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ADVENTIST M.A.D. EDITION REVIEW

“SO I’M NOT
COMING TO CHURCH
ANYMORE,
WHO CARES?”



Won't You Come Home?

The welcome mat is out. It's for you. Come on home where you belong. We have missed you so much.

Every church, every Sabbath school class, every church member in the North American Division, is a part of the welcoming party. We have talked about and planned this for a long time—your Homecoming Day.

We won't need to ask you a lot of questions—like Where have you been? What have you been doing? Jesus knows—you have told Him all about it anyway—and that is sufficient.

However, we do need your input. Tell us how we can make you more comfortable, more secure in the fellowship. Tell us where we went wrong. Be frank with us. Tell us what we need to do to make our Christian fellowship more pleasant and inviting. You know, we get so busy with the Lord's work that sometimes we forget the little things that mean so much to our brothers and sisters.

Chain Reaction

If the fellowship becomes inviting for you, it will be for others, too. You see, your coming home will be the beginning of a great influx of returning brothers and sisters and *new* brothers and sisters. I can see it happening, and I am excited! Your renewed experience in Christ and your happy reunion with fellow believers will light up your countenance. You won't be able to keep it to yourself. And your friends and relatives will begin to ask you questions. Then you can tell them, "Come with us, and we will do you good" (Num. 10:29, RSV).

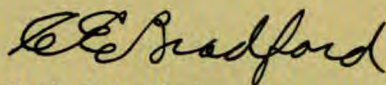
Friend, as long as you are not attending regularly, there is a missing ingredient for our churches—something lacking. It is you! If you want to put one big smile on the faces of your brothers and sisters, just show up—join in the singing, the prayers, the study of God's Word, and the fellowship—and you will see it happen.

Rejoicing in Heaven

Do you remember Jesus talking about the fold—the sheepfold? He said, "I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:16, 27, RSV). There is always great joy and rejoicing on the part of the shepherd when all of the sheep are in the fold.

What I am trying to say is this: Not only will your coming back warm the hearts of your brothers and sisters, but it will cause great joy in heaven. Oh, what joy it will bring!

Friend, we want you to come home, to come back. Not to dwell on the past, but to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus," and to help turn on the church in North America for Jesus Christ. We truly need your help. You can make it happen. Won't you come home?



Charles E. Bradford
President of the North American Division.

Homecoming

BY GORDON BIETZ

*His mind
flipped back
and forth
between
anticipation
and dread.*

It was the sound of his father's voice that convinced him. It wasn't that his dad had pleaded with him or anything like that. It was the catch that he thought he heard in his father's voice . . . or was he imagining it?

He didn't know for sure; maybe it was just a bad phone connection. Maybe the catch was in his own mind rather than in his father's voice.

He hadn't been home with his folks for a long time. He told his father that things were pretty busy and that he didn't see how he and the family could make it for this Thanksgiving.

Actually, he wasn't really all *that* busy. He did have some things planned, but nothing that couldn't be changed. He was going to a friend's house to work on his jeep and maybe do some four-wheeling.

The catch he thought he heard in his father's voice came back to him as he argued with himself. *Besides, it would be a full day's drive home and the weather wouldn't be all that great.* Thoughts continued to jumble through his mind as he made excuses to himself after hanging up the phone.

"Why don't I really want to go home?" he asked himself. He had established his own life, and well, to be perfectly honest, home, the home he came from, was tight, religious, a bit too religious for him. He didn't really think he would be comfortable there. They had grown some distance apart since he took a job and moved away. He knew his dad didn't approve of his job because it required him to work on Sabbath, and then there was his marriage to a "Philistine."

His folks meant well, and he knew they loved him, but he was uncomfortable there. His new style of life just didn't match the way he had grown up, and he could just hear the disappointment in their voices and see it in their eyes. Besides, they had his sister there. She was the good one who stayed close to home, and to their religion.

He was the black sheep of the family. He didn't do anything bad, he held down a good job, and his kids were good kids. Of course, there was no religion in the home, no grace before meals, no church attendance, and some occasional wine. But he was no prodigal son.

He was still gazing out into space by the phone when his wife snapped her fingers in front of his face. "Hello, anyone home?"

"Huh, Oh. I guess I was lost in thought."

"Who was that on the phone?"

"It was Dad."

"What did he want?"

"Oh, nothing really. He just wondered if we would be coming down for Thanksgiving."

"What did you say?"

"I told him that we were pretty busy and that you had plans. I said we probably wouldn't be able to make it this time."

His wife showed some relief and said nothing more as she passed into the kitchen. He followed her and said, "But you know, I think we should probably go."

"Why?" she retorted, and didn't wait for an answer. "You know how hard it is on me and the kids. I want to relax over vacation and not feel guilty. I always feel guilty there—I mean the diet, the prayers, the church attendance and all. I just feel like I don't measure up."

Unified Silence

"I know, but, well, Dad and Mom are getting older, and I just sensed on the phone that they would really love to have us come. And the kids haven't seen their grandparents for years."

The subject came up again a few days later when he spoke at the supper table. "I think we should all go to my folks' place for Thanksgiving this year."

His comment was met with a chorus of unified silence. It was as if a wet blanket had been thrown over the table.

"What's Thanksgiving with no turkey?" muttered the oldest. "Come on, son," Dad replied, "Thanksgiving is more than turkey. It's family, it's . . ." and his own voice faded away as he reflected on the fact that they had their own Thanksgiving traditions that didn't really match his parents'. He realized how far



The spark

of one

memory

ignited

another in

his mind.

he had grown apart from his parents.

The dinner ended with little further conversation on the subject, and he continued in his own thoughts. As he became older himself, he realized the importance of family. And as his parents were getting older, he realized how they were becoming more dependent on him. They had started writing more since Dad's retirement, and they were calling more since Dad had a minor heart attack. He didn't even go down to see them then. His mother said it was all right, and besides, his sister was right there.

It was that thought that really crystallized his decision—his Dad's minor heart attack. How would he feel if he was attending his father's funeral and he had never really made an effort to surmount the social walls that had grown up between them?

Mother Always Makes Extra

He decided the family would go, and he announced it to them that evening. His wife knew him well enough to realize that this was not a decision that could be changed with some cajoling. The children didn't really understand its finality until they tried to change his mind.

"Let's make it a surprise," he said, seeking to build some anticipation for something he knew they didn't want to do. "Their house is plenty big, and we can take some food. Mother always fixes more than enough food anyway, and it will be a big surprise. I'll take an extra day off. We can leave Wednesday morning and be there late Wednesday night."

A slight bit of excitement may even have developed among the family members as they thought of the trip. Planning proceeded; and on Wednesday morning, with car packed and pets provided for, they hit the road.

During the actual preparations for the trip there had not been much time to reflect on what they would do during the time at the grandparents' place, but now that they were on the road, Dad began to mull over the implications of the trip. Maybe it was all a mistake.

He drove as if in a trance. His mind flipped back and forth between anticipation and dread. He remembered the first time he was teased by a neighbor boy for not having turkey

for Thanksgiving. "Why, it isn't Thanksgiving without turkey," the boy had said.

His dreaming broke for a moment as he realized that he needed to talk to his kids about some things. "Now listen up," he said. "There are some things that you need to remember at Grandma and Grandpa's house. Don't use any swear words.

"And be careful what you watch on television. Remember that we are their guests. When we sit down to eat, wait until Grandpa prays before you begin to eat, and no comments about there being no turkey. Remember, too, that Saturday morning we will go to church with them."

There was no response after his little speech. He slipped back into his thoughts and wondered how this was going to work. He had not seen his parents for years, and hoped that they wouldn't have any big arguments like they did last time. He just wanted to be able to relax and remember the old days.

The trip was generally uneventful. There was the usual squabbling in the back seat, and each seemed a little tighter than usual. There wasn't as much talking as there normally was, and it seemed like he was often a thousand miles away.

"Careful!" screamed Mother as the car that had been on their bumper for three or four miles on the freeway found an opening on the right and raced around them. "If you are going to drive this slow, you should be in the right lane," she said. He did not like to be reprimanded about his driving and was going to make some quick rejoinder, but thought better of it. Slowly he drifted over into the right lane, to the relief of a line of traffic behind him.

Memories! It is amazing what they can do to you, he thought to himself. He hadn't even thought about what they would do on Saturday until he told the kids they would be going to church. He remembered Sabbath School classes and getting dressed up and big meals after church. And there was Ingathering.

Ingathering—he hadn't thought of that for years. He recalled many evenings walking along with a can in his mittened hand and a red nose from the cold. He remembered the hot chocolate afterward that burned his tongue,

Maybe this

was all a

mistake.

Maybe he

shouldn't be

going home.

and the singing. The image of old Mr. Green came back to him. He was the Ingatherer to beat all Ingatherers. *I wonder if they still do that?* he thought to himself.

Other things came to his mind as the spark from one memory ignited another. He thought of the big evangelistic series, when every night he went to the tent that was pitched out on Jewell Road. He rather enjoyed going because he met all his friends there.

They would sit on the back row and talk as much as they could without being caught by the ever-vigilant deacons who were roaming the aisles. Their Bible teacher would give them quizzes on the materials that the evangelists presented, so they did have to listen some. When the evangelist made a call, they would all get very quiet. It was at one of those meetings that he went down to the front. He really meant it at the time. The evangelist had told a tear-jerking story about how a little girl had died after she had given her heart to the Lord. He was baptized shortly after that with a bunch of his other friends.

Why Didn't I Stay?

He figured his baptism meant as much to him as baptism did to any other 10-year-old boy. *Why do you suppose*, he thought to himself, *I did not stay around like my sister and stay in the church? Why am I a backslider?*

Backslider—that word also brought up memories of discussions in his family when he was young. They would talk about relatives that were “divorced” and “backsliders.” And now he was one. He just hoped that he wouldn't feel too uncomfortable there in the church, seeing all those old friends of the family. He was sure that people would lean over in church and whisper to each other: “That's Bill's older son. He's the one that isn't in the church anymore.”

Maybe this was all a mistake. Maybe he shouldn't be going back at all. Maybe the minister would make a call and he would make some emotional decision based on the rush of memories that he would be sorry about later.

A cold sweat broke out on his neck and back as he reflected on what he might be getting himself into. His wife noticed and queried, “What's the matter?”

“Nothing,” he said as they pulled up at a rest stop. *Going home again isn't so easy*, he thought as he stepped out of the car to get some fresh air.

It had been 9 or 10 years since he had been in the town. And the closer he got to the city, the more things he began to recognize. There was the place where they had gone camping with the Pathfinders and he had broken his arm. He remembered Mr. Sanchez, the Pathfinder leader, carrying him back to the car. They passed the park where they spent so many Sabbath afternoons.

Memories flooded his mind as he drove into the town. He passed through a new section of town that had all been built up since he left. *I guess there is life in this old place*, he thought to himself.

As they neared his folks' house his heart began to beat faster, and he began to worry about the surprise nature of this visit.

