

ADVENTIST Review

March 19, 1998

Cutting Edge



When Jesus "Fails"

The Lost Weekend

**Strengthening the
Local Church**

LETTERS

God's Great Big Kingdom

I support Jon Paulien's opinion, expressed in "Lions and Tigers and Bears" (Jan. 15 Cutting Edge Edition), and would like to perhaps extend it a little.

Paulien believes that it is cruel to try to change old static churches; instead, we should just plant new ones. He's right! And it may be time to go even further. Ellen White repeatedly urged churches to stand on their own feet and not keep the ministers tied to themselves; ministers should be freed to get out and raise new churches. In numerous references ministers were urged not to "hover over the churches" (*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 156), but to carry the work to new fields.

It may be a hundred years late, but we should try this approach. We simply can't continue using the same expensive failed strategy in these static churches. What do we have to lose?

—John F. Duge

BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

God bless Dr. Paulien for admitting 20 years of slow learning and mistakes. I challenge our leaders, pastors, and our church to learn from him. Read *Present Truth in the Real World*, weep for our failures, learn what Paulien has learned, and go forward in faith with a new vision in the power of prayer.

—David and Dianne Hiller

INDIANOLA, IOWA

God Is Not Fair?

Jeff Bromme's "God Is Not Fair" (Jan. 15) troubled me. If God is unfair, He can also be labeled as unjust, partial, biased, unethical, and dishonest, since Webster uses these terms to define the reverse of "fair."

All true Christians would admit that cleansing from sin and eternal life are gifts of which none are wor-

He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26, NKJV).

—W. H. Elder

YUCAIPA, CALIFORNIA

Grammar Question

We've received several letters taking exception to the grammar in a few sentences appearing on page 14 of our January 15 issue:

■ "When a drunk driver careens off the road, runs into a tree, and kills themselves . . ."

■ "But if on their way to the tree the drunk runs over . . ."

■ "We do not consider it unfair that a person convicted of murder should spend the rest of their days in prison . . ."

While we agree that these sentences—especially the first—read a little clumsily, they are grammatically sound, according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, tenth edition, which says, "The use of *they*, *their*, *them*, and *themselves* as pronouns of indefinite gender and indefinite number is well established in speech and writing, even in literary and formal contexts."

thy. But Christ took care of this anomaly. He is worthy, and His worthiness is attributed to those who accept and follow Him. Christ's life and death alone make it possible for us to be saved in His kingdom and yet for God to retain His principles of perfect justice and fairness, "that

Isn't this the same accusation that Satan made against God—that He cannot be both just and merciful at the same time? My understanding is that justice equals fairness (except in America's court system).

In the Adventist concept of the great controversy, God is both fair and merciful. The mercy/judgment seat on the ark of the covenant—as well as Jesus' act on the cross—both display that dichotomy. Bromme's proposition is cute, but inaccurate in trying to adequately describe God. The injustice we see around us is a result of the "prince of this world" and his attempt at being God. God must allow Satan and sin to play out their roles to show the universe just how terrible sin is and how magnificently wonderful the Creator-God is.

—Kevin Kuehmichel

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Roll in the Snow

In view of Andy Nash's "Roll in the Snow" (Jan. 15), I feel there is both merit and danger in his reasoning.

Merit: It can help us appreciate our church more when we have a better understanding of our neighbor's beliefs, and it may provide an incen-

tive to search the Scriptures more.

Danger: In public high school I "rolled in the snow" when I participated in sports and plays, entertained with my singing, attended Sunday churches with high school friends, etc. Eventually I left my own church for about four years.

Thanks for the inspiring thoughts!

—Dot Siemsen

ORANGEVALE, CALIFORNIA

Hurting Young Members

Regarding the January 15 X-Change ("The Church: Clubhouse or Community"), by Allan and Deirdre Martin.

The church that failed to accept the young member's transfer request needs to read the *Church Manual*, which states: "The church to which the letter of transfer is addressed is under obligation to receive the member, unless it knows a good and sufficient reason why it should not extend the privilege of membership" (p. 34). The new church is also required to return the letter to the granting church with a full explanation of the reasons for the denial.

The excuse that they "didn't know her very well" just won't wash. I would not want to belong to such a church anyhow.

—Jerry Barts

LXINGTON, KENTUCKY

This situation appalled me. Our congregation is blessed with a nearby large military base, which brings us a wide variety of members. If we waited until we "knew them well," the military transfers would be ready to move on, and we would have missed some very wonderful friends.

In the same issue I was again appalled by the story of the frustrated young musician (see "Post-Rumblings"). As a boomer, I hope that I can continue to be open-minded to the new ideas developed by future generations.

Church worship style is not biblical (or a thus saith Mrs. White), but a tradition. God is still giving the gift of music to today's generation.

Please send these two hurting members to our congregation. We would love to use their talents in our church.

—Debbie King

KILLEEN, TEXAS

"Post-Rumblings" offered some thoughtful perspectives; one in particular grabbed my heartstrings. The discouraged musician who feels his gifts have been rejected (to an amazingly rude degree at that!) may not have considered that many older folks have hearing problems that are exacerbated by poor PA systems, amplified instruments, and background accompaniment. Has an effort been made to determine exactly what the problem here might be?

Having said this, I do wish to assure this musician that his efforts are appreciated by some—perhaps even by a silent majority. We seniors can ill afford using our influence in ways that discourage or alienate others who feel called to use their particular gifts in service to the Master. There will come a day of reckoning, and I for one do not want to be held accountable for causing anyone to lose their way on the path to God's kingdom.

—Elizabeth Davis

ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

Letters Policy

The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617,15.

ADVENTIST Review

COVER FEATURE

8 The Local Church Is the Church

It all begins here.

BY ALEX BRYAN

11 How to Experience Spiritual Growth in a Small Church

Thirteen ways to build on the talents at hand.

BY DICK DUERKSEN

13 Trusting the People

What's different about how leaders are leading.

AN INTERVIEW BY BILL KNOTT

ARTICLES

18 The Lost Weekend

It revolved around someone's mistaken notions about what constitutes a "good time."

BY RENEE MARTIN

24 Bridging the Gap

No matter how well you communicate, you can always do better.

BY LOREN DICKINSON

26 When Jesus "Fails"

What's going on when some prayers are answered—and others aren't?

BY VICTOR CZERKASIJ

DEPARTMENTS

2 Letters

7 Give & Take

17 The X-Change

20 World News & Perspectives

29 Leaving the Comfort Zone

30 Reflections

EDITORIALS

5 Right About Jesus

6 Nash Ramblings

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.

The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119), published since 1949, is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and is printed 40 times a year each Thursday except the first Thursday of each month by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association. Periodicals postage paid at Hagerstown, MD 21740. Copyright © 1998, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Publishing Board: Robert S. Folkenberg, chair; Phil Follett, vice-chair; Lowell Cooper; William G. Johnson; A. C. McClure; Dorothy Watts; Ted N. C. Wilson; Martin Yreberg; Robert Nixon, legal advisor

Executive Publisher and Editor William G. Johnson

Associate Editors Roy Adams, Bill Knott

Managing Editor Myrna Tetz

News Editor Carlos Medley

Assistant Editors Stephen Chavez, Andy Nash

Editorial Assistant Ella Rydzewski

Administrative Secretary Chitra Barnabas

Editorial Secretaries Mary Maxson, Jean Sequeira

Art Director Bill Kirstein

Designer Bill Tymeson

Design Assistant Alan Forquer

Desktop Production Stephanie Kaping

Ad Sales Melynie Tooley

Subscriber Services Steve Hanson

Marketing Coordinator Ray Tetz

Consulting Editors: Robert S. Folkenberg; Matthew Bediako, Phil Follett, Robert J. Kloosterhuis, A. C. McClure, Jan Paulsen, Leo Ranzolin, R. F. Rawson, Calvin B. Rock, G. Ralph Thompson

Special Contributors: P. D. Chun, L. T. Daniel, L. J. Evans, Ulrich Frikart, Lee Huff, Israel Leito, Roy H. Nagel, L. D. Raelly, Ron Watts, Bertil Wiklander

To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. (Please query before submitting long articles.) Include address, telephone number, and Social Security number, where available. Address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638.

E-mail: Internet: reviewmag@adventist.org
CompuServe network: 74617,15

Subscriptions: US\$38.97 for 40 issues, US\$50.97 for 52 issues. Add \$10.20 postage for addresses outside North America. To order, send your name, address, and payment to your local Adventist Book Center or *Adventist Review* Subscription Desk, Box 1119, Hagerstown, MD 21741. Single copy, US\$2.50. Prices subject to change without notice.

Subscription queries and changes of address: Call 1-800-456-3991, 301-791-7000, ext. 2439, or E-mail shanson@rhpa.org.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.

Scriptures credited to ICB are quoted from the *International Children's Bible, New Century Version*, copyright © 1983, 1986, 1988 by Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas 75039. Used by permission. Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977. Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Texts credited to NKJV are from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Bible texts credited to RSV are from the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Vol. 175, No. 12

it is written **TELETALK**



*Thanks to Faithful
Supporters Like You
God's Message Reaches Nearly
100 Countries in 9 Languages*

Arabic

- Launched January 18 on Middle East Television with subtitles



Chinese

- Nationwide release of programs on smoking and heart disease

English

- Four releases in the PHILIPPINES
- Seen throughout INDIA and SOUTHEAST ASIA over Asia Television Network
- Now available in UGANDA on Trinity Broadcasting Network
- ZIMBABWE reviewing programs for possible release
- Blanketing NORTH AMERICA, with associate Henry Feyerabend in CANADA



Icelandic

- Thirteen programs being voice-dubbed for national release

Korean

- Programs being dubbed for planned home witness by lay people



Portuguese

- Nationwide telecast
Está Escrito with Mark Finley and associate Alejandra Bullón
#1 in BRAZIL

Russian

- Releases with Mark Finley and associate Daniel Reband viewed in seven countries of former Soviet Union
- New video edit studio dedicated at Media Center in Tula, Russia



Spanish

- Second year airing in CHILE and PERU with associate Milton Peverini and dubbed Finley programs
- Preparing launch in ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY, URUGUAY
- Airing on several Spanish stations in U.S.



Ukrainian

- First national release in Kiev November 15, 1997
- Now aired in 17 other regional cities

Your Prayers Make a Difference!

- Letters pour in from around the world
- Bible course enrollments
- Requests for books
- Thousands of baptisms

**It Is Written
International Television
Box 0
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360**

www.iiw.org

Right About Jesus

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

To be wrong about Jesus is to be wrong about everything. But to be right about Him—to know that He is God in the flesh, and Saviour, Lord, and Friend—is to be right about what matters most now and eternally.

Without question, Jesus of Nazareth is the most controversial person in human history. In previous editorials we noticed how He challenged the people of His time with the disturbing question “Who do you say I am?” (“The Enigma of Jesus,” Jan. 22), even as He confounds the critics in our day (“Jesus and the Critics,” Feb. 26). Now in concluding the series, we look at Jesus in the hands of Adventists.

During the past 150 years many churches have focused on Jesus’ humanity and become less certain of His deity, but Adventists have progressively moved to the affirmation that He is fully, eternally God. Thereby we have come back to the biblical, apostolic confession about Jesus of Nazareth.

