harvest will be ripe only when the last grain of souls living in the end-time ripens. This would not be the first ripening of Christ's image in His people, but the glorious, worldwide *last* ripening of His character in the lives of His people (see Mark 4:26-29).

Ellen White states that righteousness by faith in Christ is "the third angel's message in verity."³ The glory of God that will illuminate the earth in Revelation 18:1 is the saving righteousness of Jesus Christ, radiating through the lives of God's saints just before His Second Coming.⁴

So the metaphors of the early and the latter rain operate on a personal and on a church-historical level. On the level of Christianity it designates the beginning and completion of the gospel commission; on the personal level, the beginning and completion of the spiritual life of the soul.

1. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

3. *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

4. *Review and Herald*, Nov. 29, 1892.

By Johan A. Japp, an associate professor of religion at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

The Unity That Is Love

EVIDENCE

1 Cor. 12:31

We live in a society of doublespeak. We hear of “unity in diversity” as world leaders seek to enforce peace by hostile means. They temporarily unite to achieve common goals but campaign against each other. We know that attempts to usher in a man-made millennium of peace are futile.

In such a world of chaos the church is called by Jesus to fulfill its gospel commission. Evidently the church’s message has to compete with the world’s ideologies. Christians have to give evidence that the unity they maintain is eternal, that there is consistency between their corporate message and their individual lifestyle. However, this they cannot achieve by their own efforts alone. Let us be thankful for the assurance of the power and authority of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

First Corinthians 12 highlights the relationship between employment of spiritual gifts in the church and unity among its members. It makes an appeal that all be clear on this distinction (verse 1). Readers are reminded that, though once

Leaders temporarily unite to achieve common goals, but campaign against each other.

heathen, they are now united in the Spirit by whom one confesses that Jesus is Lord (verses 2, 3). Although there are diverse spiritual gifts and different means of applying them, each is energized by the Spirit (verses 4-6) and each may be of benefit to all (verse 7). Specific examples of these gifts are shown (verses 8-10), and they are individually distributed according to the Spirit’s will (verse 11).

The church is described as the united body of believers in Christ (verses 13, 27), with the human body consisting of many parts (verses 12, 14, 19, 20). God Himself so designed the body (both physical and spiritual) that all members could function in sympathy with one another (18, 24-26).

The conclusion gives a short hierarchy of offices and roles by which members can exercise their individual spiritual gifts for the well-being of the church (verses 28-30). The final appeal is that all should eagerly desire to serve by the best gifts (verse 31). Although someday our gifts will be of none effect (13:8-10), always, love is the “more excellent way” that “never fails” (verse 31, 13:8, NKJV)! It is such a revelation of God’s character that our world needs.

REACT

How can we resolve the apparent contradiction of the apostle Paul in saying on the one hand that “the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (12:11), while on the other hand he counsels that we should “earnestly desire the best gifts” (verse 31)?

By Americo Jorge Ramos, a third-year theology student at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

Take a Break!

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ps. 46:10

I will certainly not blame anyone if he is wondering how this text fits into the theme for this week's study. Our study deals with the use of spiritual gifts for the salvation of souls, while Psalm 46:10 seems to imply that we should in fact be silent. Second, the text appears to contain a question of how God's name can ever be exalted if we are still.

Gaining clarity from the Hebrew Bible goes a long way to help us out of our dilemma. A literal reading of verse 10 does not, in fact, imply that we should be still at all, but rather that we should "desist" or "give up." However strange it may sound, "desistance" and "giving up" should form an integral part of active membership for Christ.

This is nothing innovative; it formed a very important part of Jesus' ministry to His disciples. In the midst of their busy program, Jesus often took them aside

Jesus often took the disciples aside and bade them desist from their labors.

and bade them desist from their labors (Mark 6:31). Jesus never urged upon the disciples the necessity of ceaseless toil. He was always attentive to their fatigue, their discouragement, their sorrow and despair, and impressed upon their minds the necessity for them to find the rest they needed.

This rest or desistance to which Christ called them was not self-indulgent rest. It was not only a time when they would rest their weary bodies but a time of spiritual rejuvenation. It was a time when all voices were hushed and the disciples could hear God speaking to their hearts—as individuals.

"When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' . . . Here alone can true rest be found. And this is the effectual preparation for all who labor for God. Amid the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. The life will breathe out fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts."*

REACT

1. How does failure to make a daily commitment affect our witnessing?
2. How can we achieve an effective balance between desistance and earnest commitment to work for the salvation of souls?

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

By Antonio Pantalone, a theology student at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

Put Your Gift to Work

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:7

Consider the following statement: A Christian cannot be a Christian without being aware of his or her spiritual gift. If this statement is true, then it's got to be relevant. I believe it is because, in my opinion, spiritual gifts are absolutely indispensable to a successful Christian life. There is no such thing as a Christian without a gift. The Bible clearly teaches that every believer has at least one gift.

First, knowing your gift makes you not only a better Christian but a better citizen too, because it gives you a sense of responsibility.

Second, your gift makes you important in the church. Without your gift the church cannot function properly. Why would the Spirit give you a gift that is not important?

Third, it makes you accountable. All your life the church does everything for you. It dedicates you, teaches you, provides a place of worship, nurtures you,

Without your gift the church cannot function properly.

baptizes you, perhaps even marries you, and will eventually bury you; but what do you do for the church? That's where spiritual gifts come in.

Fourth, it makes a big difference whether you're exercising your gift or not. How can the Holy Spirit be fully poured out if your gift isn't doing its job?

