

ADVENTIST Review

SEPTEMBER 19, 1996

Cutting Edge

**Does Our
Upbringing
Define Us?**

**How to
Choose
the
Right
Career**



LETTERS

Something to Sing About

I have just finished reading the



marvelous story of Janice Chandler ("True to Her Convictions," July 18). How I would love to hear that wonderful voice singing God's

praises. Wouldn't it be a Sabbath blessing if we could hear her, say, on tape?

—**Leona Dial**

PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

How it saddens me to see my church's "stricture" perceived as "prohibiting" and "demanding." All these terms, within and without the contexts of the article, seem to leave no room for personal choice.

I chose to be an Adventist and I choose to continue to be because of the freedom it gives me now and will give me throughout eternity. Like Daniel of old, Janice Chandler will be blessed for choosing to follow God's way rather than the world's.

—**Terry Loss**

LEAVENWORTH, WASHINGTON
VIA E-MAIL

For those unaware, the Chandler piece, which first appeared in the Baltimore Sun magazine, was written by a non-Adventist.—Editors.

Renewed Hope

For some reason, in the midst of anguish, I scribbled a letter ("Still Hope?" Readers' Exchange, July 18, p. 7) to you asking for help, for advice in my continual failure at faithfulness to my Lord and Saviour. My backsliding was eroding my faith and my strength.

I just never believed you would print that letter. In all my years of attending Adventist churches and schools, never have I felt the power of church family and the matchless love of Jesus as I have from the countless strangers who wrote to me, reflecting (in ways that have brought me to tears and to my knees) on the infinite love and mercy God has for me—even me!—and for all of us. How can I express it? Tears don't seem to be enough.

I thank you and thank God for sharing with others my struggle, which of course will never really end until Jesus comes. But this beautiful church God is guiding and my brothers and sisters in Christ who are praying for me (and I for them) have given me hope in an indifferent world and dissipated my loneliness.

No friends? No family? No problem. I have Christ in me, I have God around me, and now I have pen pals who will stand with me on the soon-to-come last day of this sin-sick world's history.

Thank you so much.

—**D.M.P.**

518 S. DALLAS STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

This woman's letter represents a growing reader-to-reader ministry spurred by our new Readers' Exchange feature (see p. 7). To those who have privately encouraged D.M.P. and others, we salute you.—Editors.

Called to Integrity

I found Kit Watts's "The Call to Integrity" (July 18) to be succinct and clarifying. Watts begins by describing a game. Could that be her central point? That we're in a continuous game of self-deception?

The final two paragraphs offer the greatest challenge to those who believe in Christian education: integrating our emotions, our intellect, and our actions. It will keep us busy for a long time.

—**Clarence Dunbebin**

TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
VIA E-MAIL

New Review (cont.)

The improvements and new faces of the *Review* have been nothing less than superb.

My 23-year-old daughter has been spending considerable time in recent issues and even made a comment the other day when she saw a young person on the cover. Keep up the good work!

—**Harry Bennett, Jr.**

VIA E-MAIL

Too Simplistic

Dr. Samuel DeShay's July 11 statement that "a diet made up exclusively of fruits, vegetables, and grains practically guarantees a reduction in weight" suggests a much too simplistic view toward weight reduction.

Many of our church members

follow a diet close to what he suggests but still struggle with weight gain. I disagree that the intake of food is the main cause of weight gain. More factors contribute to that problem than people are willing to discuss.

I work quite extensively with people who struggle with problem eating and weight management. In my experience, food in itself is not the real problem. There are psychological and emotional issues that may underlie weight gain.

—C. Serena Gui, Ph.D.

MARIETTA, GEORGIA

Stump's Jump

I hope you won't mind a minor correction to your editor's response to John A. Lockley's letter in the June 20 issue:

Sheila Jackson Lee is not the first Adventist Democrat elected to the House of Representatives. Bob Stump was first elected as a Democrat in 1976 and served under that party label before switching to the Republican Party in the 1980s.

—Ray Minner

CALHOUN, GEORGIA

Grow Up, Wake Up

Regarding William Johnsson's "In Your Face" (July 18).

Having just read a documentary about World War II prisoners of war in the Asian war zone and the atrocities they were subject to, it is a wonder any survived and returned to their homeland. Pick up any major newspaper and read of the inhumanity in Bosnia, Rwanda, etc.—it seems nothing changes.

In this country we are blessed with material goods and unprecedented spiritual opportunities. Yet so many of us waste our time nitpicking/debating over things either unsolvable or inconsequential to anyone's salvation. The warning in Revelation 3 is a constant reminder of how wretched,

poor, miserable, and blind we truly are.

In addition to "grow up," perhaps the call should be to "wake up."

—Bettigene D. Reiswig

PORT ORFORD, OREGON

Keep Talking

I was happy to hear about the talks with the Worldwide Church of God (July 25). In 1954 I attended a lecture in Manchester, England, given by Herbert W. Armstrong. I believe he has been one of the most powerful Christian communicators in modern times. It is tragic to learn that some of his followers are forsaking their convictions regarding the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath. Building bridges of understanding with sincere Christians in any other denomination makes good sense.

—John Arthur

HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

What Color Is Worship? (cont.)

As an African-American teenager raised in the Adventist faith, I have always been amazed at the segregation within the church (see "What Color Is Worship?" July NAD Edition). Many of my friends from church are angry with it also. Some are completely enraged.

It's true that different groups have different worship styles, but we are all of the same faith and it is imperative that we learn to worship together. It will take some time for us to mingle a little, but we are living in the last days. If ever there was a time to step out of our "comfort zones" it is surely now.

—Ruby Agoha

COUNTRY CLUB HILLS, ILLINOIS

ADVENTIST Review

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Miracles by the Mile

Alone, stranded in a big city, she still found herself surrounded by God's love.

ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly..."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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Bible Course Students from 1,200 Schools to Graduate October 5



Discover Bible School instructor Nancy Gibbons in Orlando, Florida, was among thousands of church members across the United States and Canada who prepared adults and youth in their communities for the first-ever division-wide Voice of Prophecy graduation in North America.

Opening night of NET '96 will include the presentation of DISCOVER Bible course diplomas to adults and youth all across the United States and Canada. It's the first time ever that Bible School students in cities and towns throughout North America will simultaneously graduate from a Voice of Prophecy course.

The history-making event on Sabbath, October 5, features Lonnie Melashenko's "commencement address" by satellite uplink from the NET '96 auditorium in Orlando. Pastors and instructors at over 1,200 locally operated Discover Bible Schools will then hand out diplomas to those who have completed the course.

Churches set up Discover Bible Schools earlier this year as one means of preparing interests for the NET '96 meetings. Leaders of many local schools have indicated they plan to continue beyond the evangelistic series because they believe sharing the gospel through the DISCOVER Bible Guides will continue to pay baptismal dividends for their churches.

"If your church doesn't yet have a Discover Bible School, write or phone today for information on how to get started. You can tap the Voice of Prophecy's nearly 55 years of Bible School experience and effectively share the gospel with your community. You'll soon have neighbors and friends completing the course and ready to attend evangelistic meetings."

**— E. LONNIE MELASHENKO
SPEAKER, VOICE OF PROPHECY**



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Joe Klein's Commitment

Those of us in the Washington, D.C., area watched a fascinating journalistic drama unfold this year. What started out as a lark turned into a storm about ethics—and commitment.

The center of media speculation was *Primary Colors*, an anonymous satire from Random House. A thinly veiled novel about the Clintons and the 1992 United States presidential campaign, the book had to have been written by a Washington insider. But by whom?

Joe Klein, columnist for *Newsweek* and political consultant for CBS, seemed a likely candidate. He, however, repeatedly denied any involvement; in an interview for CBS he stated: "It's not me. I didn't do it. This is silly."

New York Magazine ran an article by a Vassar professor who, using computer analysis of the book's language, concluded that Klein was the author. Still Klein denied it. When David Von Drehle, an editor of the *Washington Post*, asked him if he would stake his journalistic credibility on it, Klein replied: "I'm telling you, I didn't write it."

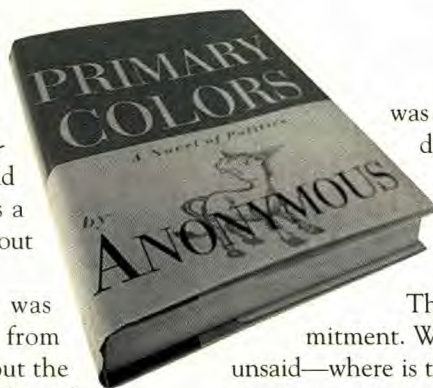
The hunt for Anonymous grabbed reporters' attention nationwide. Fueled by the speculation, sales of *Primary Colors* soared from a modest beginning to more than 1 million copies in hardback, with translations into German and Dutch and a movie in the offing. Anticipating royalties of \$6 million, Anonymous had become a wealthy man overnight.

Then in July the *Washington Post* ended the game. By studying the handwritten changes in the manuscript of *Primary Colors*, they established that the author was the one who had repeatedly denied it, who had staked his professional reputation on it—Joe Klein.

With the revelation the roof fell in on Klein. At first he seemed bemused by the criticisms from his fellow journalists: hammered by reporters at a press conference, he tried to downplay the matter and told them to go get a life.

But the storm would not blow by so easily. Members of the press felt that Klein had damaged them all by eroding the trust on which every publication finally depends. Klein then wrote a column for *Newsweek*, "A Brush With Anonymity" (July 29, 1996), in which he sounded more contrite.

In this column Klein zeroed in on his commitments. "I



was caught between two commitments, two different ethical systems—book publishing and journalism. . . . But I eventually came out in favor of keeping my commitment to the publisher and my book."

That's an interesting perspective on commitment. What troubles me most is what it leaves unsaid—where is the commitment to truth? Where is the commitment to one's own being, to follow, as Shakespeare put it:

"This above all: To thine ownself be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man" (*Hamlet*, Act I, scene 3).

If Joe Klein were on my staff, he'd be looking for another job.

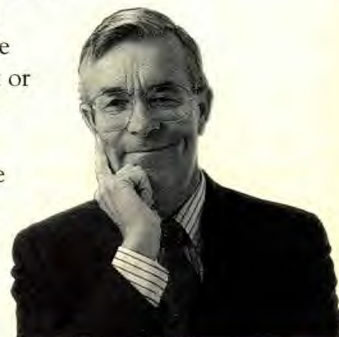
But it's probably unfair to single out Joe Klein as a bad fellow. I don't know him, but I suspect that he merely reflects the ethics of our age. Today, commitment doesn't seem to mean very much for most people. They say "I do," but don't; "I will," but won't.

Anytime a society turns away from absolutes—God, and in this context, the Ten Commandments—commitment drops onto a sliding scale. My wishes, my gain, my interests dictate behavior.

We Seventh-day Adventists must be people of commitment. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). We make high claims, and the world has a right to see in us men and women who keep their word, whose yes means yes and whose no means no (Matt. 5:37).

The saga of Joe Klein also causes us at the *Adventist Review* to search our hearts. Not infrequently we wrestle with questions of whether to print or not to print; or if to print, how to print. Our work is not merely journalism, but ministry. We strive always to be honest, truthful, and forthright, but also redemptive; to glorify our Lord and to help build up His church.

That's our commitment to you.



