

ADVENTIST Review

A close-up portrait of a woman with short, dark, wavy hair, looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. She is wearing a bright red jacket over a dark turtleneck. The background is dark and out of focus, with some light streaks on the left side.

April 16, 1998

Cutting Edge

**Ginger Ketting:
A College
Professor
Shares Her
Heart**

Forgive Us Our Debts

Samson—A Story About God

LETTERS

Marvelous Mark

How my heart thrilled to read Kellie Tompkins' "Marvelous Mark



Hughes Gets Real" (Feb. 19 Cutting Edge Edition). I arrived at Weimar College while that story was still in progress. The year

was just ending, and Mark was getting ready to leave. I could tell from the frequent comments that he was much loved by the staff, and yet the look in their eyes showed a concern over the direction his life had been taking the previous few months.

What rejoicing I heard when Mark came back from his evangelistic meetings in Georgia. He was a transformed young man! Now the conversations on the trails and in the offices were filled with praise. The prayers for him had been answered.

Our prayers continue to go with Mark and all the others who have passed through these halls. May your love for Jesus never grow dim, and may you never be taken "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Col. 2:8, NIV).

—Homer Trecartin

WEIMAR INSTITUTE
WEIMAR, CALIFORNIA

Spiritual Rubbish

I agree with Carlos Medley's "Spiritual Rubbish" on both aspects. However, there is a good side to junk mail. We

shred it and use it to start fires.

—Frank S. Waxter

VIA E-MAIL

Please include city and state/country with all correspondence.—Editors.

Generation X

As one who is technically a member of the so-called Generation X, I am alternately amused, annoyed, and frustrated by both the quality and quantity of discussion being engaged in by the Adventist Church in an attempt to outline how best to evangelize this basically misunderstood group. In the February 19 issue alone I counted three separate pieces that, in one way or another, dealt with the dilemma of reaching GenX.

It seems to me that the problem of reaching Generation X is not really very complex. What Generation X wants, believes, and responds to is well known and has been documented ad nauseam by people claiming to be experts—although few are actually social scientists, and fewer are GenXers themselves. In my opinion, the real obstacle to evangelizing Generation X seems to be the unwillingness (or perhaps inability) of the Adventist Church, at several levels, to get serious about doing so.

If there is movement to evangelize Generation X, it needs to come from Generation X. GenXers themselves need to be allowed to plan it and do it their way, on their terms—using symbols, language, dress, music,

metaphors, and so on that are meaningful to them. Until that happens, the best that can be expected is marginal success.

—Jeff Wright

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

Love for Animals

I appreciated Laurie Barcelow's "Fur and Feather Stewardship" (Feb. 19) very much for several reasons, but I want to comment on her statement that "surely those men I see in my office who can cry over the loss of their cats, dogs, or even iguanas are not men who go home and abuse their family members."

How wonderful it would be if love for animals were a reliable indicator of who is an abuser and who is not. But this is a myth. Abusers can have tender hearts toward animals and people. They can pray earnestly with tears and talk passionately about God. They may love nature and enjoy tranquil rides to the mountains . . . and yet instantly explode into life-threatening road rage.

Sometimes tendencies toward abuse can be easily detected, but often even clinical professionals and time cannot forewarn you of the probability or magnitude of abuse. Courtesy, a tender heart, charm, spiritual devotion, etc., are not reliable indicators of safety—especially to an unsuspecting heart.

I don't say this to make us all cynical, but to encourage generosity toward victims of abuse. They don't need their heartache compounded with "You should have known" or "I

would never have . . ." messages. I'm sure this is not what Dr. Barcelow was saying, but it seems prudent to warn the unsuspecting.

—**Patricia Hart**, PASTOR
ORACLE, ARIZONA

God Isn't Unconditional

Myrna Tetz's editorial "I Don't Understand" (Feb. 12) is well titled, because as I see it from the Bible, there is nothing about God that is unconditional. We seem to confuse God's wonderful forgiveness and amazing love with the idea that He's willing to accept anything. But God has abundantly revealed that He is particular and conditional, yet with love divine beyond human understanding.

—**Ernest H. J. Steed**
DEBARY, FLORIDA

What About the Rest of Us?

While I enjoy reading articles about Adventists who have "made it" in the world of work, the focus always seems to be on those who have succeeded in the professions, high government offices, the world of entertainment, and other upper-echelon workplaces. Relatively few people, Adventist and otherwise, ever attain jobs of this type. I'm not sure we would feature the carpenter Jesus if He were here today.

Wouldn't it be refreshing to see articles on Adventists who are welders, nursing assistants, small business operators, secretaries, drafters, cooks? Wouldn't it be interesting to hear how these workers deal with the many issues they face in the workplace and how they witness for their Lord? Our emphasis on higher education has certainly been a blessing, but has it contributed to our message's limited success among blue-collar workers?

I like the Ellen White quote: "All who toil with head or hands are workmen or workingwomen. And all are doing their duty and honoring their religion as much while working at the

washtub or washing the dishes as they are in going to meeting" (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 590). As usual, the gospel turns the world upside down.

—**Steve Mallory**
JEFFERSON, TEXAS

Good observations. The Review welcomes unsolicited features on Adventists in all walks of life. You'll find 22 of these Adventists—including a sculptor, a secretary, a firefighter, and a filmmaker—in our 48-page special issue, Class Acts, in just two weeks.—Editors.

When asked about her satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the role of women in the church today, Judge Marla Anderson responded: "Is it possible that there are women out there who are capable of being used by God?" ("In Judge Anderson's Courtroom," Feb. NAD Edition).

What does she or anyone who feels this way mean by that? What must we do to be used by God? I have spent my life at home being a helpmate to my husband as the Lord continues to guide me in raising a glorious household of children for His kingdom. I know that Ellen White and God Himself believe this to be the greatest calling any woman can have. Why do we think we are limiting God because we don't all believe that women should be elders, pastors, or leaders over men? Are there not enough callings for us that we pine away our lives desiring that which God never intended? Have we forgotten that the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world?

—**Brenda Caster**
FULTON, NEW YORK

Judge Anderson's comment wasn't meant to slight full-time moms. But your point is well taken.—Editors.

ADVENTIST Review

COVER STORY

8 A College Professor Shares Her Heart

Just what is an Adventist education supposed to provide?

BY GINGER KETTING

ARTICLES

14 Samson

Everyone knows what he did, but does anyone know what it meant?

BY LARISA BRASS

22 Forgive Us Our Debts

What good is a credit history if it's all bad?

BY LESLIE KAY

26 The Test

He was only a derelict, and he needed professional help.

BY KEM TILLEY

29 I Wanted to Be a Nun

God has always been precious. And now even more so.

BY LAURA HAMILTON

DEPARTMENTS

2 Letters

7 Give & Take

12 Leaving the Comfort Zone

13 Cutting Edge Conversations

17 Book Mark

18 World News & Perspectives

25 The X-Change

30 Children's Corner

31 Reflections

EDITORIALS

5 Reading the Future

6 Family Ties

NEXT WEEK

All That Glitters Is Not AU

Lots of institutions begin with noble dreams.

ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly..."

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

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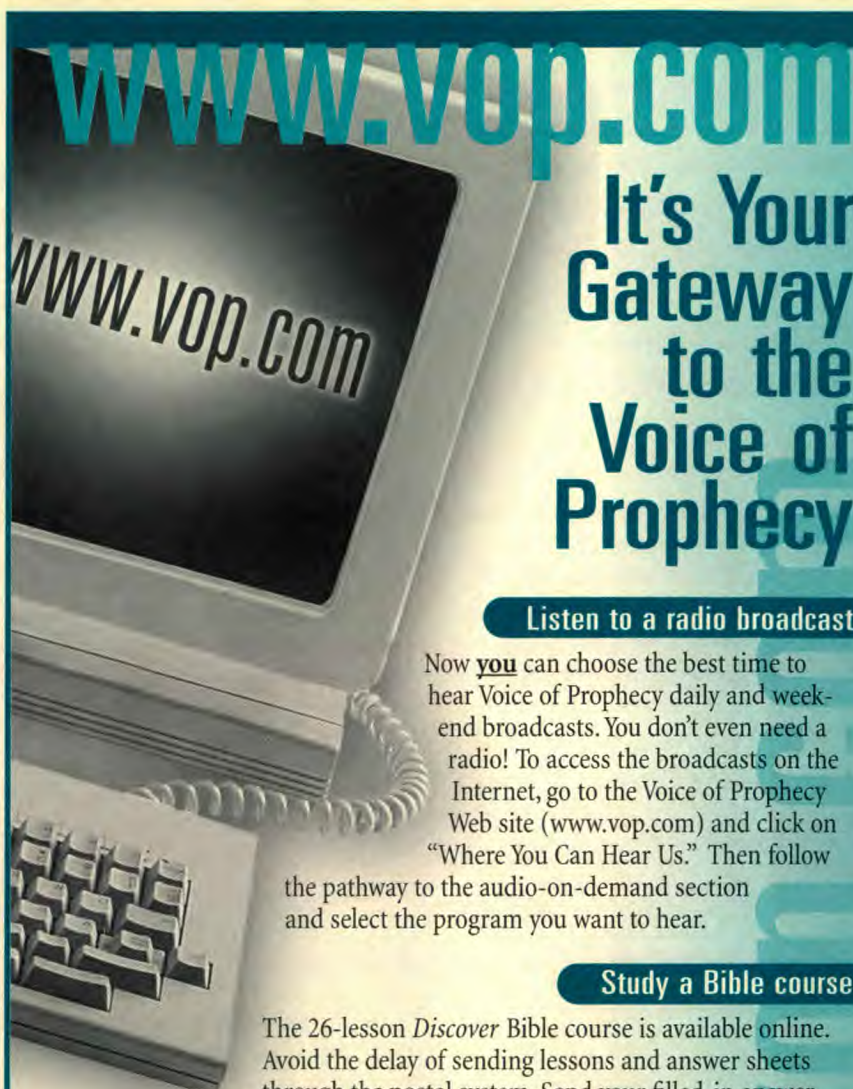
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Reading the Future

BILL KNOTT

"Incurable Bibliophile Holes Up in General Conference Building"

Being an editor, I imagine how the headlines might read as I unpack the citrus and banana boxes that have imprisoned my library for the last nine months. Colleagues roll their eyes and gently chide as they pass the growing pile of "empties" in the hall: surely no one would want that many books in one office!

They must be only mildly afflicted, I decide. They do not know the grip of this disease.

Something like homecoming, Christmas morning, and summer vacation happened in my life last week as I filled newly built office bookshelves with the volumes I've collected through a lifetime. An accident of planning left my books ignominiously alone in the garage for months, pages curling in the winter moisture, bindings stressed in heavy stacks. During the bookless months I had almost forgotten the warm security they bring, the sense of rootedness and memory they inspire—almost as if a cluster of old friends had suddenly descended on my life with food and flowers. This 12 x 10 x 9-foot space now feels "mine" even more than if I decorated it with pictures of my wife and sons.

For it was Brady and Evan I was thinking mostly of as I unpacked the red books and the mostly-read books. Just now they are enthralled with all that reading means: at six and seven, the world of words is opening to them like blossoms on an April morning. They feel no fatigue in books, for Bill and Jill and Dick and Jane and—oh yes, Spot—romp through pages closely chased by squads of exclamation marks. Jump, Spot, jump! See, Sally, see! Read, boys, READ!

I look about the book-lined walls and worry for the future. Will my sons ever find the joy I know in *Walden*? Will they smell the daffodils with Wordsworth or go cruising down the Mississippi with Mark Twain? Will that Boer War history that I love be ultimately boring to them? Could they ever understand why John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* are the language of my prayers?

And what of Luther and John Bunyan? Will righteousness by faith leap off the page and fill their minds, their

hearts, as once it did their father's? At 17 (or sooner) will they fall in love with Jesus because they came to know Him in *The Desire of Ages*?

Most of all, will Scripture—KJV or NRSV, I care not—be to them a comfort and a guide? Will they relish cadences and sounds ("God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved")? Will all those memory verses that we practice on the way to school bring hope on bad days and lamps on dark nights? Will the Word—the Book, the Bible—be to them cool water in a dry land?

These might be just the melancholy musings of a middle-aged man, save for one thing: this is not a friendly age for readers. Everywhere, the culture

spins a gossamer web of things seen and obscene. Rent this video; load this game; watch this show; surf the Web. Rushing at us from the screen come images of a world that moves unnaturally and impossibly fast, crammed with stimuli we can only sometimes process and most usually just "experience." It's an indiscriminating world as well, in which Pepsi is as valuable as the Red Cross, and appeals for literacy volunteers get buried by the laugh tracks of a dozen desperate comedies.

But ruining all things video will not, by itself, make readers of my sons. Rearing readers in an on-screen age will require a careful piece of living, I sense, filled with evenings when I trade my *Time for Weekly Reader* and my tome for Uncle Arthur. Twice-told (thrice-read!) tales of Robin Hood and Timothy must recharge young imaginations just before the lights go out. Through their eyes and in their books, perhaps I will be graced to see again what 30 years ago I saw—a world rich with wondrous places, peopled by amazing folks who each have stories well worth hearing—and worth reading.

"They can't read the Word if they can't read the words," the literacy slogan urges. That remains the finest reason that I know to give my boys my love for reading. Holed up in my book-lined office, I bless each day they choose to love the Word revealed in the Word, whom to know is life eternal.

*Rearing readers will
require a careful
piece of living.*



Family Ties

One of my favorite television shows in the 1980s (a decade I'm already nostalgic for) was the Thursday night comedy *Family Ties*—you know, the one that followed *The Cosby Show*.