Maybe he should have called and told them that he was coming.

Maybe it would be too hard on his dad's heart.

Maybe they had invited others to be in the house and there wouldn't be room for them.

Maybe the catch in Dad's voice was simply his imagination and his dad was not all that interested in his backslidden son coming home for Thanksgiving.

Maybe his dad was as uncomfortable as he was.

Maybe . . . maybe, and there was no more time for maybes as he turned the corner onto the old familiar street and saw the house he grew up in. He drove up the driveway, and there was Grandpa, standing there on the porch as if he was looking for them. They piled out of the car, and his dad threw his arms around him and said, “Welcome home, son.” □



Gordon Bietz is pastor of the Collegedale Church, Collegedale, Tennessee.

The Tenderness of Christ

BY HENRY WRIGHT

From time immemorial, love tales have dotted the pages of history: “boy meets girl,” “rich man gives up all for poor,” “sighted brother gives his eyes so that little brother can have a turn at seeing.” Whatever kind of love story moves your soul, there is none that can compare with the love of God in Christ—truly the greatest love story ever told. It is a story that takes the word *love*, turns it upside down, and pours out all its deep meaning before our wondering eyes. In the immortal words of the gospel: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Reflections
on God’s
amazing
kindness

This idea moves us because somewhere in the hope chest of our thoughts we want to be loved (and indeed, we want to learn to love) in this magnificent way. In the biblical love story, God, the lover of our souls, loved us from the start.

Go with me to the Garden of Eden and hear the Lord God searching for the human race. Covered with fig leaves, Adam and Eve hid from Him. What they did not understand was the tremendous excitement and love that possessed the mind of God as He created them. Before He infused their bodies with the breath of life, He had already embellished their garden home with every convenience. And as with undimmed eyes they looked upon their palatial paradise, every detail said “I love you.”

But then they broke the heart of Him who loved them, and became the “Gomer” of the universe. What disgrace upon their Lover in the eyes of the unfallen beings throughout the galaxies! But, like Hosea, God pursued them. “I will bind you to me forever,” He says, “with chains of righteousness and justice and love and mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and love, and you will really know me then as you never have before” (Hosea 2:19, 20, TLB).

The overpowering aspect of this story is that God knew ahead of time the grief this creation would bring to Him. Yet He created us and gave us the power of choice. Amazing!

Thus the entire Bible is linked together by the concept that God is always seeking to retrieve us and redeem us. He comes to the garden to give us

hope. He comes to the ark to float us over the flood waves of our rebellion. He comes as the pillar of cloud and fire to shade us in the heat of life’s trials and to light the way through our wilderness of fear.

Try to grasp, if you can, the utter malignity of sin in contrast to God’s impeccable holiness. It then becomes obvious that we are the pariah of the universe. Our very presence is contaminating. Every imaginable evil abounds with us. God might very easily have eliminated us all and started over afresh! But no, this loving Creator of ours accepted our freedom of choice. Nevertheless, He allows the result of sin to take its course, and that for our benefit.

Link of Love

Love went even further. Jesus left heaven and came to this quarantined planet beset with a malady that makes even the AIDS virus seem mild in comparison—a disease so communicable that it has ravished every person that was ever born, except One. Jesus came and took our flesh.

Ellen G. White, reflecting on the same idea, wrote: “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death that was ours, that we might receive the life which was His” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25). He truly died the sinner’s death! And why all this for you, friend? John gives the answer: “For God is love” (1 John 4:8).

We see the love of God demonstrated in the case of Matthew the publican. The scribes and the Pharisees were there to accuse. They did not understand the tenderness that flowed from the bosom of Christ. Their words were meant to belittle Him. “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them,” they charged (Luke 15:2, NIV).

What wonderful news! *He is guilty*, indeed!—guilty of welcoming sinners!

To a race unable to go beyond the borders of



their own solar system because of the plague they carry, Jesus, the ruler of the whole cosmos, says, "Welcome, sinner! I'll eat with you! I'll walk with you! I'll talk with you! I'll be with you!"

In the fifteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus told three parables of His loving quest for us.

In the story of the lost sheep He depicted a person who is lost, who knows that he is, but who cannot find his way back home. Might that be you? I have always believed that this little animal represents the new Christian or the young person in the church who gets fed up with the fold and decides to try some wilder "grass." To him, the fold seems too traditional, too rule-bound, no room for creativity or independence. And in some ways, this assessment may even be correct.

The Story Unfolds

But such sheep forget that the fold actually belongs to Jesus. This implies that when one leaves the fold, one does not merely leave the church; one also leaves Jesus.

But what does the shepherd do when this occurs? He leaves the fold and searches, exposing Himself to the same hazards the wandering sheep experiences, until He finds the headstrong one.

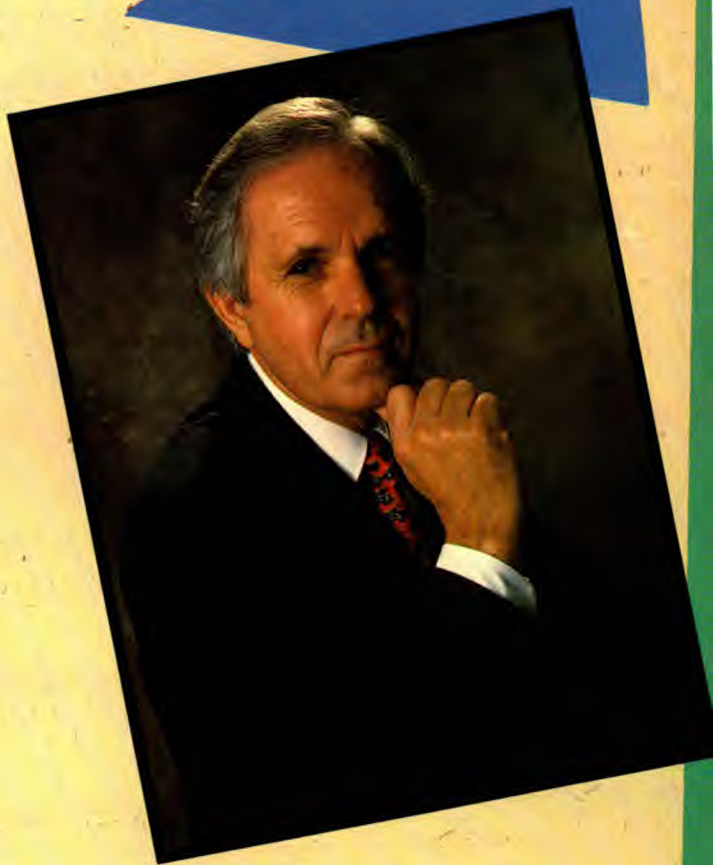
The beauty of the story unfolds as the shepherd gathers the sheep into his arms and restores its status as a part of the fold. What a parable of the immeasurable seeking love of God!

The story of the lost coin is no less significant in our understanding of God's tender love. The lost coin represents the person who is lost, who does not know that he is, and who thus makes no attempt to be found. Represented by an inanimate object, this kind of person has lost the desire for spiritual things. The coin is covered with the dust *in the house*, lost at home! But it is valued by its owner. The woman sweeps for it.

What a tender picture of Christ! He is seen here as a woman, a concerned woman, who cherishes what she seeks. May we, through this powerful story, see the Lord searching for us with the light of His Word. Let us sense His hand reaching for us, ignoring the dust of indifference and sinfulness that covers us. Perhaps as hard and cold as an inanimate coin, may we be warmed by His touch of love.

Finally, Christ tells the story of the prodigal son. This son exemplifies the person reared in the

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This great

love story

could be

our story

church system. He has learned the Bible verses in Sabbath school. He has attended church school, academy, and college. He has worked in the furniture factory or the business office.

But he comes to the place where he turns his back on it all. Ignoring his father's care and sacrifice, so to speak, he demands: "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me."

Quite frankly, everything that happens after this is inevitable. When I take the gift of life out of my Father's control, there is tragic waste. In the story there is no seeking shepherd, no sweeping woman. The son is treated differently because his level of exposure to God's Word and church is much deeper. This person is a willful sinner.

This person knows the Bible. He knows the Spirit of Prophecy. Maybe he even knows Greek and Hebrew. He knows key people in the church. Yes, he even knows that some of them have skeletons in their closets. No pastor or parent can straighten him out, because *he knows*. The prodigal does not look up until he has spent all. He winds up with pigs, who teach him a profound lesson in life: they stayed where they belonged.

We who know about the Sabbath do not belong on our jobs on that day. We who know that our bodies are the temples of God should not have cigarettes in our purses or beer in our refrigerators. We belong at home. And our loving Father longs for us to come to ourselves. This great love story could be our story.

I appeal to all who are outside the fold just now. The remnant church is Christ's church. If you are not here, He misses you. We miss you. Jesus has loved you from the beginning. He gave up all for you from the beginning. Too often we, your fellow church members, have failed you; we failed Christ, too. But the Father owns the house. Return to Him. For every good love story should have a happy ending.

I am praying as I close this love letter to you, my fellow traveler, that *your* story and *my* story will end with this postscript: "Loved by Jesus—and loving Him, now I'm coming home." □



Henry Wright is executive secretary of the Columbia Union Conference, Columbia, Maryland.

A New Experience With Uncle Arthur

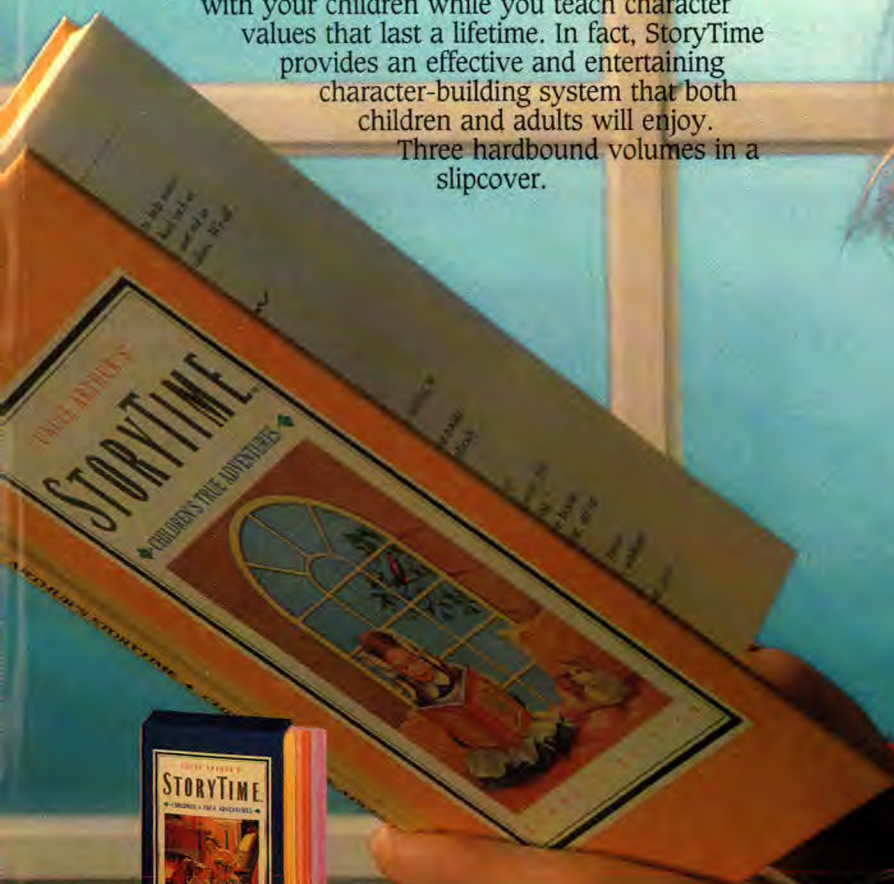
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Is the Church Learning?