One of the most thrilling experiences for a Christian is the discovery of his or her spiritual gift and its dedication to God. Every Christian has at least one. Many are still buried in the ground like that described in the parable of Matthew 25, but they can be discovered and placed in the hands of the Master.

Recently the Lord worked in a mighty way with someone I know. That person was so impressed that she wished to serve God in a better way. She didn't know what her spiritual gift was. I thought she might have the gift of teaching and took her with me to my Bible students, hoping to train her to give studies herself. She enjoyed it and feels that she has made a great discovery. That's exciting!

Also recently the Lord worked in an even more miraculous way with someone I know. That person was very impressed, but not enough to do something for the Lord. She still doesn't know what her spiritual gift is, and she's not going to know unless she really wants to. That's not exciting.

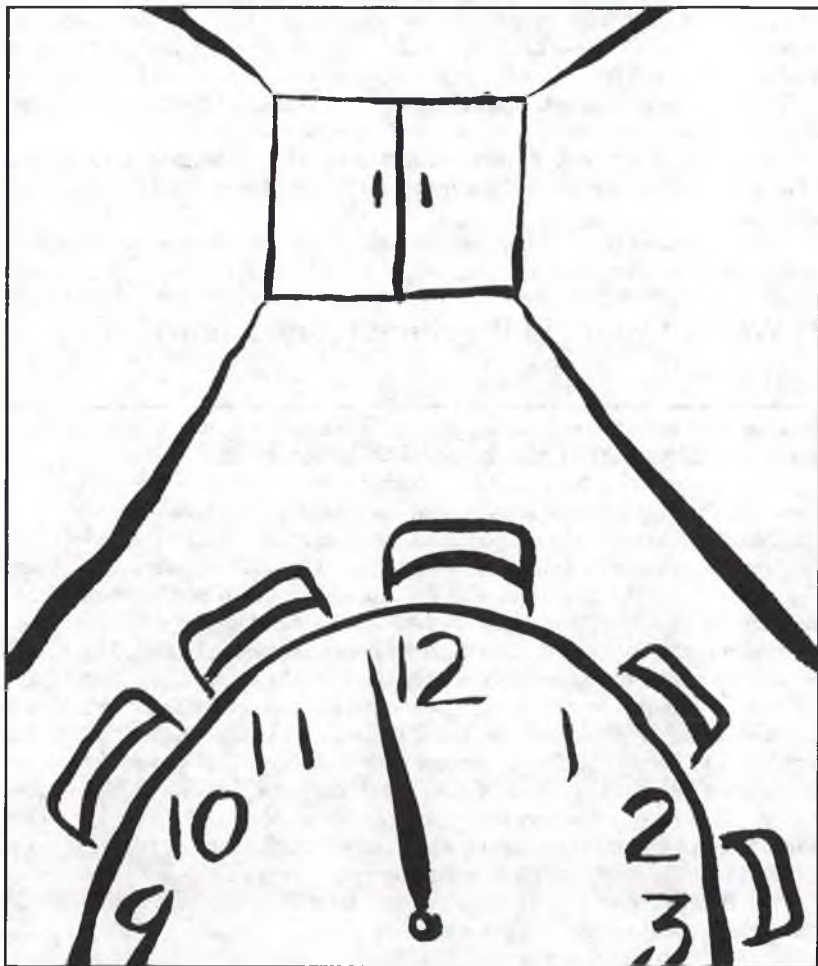
You don't need to lead an unsuccessful, unfulfilled, incomplete life. Things can change. Get your gift and get it working!

REACT

Which gift, or gifts, do you think you have?

By Michel van den Bergh, an M.A. student in religion at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

BORED-ROOM EVANGELISM



“Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent” (Rev. 2:5, RSV).

A Standing Committee

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 3:22

Phil A. Delphia slowly raised his hand as he quietly caught the attention of everyone. He was a gentle giant with a hulking body that engulfed people when he lovingly hugged them. Everyone loved Phil. He could be counted on, and that is why he had been asked to chair this meeting of the personal-ministries committee.

"I'd like to call this meeting to order," Phil gently intoned. "The pastor has asked us to brainstorm concerning the ways in which we can witness to our surrounding community. Who would like to begin?"

There was a rustle of taffeta as Effie Sus began her high-pitched sermon that set the tone of every committee in which she served. "The problem is . . . well, these people we want to reach for Christ, they just don't want to be reached! Now, heaven knows we've tried. I've worked my fingers to the bone, knocking on doors and passing out literature. Being a Christian is so-o-o-o-o hard sometimes. It used to seem so fun."

Ty Ray Thira, a lifelong Christian, joined in carefully. "Well, I like witnessing, I just don't understand why we always feel that we have to change people." At

**“Being a Christian is so-o-o-o-o hard sometimes.
It used to seem so fun.”**

that point everyone became aware that Mrs. Sardis was snoring. Phil reached over and awakened her with a gentle nudge.

"Oh, I like Ty's idea," she blustered. "I think we should do what she said."

S. Merna began to cry quietly. "Oh, if only I knew what to do," she whispered through her tears. "I would love to help if only I could get someone to help me through the trials I'm facing," she suddenly stated with conviction. "I can't help anyone unless I'm in good enough shape to do it!"

"It's OK, honey," cooed Ms. Perkymum. "I've been there. I know how you feel. Whatever you have to do to get through it is OK. God won't hold it against you."

Finally Leo D. Cia spoke up. "I think this witnessing thing is a good thing if it's your thing, and I think you know what I mean when I say that I'm in support of however this committee intends to pay out its decision because it's not bad although there are a lot of pitfalls we have to watch for. Well, I guess I'm saying that I'd support the program financially because I can do that. Just don't expect me to do anything else that is not my spiritual gift."