I guess I liked *Family Ties* because I felt strangely bonded to Michael J. Fox, who played Alex. I suspect a lot of short White guys with straight brown hair felt strangely bonded to Michael J. Fox. Michael J. Fox gave us hope—see, you *didn't* have to look like Magnum, P.I. to be popular (though it sure didn't hurt).

But the main reason *Family Ties* connected with so many people—even those without straight brown hair—was the excellent on-air chemistry this very diverse family had. Even though Mrs. Keaton was sensible and Mr. Keaton was scatterbrained, even though Alex liked politics and Mallory liked fashion design, the Keaton family consistently closed ranks around each other.

I remember a line from the final episode. Alex, who's moving away from home, catches Mallory measuring the dimensions of his bedroom; she plans to turn it into a sewing room. As her brother playfully chases her out, Mallory suddenly spins and sobers. "Alex," she says, "I just want you to know that I'm proud of you. I don't know *anything* about whatever it is that you do, but I know that you do it really well." Alex returns the compliment, and I brace myself for the trademark *Family Ties* hug.

Of course, this was just a pretend family. It isn't hard for a bunch of genetically unrelated characters to get along in a studio. It is hard in a church. Yet in spite of all our differences, Jesus had the audacity long ago to pray that we *would* get along, that we would be "brought to complete unity" (John 17:23, NIV).

On paper it doesn't look easy. The Adventist Church is an extremely diverse family; we have widely ranging ethnic backgrounds, personalities, learning styles, abilities, tastes, and on and on and on. This diversity can be our greatest weakness—or greatest strength.

We do, after all, serve an extremely diverse God, a God who documents His rather startling love for diversity in:

Creation. The colors, the landscapes, the life forms. Just imagine if God had settled for purple prairie dogs.

Worship. Though you probably won't find me shaking a

tambourine or dancing (everyone knows that lifelong Adventists are rhythmically challenged), I love Psalms 149 and 150, which encourage a variety of praise.

The disciples. Have you heard the one about the tax collector, the zealot, and the fishermen? God used them to change the world.

Gifts of the Spirit. If hardheads like Peter (1 Peter 4:10) and Paul (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12; and Eph. 4:11-16) can make room for other's callings, we can too.

A thousand other forms.

This isn't anything goes. For our own good, God requires uniformity in such areas as the fruits of the Spirit and the commandments. But even the commandments allow surprising freedom. After all, what's more restrictive: "Thou shalt not" or "thou shalt"?

If God loves variety, and if we routinely welcome variety into our nonreligious life—do we always wear the same clothes? order the same meals?—why shouldn't we welcome variety into our religious life?

Why should a new church employee who calls her colleagues "brother" and "sister" be driven to tears by a senior official who says that that isn't appropriate?

Why should a young, expressive Canadian couple—who don't urge their expressiveness on anyone else—be frozen out of their church's fellowship?

Why should the longtime, dedicated members of a Florida church be made to feel that they—and their gifts—don't matter much anymore?

What ties this family together? Uniformity in the way we speak, look, worship, serve? I don't think it's a coincidence that *every* time Peter and Paul discuss the wide-ranging manifestations of the Spirit, they couch that discussion in an appeal to love.

It isn't uniformity that unifies us. Uniformity is dull. It's *love*—the love that comes from Jesus Christ. It's loving others. It's respecting their gifts. It's saying, "I don't know *anything* about whatever it is that you do, but I know that you do it really well. And I love the way God is working in your life."



GIVE & TAKE

ADVENTIST QUOTES

"It isn't hard to make a mountain out of a molehill—just add a little dirt."

—a sign at an Oregon Adventist Book Center

"The greatest gift you can give your mother on Mother's Day or any day is your commitment to Jesus."

—Mike McKenzie, associate pastor, to the Madison Campus Church in Madison, Tennessee

"It is better to sing alone than to be in a choir in prison."

—Gordon A. Case II, to the Mount Shasta, California, youth, in a talk about choosing friends wisely

"Do Lord, oh, do Lord, oh, Deuteronomy."

—Christopher and Lauryn Stiles, then ages 4 and 3, as they prepared to go to Sabbath school in Granite Bay, California

ADVENTIST LIFE

Recently our family moved to a new church, and many people befriended us. The head elder of this church was trying to befriend our 4-year-old daughter without success. One Sabbath I mentioned to Emily, "Why don't you just go hug his leg? He'd like that."

She looked at me and emphatically responded, "You go hug his leg!"

—Becky Anderson, Aurora, Colorado

As I was tucking my 11-year-old, Robert, into bed, we were discussing how Jesus talks to us in a still, quiet voice. He told me he couldn't hear Jesus talk to him. I assured him that if he took the time to spend with Jesus, He would speak to his heart.

The next morning Robert woke up with excitement in his eyes and said, "Mom, I heard Jesus talk to me! He said, 'How are you, Robert?'"

Then Robert told me about his dream of being in heaven. Jesus was showing him the mansion that was waiting for him. "And every time you sin," said Robert, "Jesus takes a room off."

—Denise Aranda, Denver, Colorado



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

Our daughter and her husband were attending church at La Sierra University with their 3-year-old son. The preacher asked, "What preparation do we need for the final crisis?"

In a loud whisper Christopher responded, "Preparation H."

—Leta Davis, Butler, Tennessee

HATS OFF TO ADVENTIST YOUTH

Baptized with his parents just a year ago, 13-year-old Shane Begg, of Primm Springs, Tennessee,



DIGGING IN: Shane Begg

has become a very active member of his local church. Besides helping to build a new church and mowing the church lawn, Shane also serves as a junior deacon. "He is courteous, kind, and conscientious," says Louise Wolcott, wife of the pastor.

Congratulations to Shane Begg on going the extra mile for God. Look for your *Review* cap in the mail.



WE NEED YOU

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A College Professor Shares Her Heart

Are Adventist colleges leading young people right out of Adventism?

BY GINGER KETTING

"Adventist education isn't safe for our young people anymore. They go to our colleges, where their faith is destroyed by teachers who teach them to doubt those truths that have shaped our church and been the distinctive marks of our message."

"I saw a young man at the checkout counter of the college market with rings all over his fingers. I asked if he was an Adventist. When he said he was, I told him I couldn't see how he could call himself an Adventist with those rings on. What is going on with our young people, and why aren't the colleges teaching them what it means to be Adventist?"

AS A YOUNG PROFESSOR WHO FROM first grade through graduate school has attended Adventist schools—including Far Eastern Academy in Singapore, Walla Walla College, and Loma Linda University—my heart has ached as I've heard of comments such as these over the past year or two. I have taken each one of them personally and have searched my heart about whether these criticisms are true. Please allow me to share my thoughts about these comments, which basically boil down to the question: Are Adventist colleges leading our young people right out of Adventism?