BY RON WATTS

Phil's family favored Fords. They always had, they always would. Phil was weaned on his grandfather's praises of the Ford Motor Company. No one knew how to build a car better

than Henry Ford; the quality, the service, the price, all were the best.

Phil took it for granted that when he grew up he would be a Ford man—loyal to the family tradition.

Going

beyond

voting

with

our feet

Sure enough, Phil's first car was a Ford, and it was first-rate. Phil felt fine. And Grandpa was pleased indeed. But when Phil bought his second Ford, nothing but trouble came with it. Little things went wrong, and it was wait, wait, wait at the dealer's. Then those items not covered by the warranty began breaking down—\$50 here, \$100 there.

Phil thought it was just bad luck, but friends confirmed that the problems were widespread. Ford no longer stood for quality. The glory had departed!

Phil's frustration turned to anger. He became openly hostile whenever he heard their ads. Then one day Phil bought an import from Japan. He didn't tell his grandfather. Just let him find out by the family grapevine. And Grandpa wasn't pleased.

Many models later, Phil began noticing a change in his old auto maker. The new advertising featured quality. Word of mouth had it that Ford had gotten the message. Sales for the new models were bouncing off the top of the charts. Enough customers had followed Phil that the company's bottom line had suffered. He couldn't believe it, but the impossible had happened. A major corporation of faceless executives had listened. Maybe he wasn't such a nerd after all.

You know, your church is getting the message too! You aren't the only one who has stopped coming on Sabbath mornings. Thousands of others have voted with their feet. They didn't like what they heard—"If you don't measure up to our standard, we don't want you here." "Shape up or ship out." "Adventism—love it or leave it."

But the church is beginning to hurt because

you and many others hurt. We failed to meet your need at a crucial moment. The quality and the service did not measure up to the advertising. But the church is getting the message! It has to change. Now, can it change?

There was Jeana. Reared in a proper Adventist home, she ate all the right food, wore all the right clothes, read all the right books, attended all the right schools. Dad taught her what was right and expected her to do it. But something was missing.

Tears and Toughness

He never seemed able to give Jeana his approval. She knew he cared, but he could never tell her. She never saw that soft warm fuzzy side she saw in other dads. But Jeana loved her dad, and she obeyed. Obeyed all through academy and college. She dried her lonely tears and tried to be tough.

When she became a teacher in the Adventist system, she found a lot of parents just like her dad—ready to tell her when she did something wrong, silent when she did something right. Then the medical problems began. Too much stress, the physician informed her. It seemed to Jeana that no one cared, certainly not in the church.

Jeana found a home Bible study fellowship of caring Christians. These people accepted her unconditionally. She didn't have to try to be something she was not in order to please them. They just loved her as she was. The Adventist Church had failed to meet her spiritual needs. The quality and service did not live up to the advertising. Someone else did.

Then there was Dave. Dave loved the church. He dreamed of becoming a minister one day. But Dave was in boarding academy when his mother died. Dave couldn't cope with the grief. He started skipping classes, but the response was "attend or else." No one seemed to understand or care what was going



It needs your

experience

of pain to

help it minister

to others.

on behind his teenager's "I don't care" facade. Dave dropped out and joined the Navy. He'd show the world that he was tough.

He married a Christian girl, but when he wanted to take his boys to Sabbath school the ensuing conflict ended his marriage. Waiting for the divorce decree, Dave started dating another. He was lonely and he was hurting, but the church did not understand. They decided he needed discipline and censure. They disfellowshipped him. He left. He failed the church—or did the church fail him?

Dave left the church, but its message never left his heart. Through years of emptiness and longing, he dreamed that someday he would return. Then Dave moved back to the old hometown, the town where he had been disfellowshipped. The church had a new building. They also had a new attitude. Dave found love, acceptance, and forgiveness. He liked what he saw. He was pleased that his church had learned to care. They had become the kind of people he needed. Now he is at the door each Sabbath helping others find the warmth and love he missed for so many years.

Then there was **Ken**. Ken knew he was at fault. He had goofed. He had played around and ruined a good marriage. When the news got out, his family folded, and Ken never showed his face in church again. But it did surprise him that even after he had remarried no one came to call. No one even came to tell him how wrong he was. Was this how the church punished the erring—treating them as if they didn't exist? He had enough guilt already, especially after those visitation weekends with the kids. Then one day an old friend invited Ken to a new Adventist congregation in the city. Forgiveness, acceptance, and love was its theme. In some perverse way he thought he would test their hypocrisy.

But what Ken expected didn't happen. There were no cold, knowing stares, no sideways glances. Ken, the divorced Adventist, was accepted and loved. Nobody asked him where he had been and why. After all these years he was back. They just hugged him and made him feel at home.

Now every Sabbath morning Ken is there. Not sitting in the pew, but standing at the door with a big smile, a happy heart, and open arms, making sure that those who come back get the

same "welcome home" that he received.

The good news is that Adventist congregations like that are developing in many places in North America. Congregations that know that the message of Christ is not just about loving and obeying God but also about loving and caring relationships with one another.

Good News, Bad News

The bad news is that you are not there to help them. Your church needs you. It needs your disappointments and hurt. It needs your experience of pain to help it minister to others in need. You know firsthand how the church failed to heal a hurt, and you know how it can succeed. You know what people need and how the church can become effective in ministry to those they have disappointed. If your church doesn't know how to provide quality in service and caring, can it learn without your help?

That's how **Carol** feels about her church. When she was a hurting teen the only caring she received was a message from the elder that her clothes were inappropriate. Mother never knew why she refused to go back to church. They didn't care at all about how she felt, only about how she looked. It made her mad!

Then one day she decided to give it another chance. To her surprise, she was greeted with happy smiles, and no one said a word about her attire. Maybe these people had learned something after all while she was gone. Soon she was back in the church and happy again.

Carol knows what young people need in the crises of the teen years, and she is actively involved in teaching a youth class—helping them find the love and care she didn't get when she was a teen. She is delighted that she can make a difference. Maybe you can too. It might be worth a try.

Oh, yes. Phil is driving a Ford again, and smiling when he thinks how pleased Grandpa would be if only he knew. □



Ron Watts is president of the Alaska Conference, Anchorage, Alaska.

Lord, Help My Unbelief!

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

A

s the people on the plain caught sight of Jesus, they ran to meet Him greeting Him with expressions of reverence and joy. Yet His quick eye discerned that they were in great perplexity.

The disciples appeared troubled. A circumstance had just occurred that had caused them bitter disappointment and humiliation.

While they were waiting at the foot of the mountain, a father had brought to them his son, to be delivered from a dumb spirit that tormented him. Authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, had been conferred on the disciples when Jesus sent out the twelve to preach through Galilee. As they went forth strong in faith, the evil spirits had obeyed their word. Now in the name of Christ they commanded the torturing spirit to leave his victim; but the demon only mocked them by a fresh display of his power.

The disciples, unable to account for their defeat, felt that they were bringing dishonor upon themselves and their Master. And in the crowd there were scribes who made the most of this opportunity to humiliate them. Pressing around the disciples, they plied them with questions, seeking to prove that they and their Master were deceivers.

Here, the rabbis triumphantly declared, was an evil spirit that neither the disciples nor Christ Himself could conquer. The people were inclined to side with the scribes, and a feeling of contempt and scorn pervaded the crowd.

But suddenly the accusations ceased. Jesus and the three disciples were seen approaching, and with a quick revulsion of feeling the people turned to meet them. The night of communion with the heavenly glory had left its trace upon the Saviour and His companions. Upon their countenances was a light that awed the beholders. The scribes drew back in fear, while the people welcomed Jesus.

As if He had been a witness of all that had occurred, the Saviour came to the scene of conflict, and fixing His gaze upon the scribes inquired, "What question ye with them?"

But the voices so bold and defiant before were now silent. A hush had fallen upon the

entire company. Now the afflicted father made his way through the crowd, and falling at the feet of Jesus, poured out the story of his trouble and disappointment.

"Master," he said, "I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and whosoever he taketh him, he teareth him: . . . and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

Jesus looked about Him upon the awestricken multitude, the caviling scribes, the perplexed disciples. He read the unbelief in every heart; and in a voice filled with sorrow He exclaimed, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Then He bade the distressed father, "Bring thy son hither."

The boy was brought, and as the Saviour's eyes fell upon him, the evil spirit cast him to the ground in convulsions of agony. He lay wallowing and foaming, rending the air with unearthly shrieks.

Again the Prince of life and the prince of the powers of darkness had met on the field of battle—Christ in fulfillment of His mission to "preach deliverance to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18), Satan seeking to hold his victim under his control. Angels of light and the hosts of evil angels, unseen, were pressing near to behold the conflict. For a moment, Jesus permitted the evil spirit to display his power, that the beholders might comprehend the deliverance about to be wrought.

The multitude looked on with bated breath, the father in an agony of hope and fear. Jesus asked, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" The father told the story of long years of suffering, and then, as if he could endure no more, exclaimed, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." "If thou canst!" Even now the father questioned the power of Christ.

*With a burst
of tears,
realizing his
own weakness,
the father casts
himself upon
Christ's mercy.*



“Have
compassion

on us and
help us.”

Jesus answers, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” There is no lack of power on the part of Christ; the healing of the son depends upon the father’s faith. With a burst of tears, realizing his own weakness, the father casts himself upon Christ’s mercy, with the cry, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

Jesus turns to the suffering one, and says, “Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” There is a cry, an agonized struggle. The demon, in passing, seems about to rend the life from his victim. Then the boy lies motionless, and apparently lifeless. The multitude whisper, “He is dead.” But Jesus takes him by the hand, and lifting him up, presents him, in perfect soundness of mind and body, to his father. Father and son praise the name of their Deliverer. The multitude are “amazed at the mighty power of God,” while the scribes, defeated and crestfallen, turn sullenly away.

“If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.” How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour’s answer is, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness.

In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ.

He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, “Lord, I believe; help *thou* mine unbelief.” You can never perish while you do this—never. □

From *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 427-429.