Everyone sighed in relief. Leo was loaded.

"Well," Phil smiled. "I think that we should make this a standing committee until we solve the problem of how to witness to others."

And it was.

By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of the Loma Linda University Church and chaplain at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Glued to the Pew?

LOGOS

Rev. 2:1–3:22

“You get what you pay for.”

“The more you pay, the more it’s worth to you.”

These two “wise sayings” are really folklore that Americans mostly understand and the rest of the world wonders about. What do they have to do with witnessing through the ages?

Consider this: in a highly competitive, industrialized, free-market society, the goal for most people is to succeed by making, thinking, doing something better than anyone else. We call it enterprise.

In politics we carry over the same expectations. As never before, we expect our country’s president to know something about everything. As I write this, we are winding down to the elections of 1992. The debates among the presidential candidates have been a forum for “wise sayings” on just about every ill this country faces; they are heavily laced with statistics, facts, and figures that the candidates have memorized. We expect our candidates to know a lot about many things.

In the church we can’t help viewing our work in the same light as our businesses, our politics, and our lives. We expect the paid clergy to know something about every problem any of us might face. We look to the “CEO” of the church to administer and counsel and preach and especially witness. But where does that leave the rest of us? We pay the salary of the expert.

Ephesians 4 has another plan in mind when it says the work of the church is to be a function of every person’s gift. And if the clergy have a role in this church, it is to facilitate that church work. What does this mean?

The family gives us a good model of understanding. Parents watch their children growing up. They see certain gifts and personality traits emerge. These are encouraged with piano lessons or skating lessons or a season ticket to the symphony or whatever.

In the same way a pastor might watch his or her church members exhibit gifts. Then the pastor helps them develop those gifts and lead the church with those gifts. It is the biblical plan.

President John F. Kennedy captured a nation’s imagination when he asked us to think of what we, as ordinary citizens, could do for our country, rather than vice versa. The church needs to think in the same way about its task.

If we get what we pay for and we are paying for a few clergy to do all the work of the church, we are not getting our money’s worth. Furthermore, if we don’t invest much in our church, it will not be worth much to us!

Revelation 2 and 3 tell us that churches go through cycles. Sometimes they do well in reaching out to the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. At other times they fail miserably. What has been the key to effective witnessing? It seems to be the attitude and involvement of the people of the pews. When they are glued to the pews, the church is in trouble. When they leap from the pews for service, ministry, and leadership, things begin to happen.

Let’s look more closely at two sections of Scripture from Revelation 3. Verses 8, 9 speak of the Philadelphian saints as people who are faithful. Then they refer to

those who say certain things but show they lie by their actions. The commendation of the saints is that they simply act on their beliefs. They have chosen to follow Jesus, and they show that belief by seeking others to help them also to believe. As one folk saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words."

In Revelation 3:16, 17 God chides the church for its lukewarm behavior, telling the saints of Laodicea that they say one thing but act another way. Again, the importance of living the life as members of the body of believers is stressed. We

We look to the "CEO" of the church to administer and counsel and preach and especially witness.

must all own the business of the church. We must all vote for Jesus Christ by following Him. We must all be witnesses for Him.

It is time we get what we are paying for. And it is time we realized we are paying ourselves.

REACT

1. How can a Christian get what he or she is paying for as a member of the church?
2. What is the proper role of the paid clergy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
3. On what should a person base his or her decision to become a member of the paid clergy?

By Charles Liu, pastor for campus ministries at Campus Hill Church and campus chaplain at Loma Linda University.

The Responsibility of Witness

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Acts 2:17, 21

“Every member of the church who is united to Christ has sacred responsibilities resting upon him, and is bound by all the holy motives which the gospel recognizes are pure and sacred, to regard the salvation of souls as the highest interest entrusted to mortals, and thus become a colaborer with God to rescue souls from the snare of Satan, and so influence, and educate, and train these souls that they shall be built up in truth and righteousness; for God will require this work of every individual who has accepted salvation. The devoted church member should accomplish much by holy living; by a painstaking discharge of every duty; by fervent prayer; by faithful warnings, especially by affectionate intercourse for the help and instruction of these souls for whom Christ has given His life, who are committed to the charge of the church, which charge they cannot neglect without imperiling their own souls and being disloyal to our crucified Redeemer.

“What a record many will meet in the day of Judgment because of their neglect of the very work which the Lord has left for them as His hired servants to do! It is

“Every member of the church who is united to Christ has sacred responsibilities resting upon him.”

his work, and none who neglect it can make an atonement for their delinquencies which have endangered souls by their passing by on the other side, while absorbing the mind and God-given abilities in pleasing occupation, retiring within themselves because it is their pleasure so to do, or absorbing the mind in business or worldly pursuits, and crowding upon their time and accumulated amount of little unimportant things, giving no time to God’s work.

“‘We are laborers together with God.’ But who are laborers together with God? Those who are doing Christ’s work. Those who are wearing Christ’s yoke and lifting Christ’s burdens; who employ their entrusted talents in active service, studying, devising, planning, with much prayer and earnest faith, ways and means to open the truth to any and every soul—those that are near, and those that are brought within the sphere of their influence—constantly studying how to do the very highest service for the Master.”*

* *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 31, 1887.

By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of the Loma Linda University Church and chaplain at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

God ♥ Laodicea

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Rev. 3:14-22; Heb. 12:5, 6

Theologians have come to interpret the book of Revelation, using at least four methods of interpretation. Nearly all who would make an attempt to assign meaning to the messages to the churches could be called a preterist, futurist, idealist, or historicist. Early Adventist leaders found the historicist perspective to be the best approach, since it allowed for both a historical and prophetic element.