Stumbling Along the Road to Perfection

I want to be perfect. I want to be an extrovert, be happy, weigh 120 pounds, have an IQ of 160, speak four languages, love broccoli and hate chocolate, be so disciplined that I can get out of bed at 5:00 a.m., spend an hour doing aerobics, an hour praying, and . . . better make that 4:00 a.m.! (Believe it or not, I know people like that.) Then there must be quality time for family, and enough left over to volunteer at church and in the community and have a few causes on the side . . . and preach the gospel to the world, too.

Some people just seem to have it all together. Some laid-back souls don't care if they have it together or not (we all have a relative or two like that). Some pretend they do. Others spend much of their time planning how they can live perfect lives. Maybe I'm one of those. I keep hoping for a perfect day—just one! I thought I made it once until I stepped on the cat while getting into bed (at 9:00 p.m. of course). His eyes widened, his claws came out, he hissed, and then in a defensive maneuver he bit me. Next Ms. Perfection chased him down the stairs, intent on revenge. He was promptly banished to the garage for the night. Thus ended a “perfect” day.

I've been talking about ordinary perfection that ordinary people strive for. But on those high theological planes inhabited by scholars and those who want to be scholars, we hear about another kind of perfection. Its place in sanctification (another theological word) has been debated for centuries. Christians who believe they need to work at being perfect to enter heaven we call legalists. I keep reading about this species but have never met anyone who would admit to being one. Perhaps legalists are too busy giving lectures, taking videos, fund-raising, or writing newsletters. I suppose we run in different social circles, for our paths have never crossed.

But for whatever motive, being perfect becomes a preoccupation for many people. And remember, I'm talking about the ordinary use of the word. In the Bible *perfect* usually means “mature.” Biblical maturity doesn't sound nearly so interesting to us—maybe too much like an AARP* publication.

Why do so many people want to be perfect? Do they

want to please God, or themselves? I suspect the latter—in fact, I know that's the truth in my case. Sure, I talk about witnessing, but being perfectly disciplined would greatly enhance my sagging ego.

Theologically I have no illusions that being perfect would reserve a seat for me near the heavenly throne. Why then do I want to be perfect, and with every attempt fall back further than before? Wouldn't I be happier just walking with Jesus, focusing on His life (and thus excelling), rather than with gritted teeth

stumbling down the road to perfection?

Psychologists and others often blame religion for the guilt people feel when they can't live perfect lives. But I believe the desire is a state of mind that has little to do with religion. Granted, some religions do tend to attract wanna-be perfectionists more than others.

Religionists may use the concept to control people at times, but I think it's something we choose to help us feel worthwhile. Atheists can be perfectionists as well as Adventists. New Agers have replaced the “demeaning” idea of perfection with such concepts as “harmony with the universe.” But whether you walk on fiery coals or up to a church door on your knees, it's all the same thing—to gain some sense of personal strength or importance.

Actually, we *can* claim perfection, but not in the way I remember one group's doing. Once in California my husband and I visited a Unitarian church as part of a class assignment. The pastor asked the audience to stand and chant “I am perfect; I am perfect”—and they did. (No, we didn't participate.) To use the latest psychological term, I would say they were in denial!

Now, as I understand the gospel, when it comes to our salvation, perfection is the goal, and only One of us has led a perfect life. When we allow Christ's life to stand in place of ours, we can say “I am perfect in Him.”

* In the U.S., the American Association of Retired Persons.



*Thus ended a
“perfect” day.*

GIVE & TAKE

ADVENTIST QUOTES

"After going 10 days without radio or TV news, my brain went into screen-saver mode."

—Trent Truman, designer for *Insight* magazine, after participating in January's "Vacation From Noise," sponsored by the North American Division Youth Department

"If you are serious about Christ, Satan is serious about you."

—Pastor Ken Brummel, at the West Lenexa (Kansas) church

"We are not citizens of earth trying to leave this planet. We are citizens of heaven trying to get home."

—Wintley Phipps, to the Seabrook (Maryland) church

WE NEED YOU

Give & Take is your page. Send your "Adventist Quotes," top-quality photos, "Adventist Life" vignettes, "Readers' Exchange" items, and other short contributions to: Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; CompuServe: 74532,2564.

ADVENTIST LIFE

During a recent Sabbath school program put on by children, a 6-year-old girl completely forgot how her memory verse began.

Her mother, seated in the front row, mouthed the words of Jesus: "I am the light of the world."

The little girl relaxed and radiated with confidence. Then, in a voice like a cheerleader's, she called out, "My mother is the light of the world!"

—Penny Nielsen, Weaver, Alabama



READERS' EXCHANGE

In this feature, readers help other readers with their unanswered questions. Send correspondence to the individual, not to the Adventist Review.

PARENT PRESSURE: Being an Adventist couple who have chosen to not have children, my husband and I have had a difficult time dealing with other Adventists who think it is our duty to become parents. Has anyone else had this problem? How are you handling it? I would welcome any advice and/or encouragement.

—Lisa M. Doll, Graham, Washington 98338-0312

PEN PAL WANTED: I am a Canadian living in northern Ontario. Very few Adventists live here, and I feel very isolated. I would enjoy corresponding with other Adventists across North America.

—Charles Mills, South Porcupine, Ontario, Canada PON-IKO

BEACH EVANGELISM



JESUS BY THE SEA: On a recent Sabbath walk at Ocean City, Maryland, *Review* editorial secretary Jean Sequeira and daughter Jenny happened upon this impressive sand formation—and unique way to witness. "The sculptor had been working on it all weekend," says Sequeira. "Hundreds of people stopped to watch him."

The *Review* continues to welcome photographs that carry a Christian message or that depict any element of Adventist life, from summer camp to church campouts. Send contributions to the Give & Take address at left. Payment upon acceptance.

PHOTO BY JEAN SEQUEIRA



How to Choose the Right Career—And Know It

Should you rely only on your aptitudes?
What about the amount you will earn?

BY DWAIN ESMOND

THE CURRENT ECONOMIC climate in America is tenuous at best. The administration claims that the economy is expanding, but many American workers are not feeling the benefits.

Technological advances and deregulation have created a free-for-all in many industries. To compete better, companies are laying off workers at an alarming rate. AT&T, for instance, will cut its workforce by some 40,000 positions in the next three years. In the merger of Chemical Bank and Chase Manhattan last year, 12,000 workers became expendable.

Since 1990 the impetus to reorganize has led to the elimination of 63,000 jobs at IBM, 50,000 at Sears-Roebuck, and 28,000 at Boeing. In 1995 alone U.S. corporations announced that nearly a half million people would be laid off. Wages have declined drastically in the past 20 years, and the gulf that now exists between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is becoming an ocean as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

In such an unstable economic environment, how can you choose the right career and know it? I believe that God would not leave us without an answer to such an important question.

Criteria I've Discovered

1. Seek God's guidance. In your choice of a career, do not overlook God. Yes, I know you've heard it before, but asking God to lead you in your decision-making is the best thing you can do.

As a person contemplating a career choice, you must come to one inescapable reality: "In his heart a [man or woman] plans [his or her] course, but the Lord determines [his or her] steps" (Prov. 16:9).*

"When I was a teenager I thought I wanted to be an orthodontist," says Kim, an advertising copywriter. "When I got a little older, I found that there was no way that I could get my fingers into someone's mouth and make anything positive happen. God goes way beyond us in knowing what would make us happy. I have always looked to God for what's next, because He knows." All of our plans will fail if we do not recognize that God is the One who directs our steps.

2. Dream! "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children" (*Education*, p. 18). Tell God your dreams. God is a dreamer.

3. Identify your strengths and weaknesses. It is important in your choice of a career that you find out what you are good at. There are many ways to do so.

For instance, take a look back at your grade reports from



junior high school, high school, and college. What subjects have you done well in consistently?

Also, many colleges offer aptitude tests that are designed to identify your natural abilities. Why not take one or two?

4. *Seek the counsel of others.*

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Prov.

15:22). I know that you probably feel as if you get enough advice already, but hear me out. Oftentimes—not always—our parents and loved ones are not consulted when we choose a career, even though they can often sense when we are about to make a mistake. Sometimes they even give bad advice, but we still need it.

For example, Becky, a 23-year-old editorial intern, remembers being given tons of advice. "I knew what I wanted to do when I was, maybe, 5 years old. But for about 10 years I got misled by well-meaning people who gave advice. I always knew that I wanted to do something with books and writing. People kept encouraging me to get into more lucrative fields," she says with a grin.

Like Becky, you may find that the advice you get is not always the best. Thank God for it anyway, because it will help you to define your goals, if nothing else.

5. *Be flexible.* Michelle, an editorial secretary, always thought that she would be in the medical field. "When I decided to get married so young I had to choose a career that would allow me to finish school soon and begin working." That meant that she had to put her dreams on hold.

In spite of the fact that this was not her first career choice, Michelle has seen God's leading in her present position. "As I look back, I can truly see how the Lord has used this career option to work with my character and my overall development."

You may not achieve your goals right away—few people do. The key is to remain patient and willing to serve God in whatever capacity you have been called.

Finding True Fulfillment

We all want to feel some sense of fulfillment from the work that we do. In the secular world this sense of fulfillment is measured by one's success in one's work. Material wealth and professional recognition are the pleasures for which many are clamoring. We are constantly bombarded with images of expensive houses, cars, clothes, etc. Do these

Choosing—And Rechoosing— A Career

BY JIM FELDBUSH

By my junior year in college I had two years of ministerial preparation under my belt. But something was wrong. I wasn't feeling right about my decision to become a pastor. Instead, I was feeling impressed that I should teach, a vocation I'd never considered before I did a Week of Prayer in a local elementary school. I couldn't seem to get rid of the confusion. Did God want me to teach or preach?

Peace finally came in a conversation with my grandma. What she said has stuck with me ever since. She had no degree in educational counseling; in fact, she had no degree at all. What she did have was a connection with God. "Jim," she said, "you do whatever God tells you to do." And after 17 years of teaching, I know my grandma's advice was best.

Recently I had the kind of job offer that doesn't come along very often. It was what I'd been looking for. I spent several days in prayer, talked with my family, and considered all its possibilities. I ended up turning it down. Although it would have been a great job opportunity, God impressed me that it was not the right time to move my family. I feel God wants me to put the family ahead of my career aspirations. Peace finally came when we made the decision not to move.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Consider all your options, but in the end make sure you've listened to the One who knows it all. I can't tell you how God might communicate this to you, but be sure of this: If you stay connected to God, the answer will come, and you'll know that peace that's beyond understanding!

Jim Feldbush is a teacher and counselor at Mile High Academy, Denver, Colorado.



I'm a Professional Mom

BY KAREN L. MAAS

My true career started before Reg and I were married, when we were comparing dreams and plans and finding out if we could support each other fully in marriage. Reg supported my plans for a career change, and I'm thankful that God blessed us in our choices.

I graduated from Walla Walla College in 1982 with an engineering degree. I did electrical engineering for the company where we worked, until they discovered that I knew computer programming—a slight career change. The next company I worked for was a graphic software developer. I started in the quality assurance department, writing programs to test the company's software in different languages, then handled technical support questions for the customers by phone or bulletin board system (BBS).

When our first daughter was born, I began my career of choice—a stay-at-home mom. I didn't make an abrupt change, for since I had a home computer, the software company let me work part-time from home, maintaining the customer BBS. And yes, they welcomed baby and me at the weekly technical support meetings.

That lasted until the company merged with another, and the contractors (I was one of them) were laid off.

Now I really was a full-time mom!

It's the career I most enjoy. Since then we've added another daughter, and I've been home-schooling, too. I've been able to schedule my time to include tutoring other students in math, being involved with computers through Adventists On-line, and doing database volunteer work for our local Habitat for Humanity affiliate. I am more active in my church than I could be if I were working away from home, and do hobbies that I'd have to leave alone if I were working for income.