“So when my husband said, ‘Linda, you deserve to get back in school and finish,’ I couldn’t argue. Since I married him, all my other goals have been realized. Why shouldn’t I get my degree too!”

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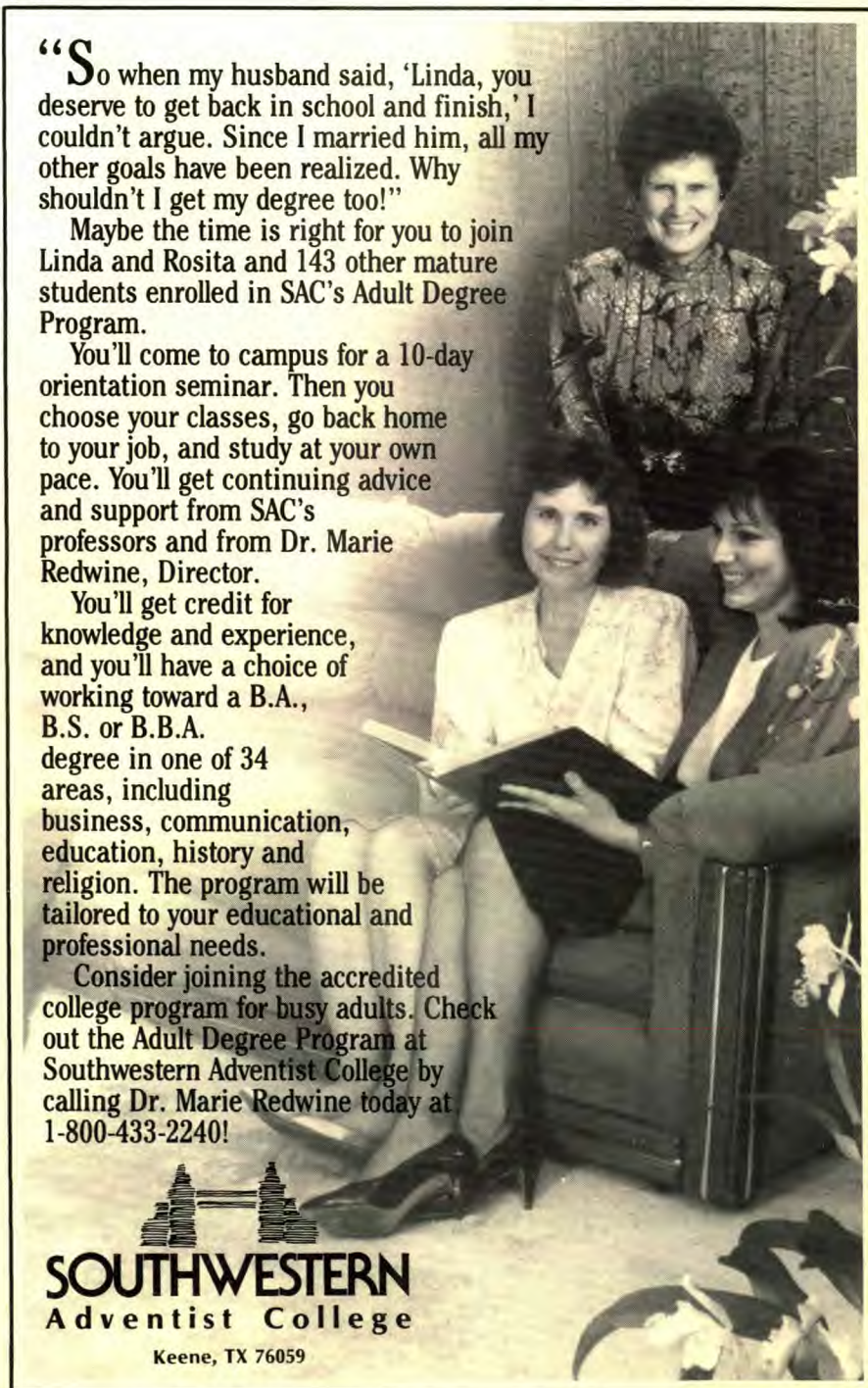
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A Listening Ear

BY LESLIE BUMGARDNER

Bob wandered from room to room trying not to look anxious. Sarah busied herself straightening the magazines on the coffee table, periodically checking out the window to see if a car had pulled up out front.

It had been two years now since they had been active in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their lives had begun to change, and church attendance became less important to them. Once or twice a month was just fine. But gradually even that level of church attendance seemed too much. Soon it dwindled to none.

Finding

support

during

difficult

times

And no one called. No one. They had wondered if anyone would call to say that they were missed. But no one did. Their lives soon became full of new interests and activities. Church didn't matter anymore.

Then, two years later, the pastor called. And now he was on his way to their place. The waiting seemed endless. Bob began to wonder what pressure tactics would be used to "urge" them into coming to church. Sarah started wondering if he would ask them to drop their names from the membership list.

Listening Support

But their fears weren't confirmed. Bob and Sarah soon realized the pastor was spending more time listening and inquiring about their jobs and home than telling them why they ought to come back to church. They found themselves sharing how Bob had experienced difficulty when fellow employees got laid off, and Sarah shared the pending divorce of her parents after 33 years of marriage. Bob and Sarah had longed for someone to share their difficulties, to say "I'm sorry" or "We're thinking of you." But they had found no one.

Now the pastor listened sympathetically. They didn't expect it. His lecture on the importance of church attendance or an insistence on dropping their memberships never materialized. He simply said, "We miss you, and we want you to return."

With the growing recognition that as many as half our church members are no longer active in the life of the congregation, pastors and lay members across North America are making a special emphasis to visit inactive members. Not because of a program, but because they are becoming sensi-

tized to the many thousands of former and missing Adventists in their communities. They sense a loss that can be satisfied only by reaching out and inviting the inactive members to come back. They'll mostly listen, not preach.

Too many who have left the church have been crying out for help, and no one has heard their plea. Pastors and church members want to listen. They want to share your hurts and challenges.

Yet listening alone sometimes is not enough to meet the needs of one who has left active participation in the Adventist Church. These pastors and members will attempt to provide support and additional resources when necessary. The pastor introduced Sarah to another woman in the congregation whose parents had divorced. They were able to share their feeling of confusion and loss. The fellowship helped relieve the anxiety Sarah had been feeling about her own parents' divorce. Maybe a visitor will help you in providing support during a difficult time or by suggesting resources to which you might turn for additional assistance.

And when you find yourself ready to return to active participation in your church, you might find that a return to new involvements is the easiest. A visit from a caring member is a good time to explore the alternatives open to you—Bible study groups, youth activities. Ask about how the church has changed and what new avenues of involvement are available.

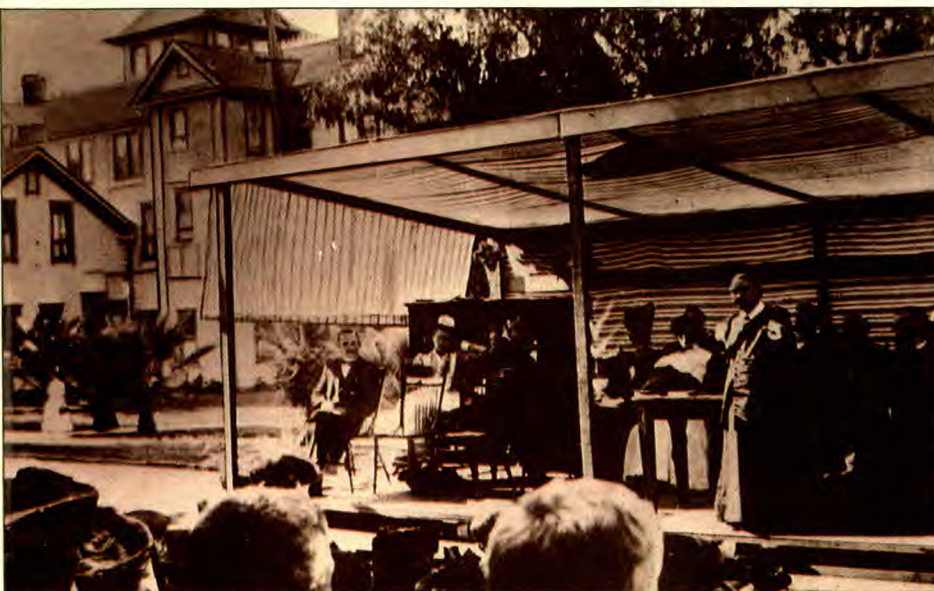
Yes, someone may call and visit you. But why wait? Take the opportunity to call your local church and ask if someone would be willing to visit. You may find a listening ear, support during difficult times, new avenues of involvement, and much more. It's worth a call. □



Leslie Bumgardner is an associate pastor of the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Worthington, Ohio.

THE

LOMA LINDA REPORT



Ellen G. White speaks at the Loma Linda Sanitarium dedicatory service held April 15, 1906.

Miraculous beginnings offer inspiration for today's workers

The miraculous beginnings of Loma Linda have been an inspiration to all those following in the footsteps of pioneers such as Ellen G. White who launched the institutions with vision, faith, and hard work.

The story begins in the late 1880s when a group of developers chose a hill just south of San Bernardino and named it Mound City. There they invested \$40,000 and built an ornate wooden hotel on the Mound's summit. Hardly had they finished construction when the building boom of the day collapsed and a long, intermittent drought began. The depression of 1893 delivered the final blow to the resort. The owners sold it in 1895 for \$15,000 to a corporation of 40 businessmen and 80 physicians from the Los Angeles area who had joined to establish a health resort.

This group poured \$155,000 into the hotel — intending to make it one of the

finest health resorts in Southern California. They advertised extensively and even ran excursion trains from Los Angeles to introduce their institution to the public.

"Hill Beautiful"

They changed the name from Mound City to Loma Linda, which in Spanish means "Hill Beautiful." In spite of their best efforts, the business failed. Local residents nicknamed the property "Lonesome Linda." In 1904 the owners offered the property for sale far below their cost — \$110,000.

During the same time, the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, with a mere 1,400 members, had recently acquired two sanitarium properties — Paradise Valley, near San Diego, for \$4,000, and the new Glendale Sanitarium for \$12,500.

To the amazement and consternation of many, Mrs. White, from her home in St. Helena 500 miles to the north, began to urge the purchase of yet another

sanitarium property in Southern California. She asked John Burden, a young minister who had managed the St. Helena Sanitarium and later served at Sydney Sanitarium in Australia, to search the area for a new sanitarium location.

"Secure the property by all means"

Pastor Burden knew of the Loma Linda property, but he also knew that \$110,000 was out of the question. However, inquiring of the owners, he found they had reduced the amount to \$85,000. This, too, was beyond the reach of the fledgling church. Soon afterward, the amount was dropped to \$45,000. The young pastor reported this bargain-basement price to Mrs. White, and she advised him to stay close to the situation and keep her posted.