The most notable variation of this perspective was developed by Uriah Smith, who suggested that Revelation 2:1–3:22 was to be best understood as a forward-looking description of the entire Christian era. Even though Smith seemed most interested in the present and future in his attempt to make sense of this very important passage of Scripture, he was aware, too, that the context pointed clearly to seven literal churches.

While Smith was emphasizing that the seven churches represented seven successive periods, Ellen White spoke often of the messages applying situationally. Even so, as Adventists we have historically seen ourselves as represented by the

When an earthquake leveled Laodicea in A.D. 60, its citizens refused Roman help.

Laodicean church. The Laodicean message seems very one-sided—having very little good to say about the historical or its prophetic counterpart.

Laodicea of old was a wealthy city. When an earthquake leveled the town in A.D. 60, its citizens, unlike those of other affected cities, refused Roman help and rebuilt their city from their own resources.*

Though it may seem easy to find parallels temporally and spiritually in today's church, might it be just as important to hear both the positive and negative aspects of the previous six messages and apply these also to life in the church? And is it not significant that along with the strongest rebuke (Rev. 3:14–18) we find the warmest promise, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20, NIV).

"Those whom I love," says Jesus, are the ones I rebuke, echoing the sentiment of Hebrews 12:5, 6, not to "lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

REACT

If the church today is really most like the church of Laodicea, what can we do about it in practical, everyday terms?

* *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, p. 639.

By Timothy Grigsby, a sophomore medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The Three Rs of Revelation 2:5

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 2:5

Whenever God has intervened in the history of humanity, He has done so within the framework of past history. He is a God whose interest is in enticing us to spend an eternity with Him. Not a smoldering reed will He quench; not a sincere desire will He discard.* Nothing can separate us from the love that God has for us (Rom. 8:35). God never violates our freedom to choose. And herein lies the Divine predicament—*sin*. This and this alone can and will separate us from God, for *sin* by its very nature is based on the freedom of choice.

In Revelation 2:5 the three Rs—remember, repent, remove, which tie together the books of the Bible—are woven together in a complex yet simple text.

The song of Moses starts with a call to remembrance. “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; . . . he kept him as the apple of his eye. . . . So the Lord alone did lead him” (Deut. 32:10-12). He finds us, He sustains us, He builds a past history with us, and never once does He violate our freedom

Our capacity to hurt is in direct proportion to our capacity to love.

to choose. God interacts with us within this framework of remembrance. If we do not have a past history with God, we can have neither a present nor a future history with Him.

In the enacted parable of Hosea we find our second verb, *repent*. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1). We often think of repentance as turning toward God—the prodigal son returning home. How often we forget the Father searching the horizon for a glimpse of His beloved wandering son. This is the duality of biblical repentance.

Our capacity to hurt is in direct proportion to our capacity to love. Since God is a perfect God and loves us each perfectly, will He not hurt the most if we are not in heaven with Him? Yes, God will wipe away our tears. But could it be that perchance I might be able to wipe away His tears? Repentance is a two-way street!

If you do not *remember*, if you do not *repent*, I will *remove* you. This feels almost contradictory to God’s nature. But we do find a precedent in the cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15). Although God is fair, God’s anger for the sin causes Him to recoil from our sins. God does not want to cast us from His sight; He wants to cast our *sins* from His sight (Isa. 38:17). Oh, how we should guard our freedom to choose!

* *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 206.

By Sam P. Thomas, who is a senior at the School of Dentistry at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Runners With a Message

OPINION

Key Text: 2 Sam. 18:19-32

Sitting in a religion class one beautiful fall morning, we were asked the question of how we as prospective doctors would witness to our patients. I wrestled with the question for days until I reflected on the scenarios of how people witnessed in Bible times.

As I read their accounts, I began to see the underlying principles of effective witnessing. In every case the people knew Jesus personally; they had been touched by Him. They were eager to share their experience with others. Knowing Jesus seemed to be the only prerequisite to sharing His love. Abraham knew Him; he stepped out to follow his bidding and witnessed of Jesus to nations. Joseph knew Him and lived in His presence as a slave, a prisoner, and a ruler. The people who knew Joseph knew whom he worshiped. In a flash of dazzling blindness Paul met Christ at the gate of Damascus, and his eyes were open. He saw whom he had persecuted and was thereafter willing to be persecuted for His name's sake. Unlike Ahimaaz, a fast runner without a message, Abraham, Joseph, and Paul knew what

Abraham, Joseph, and Paul knew what they were about.

they were about (2 Sam. 18:19-32). Like Ahimaaz we too may be eager to witness, but if we don't know the One about whom we are witnessing, we will be runners without a message.

God does not require that we have vast storehouses of information about Him and the Bible. All He really wants is our willingness to know Him and be used by Him. As we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He will teach us more of God, and if we allow God to share His love to others through us, He can use us in many ways. Witnessing is not made up of occasional events but is an ongoing process that begins the moment we accept Christ. Christ desires to work through each one of us to share His love to all the world.

REACT

1. How do nonclergy professionals witness?
2. Can you still witness if you don't know Jesus, and if so, to what do you witness? Explain your answer.

By Lynnetta Skoretz, a sophomore medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

QUESTIONING GOD'S JUDGMENT



“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6).

Questions and Wonderings

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 14:6

There was a time when it was commonly stated that to become a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one had to accept the third angel's message. What messages are you accepting? Do we need to be afraid of God as suggested by the first angel's message? What is the "everlasting gospel"? What "good news" do we have to share that was true even before there was a single sinner in the entire universe? To be "everlasting," it had to be good news before sin entered the universe!