I know my situation may not last forever. I'm thankful we've been able to live on one salary, but even with my husband's engineering salary, it's not that easy. We seem to make it from paycheck to paycheck (though there have been some scary times when we've had to charge groceries—not often, thankfully). We've been wonderfully blessed with a country home and a loving church family.

A stay-at-home mom, professional mom, research assistant in child development, call it what you will—this is my true career choice!

Karen L. Maas writes from Newberg, Oregon.



things really bring us true fulfillment?

After you have followed the steps mentioned above, you will need to determine what your response will be to the Great Commission given to us by God in Matthew 28:19, 20. In this text, Jesus sums up the way to achieve true fulfillment from your work. He says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

I believe that true fulfillment is wrapped up in service to others. It is not enough to merely want to succeed; we must help others along the way. When Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery, how do you think he felt? Just when he was beginning to get a foot up on life, he was accused of rape and thrown into prison.

What amazes me about Joseph, however, is that while in prison he did

not sulk or complain about his predicament, although he had ample reasons to do so. Joseph took time out to encourage other prisoners.

Two of the king's attendants were imprisoned. "When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected" (Gen. 40:6). With love and compassion he asked, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

They replied, "We both had dreams . . . but there is no one to interpret them" (verses 7, 8). Joseph, through the power of God, interpreted their dreams.

Lessons

I wanted to be a corporate lawyer because of the potential to make gobs of money. The concept of helping others to find Jesus—service—never entered my mind.

During my sophomore year of college I grew spiritually. With my spiritual growth came a nagging feeling that I had not submitted everything in my life to God's

leading. That was when I asked God to direct every facet of my life, including my choice of a career. God showed me that my choice of a profession was not wrong. However, my reasons for choosing it were.

In our career choices we must see much more than an opportunity to make money or fulfill our own dreams; we must help others find the interpretations to their dreams. God gives true fulfillment when we help others come to a knowledge of who He is.

How can you choose the right career and know it? Make service to God and others your first priority. ■

* Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

Dwain Esmond was a graduate editorial intern at the Review and Herald, with Message and Celebration magazines, at the time of writing this article.



Who Gets the Rain?

Sometimes it's good to stop and think about what exactly happens when we pray.

BY BIZ FAIRCHILD REYNOLDS

They prayed for rain. Midwestern farmers who had their lives tied up in rows of dusty soybeans and acres of corn barely surviving in dry, cracked, sand-colored soil. Entire congregations met for an all-day prayer session at the edge of a stunted milo field. They prayed, pleaded, and begged for a soaking rain, demanding at least two inches. Their discouraged pastor drove home in a cloud of dust that settled over the few stunted roadside flowers. It was 102 degrees Fahrenheit, and the sky was clear blue. His church, made up of hardworking farmers clustered in this drought-deadened valley, was a loyal, tithe-paying, honest congregation.

They didn't pray for rain. In fact, they never prayed for anything. Guy and his three sons run a huge farm in Kansas. It is a successful farm, providing for three families, six hired hands, and Guy's mother, who lives in a trailer behind the modern farmhouse. Guy and his sons spend seven days a week in the fields. Even during drought years, Guy's farm seemed to be one of the lucky few that got the chance rain, that stayed green when for 90 miles around other farms had stunted, brown wheat. Guy's wheat was thick and green, his corn tall and tasseled. On his farm it rained four inches in April; five inches in May. Guy made quite a profit. And none of it went into tithes.

The town of Mayburg is hot in July. Mrs. Johnson's grass is turning brown, just in time for the church picnic to be held in her yard. She reads her Bible, closes it, and politely prays for a little rain . . .

Two streets over, the Grant family is almost finished putting up new siding on their house. At family worship they ask Jesus

to please hold back the rain for at least another week . . .

The Joneses are planning a campout for the Pathfinders and are praying for a dry weekend . . .

The gravel road to the Millers' house is dusty, and Glen Miller prays for rain to hold the dust down so he doesn't have to wash his car before leaving for camp meeting . . .

The Neals' garden needs a soaking . . .

Gibsons' roof leaks, and Mr. Gibson can't fix it until vacation time next Wednesday . . .

Half the town (mostly nice people) is praying for (and expecting) rain. Half the town is praying for (and expecting) a dry week.

Who gets the rain?

Rain falls where unpredictable weather patterns decide to drop it. God could play Santa Claus, climbing each rooftop in Mayburg and dropping appropriate amounts of rain into each yard. But most of the time God allows natural occurrences to occur naturally.

Prayer isn't just an easy solution. Not just a way for humans to get God to give them what they want. Although I believe strongly in prayer, and in miracles, and in God's intervention on people's behalf on many occasions, I don't believe that God is going to give us whatever we ask for just because we said a proper prayer.

Our world is full of sin—has been for years. Each generation of us (as sinners) is paying the consequences. God isn't going to cure all cancers, water all dry gardens, heal every skinned knee instantly, or make every good Christian person rich. We are left on this earth for a while to see sin and Satan as they really are. We will learn to cope, to live by faith, to survive. But although



our "bread and water will be sure," God is not going to pamper us just because we can quote a lot of Bible texts.

How to Pray Wrong

How often do we rattle off the following prayer, or something close to it? "Lord, please help me to get a good grade on today's math test. Help Grandma to get over her pneumonia. Help my headache to go away, and help me to stop eating all these Snickers bars. Help me to get that summer job I want. Bless our family and the missionaries and the colporteurs. Amen."

So while we're at it, why not go ahead and ask for \$10,000? And for a new Mercedes? And to win the Publishers Clearinghouse Sweepstakes?

Come on! Ask and ye shall receive, right? The Bible says so . . .

When I was in college, I used to pray day and night for the opportunity to marry my then-current boyfriend, Pete. The more I prayed, though, the more I thought about what it would actually *be like* to be married to Pete, and the more I decided it would be rather awful. And that's how my prayer was "answered"—we broke up.

When I did get married (to somebody else) and had a couple kids, I started praying like this: "Make them sleep through the night—I need some rest!" But those babies went ahead and cried. Babies are babies, after all, and if God clammed them up for their mothers every time those mothers requested it,

what an odd bunch of babies there would be in this world. Furthermore, no children would be noisy, messy, cranky, misbehaved, drooling, or less than perfect, because we asked God to "cure" all their natural tendencies!

A woman I knew had a terrible earache. She prayed about it for almost a week. When a neighbor suggested that she try using eardrops, the miserable woman bought some. Delighted with the results, she told me, "Either the eardrops worked, or else the Lord answered my prayer!"

God expects us, if possible, to seek help for ourselves—from a doctor, a want ad, a phone call, an aspirin, a friend. All of these might be our "answer to prayer." You can't pray for wisdom before a test if you haven't studied first. You can't pray for good health if your diet consists of root beer, honey buns, and an occasional apple.

Praying for the Sick

God and the angels must cry when they look down and see hospitals and nursing homes, clinics and infirmaries, crowded and overflowing with misery. This is not what God intended when He so lovingly formed Adam and Eve at Creation and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. We suffer, not because no one is praying on our behalf, but because of sin's influence.

People who pray for the sick to get well are often discouraged when that person gets worse instead of better. Again, it must be remembered that we are all subject to suffering. We may be "good," "Adventists," "faithful Ingatherers." But we are not exempt from the curse of sin. As we see the almost unbearable results of sin, we know without a doubt that God is right in His plan for ridding the universe of Satan and his host.

However, praying for, and with, the sick is beneficial. It makes us aware of others and of their needs. It makes us compassionate. Thankful, too—for our own life and health. And it makes us look forward to heaven, where there'll be no more cancer or heart attacks—"no more death, no more grief or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4, TEV).

The patient with whom you're praying feels loved, secure, and remembered, knowing that they're being prayed for by the church family. Often this sense of importance improves their outlook on life and can actually promote healing—an "answer to prayer." And no one who listens to the personal testimonies of others can doubt that indeed, results happen that can be attributed only to God's miraculous healing. But do our prayers "make" it happen?

No Catering Service

"Thank God that only my leg was broken!" Ben remarked after totaling his car while taking a fast curve late one Saturday night. But if God was catering to a Christian's every whim and protecting him or her from all calamities, why did the accident occur at all?

"Thank the Lord it finally rained! We've been praying for it for three weeks!" But why did God "make" it so disastrously dry in the first place?

We are Midwestern farmers who have been hit with many a drought. We didn't pray for rain. Being realistic, we knew that drought years occur from time to time—they are part of our world's natural cycle. Farmers do survive. But some friends who phoned us one evening were discouraged. "We've been praying and praying that you would receive rain," they said sadly. "We just don't understand. You pay tithe and everything!"

During the terrible drought of 1988 a TV newscast featured a local drought story, including coverage of one large church sponsoring a public prayer gathering. "They are praying for rain," the reporter stated solemnly. "If there is any power in prayer, then now is when it will rain!" Or, in other words, "If enough of us pray long enough and hard enough, we can make God do anything! And then, if it doesn't rain, we'll know we just weren't praying forcefully enough."

But Ellen White said, "Prayer is not intended to work any change in God."¹

Before you say "What a disbeliever she is!" let me tell you that we *did* pray. But instead of praying for rain, we prayed for

wisdom in planning our soon-to-be-very-tight budget; for some relief from the constant mental stress of worrying; for courage. And just as the stress level in our family was rising dangerously high, we got three and one-half soaking inches of life-giving rain.

It was one of those scattered showers that hits and misses, and it happened to land on us. Of course we were thankful for it. Our soybeans were worth their weight in gold (not quite) that fall, as so few farmers had a good crop. The rain

You can't pray for good health if your diet consists of root beer and honey buns.

tasseled out our corn, while some farmers had cornfields that never even came up. We didn't "deserve" that rain. Better folks didn't get even a drop. But in this life we don't often get what we deserve, be it good or bad. "The rain falls on the just and on the unjust."

If it were only Seventh-day Adventists who got rain during drought years, or who got healed from all sickness, or who got all the high-paying jobs, everyone else in the world would be smart enough to notice, and to rush to the nearest Adventist church for a quick baptism. But greed is not the motive for obedience that God is looking for. The advantages of being a Christian are more subtle than simply *having*.

How to Pray Right

While prayer doesn't change God, it does change us. Ellen White says that "the strength acquired in prayer to God will prepare us for our daily duties."² When my babies cried, and I prayed for patience instead of for God to clam them up, things began to improve. And whether God

actually poured a dose of patience and love into my being, or whether just speaking to God about it made me try harder to be kind, I became a better mother. There are things God will give you when you ask, one can be sure of that.

Rather than praying for "more money," pray for the ability to handle what you already have. Rather than requesting "better looks," "nicer clothes," or "more friends," ask God for strength of character, wisdom (as Solomon did), courage, the ability to resist temptation, and for a quick mind with which to meet life's challenges. And pray for the Holy Spirit—"The Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, TEV). If you have all of these, what more could you ask for?

I like to pray because of the safe, secure feeling it gives me, sharing my thoughts, problems, complaints, joys, worries, and cares with my private "psychiatrist"—the One who listens, never interrupting, never criticizing, never laughing at me, never in a hurry with "something else to do" (although simultaneously running the world).

Sometimes just putting problems into prayer words gives us time to think about those problems more clearly, putting our worries into perspective, maybe even thinking up our own solutions. Might this also be an "answer to prayer"?