Many, perhaps most, of the pioneers of the Adventist movement had an impoverished theology of Jesus. They loved Him but—as surprising as we may find it today—they saw Him as an exalted, divine being who was not eternally God. Stalwarts like James White, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, and A. T. Jones all shared this diminished Christology.

The notable exception was Ellen White. From her pen eventually came categorical statements that helped set Adventists on the right track. “Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . In speaking of his pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God,” she wrote in 1900 (*Evangelism*, p. 615). In 1897 she had written: “He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. . . . He is the eternal, self-existent Son” (*ibid.*).

Ellen White’s work on her masterpiece, *The Desire of Ages*, however, brought forth the simplest and most powerful affirmation of Jesus’ deity that I know of: “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived” (p. 530; 1898). Each term is sufficient to make the point, but three times she hammers it home—Christ is God, God, God.

One would think that the low view of Jesus would have been laid to rest after this, but it died slowly. However, the

church was moving forward, and our fundamental beliefs, voted by the world church in general session in Dallas, Texas (1980), put our official position on the line. “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.” “God the eternal Son became incarnate in

Jesus Christ. . . . Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ” (Fundamental Beliefs 2 and 4).

Occasionally people still send me letters or pamphlets arguing the old view. The reasoning is curious: the belief that Jesus is eternally, fully God is “Catholic”! What an example of fallacious reasoning: the issue is what the Bible teaches, not what some other body may believe.

Sometimes the reasoning proceeds from the Bible designations of Jesus as “only begotten” (John 3:16), “firstborn” (Col. 1:15, 18),

or even “Son” (Heb. 1:1-3). But none of these terms in the original suggests origin or derivation. “Only begotten”—*monogenes* in the Greek—means unique or special, and is used of Isaac (Heb. 11:17), who was *not* the only son Abraham fathered. “Firstborn”—*prototokos*—signifies “first in rank,” as is seen clearly in Revelation 1:5, where Christ is termed “the firstborn of the dead.” And Jesus as eternal “Son” connotes equality with the Father (see John 5:18-20).

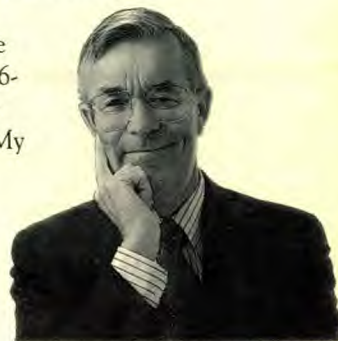
But what, after all, is at stake in the debate over Jesus’ deity? Everything:

1. Did God really, truly come to earth, or only a being close to God? Do we really know what God is like, or are we still in doubt about God?

2. Are our sins truly dealt with? Unless God handles them, we are still in chains. “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7, NIV).

3. Whom will we worship? At the heart of our message, Revelation 14:6-12, lies the issue of worship. Can we truly fall at Jesus’ feet and confess: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28)?

To be wrong about Jesus is to be wrong about everything. But to be right about Him is to be right about what matters most now and eternally.



Nash Ramblings



Being assigned eight editorials a year means a chance to develop eight ideas a year. Some years, though, my mind manages to produce more than eight ideas, leaving many of them lonely, abandoned, flipped carelessly to the cold, dark abyss to the left of my computer where I keep my gum. "Please," they gasp, craving the monitor's warm glow, "have mercy on us . . ."

Without further nausea, here are a few of these ideas. I call them Nash Ramblings so that, should any fall short, the blame can be placed squarely where it belongs—with my parents.

I think that the Adventist pendulum has clearly swung toward grace—and that it should stay there. All great works are rooted in grace.

I think that whoever says change can't come (1) overnight and (2) from the "upper levels" needs to think bigger. Of course change can come (1) overnight and (2) from the "upper levels."

I think that we neglect doing a lot of things we know are right because we fear how a group of people might respond. At some point we need to decide whose opinion we care about—and whose we don't.

I think that Jesuits are probably well-meaning, but I'm not one.

One of the best Adventist books in years: Jon Paulien's *Present Truth in the Real World* (Pacific Press, 1993). When will we implement its message?

Two of the best Adventist books coming off our presses this spring: Nancy Carver Abbott's *Journal of a Not-So-Perfect Woman* (Pacific Press) and Sarah Coleman's *God Who?* (Review and Herald). Great content, great writing.

I think that we—you and I—need to learn to discuss things fairly. No more straw man arguments, no more extreme examples, no more exaggerating. The high road—let's all aim for it in our inevitable disagreements.

I think that if we're going to be relevant, we might as well be relevant about what matters today, not what mattered five years ago.

I think that if the stiff upper-lipped British can comprehend that their citizens needed a variety of music to mourn their princess, then the stiff upper-lipped Adventists should

comprehend that their members need a variety of music to praise their Lord and Saviour.

We still see instances of *internal* healing (tumors vanquished, arteries unclogged). Do we still see instances of *external* healing (limbs restored, leprosy cleared)? If so, please share them.

Cradle roll teachers are heroes. Three dozen activities an hour, no concrete feedback—and *still* they lead out cheerfully.

Ellen White was progressive. We shouldn't be anything less.

I think that in our backlash against legalism, we've lost many of our wonderful traditions—especially Sabbath-related traditions. Not all structure is bad; light those Sabbath candles once again.

I still think that Christians should be both conservative and liberal: as conservative as possible with themselves and as liberal as possible with others.

I still think that the minute we stop brainstorming, we fall behind.

I have had some reservations about Promise Keepers, but not as many as I have about the Adventists who passed out antagonistic literature at the Promise Keepers D.C. rally.

The curse of being a remnant person is to remember one commandment and forget the rest. As Jesus' contemporaries did.

Many of us have no idea how to live the truth we have.

I love that Elder Folkenberg's column this year is devoted to discussing ecclesiology. Timely, pertinent.

I love that Southern's new president, Gordon Bietz, can occasionally be found serving au gratin potatoes in the cafeteria line. Very cool.

Adventist students who attend public school or home school need our love and support just as much as—if not more than—those who attend Adventist schools.

A baby joining our home has heightened my repulsion of the thought of child abuse, and I now better understand why so many people struggle with the question Why does God allow suffering?

I need to pray more.



GIVE & TAKE

ADVENTIST LIFE

While we were visiting a few days at our son's home, our 6-year-old grandson, Ross, was up early one morning blowing his big brother's trombone with all his might. His mother reprimanded him, saying, "Ross, stop playing so loudly."

Ross stopped, looked at her reprimanding, and said, "But Mom, I'm just trying to praise the Lord."

—Ruth Kloosterhuis, Burtonsville, Maryland

Our 4-year-old granddaughter, Gelline, who lives with her parents in Las Vegas, attended Vacation Bible School at the Mountain View church last summer. Impressed with the Bible stories about Jesus' ascension and second coming, which were dramatized so beautifully, she called me in California and said excitedly, "Grandpa, do you know that Jesus is coming very soon here in Las Vegas? Is He coming to California, too?"

—Albert C. Regoso, Baldwin Park, California



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

HATS OFF TO ADVENTIST YOUTH

When the 57-member Brazosport, Texas, church aired the SatelLight Seminar (with speaker Doug Batchelor) last October, an unexpected number of non-Adventists—and their children—showed up.



LEADER OF THE PACK: Bernadette Estrello.

With the church short on child care, new member Bernadette Estrello stepped in—not only baby-sitting the kids but using a wide range of methods to get them interested in Jesus Christ. "It is not an easy task," says Pastor Ion Groza, "to keep a group of children in one place and keep them motivated for two hours almost every evening. Bernadette did a service that many adults wouldn't be able to match."

The *Review* adds our thanks to Bernadette Estrello. Look for your *Review* cap in the mail!



DUELING LINCOLNS

WILL THE REAL ABE PLEASE . . . BUILD A LOG CABIN? Recently it's been "fourscore" all over at Andrews University. Within seven months of each other, two one-man plays about Abraham Lincoln have been performed on campus. In April it was Andrews alum Chet Damron in *Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?* When he takes the tall hat off, Damron is a hospital chaplain in Daytona Beach, Florida. The other Lincoln-thespi-

an was senior religion major Christopher Small, who defended the Union in a play titled *Mr. Lincoln* last November. Small is now a pastor in Michigan. *Photos by Tyson Thorne, AU Public Relations.*



WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to . . . Give & Take, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.



The Local Church Is the Church

Period.

BY ALEX BRYAN

The following three articles examine the state of the local church. In the first, an opinion piece, a young pastor argues that the local church must be given increased priority in the Adventist system.

In the second, a union vice president shares practical (and inexpensive) ways to revitalize small local congregations.

In the third, an interview, two new conference administrators discuss their role in strengthening local churches.—Editors.

I'M LISTENING, BUT I DON'T LIKE WHAT I HEAR.

A Seventh-day Adventist religion professor tells me about the local churches in his area. "To tell you the truth," he says, "there isn't a single healthy, vibrant church in the area. As far as Adventist local churches go, this region is dying."

I'm listening, but I don't like what I hear.

In a NET '98 satellite evangelism planning committee the discussion turns to the number of meetings the series should include. One committee member wonders if we could have fewer meetings and then encourage local churches to continue Bible studies with the new converts. A seasoned administrator replies, "We've tried that. We can't depend on the local churches to follow through on Bible studies. It just won't happen."

I'm listening, but I don't like what I hear.

In a conversation with a local conference president (not mine), I ask how many of the 100-plus churches in his conference have a vision for ministry. "Oh, about three," he says. "Maybe four."

I'm listening, but I don't like what I hear.

A layperson is explaining the predicament she feels about inviting her unchurched friends to her local church. "I can't invite them to my church," she says. "There's no telling

what might happen. But then again, I don't know an Adventist church in my area I *would* feel comfortable taking them to."

I'm listening, but I don't like what I hear.

Hurting Local Churches

Do I find myself in the wrong conversations? Am I simply hearing the negative voices? Is this just pessimism?

Over the past several months I've listened to dozens of committed, card-carrying Seventh-day Adventists—church pastors, administrators, and lay members—describe the desperate situation of many Adventist local churches. "The local church is in critical condition," they say. "It has become the weak link in Adventism."

Exciting stories are told about the growth of Florida Hospital, new research at Loma Linda University, the latest book from Pacific Press, and a new global television initiative at the General Conference. By contrast, the local church's story line is mostly stagnant. It isn't that there are no bright spots. Encouraging conversations about a church here or there always pop up. A flame still flickers and in some cases burns brightly. But the stories seem to be lonely voices rather than a full-fledged choir.

A prophetic cry can be heard most clearly from hundreds of Seventh-day Adventists who each year attend church leadership conferences at large, vibrant evangelical churches. Many Adventists question why their fellow believers would go "outside" our denomination to learn about how to do church better. The answer: They long for local churches to be growing, dynamic, relevant, spirit-filled bodies again. They have an immeasurable hunger to be part of a life-changing local church community, to capture the spiritual

adrenaline of the Acts church. It is this vision for the local church that draws so many Adventists to Willow Creek and Saddleback. It is this vision for the local church they find absent within our denomination.

Young Members Dropping Out

While the horn is sounded by Adventists attending non-Adventist ministry conferences, an equally apparent alarm is the oft-mentioned erosion of the youngest Adventist generations. Few academies (if any) keep statistics on the church attendance

of their young alumni. But after having conversations with several recent graduates from a half-dozen schools, my sense is that anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of their former classmates no longer participate in a local church.