Pastor Burden again went to the owners and this time they quoted a firm price of \$40,000. Hearing this, Mrs. White replied at once, "Secure the property by all means, so that it can be held and then obtain all the money you can and make sufficient payments to hold the place. This is the *very* property we ought to have. Do not delay; for it is just what is needed."

The property owners would give only a few day's option to buy the property for \$40,000. Meanwhile, members of the local conference committee, meeting in Washington, D.C., sent a wire to John Burden saying, "Developments here warrant advising do not make deposit on sanitarium."

Thus Pastor Burden was caught in a squeeze between Mrs. White and the brethren. He knew that the newly-elected Southern California Conference president had been told to get the conference out of debt, and he sympathized with that viewpoint.

"How does one whose pockets are empty buy a \$40,000 property without going into debt?" Pastor Burden must have wondered. *(continued next page)*

Information for this section supplied by the Loma Linda University Medical Center office of public affairs.

"FULFILLING THE VISION"

"FULFILLING THE VISION"



An awesome flight of steps led up the hill to the old Loma Linda Sanitarium.



Physicians perform surgery at Loma Linda Sanitarium in 1914 as medical students observe. The first medical students graduated from Loma Linda that same year.

Venturing out in faith, however, he borrowed \$1,000 on his own signature and put the money down on the property. He delivered the money on May 29, 1905, and signed the documents. An additional \$4,000 was due on July 7, and the next \$5,000 on August 9. The balance was secured by a three-year mortgage.

A series of providences

Through a series of providences, the amount was paid in full within seven months, earning a discount of \$1,100. Thus the sum of \$38,900 (plus \$7,000 for taxes and interest) was paid for 76 acres of land, a three-story hotel, a farm house, five large cottages, a recreation building, a water plant with shares of water stock, an artesian well, pumping plant, and water tower and tank.

The purchase price included a full set of farm implements, horses and carriages, and cows; besides orchards with peaches and pears; and over \$12,000 worth of furnishings including linens, dishes, and silverware.

Then began the tremendous challenge of assembling a sanitarium staff and getting patients to register. The Seventh-day Adventist owners took possession on July 1; the first two patients signed in on October 13. Loma Linda was in business.

There was, of course, no working capital and no assurance that anyone would receive a salary. In spite of this, 35 people had reported for duty by November 1. On December 18, the sanitarium had 25 patients. At the end of the first eight months, the books showed a gain of \$1,100.

Julia White, MD, arrived in late November, 1905, to take charge of the nursing program. In April, 1906, the Pacific Union Conference and Southern California Conference committees met at Loma Linda and agreed to name the new institution "Loma Linda College of Evangelists."

Ellen White dedicates sanitarium

A dedicatory service was held on April 15, 1906, with Ellen White delivering the principal address.

In her remarks she stated that "Loma Linda is to be not only a sanitarium but an educational center. With the possession of this place comes the weighty responsibility of making the work of the institution educational in character. A school is to be established here for the training of gospel medical missionary evangelists. Much is involved in this work, and it is very essential that a right beginning be made. The Lord has a special work to be done in this part of the field.

"The securing of this property is a miracle that should open the eyes of our

understanding. If such manifest workings of God do not give us a new experience, what will?"

The first school year officially opened in 1906 with only a part of the faculty present, and no students had appeared. However, by October 4, 35 students and the entire faculty were present.

The educational center

Times have changed. Today, Loma Linda University Medical Center is the educational center of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist health-care system which reaches around the world. It now employs over 4,200 individuals, provides annual services for 22,400 inpatients, serves as the tertiary-care center for a large portion of Southern California, has an operating budget of over \$250,000,000, and is the world's leading center for infant-to-infant heart transplantation.

Loma Linda University Medical Center continues in its efforts to "fulfill the vision." Currently under construction is a 220-bed Children's Hospital and a new proton beam cancer treatment facility which will revolutionize the treatment of certain types of cancer.

The services and facilities of the 620-bed Medical Center all play a role in fulfilling the Medical Center's motto "To Make Man Whole."

We Need Your Differences

BY ALDEN THOMPSON

Pondering
the tension
between
people in
my church

I was unnerved and somewhat startled by the intensity of my emotions as I began this article. You won't understand unless you too love the church, and people, and God—and want

to spend an eternity as one happy family.

A sobering public lecture triggered this piece. Never before has the United States been so fragmented between “liberals” and “conservatives,” observed the speaker. New alliances are being forged across traditional boundaries. Jews, Catholics, and Protestants are breaking ranks to choose up sides as “liberals” or “conservatives” and then making common cause together.

I pondered the tension in my church between liberals and conservatives and all the pain thereunto appertaining. If only we could press together, work together, sing and pray together. But the heart has to be in it, and the conscience must come along unscathed.

So let's talk about it.

First, the annoying labels. We use them in two ways. As lifestyle markers, they distinguish those who like to pray from those who like to play; those who flee to the desert to be with God from those who rush to the city to be with people.

As markers of intellectual patterns, they distinguish those who lay claim to clear answers from those who love to ask questions; those who prefer the disciplined obedience of the army from those who prefer the probing creativity of the university.

As illustrated in the accompanying diagram, overlaying the two ways of using “liberal” and “conservative” yields a quadrant of four basic types: a double conservative, a double liberal, and two types that are half-and-half. The church urgently needs all four perspectives—and can make excellent use of all the variations in between, including those who are a lively blend of all four extremes. That means there is room in the church for both thee and me, even if we do have to curb some of our excesses.

Interestingly enough, the differences in the church today are mirrored in Scripture. We

can roughly match biblical books or authors with each of the basic types.

In my church, for example, I think of Brother and Sister Proverbs, hardworking, practical, optimistic. They are convinced of both God's goodness and the value of human effort. They thrive on church socials and picnics. They love people, and they love the Lord. They like what they see in church papers, the *Review*, *Insight*, *Signs*. For secular literature they are likely to pick up the *Reader's Digest*.

Then there is Brother and Sister Jeremiah, faithful, intense, devout. They are deeply concerned about the loss of spiritual fervor in the church and the subtle inroads being made by the world. You can count on them to be at prayer meeting, Sabbath school, and church. They are inclined to read private publications, being rather troubled by what they consider a “worldly” tendency in our church papers. They read very little in secular literature, preferring to spend their time with the Bible and the writings of Sister White.

Brother and Sister Ecclesiastes are probably the most difficult for the church to understand. They don't have much time for church work since they are so busy with the symphony, the art gallery, the museum. Yet they have made some remarkable contacts for the church in the community and, on occasion, have been known to be quite generous in supporting worthy projects. Probing, curious, questioning—they like what they hear about the new *Review* but haven't subscribed yet. *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* are the magazines you'll likely find around their house.

Brother and Sister Paul are also a perplexity for the church. They seem so devout (indeed, they are devout!). But they keep asking questions about matters that the church decided long ago. Their Sabbath school class seems radical, almost heretical. But they attend faithfully and are loyal supporters of the church.



WE CARE



FOR MAJOR AND DOROTHY EVANS OF THE DUPONT CHURCH IN WASHINGTON, D.C., "LIVING IS GIVING." THEY DEMONSTRATE THEIR CARING THROUGH HOSPITALITY, REGULARLY INVITING THE YOUNG AND THE OLD HOME FOR DINNER. "THE LORD BLESSES US AND WE ARE JUST SHARING A LITTLE OF THOSE BLESSINGS. WE FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER AND HAVE A GOOD TIME."

PHOTO BY DENNIS CREWS

They will tell you that they would like more substance in church papers. They also read broadly in secular literature, but not with a consuming passion.

Can we handle such diversity in Adventism?

When describing ideal Bible teaching, Ellen White addressed that very issue: Students should not have the same teacher "year after year," even if it means using instructors who may not "have so full an understanding of Scriptures." Why do we have four Gospels instead of just one, she asks? "Because the minds of men differ." There is no "ideal" teacher; the ideal is only reached through a community of teachers. "The whole truth is presented more clearly by several than by one" (*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 432).

We need each other if we want the church to be strong.

A Word to the Conservatives

Now a word directly to you who are drawn by the commands and promises of a changeless God, not by the ever-changing fashions of a restless world; to you who yearn for unity, not relevance; to you for whom obedience to a holy God is infinitely more important than exploring the mysteries of the universe.

If you are alarmed at the loss of fervor in the church, the lowering of standards, the inroads of alien theology—if you long for the "straight testimony" but feel driven to independent publications or private camp meetings to hear it, then this part is for you. Read on. These are your strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and besetting sins.

1. Piety, commitment, conviction. If you're hungry for spiritual food and lonely in the church because it seems listless and lukewarm, don't give up. The church needs you more than ever right now. You sense its weakness; you know where it needs to go for strength. In a time of prosperity, the "naturally devotional" (to borrow Ellen White's phrase) dare not abandon the church to those attracted by material and worldly interests.

Sensing the weakness of the church, you may be tempted to pull away with the rest of the "pure" saints and establish your own

Change is an uncomfortable

"pure" community. But when has the church ever kept its act together for more than a few minutes at a time? Read Scripture. Read the *Testimonies*. When were the good old days and how long did they last? God is patient. We must be also.

2. **Anger.** The anger and hostility I find in much of your literature concerns me. To A. T. Jones, Ellen White once wrote, "Every sermon you preach, every article you write, may be all true; but one drop of gall in it will be poison to the hearer or reader." If he had the holy oil of the Spirit flowing into the heart, his words would "reform, but not exasperate" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 123).

Give your anger to the Lord. Immerse yourself in 1 Corinthians 13 and plead with Him to make it happen.

3. **Change.** That's an uncomfortable word for you. You would rather be guardians than explorers. And the church needs the stability you bring. But you will have to make peace with change as well. That goes for standards and for doctrines. Early Adventists were critical of any woman without a bonnet and any man without a beard. Even mustaches were off-limits. Modesty is something perceived by culture, and culture changes.

How can we know what change is legitimate? By studying Scripture and the writings of Ellen White. Both can help us establish the breadth of God's activity as well as the limits.

4. **Diversity.** The word is almost as dangerous as "change." Read the parallel passages in Scripture and learn to appreciate why the different writers told the same story in different ways. Diversity gives us a net big enough to do the job.

5. **Authority.** You are impressed by divine authority. Appeals to authority are powerful, but can be short-lived and dangerous if not supported by sanctified reason.

In her very first coun-

word for those

who'd rather

be guardians

than explorers.

sel on education, Ellen White warned against holding the minds and wills of the students by "absolute authority" (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 134). The attempt to ensure stability by the hand of authority can be the very means of destruction.

The church needs you, conservatives. And you need the church. Your great strength is also your great weakness. Share your strength with the church and let it help you with your weakness. Send your children to the church's schools; they are your schools, our schools. There will be moments of discomfort for all of us. But we must learn to live together. After all, we'll be neighbors in the kingdom.