There are rewards for living a Christian life here on this old earth. We might not get those rewards right now, today, this week—maybe not even in this lifetime. But "listen!" says Jesus, "I am coming soon! I will bring my rewards with Me." (Rev. 22:12, TEV). And that sure beats getting just the right amount of rain—any day! ■

¹ *Messages to Young People*, p. 248.

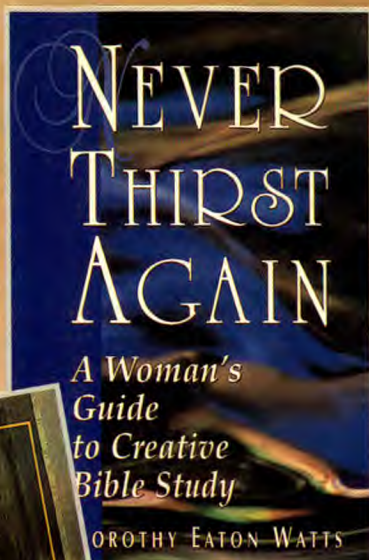
² *Ibid.*

Biz Fairchild Reynolds is a dairy farmer in Kingsville, Missouri. She writes from personal, recent experiences with drought in the U.S. Midwest.

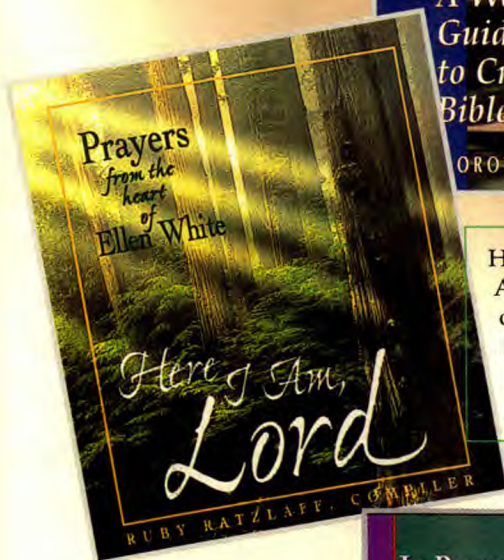
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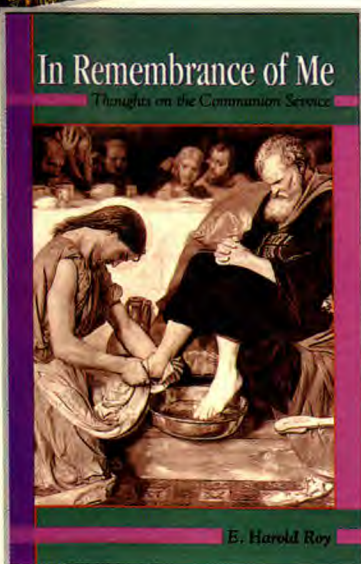
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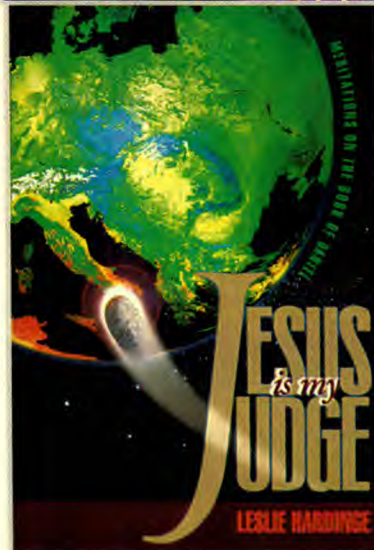
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Lamb Chop

Rescuing him seemed like a good idea at the time.

BY SKIP JOHNSON

"I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands" (Ps. 119:176, NIV).

The little lamb was in trouble. He had somehow slipped through the low wire fence that separated the open pasture from the busy highway. Now he stood on the roadward side of the mesh, looking in at the ewes and lambs nibbling the leaves from last summer's alfalfa.

I am no shepherd. I'm not even a rancher. But it was plain that the little fellow's life expectancy had been severely reduced. Any moment now he might wander out onto the pavement and be grilled on the radiator of an 18-wheeler. A passing pack of stray dogs might find him here and tear off his ears and other body parts. Or a larcenous carnivore might spy this bleating bit of tasty mutton, put him in a car trunk, and take him home for supper.

And should the lamb escape all these dangers, he would win the privilege of slowly expiring for lack of milk. He was too small to eat grass. No doubt his mother was somewhere among the hundreds of ewes and lambs on the other side of the wire, looking for her lamb.

"There's a loose lamb back there," I told my wife and kids. "I don't see anybody around. I'm going back to see if I can help."

I waited for a break in the traffic, made a U-turn, drove back, and parked on the rain-soaked shoulder of the roadway.

As I approached on foot, I noticed that the fence was less than four feet high. The lamb was quite small. *This should be*

an easy fix, I thought to myself. I'll simply lift the stranded baby back over into the alfalfa field where he belongs.

"Well, Lamb Chop," I said quietly, "this is your lucky day. I'll have you back with your mom in a minute."

But the lamb didn't know that I'd come to help. Neither did the sheep within the fence. When they saw me approaching, there was a sudden explosion of hooves. The whole huge flock leaped to its feet and fled to the far side of the field. Not even Lamb Chop's mother stayed behind to see what I might do to Junior.

Doubtlessly he had been instructed to run when the others ran. But there was one small problem: the fence was in the way. Seeing the others running and not being able to follow, Lamb Chop took off along the fence line, looking for an opening into the field.

No problem, I thought to myself. I'll just chase him down. After all, I'm a six-foot-two-inch able-bodied man. That lamb is a poor, helpless, still-has-his-tail baby. This won't even be a contest.

It turned out to be no contest—but different than I expected. Lamb Chop turned out to be a streak of greased fuzz! When he saw me lumbering along behind him, collecting additional pounds of sticky gumbo mud with each stride, he lifted his tail and shifted into high gear. Every sprightly, prancing bound said "Eat mud, big thug!" The gap between rescuer and rescuee widened dramatically.

I finally clomped to a stomp and then a stop, puffing hard. Lamb Chop had evaded rescue. *There's nothing more I can do, I thought to myself as I stood panting beside the fence, trying to catch my breath before I waded back to the car in muddy defeat.*

Meanwhile, a hundred yards farther along the fence line, Lamb Chop realized that in escaping the huffing mud monster, he had also abandoned the home field. Apparently that thought scared him worse than being chased. Here he came, zipping back along the fence toward me and the alfalfa field where we first met. I stepped aside to let him pass, then took up the chase again.

Now that he had run all that extra distance, the race was less lopsided. Or maybe he was no longer concerned about escaping. He slowed as he arrived at the place where the flock was grazing. As I overtook him, Lamb Chop wobbled weakly and collapsed into a splay-legged, loose-jointed, hoof-jumbled heap. His nose was pointed toward the distant flock that

was at the far side of the field.

I came up behind him, talking softly. I didn't want him to bolt again. But when I reached out a cautious hand to touch him, he ignored me completely. There was no butting or struggling, no fighting or shying away. He lay on his woolly belly, helplessly and hopelessly wishing himself through the wire to the others of his kind.

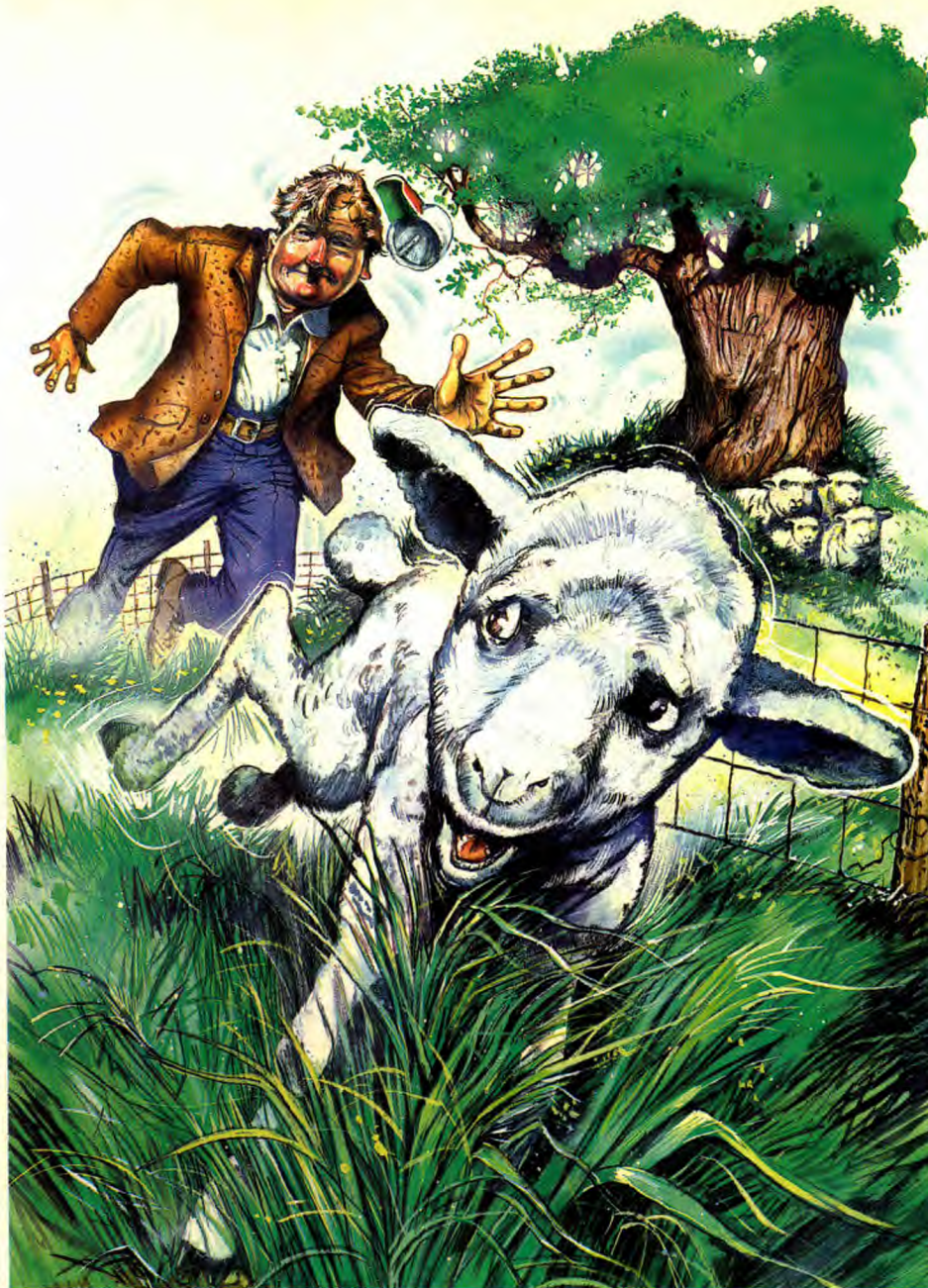
He was so limp that I began to worry. Maybe the shock of the chase had done some permanent damage.

"Hey, little fellow," I said, "we've got to get you back to your mama." I picked him up. He was heavier than

critter's tendons go? I asked myself. His tiny hooves pointed raggedly toward odd destinations.

I am no veterinarian. I'm not even a doctor. But this lamb suddenly looked like a goner to me. It seemed as though each breath was going to be his last. *I've done it now*, I thought. *By trying to pluck this tender, helpless lamb from danger, I've murdered my first sheep. Why didn't someone tell me these things are as fragile as tropical fish?*

"Look!" I pleaded. "You're safe in your field again. This is no time to die!" But Lamb Chop's woolly little snout was sunk down on the wet



our cat at home, but not by much. His little legs dangled limply. I leaned over the wire and set Lamb Chop down on the alfalfa. He immediately crumpled into his previous posture. *Where did this loose-limbed*

alfalfa. He lay exquisitely, precisely, perfectly still—as lifeless as a puppet with every string cut. Anyone could see it. He was gone.