"Rumors are that up to 60 percent drop out," says Bailey Gillespie, executive director of the John Hancock Center at La Sierra University. "But the numbers are difficult to determine. What's fascinating is that 95 percent of Adventist young people see themselves as committed to Jesus and spirituality. But they are far less loyal to the organized church. They don't see the organized church as something that nurtures their faith."

I'm listening, but I don't like what I hear.

The Problem With the Parachurch

I believe a dangerous illusion has blinded us. While we Adventists have attentively managed a large, sophisticated, multitiered administra-



tive structure and a fully orb-ed educational system and a nationally renowned health-care conglomerate and a growing theological respectability in Christian circles, the most important part of the church—the church itself—has atrophied. I believe we have substituted religious organizations in place of local church communities. We have become enamored with entities designed to *support* the body and forgotten the body itself. We have replaced the church with the *parachurch*. And it has hurt us.

It seems we have forgotten that parachurch organizations (schools, publishing houses, hospitals, church administration) are important only when they serve a *healthy* local church. When the local church isn't healthy, these ministries actually lose their effectiveness. It really doesn't matter a whole lot if our hospitals heal people physically if our local churches don't heal them spiritually. Or if our schools

educate young Adventists who will never become energized in a local church community. Or if NET '98 evangelizes people who won't be disciplined locally. Or if *this* magazine prints wonderful articles whose ideas never get carried out. Without a strong local church, the rest of it is meaningless.

The Adventist system fails when the support team outshines the church itself. It fails when our administrative facilities are far better than that of many local churches; when the latest communication and information technology is

found in our colleges and conference offices while the "typewriter" age lingers in many local churches; when "up" is the most common preposition used when a pastor moves from local church leadership to administrative leadership.

"The Decade of the Local Church"

I believe the most critical question we face as soon-to-be twenty-first-century Seventh-day Adventists is: How can we make local churches the linchpin of the church instead of the weak link?

Often we declare such-and-such a year "The Year of the Woman" or "The Year of Evangelism" or "The Year of Prayer." We should declare the next *decade* "The Decade of the Local Church." We must have an intentional and serious conversation about how we can restore the local church to its proper place. We must commit ourselves to the *primacy* of the local church.

There are at least five ways to begin this process.

First, we must continue and intensify our initiative to plant new churches (and close a few existing ones). The efforts of Al McClure, president of the North American Division, to lead a church-planting movement are visionary and Spirit-led. As researcher Roger Dudley said recently, "new Adventist churches grow at 10 times the rate of established churches." The best way to revolutionize the condition of the local church is to start new ones in abundance.

Church planting must be more than just another program. It is what explosive church growth in the New Testament is all about. When the church stops planting churches, it ceases to live. Little is as spiritually exhilarating as riding the spiritual wave of a brand-new church.

We should also consider closing some churches. Planting and pruning are both important activities for growth. Some churches that have experienced zero growth for a generation become a liability rather than an asset. Decades of a comfort zone become spiritual poison for some local church communities, and termination is the best spiritual decision that can be made. We must remember that God often uses people and churches for certain time periods—that includes both a beginning and an end.

Second, we must call young people with outstanding leadership gifts into professional ministry. Too often on our college campuses the strongest spiritual leaders choose careers in business, medicine, law, and other professions. While these are noble pursuits, the local church cries out for effective leaders who can cast vision for an exciting biblical community. We should be intentional in recruiting (under God's guidance) "the best and the brightest" into ministry. Throughout history God has always relied on leaders to energize His earthly kingdom. Now is no different. We must not apologize for challenging young people to spiritual leadership. An infusion of young pastoral leaders in local churches would have an enormous impact.

Third, we must make sure that

Adventist parachurch ministries are benefiting the local church. In a constructive way we must evaluate every publication, organization, institution, and project in the Adventist parachurch family. We must survey local churches to determine the effectiveness of these ministries. We should sustain parachurch ministries that are helpful. We should improve ones that are valuable but need adjustment. We should not be afraid to eliminate

*The more we
support local
congregations, the
less likely it is that
congregationalism
will arise.*

those that no longer benefit the local church. The parachurch must help, not hurt, the church.

Fourth, we must begin a redistribution of financial resources to the local church level. We have called upon the local church to support Adventist academies and colleges, administrative programs, publications, evangelistic initiatives, and a host of other worthy projects. We must now support the local church itself. Our "dangerous illusion," which has misdirected emphasis on the parachurch over the church, is visualized most clearly in our system of financial allocation. Too much money resides in our parachurch efforts, too little in our local churches.

Hungry local churches across North America cry out for greater resources to do ministry. Some desperately need a youth pastor, others a worship leader or a full-time secretary. They long for money to do evangelism in the local church. They wish for needed improvements in

their facilities. They hope for new and vibrant ministry programs and outreach initiatives in their communities. Many churches long for their spiritual engines to be fed by the financial fuel God has set aside for the church.

If we wait 10 or 15 years to help the local church financially, it will be too late. As a Seventh-day Adventist family we must together discover ways to invest more money in local churches. We must not allow a fear of congregationalism to hinder this endeavor—for congregations are ultimately the church. A worldwide church that prioritizes its local church need not fear them. It will not see such congregations breaking away. Well-cared-for Adventist local churches will long to support Adventism. Ironically, the more we support local congregations, the less likely it is that congregationalism will arise.

Finally, church pastors and members must take upon themselves the sacred mandate of reviving their own local church communities. We must not wait for church planting, new pastors, structural change, or more money. God calls us to be creative and fervent in building prevailing churches. We must not rely on others to do our job. An adventure in faith awaits us. We must become a body of believers no longer satisfied with business as usual.

The strength of the Seventh-day Adventist movement lies wholly in the strength of its local churches. The promise of tomorrow lies in our ability to produce thriving local church communities. The vitality of our message and mission, our prophetic calling, the future of our young people and the not-so-young lies in their care. The local church is the church. We must boldly move ahead to make it everything God intended it to be. ■

Alex Bryan is pastor of the New Community, a newly planted church targeting Gen Xers in Atlanta, Georgia.





How to Experience Spiritual Growth in a Small Church

BY DICK DUERKSEN

MY FATHER USED TO SAY, "BOREDOM is not something someone does to you. Boredom is something you do to yourself." I believed him. (After all, he was my dad.) Then I began visiting small Adventist congregations around North America. Eighty members on the books, 30 dozing in the pews. Boredom oozing from the frozen furnace ducts. Energy on hold.

OK, I may be exaggerating. A bit. Yet many of the churches came across as places of quiet appropriateness with minimal relevance.

Then I began listening to the hearts of members. In almost every case they are proud of their church, yet frustrated about how to bring vitality and relevance into their tiny congregation. They've bought new hymnals, set up a satellite dish, painted the siding, and put the sermon title on the sign each week. But they're still finding it hard to stir up a Sabbathful of energy with their small crowd.

Discouragement settled in—until I noticed that some of the tiniest congregations didn't fit the pattern. Instead, they were vital, energized, filled with smiles, friendship, and worship. The difference? Not the signs or the hymnals. Simply the attitudes of the members. Rather than focus on the size of their congregation, they focused on the size of their God. Rather than visualize limitations, they drew dreams during prayer meeting, Sabbath school, and the worship hour. They dedicated their energies to helping others. The 20, 30, or 40 members had turned their church into a place of hope!

You can do the same.

The following are just a few of the practical how-to-bring-spiritual-life-to-your-church ideas I've gleaned from small congregations. Read them over, compare them with your community, imagine the possibilities, then choose three and do them. If you need assistance on the details or on where to find helpful resources, call 1-800-SDA-PLUS.

(Qualifier: Before you even think about bringing spiritual life to your church, you must allow God to bring spiritual life to yourself. If you're not engaged in regular

personal study and prayer—and I also suggest journaling and memorizing—then your attempts to do anything else will be empty.)

1. Small Group (Multifamily) Activities

Start a small group Bible study. Begin with two friends and the book of Matthew. Your study aids should include a concordance and a couple commentaries, such as George Knight's Bible Amplifier series or *Matthew Henry's Commentary* on Matthew. Invite the Holy Spirit to challenge your minds with wise questions and thoughtful insights.

Read 10 to 15 verses and make a list of the questions the passage raises. Ask: Why did Matthew include this passage? What did it mean to the people who first read it? How can this help me understand God's character today? Your discussions will invariably last longer than you had planned, and your prayers will quickly focus on practical issues of spiritual growth. You'll also find that your small group discussions will bring new energy into your church.

Hold Friday evening church at your home. Nothing fancy—just fellowship, music, and study around a giant bowl of popcorn.

Start a "Slow Food Testers" club. This is a one-night-per-month recipe-testing invitational, a planned potluck. Since "slow food" is the opposite of McDonald's, invite three members to make one of their favorite, most wonderful recipes and bring it to the club meeting. Now invite several others to help you test the results. Add a couple prayers and a Scripture verse. Stir in smiles and garnish with hugs. Next month invite the women.

2. Intergenerational Activities

Help a "founder." This one is for the kids, especially the teens. Offer to buy groceries, read the newspaper, mow the lawn, wash the car, or otherwise become a pleasant nuisance to the older church members. At first they'll be uncertain about the idea, but they'll catch on quickly, inviting the kids in for lemonade, hot chocolate, and conversation about

the "good old days."

Baby-sit the noisy. Here's a job for the "more experienced" parents in the congregation. Among your members there is a single parent or a young couple with a new baby. They need an evening off! Begin by offering an hour of freedom while Mom goes shopping or takes a bubble bath. Add to the offering till you're spending an evening with the young ones every couple weeks. No payment allowed for your services; this is a gift from you to the future of the church.

Adopt a child. Sure, they've already got parents, but this is your chance to build an even stronger church family. One church assigns each adult as "church parent" for one of the children in the congregation. Yes, the kids may end up with three moms and two dads, but that's OK; it makes for more home-made pies and backyard ball games.

What do church parents do? They ask questions, send flowers, tell stories about their own childhood, and invite families over for Friday evening cornbread and soup. They do whatever parents do—only from a safe distance. They provide models of God's accepting love.

When the kids grow into teenagers, keep the church parents active. Now is when they need each other the most. Write to the kids when they're away at academy. Send cookies and magazines. And pictures of your cat.

3. Community Service

Become a tutor. Volunteer as a reading tutor in a local elementary school. You'll meet a whole new group of friends, sit in a tired overstuffed chair with kids all over your knees, and listen as some great old storybooks are read to you. You'll add names to your special prayer list and, before long, become friends with parents of the kids you're tutoring. Tutorials in the classroom may well develop into deeper relationships and community service.

Volunteer. Become a candy striper at the hospital, pizza maker at the firehouse, book reader at a nursing home, dog walker for the housebound, math tutor at the elementary school, equip-

ment manager for a kids' baseball team, pot washer at the homeless shelter, etc. To get started, call the city offices and ask for the volunteer coordinator. And take a couple other church members with you.

When you give your talents to others, everyone comes out richer. Volunteering will also give you a rich reservoir of stories to share at church, stories that will quickly become part of the "new life" your church is experiencing.

Go on a mission trip. Have you ever been to Haiti? Each year Maranatha Volunteers International and dozens of other organizations plan mission trips to exotic locations such as Sarawak, Kenya, Cuba, and Haiti. You'll get a couple hours on a beach and 10 days of hard work, happy workshops, and new friends. You need no special skills, only a willingness to work at whatever tasks need to be done, but you'll come home with a new awareness of needs and a willingness to meet them. You'll be spiritually and physically energized, ready to do a mission project in your hometown.