In the second angel's message, are we clear about who "great Babylon" is? What is "the wine of her impure passion" (verse 8, RSV)? Are we sure that we are not still a part of it?

Does God become upset by those who worship the beast and its image? Does God force them to drink "the wine of his fury, which he has poured at full strength

How can Seventh-day Adventists claim that they do not believe in the immortality of the soul?

into the cup of his anger"? Does God get pleasure from the fact that "all who do this will be tormented in fire and sulfur before the holy angels and the Lamb"?

How can Seventh-day Adventists claim that they do not believe in the immortality of the soul and still say they accept the message that says, "The smoke of the fire that torments them goes up forever and ever"?

Is it OK for us to quote just the parts of these messages that we can explain easily as fitting our understanding of coming events? Or would it be best to let the Bible serve as its own interpreter? Doesn't the Bible give us examples to show that "forever" doesn't have to be a long time (Jude 7; Exodus 21:6)? Does God express His wrath by zapping sinners, or does He just let them reap the natural consequences of their sin? Isn't God's wrath explained in Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28, where God "gives people over" to the results of their own behavior? Didn't Christ Himself experience this wrath when He was "given over" (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; 4:25)? Did Jesus on the cross as He was suffering under God's wrath say, "My God, My God, why are you torturing Me?" Or did He say, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). Do we understand that God's very presence is to the wicked a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29; Dan. 7:9, 10; Isa. 33:14-16; Exod. 24:17; Ezek. 1:27, 28; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 265)?

By Ken Hart, physician, and Dee Hart, professor of nursing and student in public health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Three Angels, One Message

LOGOS

Rev. 14

For Seventh-day Adventists in the 1990s who are interested in theology, there is much to discuss. Everything—from behavioral doctrines to the nature of Christ to the correct view of the atonement—is on the line. What do you believe?

The three angels' messages are a keystone of Adventist theology. The phrase itself is used by every branch of theology in Adventism to underscore the correctness of a particular view on beliefs in the church. For instance, when Adventist scholars today discuss the doctrine of atonement, they can view it from that known as the "moral influence theory," that is, a belief that Jesus came to save us by setting an example by which we can be empowered.

Or they can side with those who believe in what is called the "substitutionary atonement" view, that Jesus died as a substitute for me, so I can live as He makes provision for me to live.

Some might even take a more traditional view of atonement that speaks about picking ourselves up by the bootstraps and calling upon a God who helps those who help themselves, though I doubt too many still believe the extreme form of this view. This one might be called a legalistic view of the atonement.

And finally, there are some who are so tired of the bickering among various proponents of certain views of the atonement that they throw up their hands and suggest we just try to get along as best we can by not talking about theology at all. These are often called the "a-theological" people. I am sympathetic to this view, especially among young people who are disgusted by the theological fighting of their elders."

But if we believe passionately about our God and if He invites us to participate actively in learning about Him and growing with Him, we must eventually examine and refine our beliefs, even in the furnace of discussion.

So, with multiple views on theology, various beliefs about Adventism, and three angels in Revelation 14, how is a person to find the single gospel message that saves her or him? Is there a single message from three angels?

I'm sure some Adventist Bibles have lines drawn in them—as mine does—between verses 7 and 8 and between verses 8 and 9. This separates the three angels who bring messages to last-day people into three distinct messages. These messages have traditionally been viewed as a parallel to certain times in the Adventist Church's history. But if we take away the lines, what is the core message?

Look at the key words in each message: eternal gospel, fallen Babylon, worship of the beast, mark on the forehead. Is there a common theme running through these words? As I look at the messages reduced to these few words, I think of some verses from Paul's writing to the Romans: "All have sinned" (3:23). This sounds much like the "fallen message" of Revelation 14. But in the context of the book of Romans, we find the antidote for this poison of sin. From chapter 1, Paul speaks of the gospel as the key to escaping the sin disease. And this same word *gospel* is what begins the message of Revelation 14 by three angels.

Finally the same apostle writes about how this gospel treats and cures the disease of sin, this fallen condition we are naturally in (1 Corinthians 15). Paul

tells us we must “die daily,” then continues by alluding to how his life has included fighting “wild beasts”—a very interesting word in light of Revelation 14’s reference to a “mark of a beast”—for the sake of standing firm for Jesus and the gospel.

What all of this means to us is that when we read Revelation 14, we must be willing to look at the whole message from the three angels. I believe it is a simple message that parallels the gospel message of Romans. All have sinned and are condemned to death by their inherited condition of turning from God. All will die as a result of this condition. By the death of Jesus on the cross—the gospel—all

We must eventually examine and refine our beliefs, even in the furnace of discussion.

can claim eternal life simply by asking for it. The choice is ours. That is the message of Revelation 14. It is the message of falling, grace, and salvation as described in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gospel in Revelation 14.

REACT

1. How have the three angels’ messages made a difference in my life?
2. What are the practical aspects of the three angels’ messages?
3. How does a Christian cope with diversity in interpretation of such crucial issues as the three angels’ messages?

* For an interesting discussion of the doctrine of the atonement and how it may define Adventist theology, see Kenneth Sample’s article, “The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventism” in *Christianity Today*, Feb. 5, 1990.

By Charles Liu, pastor for campus ministries at Campus Hill Church and campus chaplain at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Do You Believe It?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 14:9-11

“We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry. . . . Events are changing to bring about the day of God, which hasteth greatly. Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains.”¹ We are in the *last days*. How many times have you heard that? Do you believe it? Saddam Hussein . . . the Gulf War . . . Rodney King and the Los Angeles riots . . . the Berlin Wall . . . Pro-choice vs. Pro-life . . . AIDS. How can you not believe it?