I glanced around with guilty foreboding. Cars and trucks whizzed by on the highway behind me. My wife and boys watched me through the windshield. The deed had not been done in private. I imagined trying to explain this matter to the owner of the sheep, should he drive up at this moment.

“Well, sir, you had a *live* lamb outside the fence when I came driving past. I stopped to help, sir. Now you’ve got a *dead* lamb inside your fence.

“Yes, sir, I do recall hearing that you’re supposed to *lead* sheep, not *drive* them—certainly not *chase them to death*. No, sir, I do not wish to purchase six and a half pounds of fresh, nonkosher lamb chops with hooves still attached. Yes, sir, I’ll write that check now, sir.”

I looked down at the limp lamb. He didn’t even twitch. Setting this baby on the right side of the wire wasn’t enough.

Far away across the alfalfa field I heard a faint bleat. Even to my untrained ear it stood out above the murmur of ewes talking to their lambs. I looked up and searched for the source of the sound. Off in the distance, on our side of the fleeing flock, I saw a black-legged, black-nosed ewe. She stood alone and stared intently our way.

“Here, baby,” I said to the lamb, “please get up.” Bending low over the wire, I lifted the tiny creature to his feet. I tried to aim his body toward that sheep across the field.

But Lamb Chop’s head sagged. I couldn’t tell if he was breathing. His hooves dragged lifelessly over the alfalfa stubs. *I might as well be dangling a handful of wet seaweed*, I thought. *This lamb is terminal.*

*I am no
keeper of sheep.
I’m not even
an able
rescuer of
loose lambs.*

A long, gloomy line of dead little animals I have loved and lost while growing up began flitting through my mind: my tire-crushed puppy; the fish I taught to do tricks floating belly-up in my aquarium; my brother’s longtime mongrel love,

Gigi, lying lifeless at the foot of his bed. I had seen death before.

“Oh, Lamb Chop,” I whispered. “I only wanted to help you. I didn’t mean to hurt you. I’m so sorry!”

I decided that since I had such a large part in this small creature’s early demise, I should at least get a shovel and give him a decent burial.

I lifted the drooping head one last time. I pointed the woolly snout directly toward the sheep across the field. The ewe called again.

Before I could straighten up, Lamb Chop was 60 feet away and running flat out for his mama. Whoa! Hold that shovel!

I am no keeper of sheep. I’m not even an able rescuer of loose lambs. But I know a live lamb when I see one!

I also know that we have a Shepherd who cares for us. Whether we are inside the fence of His will, or outside it, He cares. Whether we are fleeing a mud monster God we fear will take away our freedom, or furiously running toward Him to escape even greater terrors, He sees us. Even when life has beaten us down to a paralyzed puddle of

undefined longing and we haven’t the strength to pray, He’s there.

And because He cares, He has set clear boundaries between right and wrong. The value that He placed on us means that what we do matters too. God wants us to graze in green alfalfa, not dodge death in the diesel fumes of the interstate. He demands all that we *are* so we can become all we can *be*. And when, like Lamb Chop, we go astray, when we have turned each one to our own way, then the great Shepherd will chase us down for the sheer delight of seeing us run free.

“Hold that shovel, Gabriel! This one is all right. Look at him go!”

Skip Johnson was a district pastor in central California when he met Lamb Chop. He recently accepted an invitation to teach Bible and be campus chaplain at Hawaiian Mission Academy, in Honolulu, Hawaii.



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NET '96 Reignites Evangelism.

Jamestown, North Dakota: 50 Years Is Too Long

Lyle Frishman started on the path back to God and to membership in the church when he attended the NET '95 satellite evangelistic meetings at the church in Jamestown, North Dakota.

“I left the church 50 years ago, and that’s too long—and I’m coming back,” he said.

The church members enjoyed his quick and ready smile at each meeting. After further Bible studies he was baptized by Pastor Stan Teller when some of his family could be present.

BOOK

• MARK •



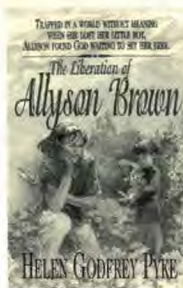
Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

Randy Fishell, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown,

Maryland, 1995, 108 pages, US\$8.99, Cdn\$12.99, paper. Reviewed by Scott Moncrieff, associate professor of English, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Oxford Anthology of Adventist Humorists may not go to press for another generation or two, but when it comes out, Randy Fishell should be included. *Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow*—presumably targeting young adults—presents 20 miniature narratives, “truth tips,” complete with scriptural epigraphs and closing moral nuggets. But the most noticeable feature may be Fishell’s shtick: a torrent of wordplay and slapstick situations. A few titles may give a faint idea: “Wheels of Misfortune,” “Brothers and Cistern,” “Baby Daze,” “Bat Idea.”

Fishell has no problem telling embarrassing stories on himself, if he can extract some laughs and a lesson. As a fellow writer, I was impressed with the number of good jokes, clever puns, and memorable situations he hatched. So if you like your religion yolked with laughter, scramble on down to your local ABC. No doubt you’ll groan at some of the inevitable clunkers—if you hate puns, prepare for torture—but you’ll also get many laughs and a rare head start on the folks at Oxford.



The Liberation of Allyson Brown

Helen Godfrey Pyke, 1996, Review and Herald Publishing

Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 127 pages, US\$7.99, Cdn\$11.49, paper. Reviewed by Scott Moncrieff.

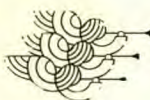
Thirtysomething Allyson Brown works for an advertising agency. Her husband, Eric, is a CPA. They are both leaders at their local church. Allyson is smart, tall, good-looking, successful in her work. But behind this front she leads a troubled life, and not just because her 3-year-old son Heath recently died in an accident because of a drunk driver. Pyke’s book patiently traces Allyson’s thoughts: backward, to the accident, her time with Heath, the history of her marriage; and forward, at work, at home, at church, as she passes through the details of daily life trying to find meaning.

I like Pyke’s storytelling. Her main character is a believable person, with

wide-ranging and interesting thoughts; indeed, the story’s most significant moments take place in Allyson’s mind. The supporting cast—the distant husband, a girlfriend, her boss, a co-worker, Allyson’s parents—are well-used and interesting but never detract from the Allyson focus. Pyke creates the texture of the material world; the look of the computer screen, the too-small cup of Sprite at a reception, the shade of a broccoli spear in the garden. This is not as simple as looking around a room and listing what you see. It takes writerly tact to know just which details are right for the story. The narrative moves skillfully between Allyson’s professional, church, and private lives; between her past and her present. It’s quite interesting how Allyson examines her inner life in terms of her understanding of advertising, and how she examines the ethics of her advertising against the core of her inner life.

The religious aspect of the story is muted. Pyke seems more interested in a wholistic look at a person’s life than extracting moral lessons at every turn, and for much of the story Allyson thinks sparingly about God. But when she does, she’s believable.

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Decisions, Decisions

SANDRA DORAN

We are uncertain as to what to do next." "We face a dilemma." "We are not sure which road to take . . ."

There are very few things more stressful than making decisions. No choice affects just one person. Our yea or nay today will touch our family, our friends, ourselves. Weighing all of the options, we strain for a glimpse of the future, some sign that will point us in the right direction. The tension mounts as we analyze all sides of an issue.

"What if I move to this town and don't like it?" "What if I marry this person and it doesn't work?" "What if I send my child to this school and he loses his grip on spiritual things?"

As finite human beings we can do nothing when struggling with the abstract, other than to suppose. We turn the issues around and around, looking for worst-case scenarios, hoping to prevent future pain by present calculations. The process is disconcerting, nerve-racking. I am reminded of words from Alan Paton's book *Cry, the Beloved Country*: "Sorrow is better than fear. Fear is a journey, a terrible journey, but sorrow is at least an arriving. . . . When the storm threatens, a man is afraid for his house. But when the house is destroyed, there is something to do. About a storm he can do nothing, but he can rebuild a house."¹

Making a decision is a journey filled with fear. By opening one door, we close a thousand others. Things will never be the same again. We shudder at the threshold.

The apostles, when attempting to replace Judas, entered into a decision-making process worthy of emulation (Acts 1:21-26). First, they put forth two candidates: Joseph and Matthias. Next, they prayed. Next, they made a decision. Finally, they went forth in confidence.

This story gives me courage. My finite mind does not allow me to perceive exactly what will happen if I make a particular choice. I don't know the thousand random things that will accompany one big decision. But I can enter the process in faith, consider the options as best I can, pray for wisdom, come to a conclusion, and go forth with confidence.

It's that last part that can be so hard—going forth with confidence. As much as we enter into mental gymnastics before making a decision, we often engage in the process in retrospect as well. "What if I had not made that move?" "What if I had married someone else?" "What if my child had not gone to that school?" "What if . . . ?"

The process is fruitless. Our strength comes from grasping the hand of God and picking up where we are right now. About a storm we can do nothing, but we can rebuild a house, work with a child, strengthen a marriage.

To those who are in the midst of a hard decision, I say, Hold on. You are engaged in one of the most stressful processes known to humanity. You are struggling with the abstract. Like Jacob, you're wrestling with something that has not yet fully identified itself, something you cannot see. Hold on. In the semidarkness of the present, grapple with the issues, pray for wisdom, and hold on until "the breaking of the day." Then, as things become clearer, go forth with God's blessing.

To those who are living with the painful results of past decisions, I say too, Hold on. Like Kumalo in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, grieve your losses and catch again the vision of hope.

"He turned aside from such fruitless remembering, and set himself to the order of his vigil. He confessed his sins, remembering them as well as he could since the last time he had been in this mountain. . . . Then he turned to thanksgiving, and remembered, with profound awareness, that he had great cause for thanksgiving, and that for many things."²

¹ Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1948), p. 108.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 273, 274.

Our strength
comes from
grasping the hand
of God.

Sandra Doran will soon complete her doctoral degree in special education at Boston University. Her new business, Powerlines, specializes in writing, speaking, and educational services.



Church Planting Summit Brings Spirited Response

BY ALEX BRYAN, SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PASTOR IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

A movement was born when Adventists across North America converged on Andrews University for Seeds '96, a church planting summit, June 12-15.

More than 400 church members, pastors, administrators, and educators participated in this inauguration of a massive church planting endeavor. North American Division organizers hope the event will spur a significant emphasis on planting new churches through the year 2000.

The purpose of Seeds '96 was to cast an initial vision for the importance of church planting. In other parts of the world Adventists are aggressively planting new churches and producing significant membership growth. NAD leaders believe church planting can produce similar results in North America.

The Seeds conference included 15 seminars and presentations. NAD president Alfred C. McClure gave the keynote address. The overflow crowd interrupted McClure time after time with cheering, applause, and thunderous amens.

"We've come here this week to change the way this division thinks about church planting," said McClure. "This is the day that North America turns a corner. Today the North American church establishes a new battle plan. Today this division launches the most aggressive and intentional church planting in its history.

"There are millions of people living in North America who are simply not attracted to the Adventist Church," he said. "If they were to

stop by some Sabbath morning at 9:30 or 11:00 a.m. and look inside, they wouldn't be irresistibly drawn to go inside. If we value the lost [as Jesus did], then it is imperative that we be willing to devise new wineskins to serve as vehicles for the water of life. Otherwise we cannot defend ourselves from the criticism that we hold tradition as more important than our mission."