I know it sounds trite, but "neither you nor your church will ever be the same."

4. Congregational Worship

Tell a parents' story next Sabbath. Work with the pastor and worship team to present a "parents' story" in church. No, not just you—you and all the children you can find! The challenge is to present a story that matches the sermon, and to have the children create a special way to tell the tale so the adults will listen. In the process you'll help the children get involved in church, add a new dimension to Sabbath worship, and help some of the older members hear the sermon theme in a memorable way.

For example, when the sermon is on loving your neighbors, have the children each read "sample" advertisements from the local newspaper. Each ad, written by you and the youth, will be an invitation for community involvement. For example: "Elderly woman with broken hip seeks teenager to do shopping for her

each Friday afternoon." Or: "I am a mother with four toddlers, and I need someone to come with us when we go to the water park on Thursday mornings. Must like standing in knee-deep water and playing Marco Polo."

You get the idea. This is an opportunity for you to involve the children in active ministry by giving them a responsibility in worship.

Participate creatively in the worship service. Read the scripture from three different versions. Include 30 seconds of silence in your morning prayer. Have three other members help you with a conversational prayer. Call the mayor, a firefighter, a grocery store checker, or the owner of a local gas station. Ask them to tell you their favorite Christian hymn. Tell about your conversation as you introduce the song on Sabbath. Use the members' favorite hats as offering plates.

The idea is to become part of the worship planning team and break the mold without breaking your connection with other members or with God. Small changes in the service will help people listen—and enjoy—the adventure of church.

Interview a member. Plan the interview together during the week and then take five minutes of the worship hour to get to know each other better. Ask about answers to prayer, favorite Bible texts, memories of your grandfather, what God means to you, questions you'd like to ask God, and where you plan to live in heaven. Yes, there will be laughter—and even a few tears—as the reality of "applied grace" becomes clear in your church.

Give church to the kids. Offer to help the youth put on a worship service next month. The planning process will take several evening meetings around your dinner table. Remind the youth that "worship is a gift we give to God," and then help them create the greatest gift they can imagine. ■

Dick Duerksen is Columbia Union vice president for creative ministries.





Trusting the People

Two new administrators articulate a bold vision for church leadership.

BY BILL KNOTT

MAX TORKELSEN II AND GORDON Pifher were elected president and secretary, respectively, of the Upper Columbia Conference in the summer of 1996. Both came from rich backgrounds in pastoral work and specialized ministries, but neither had previous administrative experience. In a wide-ranging interview at a recent pastors' retreat, associate editor Bill Knott talked with them about how they've adjusted to their new responsibilities.

Knott: Max and Gordon, you've been serving as officers of a conference for about 18 months now. What about your roles has been the most surprising to you?

Torkelsen: It's surprising to me how little personal "power" I actually have. I always looked at conference leaders as having a great deal of influence to make decisions and make things run on time. But I've made virtually no decisions without at least the three officers present, and then most of the time with the larger executive committee.

Knott: Is that something that's different now in administration than it was 20 or 30 years ago?

Torkelsen: I'm sure that there are differences in style between individuals as well as eras, but I think God ordained through Ellen White that the church should be organized through committees. We don't have a presidential system; we have a committee system.

I don't know that every president or secretary would feel as Gordon and I do about our roles. I believe that the church was set up to be a committee structure. It's not my responsibility to control everything. It's the Holy Spirit who controls the church. I see my role as facilitating the conference executive committee and doing everything I can to ensure that they have good information to make a good decision. But I don't see my role as making the decision for them, or trying to figure out how to get them to make it my way.

If the executive committee makes a different decision

than I would have made, I don't take it as a personal rebuke. I understand it as the Holy Spirit showing me that I was mistaken in the direction I was going. That's the purpose for this committee. If I don't believe God works through that committee—I might as well give up. It puts way too much pressure on you to think that you personally have



Max Torkelsen II



Gordon Pifher

the wisdom to make all kinds of decisions.

Pifher: We say we believe in the priesthood of the believer—the idea that Mrs. Jones at Maryville church knows what God wants for the Maryville church even better than the president or the executive leadership of the Upper Columbia Conference—

Torkelsen: We're not that good!

Pifher: We want to communicate to Mrs. Jones that as the Lord impresses her with ideas for the Maryville church, we would love to have her and her pastor come up with proposals to share with us at the conference. It's our job to provide resources and support to make what the Lord is telling Mrs. Jones actually happen in that church. But that's a real education process. Somehow Mrs. Jones thinks that the conference president and leadership are the ones who should have the ideas for the Maryville church.

Knott: *You're articulating a vision of leadership that's substantially different from the stuff you might pick up at the airport bookshelf. Those books say that leaders need to be articulating bold visions and announcing directions, rallying people toward a goal that the leader got from a long walk in the woods.*

Torkelsen: I think I do have a responsibility as the shepherd of the flock to set a spiritual tone that would be an example and would provide a vision. When it comes to making detailed goals and objectives, I don't think I'm the one who can do that well for a local church. I have a responsibility to do whatever I can to motivate them to do it themselves, and even require them to be accountable. They need to say, "We've met as a church body; we've developed a shared vision for our church, and this is how we've articulated it." And then I need say, perhaps on an annual basis, "How have you done with your goal?"

Knott: *Evaluating them by their standards rather than yours?*

Torkelsen: Oh, for sure. Definitely. I think a leader does have a

responsibility to set a tone. I don't mean that I detach myself, and that I'm uninvolved. I don't hesitate as the chairman of a committee, if there's something that I feel keenly about, to clearly express my personal opinion. But in doing that, I also let them know and acknowledge that it's only my opinion. Their role is to help me, understand clearly, and to disagree and

Our real responsibility is to protect the process—to let Mrs. Jones and our pastors and our committees under the guidance of the Holy Spirit really make the decisions.

point out weaknesses in my argument.

Pifher: It's a struggle to have that right balance when you have strong feelings. Sometimes Max and I will be in conversation, and we'll catch ourselves not following our own philosophy and say, "Now hold on. We're sounding as if we feel we must use our authority to orchestrate something here." Our real responsibility is to protect the process—to let Mrs. Jones and our pastors and our committees under the guidance of the Holy Spirit make the decisions.

The executive committee was selected by the whole conference. It's a

wonderful committee, and they're Spirit-led people. That's a major difference between Chrysler Corporation and what we're doing. Chrysler doesn't feel that when they get a committee together, the prime purpose of that committee is to listen to a power that's higher than any of them. Our goal is to provide the right information so our decision-making groups can listen to God's Spirit and make His decisions. This isn't Chrysler. This is God's church.

Once the local church—Mrs. Jones—speaks, and lots of Mrs. Joneses and lots of local churches, our role is to recognize that as the voice of God speaking to us at the conference.

Torkelsen: We do need to think about the dangers of congregationalism: if we as administrators take the view that the way to deal with it is to stiffen our spines and to lay down the law and exercise our authority, that will only make the issues worse. It's when we become susceptible to a worldly kind of power that people bristle, and rightly so.

The attitude of leaders must be to find ways to make ourselves valuable to the local congregation. While I don't believe in "congregationalism," I still believe that "where it's at" is in the local congregation. There are huge blessings in our worldwide organization, and we are unified as we work together. But I need to be sure that I never take away that priority role of the local congregation. I work for them; they don't work for me. My job isn't a power job; my job is a servant job.

Knott: *What does the conference offer that the local congregation can't provide for itself?*

Pifher: There are services that only a conference can provide, like an educational program at Upper Columbia Academy. There are goals the organization needs to focus on because they do affect all of the churches.

Torkelsen: The majority of our churches are relatively small. Most could never individually generate the kind of diverse resources they need.

But many of our local churches have never really thought about all the things that the conference does for them in evangelism, in education, in church planting, and so on. That's another goal that Gordon and I have—to communicate clearly what we are providing, what we do. You talk to pastors of other denominations, and they marvel at all the things that the Adventist Church provides—our network of support. That's largely due to the way we're structured. It can make an enormous amount of positive difference.

Knott: *What's the most satisfying thing about your roles right now?*

Pifher: I get a lot of satisfaction from knowing that somehow I'm being used by God to minister to people. To me, it's most satisfying when I get a chance—at a pastors' retreat like this—to sit with these men and women, to share together, to see a gleam in their eye when they feel empowered and listened to—that's exciting.

Torkelsen: I have access to more information than I ever had before. A lot of that information is very affirming about what God is doing in all the churches in our conference, and in the lives of our workers. Sometimes it can be a huge blessing as you watch the hand of God working. Just because I'm in a different role, I hear more of those stories; I have more of that information brought to my attention. That's a great reward.

Knott: *If the two of you had the ability to change one thing about your lives as administrators or the way your structure works, what would it be?*

(Long silence.)

Pifher: I guess I'm hesitating because I'm having fun in my new role just the way it is. . . . I would pray that church members could sense that they are really the most important parts of this church. We say this over and over again, that we at the conference are really their servants. But it doesn't seem, after years and years, that message has really gotten through.

Torkelsen: I'd want the members to

The attitude of leaders must be to find ways to make ourselves valuable to the local congregation.

believe that I want to empower them. I want to give them the ability to make a difference in this church. My role is to make it possible, to give them every resource, training, help—whatever they need—so they can really take hold of their role as the church. The key is not paid workers working harder. The key is empowering our people so they can really do something.

Pifher: That common misunderstanding must be administration's problem in some way. The obvious fact that many members don't sense that they're empowered and that we're listening to them obviously means that we aren't communicating as well as we should.

Torkelsen: Often when we talk about this problem, we make it look like it's the members' problem—that they just won't do it. But in subtle ways we as pastors and leaders can give signals that we want them to make us indispensable. Gordon and I don't feel like we're indispensable. The president of the conference doesn't have to be present at every single committee. The work of the conference won't collapse if I'm not there for a week. And the work of the church won't collapse if the pastor isn't there. But the work of the church will collapse if laypeople believe that only paid ministers can do the work.

One really heartwarming thing just happened recently. Several pastors volunteered to take multichurch districts if we'll guarantee that the money saved

will be used to plant new churches. They don't just want that money reabsorbed into the conference budget, and I think that's fair. They've said, "If we can go to our congregations and tell them 'Because you're willing to do with less direct pastoral care, a new church can be started in Pullman that ministers to a secular campus,' our members will sacrifice." But it's not very appealing for them to think *Oh, well, by doing this, the conference is just going to have another \$10,000—*

Pifher: Or another conference administrator.

Knott: *So you want to honor that in your decision-making?*

Torkelsen: I admire the pastors who are willing to do it, and even be enthused about it. And I admire the congregations who are willing to try. Our job is to provide those churches with information about the newly planted congregations so that they can

ADVENTIST Review Subscriber Services

- ☐ Please send me one year, 40 issues, of the *Adventist Review* for US\$38.97.
- ☐ Please renew my subscription.
- ☐ Please update my address. Enter new address at top of form. Copy previous address at bottom of form or enclose old mailing label.
- ☐ Please send a gift subscription to the address at the bottom of this form.