Issues in the Eighties

In the early 1980s college teachers and students were grappling with a couple thorny issues: the understanding of the sanctuary doctrine, and questions about inspiration prompted by accusations that Ellen White had plagiarized a disturbing amount of material. I sat in classes listening to professors who had wrestled with the difficult questions of the time.

I distinctly remember my professors telling us, "We want you to take a good look at these questions and at other questions that you will meet when you leave college and enter the non-Christian world. We would rather have you ask questions and risk unbelief in an Adventist school than to deal with the questions all by yourself sometime in the future. We have negotiated these questions ourselves, and we're still committed to being Seventh-day Adventists. We



When a Teacher Lets You Down

The following incident, written by a young Adventist, has been verified. We include it not to spark a witch-hunt, but to remind students, parents, schools—indeed, the whole church—of their stake in ensuring Christian education.—Editors.

I had a wonderful experience in Adventist schools, and I can easily trace much of my love for the Lord to my love for His representatives in Adventist classrooms.

A few years ago, however, I encountered a teacher who not only took lightly his preparation (a fact of life in *any* school system), but much more distressingly, his responsibility to shape young minds.

I had asked a question in class about whether Jesus might have spoken some Latin and, in turn, spoken some words that sounded English. The teacher replied that the question was moot, since new research showed that much of the Gospels couldn't be trusted anyway. Later, in his office, he referred me to John Dominic



Crossan's *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* and other revisionist works.

In subsequent classes this teacher mocked Ellen White—describing her as “just a plagiarist”—and showed a video wherein a comedian told sexual jokes. Among the students was a non-Adventist woman from the community taking a single class—this one—from our Adventist school.

I shared my concern with the appropriate people. The response was lackadaisical. “He’s tenured,” they said. “He’ll be retiring soon anyway.” (Not soon enough. Recently I was talking with a friend whose daughter had phoned the previous Friday night, troubled about some things this same teacher had been saying in class.)

I’m glad for teachers who eschew spoon-feeding, who challenge their students to grasp

Adventist beliefs for themselves. I worry about teachers—and I believe there are few—who clearly, *vocally*, denigrate the beliefs of their employing institution. They threaten to color so much good happening on campus, and tenured or not, they’re not worth keeping around.

want you to have the benefit of our support and experience.”

The questions to which they exposed us were difficult indeed. For a few months I stared in disbelief in the face, considering whether I could honestly look at these questions and remain a Christian. Throughout this time my professors were there to encourage, to be witnesses, and to affirm belief in God and a commitment to the Adventist family.

Could I have navigated this journey successfully on my own? I know I could not have. My professors were correct when they chose to risk my belief by presenting these questions within a caring and supportive environment. It is because of their risk-taking that I remain an Adventist Christian today.

Adventist Higher Ed Today

Now I am in a position to pass on the same kind of support given to me by my dedicated Adventist professors. As I look around at my colleagues, I realize that I am surrounded by the same kind of committed, supportive Adventist academicians that I was

fortunate to study with in college. Many of us have made it our mission to give up better-paying jobs to “pass on the torch” in preparing young people to take their places in service. Although the facade of Adventist education may have changed over the past 100 years in response to a rapidly changing world, the unique mission of Adventist education continues very similar at heart to what it was 100 years ago.

What worries me is that some in my Adventist family have begun to question publicly the value of Adventist higher education. This has arisen in part because of an occasional case (see sidebar) in which a professor did truly delight in challenging students’ faith without the Christian support—the responsibility to “pick up the pieces”—that should accompany such challenging questions. I believe that such cases are extremely rare, occurring less frequently in Adventist colleges than in Adventist congregations in general.

When such a situation occurs, due process should be followed. Such a professor might need to be asked to

find some other educational system where his or her views would be welcomed. However, we can’t afford to paint Adventist education with a broad brush based on the occasional “bad apple” any more than we can afford to paint *any* Adventist institution with a broad brush based on a worker or two who makes choices dissonant with our beliefs. If we followed such a train of thought, we’d end up carrying on inquisitions and purges reminiscent of other religious systems we would prefer not to emulate.

Another recent problem affecting the reputation of Adventist higher education has been gossip or rumor passed on by people who have an intrinsic need to find an enemy within the ranks. Some of this may have resulted from intergenerational misunderstanding; it’s too easy to look at the outside of a young person and draw conclusions about the state of their spirituality.

Some rumor may also result from our own longstanding “eye on the horizon,” with which we eagerly seek signs of the end of the world, even among ourselves. Those times will

come, but we cannot afford to be hasty in labeling people, situations, or institutions as prime examples of end-time apostasy.

In each of these cases a personal effort to become acquainted with the people and facts of the situation would likely bring some surprising results and reassurances. Hundreds of professors in Adventist colleges are quietly working in their classrooms to draw students to Christ and to pass on beliefs distinctive to our Adventist family. And hundreds of students who have daily been shaped by both an excellent academic education and a rigorous and solid spiritual education are graduating each year.

The problem with some of the recent critical statements is that they undermine a mission that is crucial to the future of the church. The Valuegenesis study has shown that in North America the longer that students stay in Adventist education, the more likely they are to be loyal to the Adventist Church both in attendance and monetary support. This finding is probably also true of our schools overseas.

I would venture to predict that if we don't make a drastic commitment to the young people who are already in the church, the church of tomorrow might be primarily made up of new converts. New converts are wonderful and welcome, but we cannot callously disregard those already here and the solid base they may provide to our church in the coming generation.

My Plea

If I were reading this aloud in class, my students would be eyeing me with that look that says, "Get to the point, Dr. Ketting!" So I will.

Here is my plea, in several parts:

1. I challenge you as church members and leaders to set aside the inflammatory stories and rhetorical questions, the gossip and innuendo, to search your heart and to pray for God to show how you can best support the young people already

here in the church.

2. I challenge you simply to listen to the young people in our academies and colleges. If you cannot actually come to a campus to converse, eat, and worship with them, find some of them on home leaves and ask them about their spiritual cares and concerns. Ask

Hundreds of professors in Adventist colleges are quietly working in their classrooms to draw students to Christ and to pass on beliefs distinctive to our Adventist family.

them what you can do to support them in their spiritual growth. Put off any judgments, conclusions, or personalized sermons until you have thoroughly listened to a lot of young people.

3. I challenge you to look past any unfamiliar or worldly looking exteriors and to see the hearts of our young people. I have met many with the bleached, spiked hair, or with rings on fingers or in ears, or with eye-catching clothing, who have hearts with a bent toward God. What they lack and crave are people who care to ask them about their spiritual lives and discuss the gospel with them.

4. I challenge you that for each time you call Adventist education to accountability (and we *do* need to be reminded to give a rationale for all

that we do in light of our mission) you do or say 10 things first that will support and help in the endeavor to "pass on the torch" through Adventist education.

I have seen good private, public, and home education in many places. I personally know the heart and soul of Adventist education, and I can say in truth that we have an educational system to be proud of. We cannot afford to chip away at ourselves with rumor, isolated stories, or negativity. In a world that is disintegrating around our ankles and families that are disintegrating within our church, Adventist education is a treasure in the midst of us. Adventist education will never be perfect, but it is an asset too long taken for granted.