A Word to the Liberals

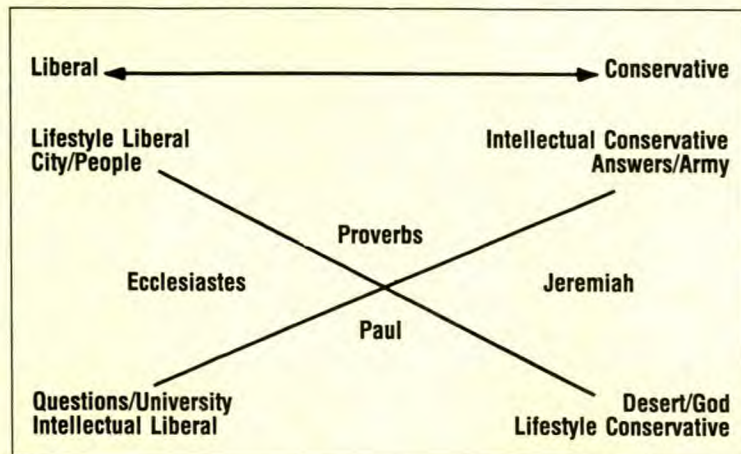
Now a word to you who find the world a very intriguing place. As far as the church is concerned, you tend to be less bombastic than the conservatives. You don't go away angry, you just go away. Later the church wakes up and suddenly remembers, "Whatever happened to . . . ?" But it is too late. The pew has been empty too long.

Actually, to pin the label of "liberal" on an Adventist isn't quite fair. In the broader religious world any Adventist willing to carry the name is hopelessly conservative. After all, we believe in a God who hears and answers prayers. That makes us conservative regardless of the labels we use among ourselves.

Still, under that conservative Adventist umbrella, some differences

are worth noting. A liberal, for example, finds the creation at least as interesting as the Creator, much prefers a probing question to a revealed answer, and is tempted to spend more time with human beings than with God.

So if you are a liberal Adventist—not wild, just liberal—concerned about the shallowness



Sometimes
life becomes

lonely for
exceptional,
thinking
people.

of the church's preaching and writing, alienated because you have ventured thoughtful questions when the saints wanted clear-cut answers, and feeling condemned because your love of beauty stands in a certain tension over against the church's call for simplicity, sacrifice, and practicality, then this part is for you. Read on. These are your strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and besetting sins:

1. **Intellect, curiosity, a love of beauty and excellence.** If you're hungry for a thought-provoking sermon, and the church seems austere, without aesthetic qualities, don't give up. The church needs you more than ever right now. You recognize its weakness. You have the sensitivity to help bring it to maturity.

The world is populated by mostly average folks. So is the church. That spells a lonely life for exceptional people. They are seeking answers to questions most have never asked, and conversation partners are rare.

If you are one of the lonely bright ones, you need to know that there are others like you in the church. Somehow you need to find each other. And together you need to help us shape a believing community for all the people.

And then there is your love of beauty and excellence. Adventism's Puritan heritage makes us intensely practical. Aesthetics are easily ignored. We build no museums or art galleries. You can show us the beautiful in a chaotic world.

2. **Patience.** This is a hard one. When your outstretched gift finds no receptive hand and your cry for help no listening ear, you would be excused for looking elsewhere. Because we have so far to go, the church will often appear barren and austere. But it needs your talents.

Pray that you might find in the church the receptive hand and the listening ear. And pray that the Lord of Creation will grant you patience to endure both the average and mediocre while the church struggles to appreciate your gifts.

You will also need patience to understand those who are so overwhelmed by the Divine Presence that they obey without questioning. You may feel that you can challenge God, like Abraham or Moses. Don't neglect that pre-

cious right—just remember that others simply melt in His presence.

3. **Gifts.** Conservatives are gripped by their convictions and give accordingly. The church would be more vibrant if liberals would do the same. Our schools, in particular, could do exciting things if they really enjoyed the wholehearted support of the church. Think about it. Then do something about it.

4. **Worship.** Liberals tend to be better at probing and exploring than they are at worshiping. And by worship, I don't mean just sitting in church. I'm thinking of an attitude toward God, an attitude of submission and acceptance.

Now, I don't mean to diminish your ability to confront God with your questions and perplexities. Not at all. Some of you have struggled long and hard to win through to that openness. But there comes a time when questions fall silent—we admit that God is God and we are merely His creatures. That is true worship. As Job said, "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40:4, RSV).

As you search after God, you can know that He is searching after you, too. So don't give up too easily. Lay claim to your blessing and don't let Him go. Stay with it—until, like Jacob, you have the blessing in hand.

I want our church to be a channel for at least part of that blessing. That will be difficult, I know, for conservatives have a hard time understanding liberals. I'm not telling you anything new. That's part of the loneliness you've learned to live with.

But maybe we are all more lonely than we care to admit. That's why the blessed hope is so precious. Let's share that hope and keep it alive. That's what the body of Christ is all about. □



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Beyond Inherited Faith

BY RICHARD A. WINN

H Reflections on Christian Growth

Have you heard the story of the great Surveyors' war? A number of young men enrolled in a College of Surveying and signed up for Mapping 101. In that course they learned to map square

corners and parallel lines. Having learned these rules well, they decided there was really nothing more they needed to know. So they left school and went north in two teams to survey the great open prairies of Canada.

One team took the eastern side of the plain, the other the western side. If all of their corners were square and all of their lines parallel, they should meet at the top midpoint, they thought. But when they reached the northern end of the prairie and the two teams approached each other, they discovered, to their dismay, that they were seriously off. They would not meet.

They had put a great deal of effort into the project, and their abject failure brought anger. They took to calling each other names, attacking one another through rival publications, arguing about whose square or parallel was more accurate and reliable. And while the rest of the world languished in hunger and strife, the two teams denigrated each other.

Christians are sometimes like that. Our measuring instruments are inadequate.

The Desk Chair

Imagine three chairs, each a different style.

The first one is a desk chair. Desk chairs are chairs in which people learn. Thus they represent the beginning point of faith. At this stage our religion, beliefs, and understandings are of the nature of something passed on—inherited—from others.

This is the faith we absorb at a very early stage of life—while still toddlers. Our pictures of God form early. When the important people in our lives—parents and other primary caregivers—are close to us, available, listening and tender, our perception of God will be that of one who is close and available and listening, and tender.

We don't critique those understandings of God; we simply embrace what we find. There is a deep sense of security here. And we don't want to be challenged to think that maybe this faith could ever be anything less than totally

adequate for the realities of the life ahead. We cling to our "security blanket."

We should not in any way diminish the importance or the value of this kind of learning and experience. It's a good foundation, a good beginning place. And as we face the complexity of life, it provides a sense of order, system, and certainty upon which to move forward.

But inherited faith with all of its pluses and advantages eventually begins to chafe. Strongly tied to parental authority, especially in middle and late adolescence, it is not agile enough to face new complexities and problems.

The Portable Chair

As we continue to grow, we discover that merely inherited faith is not adequate. And our search brings us to the second chair, a chair for the out-of-doors, *the camping chair*—lightweight, portable, collapsible. It's a pilgrim chair—a chair for the journey. It symbolizes the "wilderness" phase of faith—a time of examination, of inspection, of careful looking at what's been handed down.

Thoughtful Adventists are facing tough questions—tough questions about the meaning of life and true relationships—about the origin and destiny of life. They're not going to take anything on anyone's say-so. The pilgrim stage is often characterized by a cutting loose from the past. It's a troubling time.

It is never easy to move away from that which is secure and tied down and authoritatively settled to that which is unclear and unknown. It is full of risks and pain.

The Office Chair

The office chair, which symbolizes the third phase of faith, is not an easy chair, not a recliner, not the kind with a lever that you pull to raise your feet and to activate a vibrator to relax you and make you sleep. No, it is an office chair, a working chair—no easy complacency here. This is the period of *owned* faith.



Thoughtful

Adventists are

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about the

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relationships.

This solid work chair supports us while we think through many problems and questions. It is at this stage of faith that we hammer down our own stakes. It is here that we say, "This I believe. Here I stand. I am staking this out as my own territory, my own faith. I have thought it through, I have examined the Scriptures, I have looked at the alternatives. This for me is home."

Oh yes, there'd be times when you would "make the tent you live in larger; lengthen its ropes and strengthen the pegs!" (Isa. 54:2, TEV) —times to pull up your stakes and move them out to encompass larger concerns, larger issues, larger perceptions of God. But basically, you are home.

At this stage you develop an immense sense of compassion for those who hurt in the world. You're now concerned about more than just getting all your beliefs tucked in properly. You've gone through the anxiety of working out your own place on the planet. Now you turn and look at that planet and say, "It's a devastated, hurting, and wounded place; it's time to weep —not because my creature comforts are not being met, but because there are so many people around me, whom I genuinely love, who are homeless and hungry and confused."

We've talked about three stages of faith symbolized by three chairs. We may term them *inherited faith*, *wilderness faith*, and *Promised Land faith*. What do these stages look like in various dimensions of your own personal living? Let's take two typical examples: Sabbath and church.

Sabbath in the Three Stages

A person can be an absolutely conscientious Sabbathkeeper at the earliest stages of life, even if it is expressed in terms of "Mom and Dad would really be mad at me if I didn't" or "I've got to be really careful not to spend any money on Sabbath because God would be so mad at me if I did." This can produce some very careful Sabbathkeeping.

There is danger, however, when the Sabbath is understood in terms of whether what we do will or will not be upsetting to God. For as a person matures, he perceives religion as something bound up with dictatorial authority figures, and that becomes very uncomfortable. So as a person goes through his wilderness pilgrimage stage, the Sabbath gets set aside. We notice that we can go shop-

ping on Sabbath and God does not strike us dead, neither do we run into car problems. So we say, "See, we're liberated!" What a tragedy!

If that's where you're struggling now with the Sabbath, may I urge you, don't go back to Egypt! Instead, allow yourself the possibility that Sabbath can take on whole new meanings. At the Promised Land stage of faith, you begin to realize that the whole issue of Christianity centers on relationships. And a relationship is something to be enjoyed and deepened. As we realize that there are so many superficial, frivolous people, we know why God desperately needs those who are willing to take the time to go deep with Jesus Christ and become deep people themselves.

For these the Sabbath becomes a cherished treasure—a time for deepening of the soul, and for getting in touch with the mind of God and with the hurting heart of the world. Devoid of the Sabbath, we become superficial, crass, empty, and materialistic.

Church in the Three Stages

We will probably relate differently to the church at different stages of faith. At the stage of inherited faith, the social dynamic in our life is very conformist. I join the church because that's where my friends are. I can fit in, and I can feel reassured that what I'm doing is OK because other people are doing it. And it feels so good to be reaffirmed by other people doing and believing and acting the same way that I am. Especially if we're friends and we hold certain vocabularies in common.

There are many people who cherish the church as an occasion for belonging because this is a stage of life when belonging is very important.