My Name _____
Current Address _____
City _____
State, Zip _____
Phone _____

Please enter previous address or gift address here.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State, Zip _____

Please enclose payment for orders. Mail to: Subscriber Services, P.O. Box 1119, Hagerstown, MD 21741.

Credit card orders: 1-800-765-6955.

663-01-0

rejoice in what God is doing.

Knott: As a direct result of their sacrifice.

Torkelsen: I think they have a right to that. God wants them to feel rewarded for their stewardship. We feel rewarded at the conference, but we're not really the ones who made the sacrifice. They were.

Here's the point: the best ideas are still the ones generated at the local level. And if we believe that, then we need to model that. We shouldn't always be saying "Well, here's what we think we should do." We should ask them, "What do you think we should do?" And I think that should be modeled at every level of church organization. But I don't have a responsibility for the other levels.

(Laughter.)

Pifher: It would be wonderful if we had more proposals from the local church about how this conference should run—if we had so many proposals, so many ideas and visions coming from the local churches and our pastors, that we just didn't know how to resource them all.

Torkelsen: I think another advantage of looking at committees and looking at our people as the decision-makers is that it's a protection against political maneuvering. If you don't feel that it's your role to provide all the conclusions, then you're not motivated to try to manipulate people. And you're much more open to letting the Holy Spirit lead and guide.

(Pause.)

But it remains to be seen whether two people as unpolitical as Gordon and I will survive long-term. There may be certain pitfalls. It may be that new administrators often feel this way, but reality pushes them into a different style.

Pifher: I wonder, in the evolution of things, whether Max and I will someday be sitting in some office trying to politically maneuver to achieve what we "know is right." And I hope that never happens.

Knott: You seem to have a fundamental trust in the wisdom of the people

*In subtle ways,
we as pastors
and leaders can
give signals that
we want members
to make us
indispensable.*

that you serve and work with.

Torkelsen: I have a deep trust that if you have a representative process in our church, you'll get the right decisions. Now obviously, there are individuals present with different

opinions. But if you balance the group, if you require them to come to consensus, if you don't allow a strong individual to totally dominate, you can protect the process. If you do those things, I believe that in the vast majority of situations you'll have good and right decisions.

Pifher: "Leadership by consensus" doesn't sound trendy. But if you create the spiritual climate for those who are making the decision to listen to the Spirit of God with good, complete information, I think then we've got more than consensus. We have a little touch of God's style of governance again. ■

Bill Knott is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.



Lesson Helps for Next Quarter


Discover fresh insights into the Beatitudes and how to reap the joy of making them real in your life.

By Taylor G. Bunch
0-8280-1322-5
US\$8.99, Cdn\$12.99

**THE ROAD TO
HAPPINESS**
How to
make the *Beatitudes*
real in your life

TAYLOR G. BUNCH

Sabbath
School Lesson
Helps for Second
Quarter
'98

 This Review and Herald book is available at your local Adventist Book Center.
Call 1-800-765-6955.

Visit us at www.rhpa.org
Prices and availability
subject to change.
Add GST in Canada.

Feelings (Wo, Wo, Wo), Feelings

Some say that any secular music is of the devil. Yet much of today's music is an expression of the soul of various artists. Music often expresses how I'm feeling. For example, Alanis Morissette seems to express the hopelessness of Generation X and its cry for something to believe in.

At this point in my life I'm just hanging on, desperately trying to find that "first love" I once had. I'm confused about what to do, unhappy in my local church, led now by a pastor who believes sugar is evil . . . if you catch my drift.

Question: Should all music always be directed toward God as worship?

Allan's reply: I can tell that you're searching and struggling. I sense that at times music by secular musicians resonates with how you feel, capturing the essence of your experience, the despair you sometimes feel. I empathize with you. I've been there also.

Looking through the lyrics composed by David, I get a sense that his music was honest and heartfelt; a running, lyrical conversation with God. The Psalms are very diverse in the emotions and expressions they convey. But regardless of the emotions shared in the various verses, the writer (psalmist) seems consistently convicted that God is the center of life, the core of existence.

We are "allowed" to use music to express our feelings; in fact, that's one of its purposes. Should all music be directed to God as worship? From a Christian perspective, music needs to have at its core the reality of Christ as Lord. So even as we convey our real moments of hopelessness, despair, and loneliness, we can find Christ in the midst of it all (Psalm 23).

Musicians like Alanis Morissette sing about cynicism and loneliness that is very real, especially for Xers who have yet to meet Jesus. But Christians know a reality that transcends the despair reflected in the music of many of today's entertainers. This is not to say that being with Jesus is always a "happy, happy, joy, joy" life. But with Him in my life, I know who is with me and for me. And that's music to my ears.

I have a 19-year-old niece who recently became a Seventh-day Adventist. She had dropped out of high school her sophomore year. Now that she's baptized and loves the Lord, I've been encouraging her to get her general equivalency diploma (GED) and do something with her life.

But she says, "No, the Lord is coming so soon it would be a waste of time." She babysits her niece and says whatever the Lord sends her way is OK, but she doesn't seem to be motivated to further her education or do anything.

What's a nice way to say "Yes, the Lord is coming soon, but He expects us to get wisdom and knowledge, to serve Him doing something maybe more than baby-sitting?"

Allan's reply: There's an important lesson to be learned from our own church history. The experience of those who lived through the Great Disappointment could be helpful in giving your niece some perspective, because it sounds as though your niece may be using her newfound faith as a handy rationalization rather than a conviction that God is leading her.

As to the "nice way" you're looking for to communicate your concerns, your niece could really benefit from your support and companionship as you join her in exploring God's will for her. Serving God is not a passive endeavor; we aren't called to wait for "whatever comes our way." Psalm 119:2 shares the active nature of our faith: "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart" (NIV).

As you support your niece and study with her, God will reveal His destiny for her. If God indicates that she simply stay home and care for her niece, that's great. But if there's something else, it's important that you guide her in following God with all *her* heart.

Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dre•am VISION ministries, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership. Visit their Web site at <http://www.tagnet.org/dvm>.



The Lost Weekend

BY RENEE MARTIN

GOING TO A NEW SCHOOL IS NEVER easy. The anticipation of it all made me excited yet apprehensive. My dreams of experiencing a whole new way of life were finally becoming a reality. I was changing Adventist colleges to enrich my educational and cultural experiences. I wanted a new perspective on life.

Making friends and getting used to a strange environment were the two scariest things I thought about as I planned my year away from home. It was hard to be away from friends and friendships I had developed over five years—three in academy and two in college. Now I was going to have to start getting to know new people and trusting those who were practically strangers. I had no choice.

When I arrived on campus, I made a deliberate attempt to be nice to everyone. I began making new friends almost immediately. It was great.

Free at Last

The first weekend after school began, some of my new friends invited me to go to a mountain cabin with them. I thought it would be fun, so I packed my backpack, and we left campus early Friday afternoon.

As soon as we arrived, we left our luggage at someone's house and drove to a nearby grocery store. The girls in the group noticed the surrounding shops and wanted to do some shopping. But we had to hurry to get our groceries for the weekend, and the guys dragged us into the grocery store.

No one had spent much time planning a menu for the weekend, so as we stood around trying to decide what to buy, Adam* said to us, "We'll get the alcohol while you girls get the food."

I was floored! I couldn't believe that my "friends'" primary interest in getting off campus was so they could spend the

Getting away from campus seemed like a good idea—until I realized what my new friends had in mind.

weekend drinking. I felt so naive. I couldn't concentrate. I stumbled around the grocery store as they decided what they were going to cook for the weekend. I wanted to ask someone what was going on, but I didn't want to look stupid. *Am I the only one who thinks this isn't right?* I thought to myself.

We all met back at the checkout line. The guys had two carts brimming with beer, hard liquor, and only two bottles of soft drinks. The cashier didn't raise an eyebrow as we pitched in to pay one twelfth of the cost. The guilt was tremendous when I realized that I had just spent \$20 of my own money to buy more alcohol than I had ever seen going out of a store at one time.

As soon as we got back to the cabin, drinks started being passed around. Bottle after bottle of the stuff.

Many times in my junior and early-teen years we had discussed peer pressure in school and Sabbath school. We pretended to have educated discussions about it, but this was real pressure, and those canned answers seemed strangely insignificant.

Adam kept after me, asking if I wanted some combination of hard liquor and fruit juice, or if I wanted to try some licorice-flavored drink. After I declined his offers several times, he must've figured out that I didn't drink alcohol. But he kept asking, just to give me a hard time, I guess.

Struggles Within

My mind was in a whirl. I felt pressured to drink; everyone wanted me to drink. The situation was "ideal": no one would ever find out, and it seemed so . . . normal. I was tempted; I wanted to do it. Saying no the first few times was really hard, because some of the wine coolers actually looked refreshing and quite harmless.

But I decided that I wasn't going to drink, and I didn't. I looked for some kind of distraction, and fortunately, there was a computer in the cabin, with access to the Internet. So I wrote letters to my friends back home. I don't like to think what might have happened without that computer. I'm afraid I would have let down my defenses.

It happened to a friend I had known for five years. She bent like a cooked noodle under the pressure of our peers. She drank, she smoked, she got sick, she threw up. I don't understand how anyone can say that's "fun," but I fully understand why she did it.

Around 11:00 that night I thought the party was winding down. But the group decided to go dancing. I went, because I couldn't stand the idea of staying at a stranger's house all alone. But going out meant cars—alcohol and cars.

I was sober, but I couldn't drive a car with a manual transmission. So I had to ride. I sat behind the driver as the smell of alcohol hung in the car like a threatening reminder of what I was doing. I fastened my seat belt and prayed that we wouldn't become another statistic.

Back on Track

The next morning we were supposed to hike the mountain next to the cabin. But everyone was so sleepy or hungover that we didn't get started till late afternoon. When we did start climbing, the scenery was magnificent—the most beautiful I had ever seen. Looking back down the path was like viewing the scenery from an airplane. The day was clear and the quaint mountain village, nestled next to a crystal-blue lake, formed a postcard-quality scene.

For some reason I thought being surrounded by God's incredible nature would somehow change the group's outlook. Perhaps they'd want to go outdoors and spend the evening talking under the light of a full moon. Maybe they'd choose to hike farther up the mountain the next morning. But they apparently had only one thing on their minds.

That evening I had to find another distraction. I washed the supper dishes. It took me a couple hours, and when I finished, they were still "chugging away." Dishes done, I had nothing else to do but go to bed. It was nearly impossible to sleep because of the noise produced by all the merry drinking, but I managed in this way to escape the temptation to join them.

Sunday morning we cleaned up the cabin, packed our bags, and headed back to school. What a relief! I made it through the weekend without drinking. I can't remember when I've been so happy to be back in my own room at the dorm.

Some Friends

I never knew that alcohol was a problem with some Adventists. Yet I spent the weekend with 12 Adventist college students who drank Friday night, Sabbath afternoon, and Saturday night.

Now I understand why people start smoking, drinking, and experimenting with drugs. I always thought it was dealers on the street who get people to try drugs. But it's their friends. I thought people started drinking in bars. But it's really in homes, with people they know, trust, and respect—people they can't say no to.

I came back from that weekend trip knowing that I had to make some new friends. Not that I hated the people I'd spent the weekend with; it's just that I didn't want to share their lifestyle.

As I look back, I realize that I felt far from God that weekend. I'm not used to that. I was raised in the Adventist Church. But sometimes, even surrounded by other Adventists, I've felt far away from God. That weekend He felt so distant it was painful.