As a local public school superintendent told me recently, "You are not getting the message out about the excellent education you have hidden up there on the hill. You should be."

Why is it that we are the last ones to realize this truth? ■

Readers, especially young readers: We're interested in your thoughts on this subject. If you attended Adventist higher education classes, what impact did they have on your personal spirituality and Adventist beliefs? Send responses to "Adventist Higher Education," Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; fax: 301-680-6638; Internet: 74532.2564@compuserve.com. We'll run responses (with your name withheld, if you desire) in an upcoming issue.

Ginger Ketting, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Education Department at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.



Beyond WWJD

Past the Bible Beanies and the Resurrection Eggs. Around "The Joy of the Lord" stationery stickers. Under framed pictures of grapes and angels, teddy bears and Christs. Along tiers of greeting cards for the first Communion or confirmation.

A forest of children's products loom, sprouting VeggieTales headquarters and a five-foot asparagus, Bible Blurt! and Spine Chillers Mysteries ("Parents: A Christian Alternative"). Next to the name tags with Christian fish swimming in the background and the 500-piece boxes of soft Communion bread ("uniform size wrapped in plastic guaranteed fresh"), before the "Jesus Is Lord" pencils, Footprints bookmarks, Testaments, and Heaven's Best Chocolates ("A Sweet Reminder of God's Holy Word"), I spy it. The WWJD section. WWJD T-shirts. WWJD four-color posters ("Go and do likewise!"). WWJD cards by Argus. WWJD bumper stickers. WWJD *In His Steps* for 99 cents.

I'm in Maranatha Christian Resource Center, here in Lincoln, and I'm looking for a book. The WWJD phenomenon is spurring Christian marketers much as the *Chicken Soup* industry stirs other bookstores. WWJD began in Charles Sheldon's classic and inspiring multimillion seller *In His Steps*, in which Henry Maxwell, Rachel Winslow, and others begin to live by the motto "What would Jesus do?" This is an ennobling question, an elevating consideration.

However, God doesn't want Jesus clones. As Bill Hybels remarks, "God is a variety junkie." If we were to do what Jesus did, we would never pursue a formal education, never travel overseas, never get married, never wear glasses. We would walk virtually everywhere we go. We would wear sandals and a robe. Moreover, if we adhere strictly to the biblical account, we would not blink, cough, laugh, clip our fingernails, or comb our hair. We would never use a microwave oven, an electric light, or a wristwatch. Instead of asking "What would Jesus do?" we ought to ask "What would Jesus have *me* do?" (WWJHMD).

Or what about the GHAPFYL¹ approach? GHAPFYL is meant to provide security, but if by "plan" we mean "blueprint," our lives may be marked by frustration, fear, and hopelessness. Suppose I mess up the blueprint somewhere in a decision—the entire house will come crashing down. Suppose I'm not sure *precisely* what God wants. Suppose my "chosen one" is living in Accra, Ghana? Oh, *no!* At times we give the impression that

God is saying, "You can have anything in the store—as long as it's the Ken doll." Many times many different options are completely within God's will for us.

We wonder particularly about the colossal choices of career and spouse. As a father myself, I have some insight into God's desires for His children. My *plan* for my sons is not that they choose to be accountants or marry Susie Freestone,² but that their lives be noble, caring, honest, deep, fun, humble, and godly. Beyond that, I want them to use one of God's greatest gifts—the human brain—to make decisions.

Freedom is sacred to God. God would rather have us free than have us saved. We scarcely comprehend the immensity of freedom and the resulting horrors God endures.

All of the world's joy and all of the world's suffering are by-products of freedom.

Instead of WWJD, I'd like to see GDTOSALBMBOOI.³ An earmark of any cult is that its members are asked to give up their individuality. Christianity is different. "For freedom," Paul points out, "Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1, RSV). Diversity makes us stronger, more compelling people. In heaven we won't all play harps.

The WWJD campaign screams with irony: Would Jesus run this high-gloss bumper-sticker marketing blitz? Why didn't He start His own public relations company, complete with a string of Jewish seminaries? Is anything too hard for Him?

Too often we find Christian rhetoric filled with shallow optimism and easy piety. We can live beyond sloganeering, wrestling with issues that engage our minds, emotions, and godly strength.

Anyway, it's what Jesus would do.

¹ God has a plan for your life.

² She's a peach.

³ God desires that our service and love be marked by our own individuality (of course).



Chris Blake loves Jesus and teaches writing at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.



Kit Watts: What's She Doing Now?

ELLA RYDZEWSKI

In May 1997 Kit Watts, *Adventist Review* assistant editor for 10 years, left for California. What's she doing now? She wears two hats: director of the Women's Resource Center, La Sierra University, and assistant to the president for communications, Southeastern California Conference. Both institutions are located in Riverside, California. During a recent trip *Adventist Review* editorial assistant Ella Rydzewski interviewed her.

Ella: Kit, your job is director of the Women's Resource Center—what is the center and how did it begin?

Kit: The center serves the university, church, and community. Women faculty and community members conceived the idea to enhance equality for men and women. They believed that women's issues needed to be addressed. We have resources available for classroom enrichment and theological studies. We have a library, worship materials, and liturgies designed for women. We plan an annual lecture series and weekend events. La Sierra University is the first church institution to have such a center.

How does the center impact the students?

We have had our first chapel program. In a gender and religion class that I coteach with Fritz Guy, we study how religion influences your life and how your gender influences your religion.

How do you respond to the criticism that the center is "feminist"?

Some people see that term as negative or relate it to secular thinking. To me it means equality. Not every Christian sees it the same way. God created men and women as equals. What does it mean to get back to that? Are we stuck in our stereotypes, or do we have redemption?

What are your dreams for the center?

The center is like an infant with endless possibilities. One of my dreams is to collect women's stories. Adventist historians have neglected women. The *SDA Encyclopedia* has 600 biographical sketches, and 80-90 are women. We also want to honor special women, letting them know we value them. We need to study history—the economy, politics—to develop a theoretical framework of women in the church. We plan to start a quarterly church with women preachers and liturgies. This will take time—the center pays

its own way, and part of my work is fund-raising.

Do you plan to use the center as a job information service?

I am working on that as a consultant with the General Conference Ministerial Association. We want to locate women in ministry—pastors, chaplains, counselors, evangelists, teachers, students, retirees. We need a network to encourage these women. We support other women's groups. The church women's ministries works on spiritual development. Our work is in the academic area.

What kind of issues do you deal with? What about church policy?

The issues of violence, abuse, children, etc. Women's ministries deals with these on a personal level. We look at the dynamics—studies, research. We won't be dealing with church policies in the near future, even though some need to be addressed. For example, in our church there are few ways for women to advance in the work. Some get wedged into being secretaries but have other dreams. There seems no way to become anything else.