But as people leave their adolescent years, they suddenly find that belonging isn't quite as important. In fact, belonging begins to feel like a noose around their neck, and being an individual becomes more important. "I want to be me—I want to do it my way. Don't lay your trip on me! I want to figure it out for myself."

The church takes on a different meaning for those who are done with conforming, and who have established their own independent identity; for they now gather voluntarily together with a group of other people who are also individualists. And they begin to enjoy each

other in a new kind of fellowship known as community, not conformity.

In this context, it's our privilege to nurture each other in our growth, not to force each other into submission. Furthermore, we've got a task to do. A world out there is hurting, doesn't know Jesus, doesn't know loving people. We need to cooperate together, to minister and to serve.

The church becomes an enabling body to make us strong so that we can go out to the world. The church becomes an exciting and a sought-after experience, quite unlike the way we related to the church at an earlier time. Tragically, many people are making long-term decisions about church at a time when church seems the least useful, that is, when the church still serves as a reminder of past authority figures.

What does this all mean for us? First of all, let's not try to grow by just tinkering with the minutia of memorized key texts and being more grim-faced about our obedience. Let the possibility of growth take us into fresh new understandings of Christian life. Perhaps the images of God, of obedience, and of church that we knew as children are not adequate for the issues that we are facing as adults. And that's OK.

Second, let's remember that there are people, children and adults, in the church who are spread over the entire spectrum of ways of experiencing church and religion and faith in God. Let's understand them. Let's be patient with them. And let's be careful ourselves not to take our experience and push it on other people, making it normative for them.

If we are to be spiritual Christians, it means that we must take the pilgrimage from Egypt to the Promised Land. And we must support each other in the process.

That means that we must understand each other as we go through our times of sorting and figuring it out for ourselves. The church is a body of people who are walking together, supporting each other through buffeting, scary, and threatening times en route to the Promised Land. □



Richard Winn is associate professor of religion at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

CONCERNED ABOUT ALONE AND OFTEN
STRUGGLING DIVORCÉES, SEVERAL
MEMBERS OF THE PIONEER MEMORIAL
CHURCH IN BERRIEN SPRINGS,
MICHIGAN, CARED ENOUGH TO CREATE A
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PROVIDES FELLOWSHIP, NURTURE, AND
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.



I CARE

Can I Come Back?

BY BEN MAXSON

Gary had dropped out of the church 12 years earlier. As I visited with him in his home, he suddenly leaned forward and asked, "Pastor, do you really think I can come back? Will they accept me? What will people think?"

What the church and I have a right to expect.

Perhaps you have had the same questions. Maybe you have been inactive or out of the church, and you want to come back. But you are not quite sure. Let me assure you. You *can* come back.

But coming back after being inactive often raises questions and fears about yourself, and your church. Many may be the same ones you experienced when you joined the church.

As you come back, you may need to rethink what you expect from your church. And you may need to explore new relationships.

Things have changed, yet the church is still yours, and you are needed.

An understanding of how expectations develop when you join a church may help you prepare for coming back, and even help you return.

How you became a member of the Adventist Church still affects your relationship with, and expectations of, your church. If you grew up within the church and your values changed, you might have expected the church to change to meet those values. Or perhaps your values stayed the same and your church changed. Either way, changes in your relationship with your church can disillusion you if you are not ready for them.

It's only natural for you to have expectations of the church as you think of returning. If not, why would you even think of coming back? The Holy Spirit has created a sense of need or expectancy that is leading you to want to return. It is important to clarify your expectations and evaluate whether they are reasonable.

What do you expect from your church as you come back? Think back to what was happening to you at the time you quit attending church. What expectations were not met at that time?

You have the right to expect things of your church. You should find acceptance, warmth, and a sense of belonging. You have the right to be nurtured spiritually and to use your gifts in ministry. You should find a church that has a sense of purpose, one whose mission is clear. Your church

should help you on your way to the kingdom.

These, and others, are legitimate expectations. But let's be realistic. Few members, and therefore few churches, are perfect. Few will be able to meet all of even these basic expectations. The church to which you return will be very similar to the one you left. You will notice changes; and the longer you have been absent, the greater those changes. Your church is still human; it still makes mistakes. You may even find one or two members who will admit to being sinners! But then, what did you expect?

Some of your problems may be the direct result of impossible or unrealistic expectations. You may have legitimate needs that your church may not be able to meet. Very few churches can meet every need for every member. So you may have to look to other sources to meet some of them. For example, if you are the only single parent in a small church, it will be very difficult for that church to meet all your social needs.

As you plan your return to your church, you need to determine the legitimacy of your expectations and be willing to modify some of them. And while thinking about coming back, consider what the church can expect from you.

What Can the Church Expect From You?

Your church has the right to expect that you involve yourself in its life and ministry. You are not needed as a spiritual spectator, but as an active participant. You will need to grow spiritually and find your niche, discover the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has given you to build up the church.

The church to which you are returning deserves your loyalty and support. Remember that stewardship is your response to what God has done for you, not the salving of a guilty conscience or the quieting of some persistent request. More than your money, the church needs your prayers and your loyalty. One of the best ways to meet your own needs is to help others.

The church has its problems, as many people



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I CARE



FACED WITH LOSING ITS YOUTH, THE LOS ANGELES KOREAN CENTRAL CHURCH CARED ENOUGH TO BEGIN A YOUTH CHURCH IN ENGLISH FOR ITS YOUNG PEOPLE. ASSOCIATE PASTOR LEROY KIM NOW NURTURES THIS GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE THAT HAS GROWN IN THE LAST YEAR FROM 75 TO NEARLY 150.

love to point out. But if it is God's church, then you must let Him work on those problems. He surely knows about them and is well able to solve them. He can answer the questions you may have, though it may take some time.

Expectations run both directions. What do you do with unmet expectations?

Dealing With Conflicts

Bill was asked to be head elder. But every time he initiated something, it was blocked by Dan, who had been head elder for 15 years. Instead of talking over the problem, Bill tried to ignore it. When that didn't work, he began to avoid Dan. After eight months of struggling with the situation, Bill exploded and turned in his resignation.

You cannot ignore conflicts without making them worse and ruining relationships. This type of problem may have contributed to your leaving the church.

There is a better way of dealing with these strains—by renegotiation, something we do in relationships all the time. Renegotiating expectations when conflicts occur can help resolve them before they lead to an explosion.

The first step in renegotiation is to clarify your expectations. Learn to talk about what you expect from the church and each other. Then explore how to meet or change these expectations. What can you do without? Are there other ways of meeting your needs? Renegotiation is simply the process of talking about your expectations with others in the church and seeking a mutually satisfying solution.

In order for renegotiation to work, you must be flexible. Ann wanted only one kind of music. She refused to return to her church unless the board voted a policy forbidding any other type. Renegotiation cannot work without mutual give-and-take.

Being willing to forgive provides another vital ingredient in the renegotiation process. Fred was an elderly deacon who had his feelings hurt by another deacon, his closest friend. He refused to forgive him or even to return to church unless his friend admitted that he had intentionally hurt him. In spite of the pastor's work and other friends, this attitude made resolution impossible.

Obviously, moral or biblical principles are non-negotiable, but very few personal problems involve such a standard. Most of us can find alternate ways

Your church

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meet all your

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to satisfy many of our expectations, or can change some of them. Often what drives people out of the church are small, unresolved relationship clashes. Flexibility, forgiveness, and communication provide keys to effective renegotiation.

We have looked at a number of things that will prove helpful as you return to your church, but the most significant is your relationship with God.

Your walk with God has a great deal to do with your desire to come back to church. The Holy Spirit is leading you back. After all, of what use is it for you to return if it does not help you in your walk with God, if you do not have a relationship with Him? Coming back to church may help your relationship with Him, but if you come back to church without Him, what good will it do?

God wants His church to be a family of believers who center their lives on Him. As you return, seek Him. He has promised that you will find Him. Your return can strengthen your spiritual life.

If you return to God or strengthen your relationship with Him as you come back to the church, you will be a stronger member. Your life will be more meaningful, and you won't drop out again as long as you continue to grow in Him. Ultimately, returning to church finds its real meaning in a closer walk with the Lord. This walk will provide a foundation for clarifying and renegotiating your expectations and church membership.

We want you back. God wants you back. The Holy Spirit is leading you back. He will provide the strength and courage—whatever you need to come back. Put your trust in Him. He won't let you down.



Ben Maxson is associate director of Church Ministries in the Carolina Conference.

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We Came Back

BY HARRIET STONE

Sabbath morning. The nearly empty pews waited to welcome the congregation. I huddled at the end of one of those pews near the back of the sanctuary, ready to leave at the first hint of inner rebellion.

I hadn't attended church for months. Once, a year earlier, my husband and I had dared to venture into this sanctuary for the church service.

My memory of that first Sabbath was sharp as I kept a lookout for that same too-friendly greeter who had said all the correct words of welcome. I didn't need her just now any more than I had needed her then.

Members-only had stared as we'd ascended the front steps that year-ago Sabbath. As though we'd drifted in from outer space.

The sermon had been good. "A teaching kind of minister," my husband had said. Again the correct words while we were being ushered along the line of platform participants on our way out the front door.

We didn't go back. For many long bitter weeks before that Sabbath, we had nursed our resentment over some shabby treatment. Not all who travel the "pilgrim pathway" are destined for sainthood, and we had encountered some Adventists whose halos definitely were slipping.

We needed time, we said, time away from uninspiring corporate worship. Time to become reacquainted with each other after nearly a decade of a too-busy lifestyle.

Those Sabbaths spent at home during the long months of self-imposed exile were sweet and peaceful. We slept late, enjoyed leisurely meals, went for walks, and read and read.

And we talked. We complained about the inconsistencies we saw in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We agonized over the treatment at the hands of those who were supposed to be such wonderful Christians.

So the winter slipped away, and we continued our solitary Sabbathkeeping. The solitude began to wear thin, however. Sometimes on Sabbath I wished I were a part of the congregation, joining in the singing, putting my tithe in the offering plate, exchanging greetings with fellow Seventh-day Adventists.

Maybe, just maybe, we hadn't given that little church a fair trial. I decided to attend one more time. I set the target date for a Sabbath several weeks in the future.

I didn't go. I let my husband talk me into staying home again. But as I stood at the kitchen window watching the falling rain, I knew I didn't want to spend any more Sabbaths in exile.

The following Sabbath I went to the church, arriving at least 10 minutes before Sabbath school was to begin. I couldn't face the crowd on the steps again.

Finding a Refuge

I was welcomed warmly, but quickly escaped the group of greeters in the foyer to find refuge at the end of one of the pews in the rear of the sanctuary. I was not ready to leap back into churchgoing Adventism. I was here as an observer.

The pews were shining, the windows sparkled, the carpet was well vacuumed, hymnals and title envelopes were orderly. The song service was refreshing and the opening remarks pertinent. Someone read the mission story. Was the mission quarterly still in existence? The large churches I had attended for years scorned such simple, outdated features as the mission story.