The more drinking I saw, the more I wanted to be close to God. I felt Him tugging me, showing me that alcohol isn't part of His plan for me, or for anyone else. The whole experience led me to recommit myself to Him. I've seen how easy it is to start drinking, and it's a chance I don't want to take with my life.

Since then I've made some incredible friends; real friends who know how to have real fun. People who share my lifestyle and my commitment to the Lord. ■

* All names have been changed.

Renee Martin is a pseudonym.

Student Missionary Reports on Brazilian Children's Project

BY KATHY CHERNIPESKI, WHO WRITES FROM YORKTON, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

As I grew up in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and later studied at Parkview Adventist Academy and Canadian Union College, I would never have imagined ending up on the other side of the globe, so far from the people, culture, and language I know so well. However, I've always had a dream of being a missionary, and last year I was not disappointed.

The first day I arrived in Brazil, I was sent to work in a day-care project sponsored by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. In the state of São Paulo, ADRA has been responsible for six projects aiding needy Brazilian children. Two of the projects are orphanages (one for girls and one for boys) and four are day cares. Each project provides the basic needs of the children under their care, including meals, medi-

cine, clothing, and a knowledge of Christianity.

The projects are overseen by Pastor Daniel Pereira dos Santos, director of ADRA/Brazil, and by project directors. The centers use both hired workers (day-care teachers and helpers) and voluntary help (student missionaries from all parts of the world).

At my center, Núcleo Bom Samaritano (Good Samaritan Center),

Acrofest '97 Pumps Up Gymnastic Community

BY JACK STENGER, ANDREWS UNIVERSITY PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

When it started, the coach couldn't have known how big it would become.

"Coach" is Robert Kalua, professor of physical education at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Since 1968 he has led the Andrews Gymnastics team and is regarded as one of the "godfathers" of Adventist collegiate gymnastics.

"It" is Kalua's brainchild—Acrofest. From its beginning, the event was touted as a gymnasts' camp meeting—one part clinic, one part "swap meet." Teams from across North America came together to learn from each other, have fun, and show off their hottest routines.

First held at Andrews in 1991, it had more than 450 athletes participating that year. "The goal has never changed for Acrofest. It's always been about community building among teams and also building up of the sport," Kalua said.

Since that first year Acrofest has traveled to a different Adventist college campus each year, becoming as much an "Adventist Olympics" as anything else. Last year it was held at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland, and

next year it will be at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. But this year Acrofest "came home" to Andrews. The gymnastics festival brought together more than 800 student athletes from colleges and academies across North America.

Participating teams came from eight Adventist colleges and universities and more than 15 high schools.

The first two days of Acrofest '97 were marked by gymnastic clinics. Festival participants, under the guidance of visiting instructors, could improve their handstands, their tosses, and their trampoline skills. Mornings and evenings were marked by worships led by Brett and Kathy Wilson, of Berthoud, Colorado.

The Sabbath morning speaker was Richard Duerksen, vice president for creative ministries for the Columbia Union. Since Acrofest's origins the organizers have viewed it as much more than a sports event. "We want young people to view this as a spiritual event. A well-developed routine or move doesn't mean much if they don't have a well-developed relationship with the Lord," Kalua said.

Fun. Worships. Action-packed learning. These elements made Acrofest '97 a not-to-be-forgotten event. Perhaps John Szalay, a senior at Mile High Academy in Colorado, summed up the event best when he said, "I've had a great time and I've got the soreness to prove it."



FLYING HIGH: The Acrofest gave the gymnasts a chance to display their skill.

I helped with the meal preparation, daily cleanup, and any extra help needed with the children. In the evenings, Sundays, and many mornings and afternoons I taught conversational English classes in the city. The money I earned from teaching was necessary to meet the monthly bills of our project.

Positive changes occurred in these children's lives because of their contact with us. The project operated under ADRA's care for one year, and the formation and construction of the first church in our area testifies to the impact our project has on the community. Changes in the way the kids act at home and at school have also been noted by parents and teachers. Our project director, Lélis Camargo, continues striving to adopt new methods to



CENTER OF ATTENTION: Kathy spreads love and cheer to Brazilian children.

demonstrate the love of Christ to the children.

When I arrived at the center, 6-year-old Leonardo didn't say anything. He just smiled. I soon learned, however, that he had a lot of energy.

He didn't sit still or listen to anyone. He wouldn't let anyone touch him. He tormented other kids, lacked respect for adults, and spent the day causing trouble. Then, when we got "unhappy" (angry) with him, he would run away and hide.

It's difficult to say how or even which day he changed. But he's completely different now. Maybe he just needed more attention. Maybe he needed assurance that the staff wouldn't punish him by hitting him, or maybe he needed the friendships of other kids.

One day, at the end of a meeting, Leonardo got up from his pew to leave. He passed the pew where I sat, but when he saw me, Leonardo returned and gave me a hug. Moments like that have made my time in Brazil worthwhile.

NEWS BREAK

Mexican Church Experiences Massive Growth

In what the Adventist Church is calling a "Festival of Baptisms," more than 7,000 new church members were baptized in services held in Mexico late January.

Of special note were the 3,000 joining the church in the Chiapas region, scene of civil unrest, bloodshed, and death in recent months. In Chiapas a number of Adventists lost their lives for refusing to join a group of armed guerrillas, according to David Perez, president of the Adventist Church in southern Mexico.

Most of the new members are joining the church in the south of the country, reports G. Ralph Thompson, General

Conference secretary.

"On January 24 more than 2,000 people were baptized in Chetumal and another 1,100 in Villahermosa, Chiapas State. In Tapuchilla more than 1,900 were baptized," said Thompson. The following week baptisms in Veracruz and Posa Rica totaled more than 1,400. "We were thrilled by the tremendous witness of our people in sharing their faith with others," said Thompson. "Most of the credit is due to pastors inspiring church members to spread the gospel among their neighbors. Growth is a daily staple for Mexican Adventists."

At further baptismal services in Mexico City attended by General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg on February 13 and 14, another 840 new members joined the church. For the worship service held on February 14, the 17,000-seat stadium was filled to capacity, reports Folkenberg. The Adventist Church in Mexico now numbers more than 500,000 believers.—*Adventist News Network*.

North American Tithe Increases Again

The North American Division's tithe gain of 5.3 percent marked the sixth time this decade that the tithe gain has been greater than inflation, says Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the North American Division president for



REAPING THE HARVEST: These baptisms are the result of church members sharing the gospel of Christ.

On Shaking Hands and Tolerance

BY RAY DABROWSKI, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR FOR THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

Can you imagine being forced to leave a job because you refused to shake hands with someone?

Seventh-day Adventists would like to be seen as tolerant Christians. Our denominational pedigree lists many impressive and successful outcomes in the field of religious liberty. No wonder that as a Seventh-day Adventist I was drawn with some interest toward two pieces of news about intolerance—one in the arena of politics, the other in the arena of religious relations.

In the first story, Washington, D.C.'s Holocaust Museum director Walter Reich got the ax because he refused to . . . shake hands with Yasir Arafat. "The minute Reich refused to greet Arafat, he was finished," the February 19 Washington *Post* quoted a museum official. Through his lawyer, Reich communicated that his refusal to go on the tour with Mr. Arafat "was a matter of conscience in a museum of conscience." Reich later reversed his decision, but it was too late.

NEWS COMMENTARY

The other story is from the February 13 *Catholic Sentinel*, a weekly paper of the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, about a new "anti-Christ" billboard erected alongside Interstate 5 in Talent, Oregon, by an obscure group calling themselves "SDA Remnant Ministries."

The Catholics reacted by saying, "Pray for those who persecute you." Dee Marks, chair of the Southern Oregon Catholic Vicariate, stated simply that "last time the vicariate made a big deal about it, and all it did was draw more attention to them. We decided now the best thing to do is just to pray for those who are so misguided."

Obviously, the Adventist Church reacted decisively, stating that Adventists "abhor acts of hostility toward anyone, and strive to promote a spirit of mutual respect for Christianity and the beliefs of any religious group."

To differ theologically is one thing. To be intolerant is another.

NEWS BREAK

communication. The per capita tithe gain of 3.4 percent also was greater than inflation.

Total tithe in 1997 was \$534 million. The Southern, Southwestern, North Pacific, and Mid-America unions all posted gains greater than 6 percent. The Dakota, Newfoundland, Georgia-Cumberland, and Kentucky-Tennessee conferences posted gains greater than 10 percent.

Another trend continued, albeit a negative one: World mission giving declined to \$21 million in 1997, a 2.4 percent decrease.

CUC Gymnasts Awe NBA Fans

Acro-Airs (see photo below), the gymnastics team of Columbia Union College, in Takoma Park, Maryland, are performing in the National Basketball Association.



While they don't play basketball, the team members are treating fans to action-packed halftime shows. The team has performed at

for the Indiana Pacers, Philadelphia 76ers, Boston Celtics, Atlanta Hawks, Charlotte Hornets, and Washington Wizards. The Acro-Airs are planning a six- to eight-game playoff tour, says Jen Caracofe, college spokesperson. The performances are designed to help build public awareness for CUC.

Lois Scales Succumbs to Cancer

Lois Yates Scales, 63, who has often been called the consummate role model for pastors' wives, died on February 9 in Beltsville, Maryland. Her death came after a long battle with cancer.



Lois Scales

Born in Summit, Tennessee, Lois served for nearly 20 years at Home Study International, based at the General Conference. Her last assignment before her retirement in 1997 was assistant registrar.

However, Lois was best known for her 40 years of service in the role of pastor's wife and evangelistic warrior. Married to William Scales, retired ministerial secretary for the North American Division, Lois assisted her husband in 35 evangelistic meetings as a Bible instructor, counselor, and singing evangelist. She also conducted health lectures, cooking classes, and hospitality ministries, and nurtured new members.

Did You Know?

As Income Rises, Christians Give Smaller Portions to Charities

The year 1995 marked the tenth consecutive year that church members gave a smaller portion of their incomes to benevolent causes, according to *The State of Church Giving Through 1995*, by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle. The study tracks giving patterns for 28 years, from 1968 to 1995.

Church giving, on a per-member basis, increased from 1994 to 1995 in both current and inflation-adjusted dollars. However, personal income continued to expand at a faster pace.

Giving as a portion of income was 3.11 percent in 1968. By 1995 it decreased to 2.46 percent, a decline of 21 percent in the portion of income that members were investing in their churches.

An analysis of the data also showed that members of evangelical denominations gave more than their counterparts in mainline denominations. However, evangelicals showed a steeper decline in giving patterns over the 1968-1995 period.—*Empty Tomb, Inc.*

For Your Good Health

Friends for Health

Having a large number of social relationships can help increase your resistance to colds and other upper respiratory illnesses. People with relationships in three or fewer social groups (friends, family, work, community, church, etc.) have a four times greater risk of getting colds than those with six or more types of relationships. Researchers believe that having a diverse social network gives you feelings of responsibility, control, and meaning in life, which in turn increases your motivation to take care of yourself.—*Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Children's Diets Falling Short

Children age 2 to 19 are not eating recommended amounts of various food groups. Less than 30 percent consume the recommended two to four daily servings of fruit, and only 36 percent eat the three to five servings of vegetables. Sixteen percent of youth do not meet the recommendations in any food group, and only 1 percent meet all daily requirements. Researchers believe that these poor eating habits in childhood could set the stage for higher risk of disease in adulthood.—*Pediatrics*.