Fundamental belief 13 is about equality. Why isn't it working?

Not everyone accepts equality. I hope we dig into Scripture and grasp those principles that enhance our church community. Equality is one of them. As it is, we get pulled into equality by outside pressures. We need study programs and discussion to keep us moving and not lagging behind.

I am sympathetic to our church being one of many cultures. I respect the good in them. We shouldn't set culture aside. On the other hand, we have not presented equality as a valuable principle and doctrine—that is the failing of the church today.

Tell us about your job with the conference.

It's a standard communication department for our workers and members. I write and edit our conference's pages for the *Pacific Union Recorder* and media releases. We also have an incredible amount of routine detail.

I still miss my friends at the *Adventist Review* and the people I got to know during my years there. It was a rewarding experience, but I am also grateful for this new challenge.



PHOTO BY JOEL D. SPRINGER

SAMSON

BY LARISA BRASS

SAMSON. A REAL-LIFE HE-MAN, Hercules, Superman, Batman, and Spiderman rolled into one. The Bible's own fantastic fairy tale.

Samson. A favorite children's bedtime saga. A stock illustration of why not to marry unbelievers, why not to break your promises to God. The typical example of a man of God who could have been so much more.

Samson. Often pictured as a silly oaf bumbling his way around Israel, killing a few Philistines here and there, prone to throwing temper tantrums with terrifying results.

Samson. Master of riddle and verse. Lurer of beautiful women.

Samson. A man who could never seem to get down to the official business of leading Israel and taking care of its enemies once and for all. That's what I always thought about Samson.

Then there's what the Bible has to say about Samson. According to Judges, he was more than a party guy who killed a few Philistines here and there. According to Judges, Samson was more than God's mistake. According to Judges, the story of Samson really isn't primarily about Samson at all. It's about God.

It all begins with the miracle of Samson's birth. His mother can't have children.

No problem, says God; you'll have a son. But he's going to be Mine, set apart, holy. No wine for you or him. No razor for his head.

So Samson is born. And he grows up to be something else. Right off the bat he's attracted to a Philistine woman and wants to marry her. He goes to his parents. They aren't so sure.

Listen, however, to this incredible statement in Judges 14:4: "His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines" (NIV).*

Samson goes to his wedding and stumps his guests with a riddle about a lion he'd killed. His bride manages to wangle the answer out of him, which makes him mad. So he kills 30 men and goes home steaming.

And the Spirit of the Lord was with him.¹

After calming down a bit, he heads back to see his wife. Actually, she isn't his anymore. Her father, assuming that Samson's impromptu exit from the wedding feast meant he wasn't interested any longer, has given her to another. "Sorry," he says now to his son-in-law of yesterday, "but what about her sister?"

Upset and angry, the Hebrew strongman catches 300 foxes, ties their tails together as torches, and burns to cinders the grain fields, the vineyards, and the olive groves.

In a bit of misplaced revenge, the Philistines kill Samson's former father-in-law, along with his (unlucky) former wife. So Samson, in counterrevenge, goes out and kills a passel of the Philistines, who, for their part, proceed to lay siege to Israel.

A story

A dramatic illustration of a man standing in a temple with falling columns. The scene is set in a grand, ancient temple with massive columns. A man, possibly Jesus, stands in the center, arms outstretched, as a large column begins to fall upon him. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong light source from the left, casting long shadows and highlighting the textures of the stone and the man's figure. The overall mood is one of sacrifice and divine power.

about God



ART FROM REVIEW AND HERALD® PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

At this point Samson's "games" begin to make the Israelites a bit uncomfortable. So 3,000 of them—there's safety in numbers—make a deal with him to tie him up and deliver him to the Philistines as a prisoner.

But no sooner is he in Philistine hands than he snaps the rope that binds him and proceeds to kill 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, singing as he goes.²

*And the Spirit of the Lord was with him.*³

Then Samson rules Israel for 20 years.

*And the Spirit of the Lord was with him.*⁴

Time passes. Samson visits a prostitute in Gaza.

Perfect, think the Philistines. While he's sowing his wild oats, we surround the city and grab him on his way out the door. But the plan does not envision Samson's taking the gate of the city with him, a clear evidence of the continuing power of the Spirit of God in him!

Does the Bible really say all that? What kind of God are we talking about here? What kind of God apparently lets His leaders waltz around with sordid women and kill their enemies in fits of personal rage? What kind of God uses obvious human misjudgments to accomplish His purposes? What kind of God seems to condone sexual escapades, trickery, and cruelty to animals? In each of these fantastic incidents, was Samson operating within the sphere of God's will?

The story requires us to ask a lot of tough questions—questions that could lead us to reevaluate our concept of God, questions that could cause us to snap shut the Old Testament and lean toward an apparently more kindly, cushy New Testament Father and Saviour.

Is there room in the Bible for both? Is it possible that the character of God includes love and perfection and the highest call to righteousness, as well as the capacity to use the most sordid situations and the most unlikely heroes for His glory?

The story of Samson inevitably leads

us to admit that we must either dismiss certain large portions of the Bible or else realize that the mind of God may not fit into the pretty little box we create for Him.

Enter Delilah.⁵ The Bible doesn't psychologically profile what happened. Judges just says that Samson gets tired of being pestered. Maybe he doesn't think his hair is that big a deal. Maybe he doesn't think God is that big a deal. Maybe he finds his own strength a little too impressive. Whatever the persuasion, Samson allows Delilah to cut his hair. And in an instant

Is it possible that the character of God includes the highest call to righteousness as well as the capacity to use the most sordid situations and the most unlikely heroes?

his strength is gone, and this erstwhile warrior turns into a pitiful slave, weak and blind.

*And the Spirit of the Lord left Samson.*⁶

But not for long. Samson's is a two-part story. The first part raises many questions about God—His wisdom, His judgment, His choice of persons and circumstance. The second reveals an incredible truth—a truth to hang on to in our darkest moments, a truth to praise God for when we know we've let Him down.

And that truth is that the great mistake of

Samson's life became God's great victory.

As the blind Samson—now a weak and stumbling fool to his enemies—hears the mocking of the greats of Philistia, hears the cries and taunts against his God (who, from all appearances, has failed), he turns to the Spirit of the Lord, who'd been with him in times gone by. And as he does, he feels himself filled again with the same power that once had terrified Israel's enemy.

Supporting himself against the central pillars of the pagan temple, and standing before the blasphemous crowd he cannot see, he prays. Yes, Samson—the one who'd allowed himself to forget his God—prays in this moment of deep crisis: "Oh Sovereign Lord, remember me."⁷

And in a display of divine power through human instrument, God shows that Samson is still His chosen man. In a final sacrifice of life and self, Samson destroys those who mocked his God as powerless. And God accomplishes His will through the death of the one He loves.

What more shall I say?" asks Paul in Hebrews 11:32-34. "I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength."