“The theme of greatest importance is the third angel’s message, embracing the messages of the first and second angels.”²

As Jesus Christ “passed into the holiest, and stood before the ark containing the law of God, He sent another mighty angel with a third message to the world. . . .

We are in the last days. How many times have you heard that? Do you believe it?

He proclaimed a fearful warning, with the most terrible threatening ever borne to man. This message was designed to put the children of God upon their guard, by showing them the hour of temptation and anguish that was before them. Said the angel, ‘They will be brought into close combat with the beast and his image. Their only hope of eternal life is to remain steadfast. Although their lives are at stake, they must hold fast the truth. . . . Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ ”³

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not.”⁴

REACT

1. How important is the Sabbath to me?
2. What does it mean to keep the fourth commandment?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 14.

2. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 29.

3. *Early Writings*, p. 254.

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

By Eleanor C. Vince Cruz, a fourth-year nursing student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The Joyful Warning

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 14:6

The three angels' messages are the heart of Revelation and of Adventism. Revelation was written in a style called a Chiasm, in which two sides reflect each other. In Revelation we find the three angels on one side and three beasts on the other.

The first beast is a red dragon, representing the devil's direct demon activity. This also represents the first of Satan's three lies about God. This first lie says that God is a cruel tyrant who worked His way to perfection and, to keep us from working our way to perfection (and thus become gods too), imposed upon us the law of self-sacrificing love and righteousness by faith.

God's hour of judgment is examining Satan's lies and our response to them. Judgment answers the question Is God who He claims to be? This first lie attacks

Judgment answers the question, Is God who He claims to be?

God the Father, the king of the universe. (By the way, the sign of worshiping God as the Creator is keeping the seventh day holy.)

The second beast is any organized group that Satan uses throughout history: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, papacy, deadly wound with 10 horns (no world ruler), and the world uniting around Satan claiming to be Christ.* This beast stands for Satan's second lie, that God's justice prevents Him from being merciful. This lie attacks Jesus, who died to make salvation possible for us. To this beast comes the message that Babylon has fallen: this religious system based on works. Today a lot of religions worship the word *Jesus* but don't know the Person.

The third beast, in its fullest sense, represents individuals who follow the second beast; but it can be applied to a system based on the individual, which started out Christlike but is in the process of becoming like Satan. This is based on Satan's third lie, that God's mercy destroys justice, that Christ's death does away with the law. This attacks the Holy Spirit, who writes God's law on our hearts.

The solemn warning of the third angel is given in response to this lie. In Revelation we find the three lies of Satan fully answered in the three angels' messages. The issue is the character of God. Is He God, or are we god? Does He love us enough to forgive us, and can He change us into loving and lovable people?

The message of the law, the message of the cross, and the message of the three angels is the good news that God is not who Satan says He is. This is the good news!

* George McCready Price, *Time of the End*, pp. 37, 38, 41; also Wood, *Last Day Events* tape recording.

By Kevin Hellerud Neidhardt, who is studying nursing at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Don't Be a Stranger

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 14:6, 7

“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev. 14:7, NIV).

Are we worshipping God and giving Him the glory in our everyday living? Are we making time to develop an intimate relationship with our Creator? Are the people around us one step closer to Christ because of our influence? If any of these questions is difficult to answer, then maybe it is time to reevaluate.

Truly understanding, realizing, and accepting the love Christ demonstrated on the cross is the power that leads us to sincere worship. How can we get this power? Let's start in the beginning. It has been written and said many times before: it is important to start the day with God. Maybe it's time to sacrifice that 15 to 30 minutes of sleep. You will find those precious moments with the Divine will

I can still recall being 6,000 miles away from the comforts of home and family.

probably be the sweetest experience of your day. If you haven't yet, try it tomorrow morning and find the difference.

How intimate are you with God? The only way a relationship can grow is by sharing thoughts and feelings and doing things with and for each other. Include Him in every aspect of your life. Nothing is ever unimportant to our Father when it concerns His children. There is so much God wants to share with us if we only take time to be still and listen. Learn more about His character by reading and rereading His love letters to you.

Do the people around us have a desire to know Christ more personally? It's time to share what God has done in our lives. It's time to tell how He has been faithful in spite of our unfaithfulness. It's time to proclaim how He has never left our side during our loneliest experience. It's time to tell about the sufficient grace God provides so abundantly to all those who just simply ask.

I can still recall being 6,000 miles away from the comforts of home and family. As I realized my own inadequacy as an inexperienced teacher in a foreign land, God never failed to supply the needed strength at the right times.

What joy it will be when we come face to face with our Creator, not as a stranger, but as a lifelong friend.

REACT

Compare and contrast your relationship with your closest friend or loved one to your relationship with God.

By Rowena E. Luna, a junior nursing student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Going Without Dessert?

OPINION

Key Text: Revelation 14

My mother gave me an ultimatum one time (actually many times, but this time in particular). She told me that I had to choose—in the next 10 seconds—if I was going to finish my dinner or go without dessert. All right, so I had 10 seconds to think about it, or 15 if I really pushed it. Would I rather eat all of my lima beans and get dessert and then possibly throw up, or would I rather just live without dessert this one time? As you can probably guess, like most kids, I finished my meal and had my dessert and couldn't have cared less whether I threw up or not, but I waited until my mother said "10" to let her in on my decision.

God has given us an ultimatum: to choose life or death. Some believers look at it as a choice between Christ and Satan; although this is correct, it goes even deeper than that. The choice, broken down into the simplest terms, is one between life and death.

Would I rather eat all of my lima beans and get dessert and then possibly throw up?