—“For Your Good Health” is compiled by Larry Becker, editor of *Vibrant Life*, the church's health outreach journal. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-6955.

NEWS BREAK

Adventist Review Program Airs March 21

The *Adventist Review* magazine presents the *Acts Files* satellite program at 4:30-6:00 p.m. March 21, on Galaxy 4, channel 11.

Hosted by *Review* editor William G. Johnsson, the *Acts Files* will feature video reports of mission projects in Cuba, Peru, and Russia. You'll also enjoy live interviews featuring Adventist Christians who have made their commitment to Christ a part of their everyday life.

The music lineup features soprano soloist Janice Chandler and the gospel choir Assurance.

Volunteers Needed for ADRA Global Village

If you are 16 or older and looking for a fun experience, consider volunteering for Adventist Development and Relief Agency's Global Village in Washington, D.C., April 13 to May 1. The interactive educational display depicts the living conditions of many people around the world.

As many as 100,000 visitors may tour the site on the Mall. To staff the event, ADRA needs 250 volunteers each day.

If you are interested in helping with setup or set dressing, or as guides or habitat hosts or any of the other volunteer positions, call 1-800-931-2372 for more information. Volunteers should commit a whole day and attend training sessions.

News Notes

✓ **Randal R. Wisbey**, an associate professor of Christian ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological



Randal R. Wisbey

Seminary at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, was recently elected president of Canadian University College in Alberta. Wisbey replaces acting president Kenneth J. Fox.

✓ **CompuServe Users.** You can access the *Adventist Review* online each week within 48 hours of presstime and several days before the magazine reaches your home. The *Review* is available free of charge in the Adventists Online Forum (section GO SDAOLB). If you're not a member of the forum, you can join by simply calling 1-800-260-7171.

What's Upcoming?

Mar.	21	<i>Adventist Review</i> satellite program 4:30-6:00 p.m. Eastern time, Galaxy 4, channel 11
Mar.	22-28	Youth Week of Prayer
Mar.	28	Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Southern Asia Division
Apr.	4	Missionary magazine emphasis

BRID

BY LOREN DICKINSON

THE BOLD SIGN ON A CITY STREET puzzled me. "You can ski on your credit card," it read. "Wait a minute," I shouted to no one in particular. "You can't do that. Or can you?"

Around communication circles we talk a lot about being clear or missing the point. In fact, in the past decade we've come to think and know more about interpersonal communicating perhaps than ever before. There are good reasons for that. Look at the scores of best-selling books on relating; check out the plethora of videos on improving communication, and consider the unanimous conviction we hold that good communicating is crucial on the job, in the family, and in the church.

And North Americans are buying into it. John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* has been red-hot for years. So has his income. Gary Smalley's videos garner wide attention. But we still miscommunicate; we still misunderstand; we still listen poorly; and we still make quick and faulty assumptions. In fact, a major reason people get sacked from their jobs, say national studies, is not that they're incompetent. It's that they communicate and relate poorly. And sadly, these are two of the most significant reasons spouses and kids start disconnecting with each other. No family, job, or church is immune.

Is there hope? There is. A lot of it. Let's look at some uncomplicated understandings virtually guaranteed to enhance our communicating.

1. Words aren't dependable. We can't assume that what's sent is what's received. Why not? Because words, for one thing, aren't stable. Their meanings exist in receivers' minds, not out in the airwaves or even in the words themselves. And we can't predict what meanings others hold.

Look at the word "run," for instance. An unabridged dictionary cites more than 150 definitions. Or "fix." Would it be repair, attach, prepare, revenge, a chemical preparation, or a surgical procedure? And those don't exhaust the meanings attached to "fix." So when we communicate, we don't send meanings; we send messages. Then we ask receivers to attach their meanings to those messages. Lewis Carroll, the writer, made one of his whimsical characters say, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean." The rest of us can't afford to be that naive.

2. Good senders sense responses. The sender has to take onus for sensing how the message is received. Actively look for confusion. Invite questions. Be willing to repeat briefly or illustrate. Ask for feedback. And know that positive feedback happens when others understand you but do not necessarily agree with you. (Agreement happens not to be the communicator's goal. Understanding is the goal.) And negative feedback happens when others don't clearly understand you but do not necessarily disagree with you. Let me say it another way: I refuse to *agree* with you until I've understood you, and I refuse to *disagree* with you until I've understood you. There's great power in that notion.



3. Reverse the focus of the conversation. There's a dynamic difference between being *interesting* and *interested*. What does that mean? Perceptive communicators find it valuable, for example, to center on the receiver(s) and much less on themselves. The journalist offers great advice for interpersonal communicators. Ask six simple, crucial questions. Who, where, when, how, and the most powerful of the six—why and what.

How do these help us? We'll be seen as a valued listener energized to understand. You see, *since I already know what I know, why don't I compel myself to find out what you know?* When I relate with you like that, you'll find that very affirming. It's a bridgebuilder.

4. Open-mindedness wins friends. Staying open to others' views that you downright disbelieve builds bridges. Why? That permits us to connect with people and their notions we might otherwise find unlikable or highly opinionated. *No one insists that we must like everybody and everybody's ideas.* But

being open means we can accept one and perhaps not the other. That's open-minded bridgebuilding of high merit. Almost no committee or board suffers from too much of it.

5. Communication under stress often is nonsense. We produce statements that simply aren't so when we feel tense. "The doctor is always late." "All the school wants is your money." "You never think of me and my needs." Sweeping generalizations. You can predict that hasty conclusions like these will almost certainly put distance between you and others. That's wallbuilding.

6. Perceptions create deceptions. Sharp communicators openly acknowledge that their perceptions are just that—their perceptions. But we often confuse perceptions with facts—our facts and our truths. Since there's no known clone of any of us, then we're bound to feel, think, and act differently from any other being on the planet. Not grossly different but somewhat. Admitting that

perceptions are just that keeps us more sane, leaving space for others' perceptions that may happen to agree with our own. Or may not. That builds bridges.

These uncomplicated understandings offer hope, a lot of hope. You can know they work almost anywhere we communicate—at school and church boards, family, and the marketplace. Use them, and our peers and our kids will see the difference and like what they hear. So will we. ■

Loren Dickinson teaches in the Communication Department at Walla Walla College in Washington State.



When Jesus “Fails”

Understanding God when things go bad

WHEN MY FATHER was 14 and living on the tail end of World War II, he and his parents

found themselves trapped in the city of Vienna. Advancing Russians were on the march from the east, with heavy artillery booming over the horizon. From the west the Americans dropped leaflets, threatening to bomb the capital the next day. The beauty of the city made it almost impossible to imagine that within hours all could be rubble.

Incredibly, my grandfather was able to buy tickets for the last train leaving west. Rejoicing, he was making his way home when, inexplicably, he found himself arrested for not having the proper papers on his person. It was a familiar charge by cruel "lawmen" to take away the pain of their own fear. In anguish he explained he had to get home to his wife and son so they could evacuate, but his pleading was to no avail. He was destined to spend the night in a cold cell block.

The next morning the bombers dropped their death, but amazingly, the bombs fell far off their target. Grandfather was released, and he made his way home.

That afternoon the family was still able to board a train leaving Vienna, but after a half hour they were forced to return. And the reason for this about-face has sickened my father to this day: the train they originally were to have boarded was utterly destroyed by the bombing, and every person on board had been killed in the most horrible manner. If not for my grandfather's having been jailed, my family too would have perished in a whirlwind of terror.

Did Jesus Fail the Others?

Isn't it wonderful that God saw to the welfare of my family? Wasn't that a miracle of divine intervention? Beyond coincidence—wouldn't you agree?

Like those *Bedtime Stories* I find myself reading to my two children: the ball that's lost is found, thanks to a

child's prayer. The friend who's sick is healed, because God blesses their faith. The daddy without a job receives one—with a raise, no less—because he honors the Sabbath.

But as adults, familiar with the ways of this world, my wife and I exchange glances: it's not like that every time, is it?

God delivered my father and his parents, but not an entire train.

Friends get sick. Then die.

Kids lose toys and never see them again.

And fathers have to apply for food stamps and go on welfare, even when the Sabbath is honored.

Did Jesus fail them? Or was He too weak to stop the bad things? Didn't He care?

Would not the proliferation of miracles cause more of humanity to turn to our heavenly Father?

Trusting When There Is No Miracle

Once a year Christendom honors Jesus Christ's sacrifice on humanity's behalf in the form of Easter. More specifically, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. According to author Philip Yancey in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*, it's Sunday that best reflects what life on earth is all about. For Sunday—Easter Sunday—suggests that in spite of the greatest darkness and pain, there is still hope.

But there is a day that receives the least comment and greatest silence, even by Yancey. It is the Sabbath. The day in the middle has been forgotten. Forlorn and silent, this, I believe, is the day that best expresses the experience of a human being's sojourn on this earth: confused disciples, bewildered and lost, angry and in pain. There are no miracles on that day.

Think of it: for more than three years the disciples had been privy to the greatest miracles ever to be seen by humans, been given every evidence that God is love and in control. Water was turned to wine, lepers became whole, demons were cast out, and their Master walked on water. But now that same Miracle Worker was lying dead in a borrowed tomb.

Why did He "fail" them? How is it He couldn't save Himself? If only He could perform another wonder to bolster their shaken confidence! Just one more miracle to confirm His claims in their minds! *Wouldn't that be enough to create faith?*

One of the most graphic examples of the limitation of miracles to bring conviction and conversion was the resurrection of Lazarus. John put it this way: "The great multitude therefore of the Jews learned that [Jesus] was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. *But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus to death also; because on account of him many of the Jews were going away, and were believing in Jesus*" (John 12:9-11, NASB).

Astonishing, wasn't it? Jesus might have raised Lazarus from the dead a dozen times, but even such an extraordinary event would have failed to convince the religious leaders of His goodness or divinity. Hatred for the Wonder-worker was so strong that it blinded their eyes to the wonder itself and to the One responsible for it. Not surprisingly, the Pharisees' first response upon hearing about Jesus' resurrection was to hush it up with bribes.

Was it more miracles they needed? No. The reality of the resurrection stared them in the face, but they just wished it hadn't happened. If we don't have a longing for a knowledge of God to start with or a regard for what He has already done, God could part waters all day long before our eyes and not make a single impression on our hearts.

Miracles Cannot Compel Faith

If miracles were a cure-all to weak faith, how would we explain all those years of wandering in the wilderness—by a people who'd seen water flow out of barren rocks and food drop from the sky? Pharaoh would have collapsed prostrate at Moses' feet when the rod turned serpent.

During His sojourn here Jesus knew that something special had to be tried.

An approach that would change hearts and gain the deepest trust. The new approach was love. Love is the one power that has worked for 6,000 years. How else could one explain the phenomenon of the "Hebrew worthies" mentioned in Hebrews 11? Tortured, mocked, scourged, stoned, slaughtered, tempted, homeless (verses 35-37), these spiritual giants did not receive divine deliverance. Nor did they experience any miraculous intervention. Out of sheer faith, however, they chose to live godly lives in the firm hope of "a better resurrection." Their love was conditional not on God's deliverance in their present crisis, but on what He'd already done. It was enough to know that they had direction and a future, even after this life, as hard as it was.