It's a story about Samson. But even more, it's a story about God. ■

* All Scripture references are from the New International Version.

¹ See Judges 14:19.

² See Judges 15:15, 16.

³ See verse 14.

⁴ See verses 18-20.

⁵ See Judges 16.

⁶ See verse 20.

⁷ Verse 28.

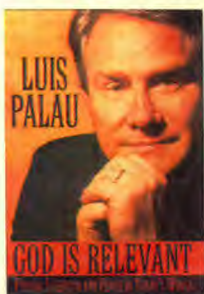
Larisa Brass is a freelance writer/teacher who lives in Loveland, Colorado.



BOOK

• M A R K •

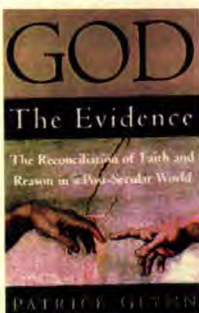
God Is Relevant. Finding Strength and Peace in



Today's World

Luis Palau,
Doubleday
Publishers, New
York, 1997, 200
pages, selected
bibliography, no
footnotes, US\$19.95, paper.

God: The Evidence. The Reconciliation of



Faith and Reason in a Postsecular World

Patrick Glynn,
Forum Publishers,
Rockland,
California, 1997,
200 pages, footnotes, US\$22.00, paper.

Both books are reviewed by Lyndon K. McDowell, who writes from Scottsdale, Arizona.

Do you have a friend or relative who struggles with faith because of scientific or philosophical questions? Here are two books that target that audience. While both books follow a similar theme, the two approaches differ radically. Luis Palau, a world-renowned evangelist and man of faith, steps into the world of philosophy and reason to examine the causes

and consequences of unbelief. Patrick Glynn, a onetime atheist, traces the reason for his atheism, his struggle to find a moral basis for life, and then in five chapters he discusses the basis for faith in a postsecular world.

Palau writes that his book should be read in the world's great universities where faith in God is ridiculed. He says it also should be read in the homes of thoughtful men and women serious about rediscovering faith, and by students of history, politics, psychology, and religion.

Apparently it has been. In an E-mail note he said that he has had comments from people in all walks of life—from professors and students in universities to men and women in business and in ordinary occupations. Their comments, he said, were “interesting.”

Palau's journey into philosophy and science could easily have become tedious, but he writes with passion and conviction. He makes his chapters short and to the point, interspersing them with stories of conversions. These include family members, an angry revolutionary, a scientist, and a person in high social circles. The stories are heartwarming and faith-building.

Glynn takes a different approach. While reason did not bring him to Christ, reason prepared the way for his conversion. His book appeals to the mind rather than the heart. He believes that no good reason any longer exists for an intelligent person to embrace the illusion of atheism or agnosticism.

As his book explains it, we do not live in a random universe. We find so many seemingly arbitrary and unrelated constants in physics that have one thing in common—they are precisely the values that must be present for life. This is called the anthropic principle, first publicly presented by Brandon Carter, of Cambridge University, in 1973.

A chapter discussing modern psychology overthrows Freud. Another, entitled “Faith and Physicians,” shows the benefits of religious faith to health.

Problems arise in the fourth chapter. In this chapter Glynn accepts the accounts by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Raymond Moody, and Michael Sabom about near-death experiences. Thus the

author uses their books as proof of an immortal soul. There is no easy answer to the evidence these researchers present, but the idea that a disembodied soul can see and hear and move in and out of the human mind not only opposes Scripture but stretches credulity to the limits.

Glynn admits there could be an alternative explanation to near-death experiences, but is at a loss to find one. In my own tentative approach to the problem, I find that the wide variety of experiences demand a variety of explanations. God has made the brain as a marvelous piece of machinery, and humans do not fully understand how it works. We do know that in some circumstances it can both “broadcast” and “receive.”

Aside from the fourth chapter, Glynn's book can provide those wrestling with unbelief rational evidences for faith.

You can order both books through your local Adventist Book Center or by calling 1-800-765-6955 in North America.

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LA RED '97 Beams the Gospel Throughout the Western Hemisphere

BY MANUEL VASQUEZ, VICE PRESIDENT FOR SPECIAL MINISTRIES, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

I'm not inviting you to change your religion just to be changing your religion," the evangelist said in a loud voice. "I am asking you to accept Christ as your personal Saviour so that He can change your lifestyle."

Changing lives was the main objective for LA RED '97, the Hispanic satellite outreach series conducted November 8-15, 1997. Evangelist Alejandro Bullon, ministerial secretary of the South American Division, conducted the meetings from São Paulo, Brazil, but the meetings were beamed to every Hispanic country on the globe.

Two years before, Bullon had planned to launch a Portuguese NET '97 satellite reaping effort for Brazil. Learning of this plan, General Conference president Robert Folkenberg challenged North American Division Hispanic leaders to request that Bullon do a Spanish version of the same reaping effort for North America one week prior to the Portuguese effort.

That was the beginning of months of planning, promoting, and preparation in local churches. Although some Hispanic churches had participated in NET '96 satellite evangelism, it was still a new concept that had to be promoted. The congregations had to be equipped with the necessary satellite equipment.

Eradio Alonso, NAD associate ministerial secretary, who coordinated the massive undertaking, said, "The greatest challenge that we had before us was to rally all our forces [leaders, pastors, and laity] to support this effort." Many meetings were held around the division, and the groundswell of support was overwhelming. More than 450 Hispanic churches prepared to participate. Some of the churches purchased the satellite equipment, while others recorded the nightly presentations on borrowed equipment from English-speaking churches. A third option was provided through *La Voz de la Esperanza* (the Spanish-language Voice of Prophecy), which offered backup videos that had been recorded a few months before.

To make LA RED '97 more identifiable with Hispanic church members, several



NEW BEGINNING: In Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Johnny Carrillo (center) and Zuleyma Palencia (left) were baptized and married on the same day by Victor Schulz.

Hispanic singing artists (Jose Ocampo, Isis Espana, and Patty Gadea) and leaders (Manuel Vasquez, Frank Gonzalez, Eradio Alonso, Luis Leonor, Francisco Ramos, Jorge Soda, and Luis Torres) appeared nightly on the programs with special music and greetings.

Rich Harvest

Baptismal reports are already coming in. Jorge Mayer, Michigan Conference Hispanic coordinator, reported that his conference had 92 baptisms from the effort, including seven that will be reported by the Anglo churches, since two groups are still part of the mother Anglo church.

Twenty-three churches in the Southeastern California Conference participated in LA RED '97, eight with their own equipment and 15 with the Panamanian backup videos. Mario Perez, Southeastern Conference Hispanic coordinator, said that 1,181 non-SDAs attended the meetings. At



STRONG SUPPORT: Many congregations, such as this one in Alberta, supported LA RED '97.

the last count there were 138 baptisms, with more baptisms planned for the near future.