NAD Evangelism Institute director Russell Burrill called it "the most significant address [McClure] has delivered as president." Robert Logan, a Baptist church planter and vice president for new church development with Church Resource Ministries, served as professional consultant at the conference. He presented several motivational messages throughout the weekend.

Logan's comments to the Adventist crowd were significant. "There are whole hosts of people out there who could be reached by a different style of ministry while maintaining the integrity of the core beliefs that [Adventists] hold dear," he said. He went on to praise Ellen G. White and Adventist doctrine, challenging Adventists to reprioritize their resources and effectively share the church's message. Logan believes Adventists need to plant new kinds of churches with the old Adventist message.

"We need to stop playing church and get serious about letting God finish His work through us," one enthusiastic participant said. Many left the four-day conference convinced this was a historic weekend in Adventism.

Where do we go from here? was the crucial question as the conference concluded. What strategy should follow this incredible vision? Participants divided into focus groups to discuss areas of concern to make church planting a reality. Ideas presented in an unofficial document included division-wide education on church planting, the development of



SOWING SEEDS OF THOUGHT: Robert Logan, a Baptist church planter, spoke at the conference.

strategic plans and reallocation of resources at the local conference level, and personal commitment to prayer and involvement with unchurched people by those who attended the conference.

The North American Division plans follow-up strategy sessions during the next year, and Seeds '97 has been scheduled for autumn 1997, again to be held at Andrews University. Several challenges, including provision of financial resources, training for church planters, and planting churches that are truly both Adventist and culturally relevant will be addressed as this initiative develops.

Many division, conference, and local church leaders believe God is firmly behind this evangelistic endeavor. Russell Burrill says church planting will be a "front-burner issue" in North America for years to come.

Andrews University Singers Tour Norway and Iceland

When the Andrews University Singers planned a June 3-14 tour to Norway and Iceland, the members of the college choir knew they had their work cut out for them. The people of Norway and Iceland are among the world's foremost choral music listeners.

"We knew we were going to have to sing well to make an impact on either of these countries," said Stephen Zork, Andrews University music professor and director of the University Singers.

The 30-member choir sang in Adventist and non-Adventist churches alike. Crowds in the Lutheran churches applauded wildly until the choir returned for three encores. They sang in some of the largest churches in

Iceland and in the city hall of Iceland's capital, Reykjavik.

In Norway some new fans even follow the group on its itinerary, traveling up to 60 miles to hear more performances. "We were really overwhelmed by the response of the people," said Kelley Wilson, a sophomore from Battle Creek, Michigan. But even more impressive was the spiritual impact of the trip—on both the choir and the audiences.

A letter from an Adventist in Norway was typical of the responses of listeners in both countries: "Your fantastic musical performances are still ringing in my memory! You and your music have made a deep and lasting impression upon me and countless

NEWS BREAK

India Bomb Blast Destroys Church School Bus

An explosion destroyed a bus used by the Seventh-day Adventist school in Madras, Tamil Nadu, India, in the early-morning hours on August 16. No one was injured when two of the three crude bombs exploded.

Media reports from Madras speculate that the attack came from an extremist group, says Dittu Abraham, communication director for the Southern Asia Division. School officials found a number of leaflets on the school grounds that demanded an end to the teaching of English and Hindi languages at the school and that only the Tamil language should be taught.

"If the explosion had occurred later in the morning, the results would have been tragic," says Abraham. The school is one of the church's old schools in south India.—*Adventist News Network*

Thousands Join Anti-Drug Walk in Kenya

More than 2,000 people took part in the first Walk Around the World 2000 event for the prevention of alcoholism and drug dependency in Nairobi, Kenya, July 31.

"The procession nearly brought Nairobi streets to a halt," says Paul Wangai, health director for the Eastern Africa

Division. Marchers started at the Kenyatta Conference Center and then traveled 6 miles (10 kilometers) to the city stadium for a one-hour rally. The rally included speeches and features that promoted a healthy drug-free lifestyle.

Elias Njoka, Kenya's minister of education, called the rising use of drugs an alarming trend, in remarks read by Josiah Okumu, deputy director of education.

Walk Around the World 2000 was launched in 1995 during the General Conference session in Utrecht, Netherlands, by the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (ICPA) and will culminate in the year 2000. The walk in Kenya was part of the international effort to call attention to the effects of drug use. More walks are scheduled in Australia, Brazil, Ghana, and Zaire, with new requests coming in regularly.

Tom Neslund, ICPA executive director and an associate director for the General Conference Health and Temperance Department, says, "Through this project all youth can take the lead in making the world aware of the dangers in alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, and how prevention can be a lasting solution."—*Adventist News Network*

News Notes

✓ Maryland governor Parris Glendening recently appointed J. John Wycliffe, research assistant in the General



GOD'S AMBASSADORS: The University Singers shared their faith and their talents in Norway and Iceland.

others in Norway and Iceland. Thank you for your witnessing through music."

Precise harmonies were important for the choir's extensive repertoire. But

their faith was what really stood out, said Doug Venn, a seminary student from Spokane, Washington. Audiences were struck to see young people who

have made Christianity a part of their lives, he said. "Someone said it was apparent that when we sang spirituals, the Spirit was really there."

Spiritual Impact

No performance tour that he's been a part of had as much spiritual significance as the Singers' Scandinavian tour, Zork said.

"We were representing our church in a part of the world where Adventists are not very well known. And we made a spiritual impact on many people who normally would not listen to a Christian choir," he continued. "I honestly don't think it could have gone any better than it did, and we praise the Lord for that."

Jack Stenger is press officer at Andrews University.

NEWS BREAK



John Wycliffe

Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, to a task force studying anti-Asian violence in Maryland and efforts of municipalities to counteract anti-Asian sentiments. By January 1997 the task force will recommend legislative measures to address the problem.

✓ Two gymnasts from Canadian Union

College's acrobatics team won silver medals in the United States Sports Acrobatics Federation National Championships in August. Angie Hiob and Kalie Baker were among 400 participants. They were the first females ever to compete in sports acrobatics from Canada, says Myrna Tetz, a CUC vice president.



BIG BIRD: Weighing 22 tons, the Buffalo aircraft is the largest plane to land at Andrews University.

✓ A "mothballed" 48-seat turboprop airplane that the United States Army recently donated to Andrews University will give aviation students new training opportunities. The largest airplane ever to land at the Andrews airport, the

De Havilland Buffalo weighs 44,000 pounds when fully loaded.

Since the plane is too expensive to fly (it costs \$4,000 to fill the gas tank), students will use it for mechanics classes and flight systems training. Though valued at \$275,000, the craft was donated to the university as surplus equipment, reports Jack Stenger, university spokesperson.—*Andrews University*

What's Coming!

Sept. 14-21	<i>Adventist Review</i> emphasis
Sept. 21	Family Togetherness Day
Sept. 28	Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the South American Division

Legal Notice

General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists: Notice is hereby given that a special meeting of the members of the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists will be held at the Herradura Hotel and Conference Center in San Jose, Costa Rica, at 10:00 a.m., on Sunday, October 6, 1996. The purpose of the meeting is to transact such business as may come before the meeting. The members of this corporation are the duly accredited members of the General Conference Executive Committee.

—R. S. Folkenberg, *President*; D. E. Robinson, *Secretary*

Is Our Upbringing Defining Us?*

Whether we're aware of it or not, four eras of Adventist culture pivotally impact everything we do as Adventists, including our evangelism.

BY GARY PATTERSON

Within the short span of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church we have passed through several eras of time and thought that have shaped the perceptions and behaviors of succeeding generations. These models of Adventist culture not only have influenced the thinking and actions of these generations, but also have made it difficult for one generation to comprehend another.

To complicate the matter further, this process of generational identity has accelerated in such a way that all four cultures may exist in the church simultaneously.

In an attempt at transgenerational understanding, I am positing four models that impact thinking patterns of Seventh-day Adventists.

1. The Clan Model (1800s-1920s)

The clan is the ground out of which our early Adventist believers grew. Prior to the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 1860s, a loosely structured yet strongly bonded group of believers had joined the Millerite movement and continued to see 1844 as the defining event for the last-day remnant.

Their perception of the close of probation was reflected in their views of the "shut door," which excluded anyone other than those who accepted the Millerites' message of the second

THE ISSUE

After more than 150 years, several factors have combined to form today's church. Necessary changes are still ahead.

coming of Christ. Yet as time passed, they were forced to rethink their position as a result of new converts and their own children joining the group. The closed nature of this community of the clan, however, was neither original nor unique.

In fact, the era and area in which the Millerite movement developed was rife with such clans. It has been called the "burned-over district," which is a reference to the multiple religious revivals and groups that sprang from this section of New England in the early to mid-1800s.

In addition to the Millerite movement, the Mormons, the Oneida community, Mother Ann and the Shakers, and others developed clannish and exclusive communities. In addition, ethnic communities were forming. In New York City, for example, there were Irish, Italian, and Jewish communities. And Germans were settling in North Dakota, Norwegians in Minnesota, and Cajuns in Louisiana.

This propensity toward clannishness was also reflected in the development of major centers of early Adventist believers. Both James and Ellen White urged that Adventists avoid these ingrown tendencies toward colonization. Yet despite their counsel, colonies of Adventists grew up in such places as Battle Creek, Michigan—contributing further to clannish tendencies.

With this bent to clannishness came the attendant problems of exclusivity, conformity, and inbreeding, all of which contributed to the perpetuation of their lifestyle issues and thought processes, regardless of whether these were truly



THE CLAN

principles of religious concern or not. Thus the stage was set for conflict with succeeding generations over these issues, which may or may not have been of spiritual significance.

2. The Authority Model (1930s-1950s)

The ground out of which the "institution" of the church grew began to give rise to a new community in the 1930s. Society experienced a massive transformation through the twin influences of the Industrial Revolution and World War II. Both called for top-down or pyramid-style authority that governed the behavior of the group.

The isolationism of the clan was broken by the extensive travels and cultural awareness resulting from the war generation's involvement in world affairs. As the forties song lamented: "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Patee?" Likewise in the church, the exposure to world mission travels and reports had a similar effect in breaking open the isolationism of the clan.

After World War II a large influx of former military personnel entered church employment. These trained and experienced veterans of the war operated their work and businesses in the format they knew best—the line-authority mode.

As the 1950s began, a curious phenomenon developed in the staffing of our ministerial ranks. For about the first five years of the decade we continued to absorb the bulge of military veterans who were finishing their college education and entering the ministry. Then just as this

large influx was finally absorbed, the IRS ruled that ministers could enter the Social Security system if they would work a minimum of five years. Thus for the last half of the fifties very few ministers retired—resulting in a drastic reduction in available slots for ministerial hiring.

This resulting employee age gap has been silently creeping up on the church for the past 30-some years. It is now significantly impacting the church as we look for experienced leaders today to replace the military generation that is retiring. In fact, so few of the silent generation are in the ranks of leadership that it is becoming necessary to skip on down to the baby boomers to fill leadership slots—again a phenomenon of general society that the church reflects as well.

The military generation got things done. And indeed, this is an admirable quality. But it is not without price. Authoritarianism is prone to bureaucratic bloat and depersonalization. Decisions are forced down from the top regardless of lower-level thinking, needs, and interests. Dissenting views are seen as dangerous disloyalty, and the official line becomes very doctrinaire. Effective as it may be, the frightening potential exists that this leadership style might even become blasphemous in the enforcement of institutional decisions as if they always are God's will.