Jesus was sent to this earth to "show us the Father" (John 14:9, NKJV). Finding people afraid to speak the name of God, Christ asked them to call God "Abba" (Father). He washed our feet. And whereas other religions *demand sacrifice* to catch the attention of their gods, our God *became sacrifice* to catch our attention. Other deities force loyalty by fear, but our God counts the hairs on our heads—to show His love and loyalty for us.

That's good and clever, someone might say, but at heart I still want a God to protect me from the consequences of my sins. To rescue me when things go bad. To be available at my beck and call. To prove to me through miracles that He is there for me.

But shouldn't our desire be for relationship—rather than for a fire extinguisher, or for a genie to answer our every need?

In the end, Jesus said it best as He interrupted Saul's deadly mission to Damascus: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4, NKJV).

In effect, Jesus was saying: "Saul, I've given every evidence of My tender care and infinite patience for humanity. I have led people—a whole nation—out of bondage and offered them every blessing, even when not deserving. I even came down to live

God delivered my father and his parents, but a trainload of others were killed. Why?

among humanity to show them what My Father is really like. So why are you still set on hurting Me by hurting the ones I love?"

Isn't it strange that during Christ's time on earth it was the dregs of society who felt most comfortable with

Him? Publicans and prostitutes, the hedonist and the corrupted—they all desired His companionship and forgiveness. Somehow they sensed that He was for real, that they could be vulnerable in His presence.

And to be able to bask in the complete forgiveness of that presence was miracle enough to these outcasts of society. With gratitude many responded, and their lives were changed. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:18, NIV).

This, then, is the reality of our God. Jesus "fails" only with those whose expectations are of their own making, only with those whose hearts' desires are at odds with His divine leading. In short, Jesus "fails" only those who never knew Him. But for those who know Him, what He has already done is miracle enough. ■

Victor Czerkasij, an ordained minister, is admissions advisor at Southern Adventist University.



We are going to
TURKEY
with Melek Jones

Tours in
April/May, June, October 1998.
In June, Dr. Jon Paulien will
lecture on tour!
Andrews University credits!

TWO WEEKS IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

Walking in the footsteps of the apostle Paul.

History, archaeology, photography, worship, prayer, friendship, building bridges, delicious Turkish food, and more!

Ephesus
Smyrna
Pergamum
Thyatira
Sardis
Philadelphia
Laodicea
Mediterranean
Cappadocia
Galatia
Ankara
Byzantium
Istanbul

For more information, please call

Lois Campbell
1-800-730-0405
Melek Jones
423-775-6574

328 Ridge Crest Dr.
Dayton, TN 37321

"Tell Me Your Story"

CHRIS BLAKE

"God made man because He loves stories."—Elie Wiesel.

It's almost a sure thing in a church service. During the children's story, you'll see everyone in the sanctuary, including teenagers, perk up their attention. The children will listen (more or less, depending on whether they have yet been weaned) while the story lasts. But the minute the speaker steps into *The Moral* they return to scooting sideways, whispering and shushing, or waving with glazed eyes. True, young children think concretely and can't decipher abstract connections, but it's also true that a story captivates children of every age. "Our lives are stories," contends William R. White, "and in a sense, any good story is about us."

When I first met with Dan, Mark, and Ric for our current weekly support group, we decided to begin with our life stories. Via paper/rock/scissors¹ we chose who would tell his story for up to one hour—wherever we wanted to start, whatever we wanted to say, however we wanted to end. I found that I grew to love these men through hearing their stories. In addition, I discovered that each time I tell my story, nuances and emphases differ; each time I learn something new about myself.

We live in a story-shaped world. Our Bible is a fertile anthology of redolent stories, and Jesus the Messiah is one of its most prolific storytellers. The following folktale explains how this came to pass.

Once, a long time ago, the Lord God decided He should select a nation to be His chosen people. He asked the nations gathered before Him, "If I were to be your God and you were to be My people, what could you do for Me?"

The Greeks replied, "We would honor You with the finest art and the loftiest, most logical thoughts."

The Roman people responded, "We would build magnificent buildings in Your name and construct remarkable road systems so that Your people could travel to worship You in these great buildings."

Over the earth the Lord questioned one nation after another, with each boasting its prowess and intentions. At last He approached a small group from the Mideast.

"Lord," the Jewish people said, "we are not known for our ships, our logic, our art, or our roads. We are a nation of storytellers. If we were to be Your people, we could tell Your

story in a thousand ways throughout the world."

And God said, "It's a deal."

In his book *The Call of Stories: Stories and the Moral Imagination*,² Harvard professor Robert Coles reveals the power of stories to heal.

As a psychiatrist, he learned from a mentor how to use stories. "Dr. Ludwig wanted me to worry about messages omitted, yarns gone untold, details brushed aside altogether, in the rush to come to a conclusion" (p. 21). How, I wonder, might Seventh-day Adventists learn from his counsel?

Coles refers to one patient who "kept himself aloof, his story unspoken, while he tested, with his questions, my willingness to surrender enough of myself (my story) to show reasonable good will toward him" (p. 18). The

importance of being known and knowing our audience deeply is made plain in another story.

Once a primitive village was given a television set and a generator. For weeks all the children and adults gathered around the set, watching program after program. After three months, however, the set was turned off and never watched again. A visitor to the village asked, "Why do you no longer watch the television?"

The chief said, "We have decided to listen to the storytellers."

"Doesn't the television know more stories?" the visitor wondered.

"Yes," the chief replied, "but the storyteller knows me."

We can relish the profound value of story, metaphor, and creativity. As poet William Carlos Williams asserts: "Their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them."³

We can encourage others to tell us their stories, even before we tell His story.

¹ The modern-day Urim and Thummim.

² Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1989.

³ Coles, p. 30.

Chris Blake teaches English and communication at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has been known to tell a story or two to illustrate his teaching.



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

BY LOIS PECCE

Have You Seen the Tears?

On a Friday evening in January I did as I often did on Friday evenings—colored and cut illustrations for my kindergarten Sabbath school class the next day. The lesson focused on the Garden of Eden

and on forbidden fruit.

The first illustration I colored depicted Adam and Eve in their beautiful, perfect surroundings. The next showed Eve taking the fruit from the serpent. The third pictured Adam's consternation as Eve urged him to eat also. The last of these coloring-book-style drawings illustrated the banishment. Dressed in animal pelts, heads bowed in sorrow, Adam and Eve walked away from the garden. Behind them, driving them out and guarding the tree of life, stood a stern-faced angel brandishing a flaming sword.

The more I colored this picture, the more it troubled me. I stopped for a while to review the lesson highlights in the teachers' guide. They stressed the vital importance of obedience, setting it forth in stark images. The attention device used cutouts of a mother hen and chicks with a rhyme telling how the fox ate the little chick who failed to obey. In the overall aspect, I wondered if the children might think the fox represented God.

Children are so visual in their learning. Though I would tell of God's love and forgiveness to Adam and Eve, the depiction of the angel's angry, unyielding face would convey a far different message. I began realizing this was a message with which I had struggled for most of my life, this very picture of heaven's response to humankind's sin.

I couldn't eliminate the angel. Scripture says God "stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned in every direction, to guard the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24, NASB). With my crayons I stroked in the orange and red flames, trying to imagine that day in

the garden and the feelings of the angel. "Dear Lord," I whispered, "what is *wrong* with this picture?"

Suddenly I knew. Taking a pencil, I drew tears on the angel's cheeks, then touched them with a silver crayon to make them glisten—just a little. Tears.

"It was the saddest day in all the world," I told the children the next morning. We talked of a God who loved to walk with the people He created, and how sad He must have been when they failed to trust Him and obey Him. How sad *all* the angels must have been, because they loved Adam and Eve so much.

"I know," said a little boy, nodding his head solemnly. "I can tell—because the angel is crying."

We talked of a God who loved Adam and Eve so dearly that He promised right there, before they left the garden, that He would send a very special Person into the world to destroy the serpent and pay the price for sin.

Amid all the pictures of God hanging in my mind's gallery—God of the Red Sea;

God of the lions' den; God of David, Daniel, Esther; God of the manger in Bethlehem and the daughter of Jairus—hung this dominant picture of the harsh, unapproachable God of the angel with flaming sword. Only as I drew in the tears could I, at last, reconcile the pictures of justice and love—the flaming sword and the cross—and see the one God who is the same—yesterday, today, and forever.

What about your pictures of God that influence your perceptions, your treatment of others, and your self-concepts?

Have you seen the tears? ■



Lois Pecce is a freelance writer currently living on the West Coast of the United States.



What Do You Call The Invention That Does All This...Without Attachments?

JUICE
30 seconds



COOK
4 minutes



FREEZE
30 seconds



CHOP
5 seconds



PUREE
1 minute



MIX
15 seconds



GRIND & KNEAD
5 minutes



BLEND
30 seconds



CRACK
10 seconds



...And Afterwards Becomes
Its Own Dishwasher
By Cleaning Itself In
10 To 90 Seconds?

The Vita-Mix® Super 5000

Call today to find out
about this ingenious
appliance.

For a **FREE** brochure call toll-free 1-800-VITAMIX (1-800-848-2649).
or write: Vita-Mix Corporation, Dept. ADV0298, 8615 Usher Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44138.



The Bible Explorer Series™

Bold, Beautiful Blessed



The Beatitudes

Promises and Principles for
The Kingdom of Grace

1. Great Works In Progress
2. Comfort For Broken Hearts
3. How To Inherit The Earth
4. Craving God's Righteousness
5. Mission Of Mercy
6. Positively Pure
7. A Promise For Peacemakers
8. Persecution May Make You Perfect
9. Accused!
10. Please Pass The Salt
11. Brighten The Corner Where You Are
12. You Are Just Like Your Father

BX-090 6 Cassettes in Album US\$ 29.00



Order Toll-Free

1-888-426-2277

717-652-3121 Fax 717-652-7602

www.AmbassadorGroup.org

© 1998 The Ambassador Group. All Rights Reserved.

Everyone wants to be happy.

In the Beatitudes Jesus set forth the constitution of His Kingdom of Grace and the conditions for entering it. The Sermon on the Mount still empowers His end-time disciples with promises and principles for a truly "happy" life.

Everyone loves a good story.

Jesus' parables are simple tales drawn from daily life that paint an incredible portrait of God. They bring Heaven closer to earth and draw us nearer to our loving Heavenly Father.

Hyveth Williams teaches

God's Word like a Bible sleuth and wordsmith who is determined to track down truth. You will be delighted to discover practical truth for today.

Listen, learn and live boldly.

You will enjoy 16 hours of life-changing verse-by-verse Bible study. Listen while driving, exercising, doing housework.

***Get both series, save \$10!**

**This bold offer ends July 31, 1998.*



Hyveth Williams

Author of *Will I Ever Learn?*



Parables Jesus Taught

A Secret Source of Joy

Exploring God's Heart

1. The Soil Of Your Soul
2. You're Everything To Me!
3. God Knows Where I Am!
4. Reversal Of Fortune
5. The Seed And The Sickle
6. The God Who Answers Prayers
7. God Be Merciful To Me, The Sinner
8. Shrewd Sinners, Simple Saints
9. Are You My Neighbor?
10. Please Pardon Me
11. Are You Ready?
12. Too Late!

BX-088 6 Cassettes in Album US\$ 29.00