I had been assaulted by entertainment to keep me from being bored with Sabbath school, interspersed with starchy, professionally prepared productions that allowed no room for warmth or informality. Indeed, I was once a Sabbath school superintendent myself, involved in the Hollywood and the starch of these serious attempts to create a meaningful Sabbath school.

But I found a quiet simplicity in this sanctuary. Missing were the glitz and polished professionalism to which I had become so wearily accustomed.

Sabbath school classtime. Here again I found quietness and purpose. Two or three pews in the class I chose to attend were filled



with persons who had obviously studied their Sabbath school lesson. I, who hadn't turned the pages of a lesson quarterly for years unless pressed into service to teach a class, vowed to be a better prepared participant if I should come again.

The church service uplifted me. Surprised, confused, I escaped before the closing hymn. I had had enough for one Sabbath and needed time to think. I didn't want to believe corporate worship could hold any meaning for me, even though solitary worship was not the answer either.

My husband, his curiosity piqued, joined me the next Sabbath. I shouldn't attend church alone, he said. We should worship together.

We continued to attend on a fairly regular basis, but warily fended off any suggestions for transferring our membership. We would be observers, thank you, not participants.

An invitation to stay for a fellowship dinner, warm greetings from members of the congregation, a phone call to say we were missed—our reserve began to yield. Soon we were welcomed into membership again.

Time and the grace of God have washed away much of the bitterness and hurt. The flaws that originally contributed to our apathy still exist in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

God deals with individuals. He directed me, I firmly believe, to this congregation, where my husband and I have found a church home. Differences of opinion are evident in this group, and members sometimes rub each other the wrong way. But these are real people—warm, caring, sincere in their worship. As busy, active members, we now join them each Sabbath morning, no longer exiles. □

Harriet Stone is a pseudonym.

I stopped looking at them . . .

Although I was out of the church for eight years, I never felt comfortable working in my garden on Sabbath. As I saw the signs of Christ's coming being fulfilled at an accelerating rate, I knew it was time to come back to the Adventist Church. So I decided to forget what church members had said or done to offend me, stop looking at others, and become an Adventist again to meet my own spiritual needs.

Bill

People in the church said they missed me . . .

I left because I was going through a divorce and didn't know who to talk to, and no one knew what to say to me. I also started smoking marijuana, which separated me further and made it harder for others to approach me. But my parents continued praying for me and inviting me to church concerts, which they knew I'd enjoy. Many times I would come to a church program just to see a friend who was visiting from out of town. And people were kind to me. When I came back, people would say, "Glad to see you. We missed you."

Later my fiancée became interested in the Adventist Church and felt she should start attending. I tried to warn her of what the church was really like, but she felt it was right. I had not thrown out my books, and she began reading them. She was baptized, and I came back because of her.

At first I was nervous to come back. I thought people would be cool to me because of my "multi-married" condition. But they weren't. Between the time I left the church and the time I came back, members had taken to wearing more jewelry. That was hard for me to accept, especially since I had explained to my wife that we didn't wear jewelry. I even questioned how serious everyone (in-

cluding my family) was about his religion, but the warmth of Jesus made the difference. I realized that it wasn't everyone else that needed to change. Getting closer to Jesus Christ made the difference for me. I quit worrying about what others thought or did, and concentrated on my relationship with Jesus. *Dane*

The love of friends drew us back . . .

My wife and I grew up Seventh-day Adventists. My dad was a staunch member, a pillar of the church.

In the early 1980s, however, my wife and I got caught up in theological debates. Discouraged by all the arguing, we stopped coming to church. In fact, we stayed away almost two years.

But we came back. We had friends in the church who loved us too much to let us go. The love of those friends eventually drew us back to church.

We have found our footing now, and teach a Sabbath school class. *Peter*

My brother invited me . . .

When my older brother started going back to church after more than 15 years, I began to feel that my life lacked something. He invited me to come back. I came, but with a lot of apprehension. And I stayed. The support of my extended family has been invaluable during these two years. Without them, I probably would have left. *Juan*

My life lacked happiness . . .

I stopped going to church several years ago. After going through many bad experiences, I realized only recently that my life lacked happiness. I thought that coming back to church would help me find that happiness. Eventually things started changing, and I felt better. It was easy to come back to the Adventist Church because I was familiar with it from my background. *Ivijeane*

Are You Hurting?

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

That lovely story *The Trip to Bountiful* tells about an old woman who dreams of going home. Walled in now by the city apartment with her son and his pouting wife, she longs to

go back to Bountiful, Texas, where she grew up and raised her son.

The movie version opens with a slow-motion scene of a young woman running through the fields, her arms stretched out to receive her boy, who comes to meet her. In the background we hear the old gospel song "Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling . . . Come home! come home!"

Are you hurting? I expect you are. Leaving the church—for whatever reason—is like leaving home.

Some kids break away from the nest with angry words and hard feelings; some don't feel wanted, and drift away; some get kicked out. But always there's pain. Home ought to be the place where we're wanted, accepted, missed.

And so you left the church, and you're hurting. Perhaps you feel as if you can't stand the church, or the church can't stand you. But you hurt nonetheless. You hurt for home.

How do I know many "missing" Adventists are hurting? Because I have friends among them, and because of their letters.

A few months ago the *Adventist Review* printed several articles about missing and inactive members. That issue went far and wide and touched many missing Adventists—maybe even you. I've been hearing from "the missing" since.

One man left the church long ago—in fact, he joined another denomination 40 years ago. Another former member wrote in anger, professing himself glad to be free of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But he requested that we send him a copy of the *Review* when we printed his letter.

A woman from Colorado, who signed herself "A Prodigal Daughter," wrote: "This is just one little letter, but I hope that its message will not go unnoticed. The church can be doctrinally pure, but please, please, let that doctrine be richly enshrined in a love that manifests itself in welcoming smiles, warm handshakes, follow-up, and friendships." Do you feel as she does?

Or maybe you hurt like the South Carolina friend who said she doesn't go back to church because she's too ashamed. "It would take much love and support for me to show my face again," she wrote, "though I long for the fellowship of an Adventist Christian. Please, dear church, let your love and show of love pull us back into the flock. The forces of the world are so strong—they are relentless in their pull on us. We missing members love and need you. But we must know we're loved and wanted."

Friend, I don't know you, but I hurt with you. You *belong* here with me, with us, in the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Home isn't the same without you. I long to see you back among us—where you belong.

Jesus Hurts Too

I believe Jesus hurts with you also. In Luke 15 He told three lost-and-found stories—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost brother(s). Each of these stories has a family setting—the sheep lost from the flock, the piece of silver in the home, the father and the two sons. Jesus isn't talking about finding people who have never heard of God, but about those who somehow became separated from the family.

Jesus hurts when you leave home.

Jesus wants to draw you back.

And Jesus rejoices when you come home!

In Jesus' story of the prodigal son, the young man "came to himself" in the far country. He was hurting—hungry, lonely, friendless. And he said to himself, "I will arise and go to my father".

Are you hurting for home? Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling: "Come home! Come home! You who are weary, come home!"

It's hard to go back. Going back suggests that we failed in some way. Going back means risk: Will anyone want us at home?

I have a close friend who joined the "missing" many years ago. Last year she had serious surgery—surgery that brought God and His

*It's hard
not to
go back*



love very close to her, but that also led her to a decision. She would go home.

"I never felt as though I had left the church," she told me. "I simply stopped attending. I would never have joined another church."

She was 13 when she quit attending church; she is now 70. She would go home—after 57 years she would go home. But would the church accept her? "I decided to give them a chance," she says.

And so she went home. And the church did accept her: they welcomed her in, made her feel wanted, special.

It's hard not to go back. It's hard to go on hurting, knowing that we belong at home, knowing that others hurt for us.

If you are hurting, you need someone to talk to, someone to whom you can open up your heart, someone who won't be shocked by whatever resentment or anger or frustration or disappointment or shame may boil out. Someone who can listen. Someone who knows God, and who will talk easily about Him.

Know someone like that? Get in touch with him or her. Tell that person where and why you hurt, and how you want to go home.

If you can't think of someone like that, go to the telephone directory. Look up the number for the nearest SDA church and give the pastor a call. Tell him or her that you've read this article and you want to talk about coming home.

Or give me or one of the other *Adventist Re-*

view staff a call. We're here to help you—to help you come home. Our number is (301) 680-6560.

Don't forget to give God a call. Get on the hot line—we call it prayer—and pour out your heart to Him. Tell Him your hopes and doubts (Is it any use trying?). Tell Him your frustrations and fears (Will anything have changed?). Tell Him everything. Speak to Him as you would to your best friend.

And then listen. Stay quietly kneeling or sitting, and wait for Him. He may have a word for you; give Him equal time, although He won't demand it.

Then go to that good old Book, the best book ever written. Take it down from the shelf and open it to Luke 15. Read the whole chapter. Read it slowly. Close your eyes and think about it. Put yourself into it. *You* are that lost sheep, that lost piece of silver, that lost child.

Lost! But God, God the loving Father, waits for you, looks out for you, strains His ear to hear your decision: "I will arise and go to my Father . . ." Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling: "Come home! Come home! You who are weary, come home!" □



William G. Johnsson is editor of the Adventist Review.

Your Heritage

I believe in Jesus, and so do you. He is the Son of God, the Messiah who lived among us and died on the cross for our sins, who one day soon will come again.

The church is *His* church. He died to redeem her, to present her to God a beautiful bride, spotless and pure (Eph. 5:25-27). No, not a perfect church—at least not yet. But *His* church.

If we love Jesus, if we believe He is our Saviour and Lord, we *belong* in His church. As Christians we don't stand alone; because we're joined to Him, we're joined to one another. We're all part of one body—His body, the church.

Church is home—your home, where you belong—despite its problems and failings.

And there is no other church like the Seventh-day Adventist church. Here the Sabbath is cherished—what a blessing! Here the hope of the Second Coming glows bright, is burned into our name. Here we find a people of prophecy, a worldwide mission inviting men and women back to the Creator of heaven and earth. Here we find the "everlasting gospel" calling the world to give glory to God in these last days.

This is *your* heritage; this is *your* home.

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It's more than a health message. It's a mission for life.

A family of four from England, had been vacationing in Florida for about three weeks when the father began feeling ill. When his condition worsened, he was admitted to Florida Hospital; tests showed he'd suffered a brain hemorrhage.

One of the nurses on the man's unit learned that her patient's son would have his fifth birthday in three days. Even though, their family was going through a tough time, the nurse knew that every child needs to celebrate his birthday. So the nurses on the unit planned a party complete with cake and gifts. The following Sunday, a Florida

Hospital social worker treated both sons to a day at Disney World. "The loving care we received at Florida Hospital helped us through our crisis," the man's wife said. The staff worked on my husband's physical recovery and our whole family's emotional one."

At Florida Hospital our mission goes beyond physical healing. We have a mission for life... eternal life.



FLORIDA HOSPITAL®