3. The Cause Model (1960s-early 1970s)

The ground out of which rebellion grew was the "cause." Sometime in the sixties the baby boom generation had finally had it with the military generation. The theme of the sixties was reflected in the popular bumper sticker that admonished "Question Authority." It was the day of new communications avenues, mobility, and the affluence to do largely as we pleased. Old behavioral standards were breached and dropped. Imposed structure and authority were challenged at every opportunity.

And indeed, there were authoritarian structures that needed to be challenged. Institutions frequently were shown to be more interested in the preservation of privilege and the imposition of will than

in the good of society and the advocacy of principled behavior. But sadly, the high-sounding rhetoric of the "Question Authority" troops often became the mantra of rebellion rather than the search for truth and equality. It was rebellion for rebellion's sake—rather than for reform. And it largely became the substitution of one power group for another.

The sheer number of the boomer group would control society for years to come. When they were young, everything had to be youth-oriented. Now as they age, the focus of products, advertising, and programs is shifting with them. And curiously enough, this shift is alienating the younger generations in much the same way that the boomers were alienated by the military generation.

The sixties verbiage advocating principle, openness, rights, and individual freedom was much needed. Unfortunately, this press for uniqueness often resulted in creating a mass conformity, demanding that the whole generation appear and sound alike, thus actually stifling the very individuality they advocated.

4. The Celebrity Model (1970s-)

The ground in which we now must plant the gospel is the soil of the "celebrity." As Andre Agassi says in a popular camera commercial: "Image is everything." It is the age of the super-



THE AUTHORITY



THE CAUSE

stars. What else would support a program on TV called *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*? We have Michael Jordan, Madonna, and Princess Diana.

My rule of thumb over the years has been “no style can survive motherhood.” Each new generation seems to desire to be different from their parents in today’s society, so whatever mother or father is doing, the next generation disdains. And whatever the previous generation stands for, the following one seems to reject out of hand.

This scenario was played out when the pope came to Denver a few years ago. Multiplied thousands of youth from around the world flocked to Colorado, much to the bewilderment of many parents who found the pope’s rigid institutional stands unacceptable.

Yet the celebrity followers flocked to him. What the parents of this generation do not understand is the celebrity factor. Celebrity followers are accustomed to accepting their icons who wear unusual clothing, and they pay scant heed to their hero’s verbiage. It is just being part of the big event that seems to motivate them.

With this kind of mix in society today—and in the church as well—how do we ever get together on a strategy to win the world for Christ, or for that matter, even to get along with one another? First, we must recognize that there are

both values and drawbacks to each of these models. When we insist on living in our own clannish little cells, or when leadership has become authoritarianism and creative innovation has become rebellion, we doom ourselves to repeat the follies of prior generations again and again.

Nature is so designed that children are to learn from their parents. But when we destroy that process through continuous cycles of authoritarianism and rebellion, we violate the natural order of things and are doomed to live in a perpetual state of conflict and folly, all the while repeating old mistakes and inventing new ones.

In the church today one segment wishes to maintain the strictures of the clan. But the question remains: At what point in history do they wish to freeze-frame? Another element seeks to maintain the top-down authority that appeared to work well for them. This model brings them apparent efficiency, to say nothing of the preservation of their privilege and position. But they seem not to realize that it was the very oppressiveness of this structure that was the precursor of the problems we face today. And even more distressing, we see this approach being played back in mission fields around the world, where we exported not only the gospel but our authoritarian way of doing things as well.

Thus without insightful intervention these mission fields will be doomed to reproduce the same problems by using the same methodologies, confusing these methods with the gospel.

Then there are the cause joiners. It is curious to note the changes in boomer causes—which they frequently assume to be original with themselves, when in fact their changes of interest are usually traceable to the natural aging process. Now boomers have discovered the family, and for all the hype, you would think they had invented it—a particularly interesting concept in light of the fact that only 20 or so years ago, they nearly destroyed it.

But we are at a threshold again. If we are not careful, the boomers will capture society and the church even as their parents of the military generation did

before them—against which they rebelled—and in the process again force aging on the church.

It is interesting to note that those who were the most rebellious against authority in the past when they were young tend to become the most rigid and domineering as they age, forcing their wishes, their wills, their styles, and their thinking on their own children. And they frequently are the most rigid in refusal to accept new and creative ideas from a new generation.

As for the celebrity followers, it is disturbing to see that behaviors generally perceived as unacceptable to almost anyone within polite, moral, or civil society are not only tacitly condoned in celebrities; even worse, they are frequently voyeuristically followed and celebrated as if murder, mayhem, adultery, and general brutishness were characteristics to be admired and emulated. And then we wonder why society isn’t safe anymore.

Perhaps the next great wave on the societal beach will be that of virtual reality. In this nirvana-inducing state, social interaction becomes individual gratification in a self-centered world of electronic manipulation. Will it call for virtual church and artificial community? And indeed, has not the burgeoning religious television industry made us vulnerable to this possibility? But what does this do to community?



THE CELEBRITY

It does seem plausible that a cult of charismatic leadership or pulpit stars, or evangelistic sensationalists or major contributors, while having the potential of a salutary effect on the church under the right circumstances, also has frightening potential for abuse, diverting the gaze of the church away from a principled commitment to gospel community onto frail and faulty humanity.

What will the institution of the church look like in the days ahead? The boomers are now taking their places in the leadership ranks of the church. As we search for top leadership in the church, we realize that we must now dip further down in the age categories than we have done in the past to find the staff we need. This has the positive effect of accelerating change and introducing new thinking, but it also contains the risk of frightening the older generations as well as losing some of the experience needed to maintain stable operations.

Only a few years ago it was the popular thing to repeat the anti-institutional theme "don't trust anyone over 30." Now the originators of this notion are themselves reaching 50 and beyond and now face the same reaction from a new generation. These anti-institutional sentiments now reflect themselves in a growing congregationalism in the church. On one hand there are those who see this congregational trend as a devil-inspired bane of the church, while others see it as the church's only hope in a new era.

Probably the truth lies somewhere in between. The pet theories of the authority era may not apply any longer. Yet the anti-institutional notions of the cause era may be so nebulous as to undermine efficiency and cooperative effort.

An immediate effect of this thinking may be noted in the distribution—or should I say redistribution—of tithe and offerings. Today's youth and young adults feel much freer to direct their giving to projects that appeal to themselves. This is often interpreted as selfishness. It may or may not be so, but unless this attitude toward giving is addressed realistically, the church will find itself standing beside

a dried-up traditional cash stream only to realize too late that the new flow is going somewhere else.

Three additional factors relating to the availability of funds include: the changing ethnic face of the church, the general decline in the ratio of earning power to the cost of living, and members directing tithe elsewhere.

As pertains to our schools, the question is being asked, Is this the best way to spend our limited resources in order to influence our children and youth for Christ and the church? The fact that not all of our youth are in our schools—especially at higher educational levels—gives rise to the question as to whether we are fairly distributing our resources, spending the bulk of our funds on only those who elect to attend. The question thus arises as to whether there are more cost-effective methods of serving in this arena, without spending so much in the effort to provide total education.

Hospitals also face new realities, and they are mostly chilling in this tough market. The wave of the future is in prevention, lifestyle issues, and home care—a future ready-made for Adventist emphasis if we are quick enough to move and are not cemented to institutionalism.

In the days ahead worship will lose its sacerdotal strictures, becoming more the work of the people and less the formal presentation of a program observed by passive communicants. This was never the New Testament model anyway. *Communion* in the early church was probably much closer to what we call "pot luck" or "fellowship dinner" today.

Stiff formality was not the model of worship in the New Testament either. These were inventions that grew out of the authority mode of operating the church. Strictures on social interaction and involvement are fading away, even in sacramental settings such as the Catholic Mass. Much of our contention over worship in the church is because we assume our own likes and dislikes are of theological and eternal significance. What we really need is more variety, which will appeal to differing tastes, cultures, languages, and varieties of people.

Likewise we must expand our evangelistic outreach to include more

audiences. Our traditional approach is directed primarily at sensationalism. We should not be shocked, then, to discover that we have drawn an overly large slice of sensationalists from society and failed to reach groups that are looking for a different kind of appeal.

This does not mean that we should cease doing what is successful. But it does indicate that we need to move more into a relational model of outreach. We need to address ourselves more to issues of attendance than membership. Membership is an institutional concept. Attendance is a social concept. What really matters is whether people are there in the community of the church.

We need to learn how the human psyche works; that is, we fellowship first and indoctrinate later. Somehow we have gotten that concept backward, thinking that if we could convince people of our doctrines, they would join our fellowship. Actually, the way it works best is to bring people into our fellowship; then they will want to learn our doctrines.

Finally, the structure of the institutional church must come to see itself as the provider of materials and services needed in the local congregation on the basis of market research, not by executive fiat. Institutional workers will need to become responsive resource providers rather than tenured departmental directors.

And in this setting we will maintain the balance required to function effectively both in the local congregation, where the church begins, and in the broad reach of the corporate body of the church, which makes possible the fulfillment of the world scope of the gospel commission. ■

* Because of its nature, this article is written from an American standpoint. But it has implications for Adventists everywhere.—Editors.

Gary Patterson, a general field secretary of the General Conference, is director of the Office of Mission Awareness.



House Upon a Rock



ROSY TETZ

Take a brick (or a big rock) out to your sandbox (or a place where the dirt is nice and soft). Hold the brick a couple inches

above the ground (if you are strong enough) and drop it. Be sure it doesn't land on your toes.

Now pick up the brick and look. Did it leave a dent in the sand? That's because it's so heavy. Try dropping a

cotton ball in the same spot—it won't leave a dent.

Now, think about this: If one brick is so heavy that it leaves a dent in the dirt, how come a building (which is made out of thousands of bricks) doesn't sink down and down and down into the ground?

Here's how you find out: Smooth out the sand so it's flat again. Take an old magazine or a catalog or a piece of cardboard and lay it down on the sand. Now drop the brick again. Lift up the magazine. Do you see a dent? Probably not.

Your catalog worked as a foundation. It kept the brick from sinking into the sand. A foundation spreads the weight around and supports the building. All buildings need them.

Have you ever seen a picture of the Leaning Tower of Pisa in the country of Italy? Something went terribly wrong with the foundation there. After the first three stories were finished, the tower began to lean. It looks like it's going to

tip over. But it's been like that for hundreds of years, and it hasn't fallen yet.

Buildings need a good foundation, and so do people. Have you ever heard someone say about a person they admire, "That person is so grounded"? People who are grounded know who they are and what they believe, and they are content. They have a foundation.

You know that song "The Wise Man Built His House Upon a Rock"? It's based on a story Jesus told: "Everyone who comes to me and listens to my words and obeys is like a man building a house. He digs deep and lays his foundation on rock. The floods come, and the water tries to wash the house away. But the flood cannot move the house, because the house was built well" (Luke 6:47, 48, ICB).

The house on the rock stands firm because of the foundation.

You can stand firm if your foundation is Jesus—if you come to Him and listen to His words.

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Lesson Helps for Next Quarter

It is very much in vogue to be cynical about "church" these days. But those things that make the whole concept of the church seem repulsive, even dangerous, to many people are just anomalies says Brian Jones. Here he traces God's plan in making the church "His fortress in a revolted world" and His holy bride. Paper, 127 pages. US\$8.99, Cdn\$12.99.