The difference between the illustration used and the idea of the lesson today is that you can't wait until the last minute or second to make your decision. The passage for this lesson reveals that God's purpose is to seal His believers *before* the Second Coming. Your decision has to be made before Christ comes the second time and takes us all home. He is going to put the end-time seal of life or death on you before He actually comes.

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:42). We don't know when Christ is going to draw the line for making a decision. The only thing that we can be sure of is that when Christ does come, it is too late!

Won't you make your decision today, if you haven't already? You can't wait until Christ says "10" to make your decision. It has to be made now. Don't procrastinate any longer. Live the life that Christ has chosen for you. Those who are saved are those who allow the Holy Spirit to draw them into union with Christ. This is done by understanding the rest of the lesson for this week about the three angels' messages.

REACT

1. Explain God's anger, as it is described in the third angel's message.
2. How do I personally feel about the judgment?
3. What are the positive aspects, if any, of the judgment?

By Greg Sewell, a master's student in speech pathology at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Next Quarter's Lessons

Jeremiah and Lamentations

If you have not yet received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 1994, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: A Place in His Plan

Scripture: Jeremiah 1, 2

Theme: God often calls young people to His service in times of crisis. Samuel and Josiah are two well-known Bible examples.

Lesson 2: A Prophet's Pilgrimage

Scripture: Jeremiah 11:18; 12:4; 14:7-9; 20:14-18; 36:1-32

Theme: Every believer is on a pilgrimage. Jeremiah was no exception. His struggles are similar to ours. Although everyone's experience is unique, the same God leads us all.

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**ADVENTIST TEENS
MUST HAVE**

A PLACE IN HIS PLAN

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

Listen

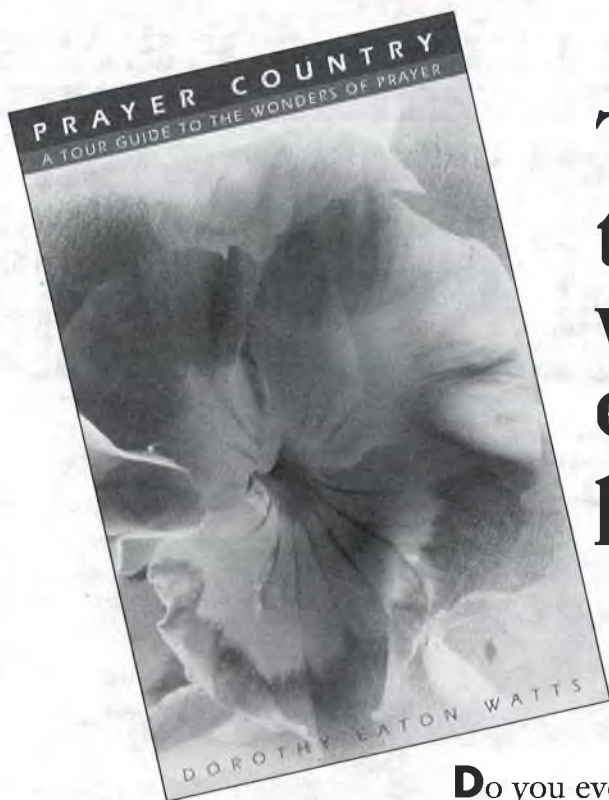
The image shows the cover of the 'Listen' magazine. At the top, it says 'CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES'. Below that, the word 'Listen' is written in a large, cursive, white font. The main image is a black and white photograph of a young girl with long hair, smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a light-colored top and a patterned jacket. The entire cover is framed by a thick black border.

Why not sponsor Listen magazine during the 1994 Annual Campaign? Call 1-800-765-6955 before May 31. Order forms are available at your church. Or you can contact your local ABC.



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Sins of the Father

by Marianne Morris

Sins of the Father is the shocking true story of a predatory child molester and the people in his family and church who wouldn't believe it.

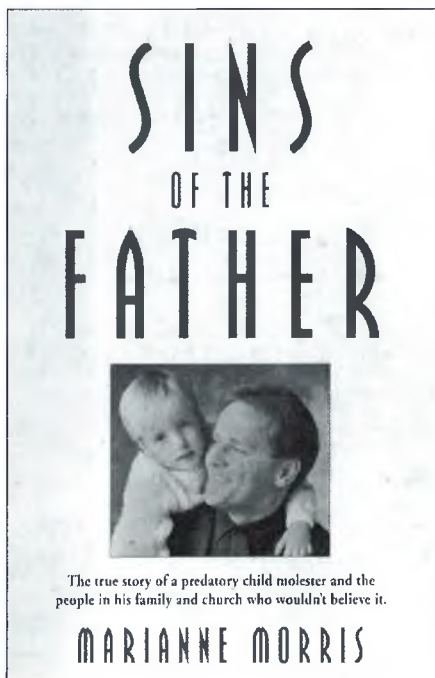
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Warning: explosive material!

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by Jack Sequeira

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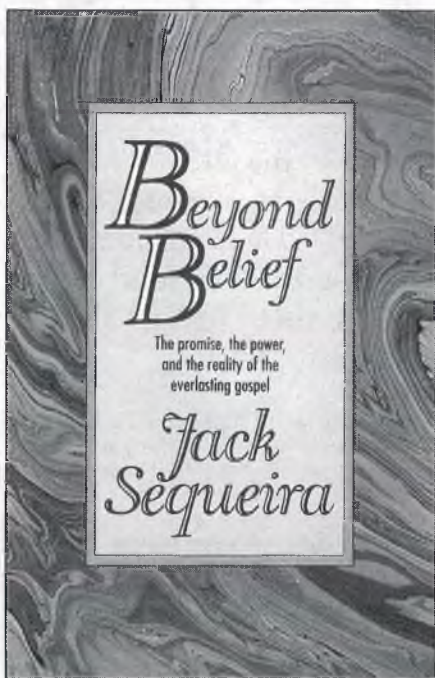
Cutting through the fog and theological mumbo jumbo that so often obscure it, *Beyond Belief* reveals the gospel in such magnificent clarity that it could help detonate Pentecost II.

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Present Truth in the Real World

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Jon Paulien

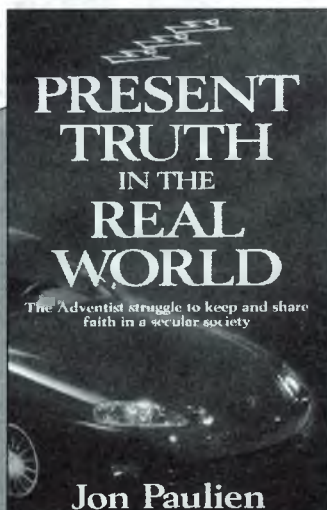
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Crucial issues facing Christians today

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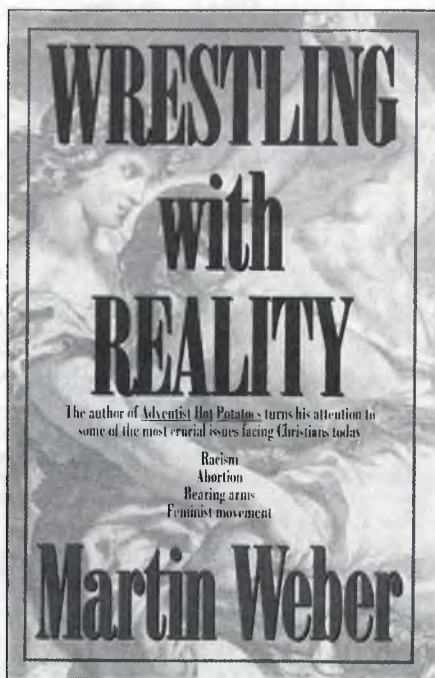
by Martin Weber

The election of a new president promised a turnaround in our nation's problems. But change isn't easy. Especially when the changes most needed are those of the heart and spirit.

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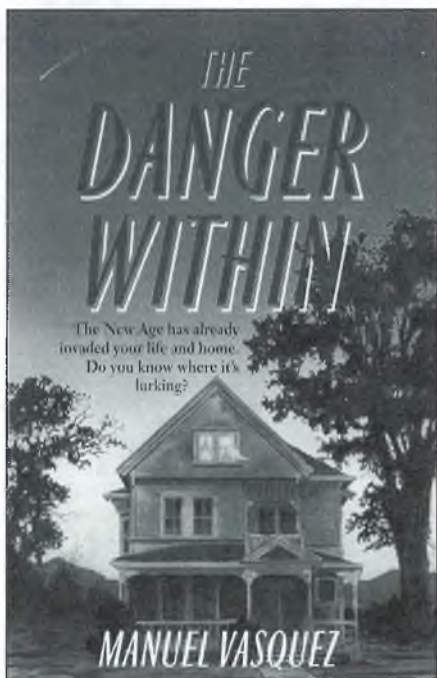
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by Manuel Vasquez

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Yes, you can change!

Never Good Enough

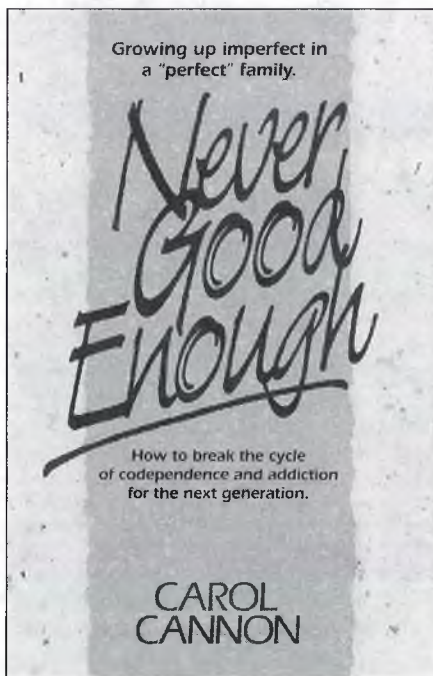
by Carol Cannon

Do you ever feel trapped by behavior patterns that are hurtful to yourself and to others? The continuous cycle of addiction and codependence can make a person feel as though they will never break free.

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Who cares what God says anymore?

God Says, but I Think

by Morris Venden

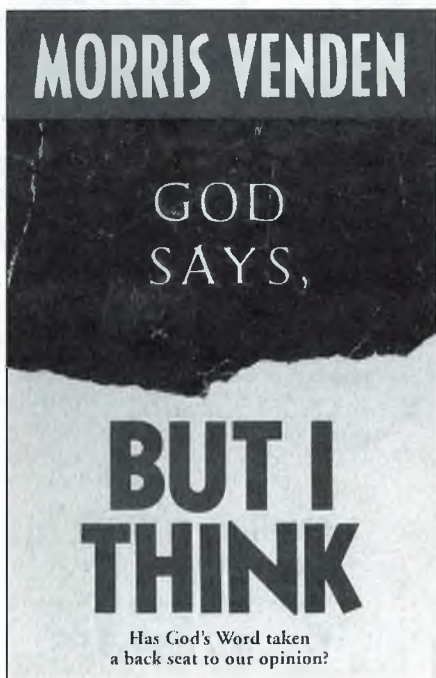
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