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HIS CHURCH CHRIST'S ROYAL BRIDE



SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON HELPS FOR FOURTH QUARTER 1996

Baptism

ANDY NASH

I got baptized with three girls when I was 9. My original plan was to get baptized with three boys when I was 8. But Larry, Jac, and Danny each had a couple years on me, so my parents and pastor suggested I wait for the next batch of candidates—Micky, Rocky, and Jenny. I would be more “ready” then, they said.

I never quite understood what everyone meant when they talked about my being “ready” for baptism. I knew it didn’t mean the physical act of being baptized itself—granted, I wasn’t known for my swimming prowess,¹ but I could certainly handle being underwater for a few seconds. I figured that being “ready” meant knowing stuff: which day was the Sabbath (Saturday), what you shouldn’t do on Sabbath (bring your electronic football game to church), what happened when you died (nothing), and how long hell will last (not long).

Only during baptismal studies did I learn that being “ready” meant, as Pastor Heglund put it, “accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour.”

That sounded simple enough. I loved Jesus. I particularly loved how He treated others—the children on His lap, Zacchaeus in the tree, the blind man on the side of the road.² Jesus seemed to specialize in giving people a break—a good lesson for all to follow (even if your kid should accidentally bring his electronic football game to church). As loving and kind as Jesus was, why *wouldn’t* I accept Him as my “personal Lord and Saviour”?

But as I studied more about Jesus’ life and mission, I began to wonder whether I really understood enough about Him to be considered “ready.” Especially confusing was the part about Jesus dying for our sins. I knew the event was important, but I had trouble connecting with it. The empty tomb? *That* I could connect with—no one expected Jesus to walk out of there, but He did, the greatest comeback in history.

But the cross and the priestly ministry and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary—if I didn’t understand all the things a Saviour did, was I allowed to accept Jesus as my “Lord and Saviour”? Would people even believe that I loved Him?

On the day of our baptism, the girls and I sang “He’s My Friend” up front,³ separated to change into our gowns, and reunited at the baptismal tank, where suddenly it was my turn.

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“And so,” said Pastor Heglund, “because of your decision to follow Jesus, I now baptize you . . .” My hands clenched his wrist. “. . . in the name of the Father . . .” My heart pounded. “. . . and of the Son . . .” My breath stopped. “. . . and of the Holy Spirit . . .” My heels lifted. “Amen.”

Liquid peace streamed down my face as Pastor Heglund dipped me in the water and then posed with me for a picture.

Dad, who took the picture, had watched my public decision in private—in the quiet shadows just offstage, where he was most

comfortable. Afterward he walked me down to the junior room so I could change. On the chair, beside my brown corduroy suit, was a hair dryer.

“What’s that for?” I asked.

“Oh, you don’t want to go back upstairs with your hair all wet, do you?” he said.

I hadn’t really thought about it.

Dad dried my hair while I dressed, and we didn’t say much. The hair dryer was too loud for talking anyway. But as he switched to low speed and then quit drying altogether, it seemed as though he wanted to tell me something but didn’t know how.

He unplugged the hair dryer and wound it up.

“Ready to go?” I asked.

He cupped my head and pulled me into his chest. “I’m glad you love Jesus, pal,” he said.

It was just what I needed to hear.

¹ At swimming lessons I was the coughing, flailing kid all the other kids waited for at the edge of the pool. “Somebody throw him a kickboard,” said the teacher—the ultimate disgrace.

² “The very first thing he saw,” read Arthur Maxwell’s *Bible Story* book, “was the face of Jesus smiling upon him.” My sister and I knew it by heart.

³ The second time through, Micky, Jenny, and I each had a solo line. Mine was “My heart sings with the joy of His love and favor.” Rocky didn’t sing a solo line; she got too nervous.

Andy Nash, assistant to the editor at the Adventist Review, grew up in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.



What's Next?

BY KELLY ROSE BISHOP

You have 60 days to find another job. Your position will be eliminated, and we have no other opening for which you are qualified." The words of the vice president shocked me. I had worked hard for this company for more than five years, and now they were tossing me out like the next hopper of scrap metal. However, I learned a long time ago to make the best of whatever situation life tosses at me. As a matter of fact, I had even hung a sign over my desk quoting Philippians 4:11: "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

With only a couple months of steady employment left, I started looking for a new job where I lived in the immediate Cleveland, Ohio, area. But God had other ideas. No matter how many résumés I sent out or how many agencies I contacted, every company I went to was looking for someone with qualifications just a little different from mine.

Welcome Words

Since I've never been a worrier, I turned the matter over to God. And God pointed me toward my grandparents. They are both in their 70s and are trying to manage three acres of property and a rental house in addition to their own home—by themselves. They assured me I would be able to find a job in the upstate New York area and sent me the classified ads. I went through the ads, sent out some résumés, and received several positive responses.

It seemed as though God might be opening the door in upstate New York after closing the one in northeastern Ohio. The only other obstacle was the sale of my house. I wasn't worried about that, either; if God could find a job for me, surely God could find a buyer for my house. About three weeks after making the decision to move, I had a buyer without going through a real estate agent, thus eliminating the brokerage commission.

Then came the hard part—telling my church family. When I broke the news to them, they were shocked. They had truly been my family for more than two years. They did everything they could to convince me to stay. But I felt I was meant to

make the move, and eventually they began to understand.

By this time, Grandpa and Grandma had already started making preparations. Grandpa put up a run for my dog. Grandma cleaned out closets. They had the piano tuned (first time in more than 10 years) and made garage arrangements so my car would be under cover. They bought new carpeting for the apartment and asked my preference for curtains. Grandpa even cleaned off the old iron bench I had used years ago so I could once again work on stained-glass projects in the basement. In short, they worked to get the whole place ready.

Nothing in Ohio could stand in the way between me and that kind of waiting love. I willingly chose to leave my friends in northeastern

Ohio in favor of going home. Knowing the extent of the loving preparations being made, I knew how very much I was wanted there.

Sound familiar? Jesus promised to make that kind of preparation for all of us. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3). I think He looks forward to our homecoming even more than Grandpa and Grandma anticipated my move back to Bolton Landing. It's hard for me to imagine someone loving me more than my grandparents do, but it's true.

Although Jesus' love is beyond my full comprehension, I accept the promise that He has a place tailor-made for me. And while there are many in my Elyria, Ohio, church family I've left behind and may not see on this earth again, I am comforted in the knowledge that I will see them in heaven. What's next here? I don't know the immediate future, but I know God's preparations for us are well under way for eternity.

*I lost my job
and needed to
sell my house.
What did God
have in mind?*

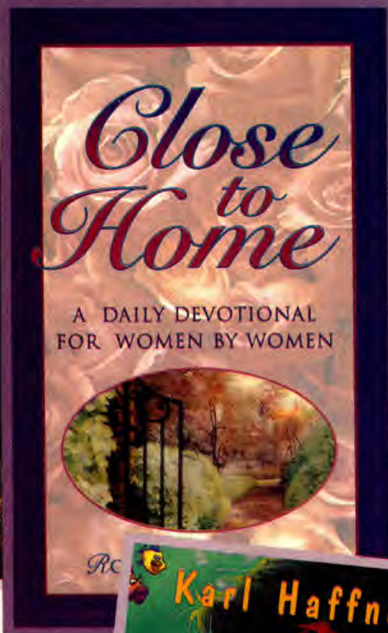
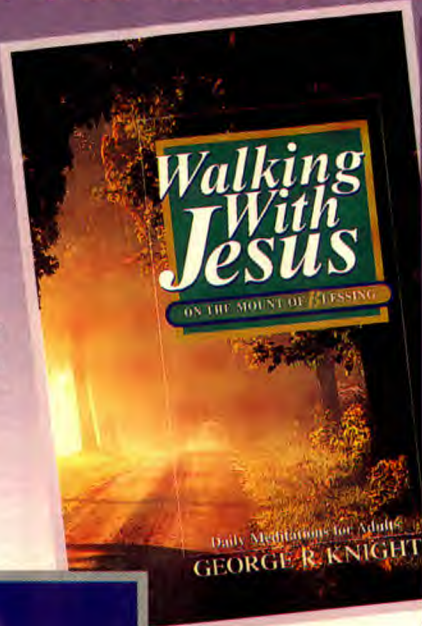
Kelly Rose Bishop writes from her new home in Bolton Landing, New York.



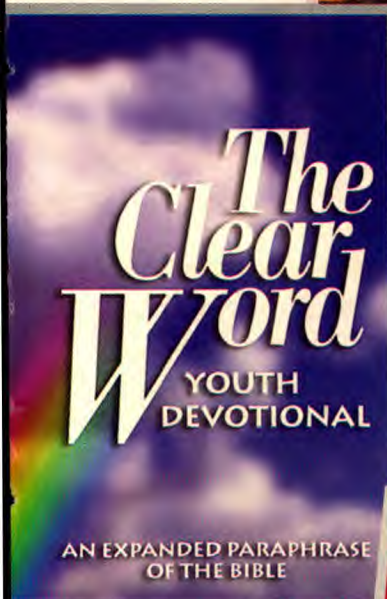
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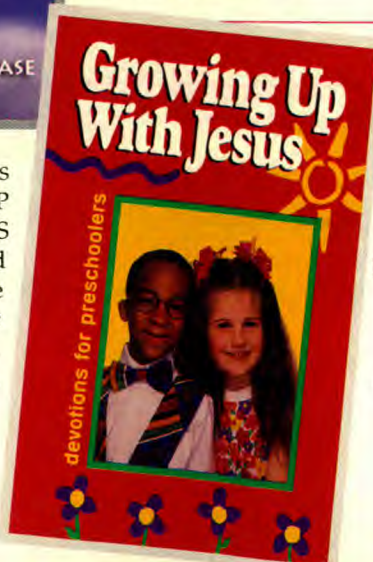
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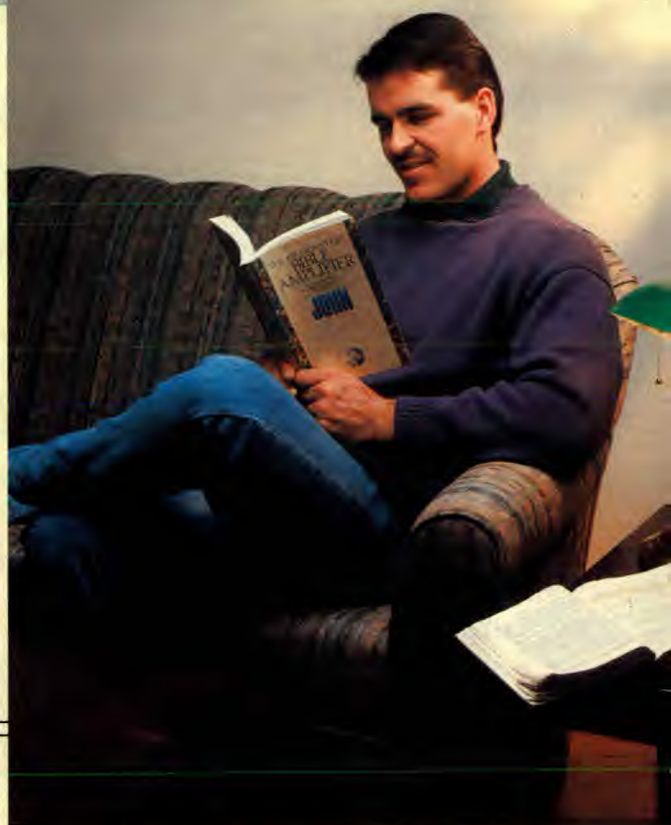
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