Hispanic coordinator Velino Salazar reports from Southern California Conference that 44 churches participated in LA RED '97 and were able to reap 475 baptisms from the 1,125 visitors who attended.

Victor Schulz, Canadian Spanish ministries coordinator, reported that all the Hispanic churches there participated in LA RED '97. The satellite program was downlinked not only in churches and auditoriums but also in hospitals and restaurants. In Toronto, Ontario, the members approached three restaurant managers whose facilities had satellite equipment and a Spanish clientele. The members arranged for the restaurants to downlink the eight nightly meetings. The pastor and some church elders arranged to be present in each place,

LA RED '97 BAPTISMS

As of December 31, 1997

Atlantic Union	551
Canadian Union	81
Columbia Union	209
Lake Union	266
Mid-America Union	23
North Pacific Union	45
Pacific Union	1,415
Southern Union	606
Southwestern Union	805
Total	4,001

answering questions, offering Bible studies, and appealing to people to make a decision.

One large family that ate at one of the restaurants the first night were surprised that there was a preaching service on television. They came back every night so they could see the programs. The family are now

preparing for baptism.

In Winnipeg and Saskatoon, where there is a Spanish-speaking population but no Spanish church, the Anglo churches took up the work. As a result, on November 15 in Winnipeg they celebrated the very first Hispanic baptism in the history of the church in that area. To date, 81 new members have been added to the Adventist Church in Canada as a result of LA RED '97, with more planning to be baptized in the near future.

The Texas Conference is reporting 610 baptisms to date from LA RED '97 and more to take place. The Spanish coordinator, José Piantini, reported that 42 of the 76 Spanish churches participated in LA RED '97, with an average nightly attendance of 5,000.

When all reporting is received, it is expected that there will be 4,000 baptisms from LA RED '97.

NEWS BREAK

ADRA Provides First Orthodontic Services in Burkina Faso

The first dental facility in Burkina Faso to provide orthodontic services was inaugurated by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) on February 5 in Ouagadougou.

Initially the principal beneficiaries will be those living in the capital area, primarily because it is the urban population that has the greatest dental care problems.

Populations living in rural areas tend to have fewer dental problems because their nutrition is better and they eat less sugar, reports Allain Long, ADRA/Burkina Faso director. Once the program has reached financial self-sufficiency, ADRA will begin serving more rural populations that are not able to pay full cost for the services.

With only 30 dentists per 10 million inhabitants in the nation, there is clearly a chronic lack of public dental health care among the people, Long says. Essentially, only the traditional tooth extractions take place.

ADRA hopes to improve public awareness of dental health care, serve the population with orthodontic services and products, and contribute to the education and training of personnel, offering specialization in various types of dental health-care initiatives.

The dental center project was initiated in 1991, but many financial obstacles kept it from being completed until now. All official authorizations from the local government were received in December 1997.

Harry Waegele, a dentist from Brazil, and his wife, Rose, are now managing the center. "We wish them the very best and hope that they can stay for a long time," said Long. "Now we all just need to roll up our shirt-sleeves and get to work, assisting the large number of patients who have already lined up outside the door."

A representative from the Ministry of Health and Regional Office of Health, the city mayor, and ADRA/Burkina Faso employees and friends were present at the inauguration ceremony on February 5. Government representatives spoke highly about ADRA/Burkina Faso's successful completion of development projects to date and encouraged ADRA to continue its favorable work. The total cost of the project is more than US\$190,000.

Video Outreach Success for Adventists in Africa

Using video programming as an innovative tool, Seventh-day Adventist Global Mission pioneers are finding success in sharing the church's message with villagers in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Six teams of pioneers are now equipped with video

A Forest of Lies

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSON, ADVENTIST REVIEW EDITOR

The tawdry merry-go-round of accusations and denials, sex and spin-doctoring that has titillated Washington, D.C., during the past three months leaves us with only one sure conclusion—someone is lying.

Paula Jones, whose lawsuit against president Bill Clinton started the salacious circus, is lying—according to her sister.

Monica Lewinsky testified under oath that she did not have sex with the president. But she shared intimate details

of just such an affair with her “friend” Linda Tripp—who secretly recorded the conversations and high-tailed the tapes to special prosecutor Kenneth Starr.

Then Linda Tripp herself was caught out: she falsified information on her application for employment at the Pentagon.

Enter Kathleen Willey, whose story of an unwanted sexual encounter with the president rivets a national TV audience on CBS’s *60 Minutes*. But a friend of Willey’s testifies under oath that Willey asked her to lie about the event.

And then, of course, there’s the president: If the women are telling the truth, he is lying. He publicly denied having sex with another woman—Gennifer Flowers—but later admitted to one incident.

Paula, Monica, Linda, Kathleen, Bill—someone is lying. Maybe all are lying.

NEWS COMMENTARY

We have reached a sad moral state when people can swear before God to tell the truth and then pour out a pack of lies; when they can face the cameras and utter known falsehoods without batting an eye; when what matters isn’t whether you lied but whether you broke any law by lying.

The prophet Micah described a situation from his time that uncannily parallels our day: “Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words” (Micah 7:5, NIV).

This is a time for Christians to stand tall for truth—in the midst of a forest of lies.

NEWS BREAK

projectors and generators that permit them to stage outreach events wherever necessary. Sponsored by the North Pacific Union and the Office of Global Mission (based at the General Conference), the teams have been operating in the rural areas of Africa since early this year.

“The meetings have been a success from the beginning,” says Duane McKey, Global Mission director for the North Pacific Union, “with up to 300 people coming to each meeting.” Requests for Bible studies are coming faster than the pioneer teams can handle them, says McKey. The video program continues through 1998. —*Adventist News Network*.

SAFE TV Wins Four Awards

KSBN TV (SAFE TV), the Arkansas-based commercial television station owned and operated by Adventist Church members recently received four awards from Excellence in Media. In the television broadcast category, SAFE TV president Carlos Pardeiro received an Angel Award for airing the innovative television format. It was judged one of the best in its category.

Pardeiro also received an award for excellence in video for his *Native New Day* video series, which is designed to introduce the gospel to Native Americans. In addition, the station received awards of excellence in



NEW ANGELS: SAFE TV president Carlos Pardeiro beams with pride after receiving the new angel awards.

production for its public service announcement for the state of Arkansas and for a musical how-to course on video.

For 21 years Excellence in Media has honored media productions that have a moral and social impact.

New Italian Court Ruling Helps Adventist Church

A ruling handed down from the Italian Constitutional Court held that defamation of minority religions, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is to be put on the same level as defamation of the Roman Catholic Church.

Until the decision, the penalty for defaming a minority

Did You Know?

Christian Coalition to Build Church Support

The Christian Coalition—hoping to build on its success in the recent defeat of a Maine gay-rights measure—will seek to involve 100,000 evangelical churches in a lobbying effort focused on conservative issues that brought it to national prominence.

The strategy, dubbed Families 2000, is designed to gain the congregations' support by connecting 100,000 volunteer "church liaisons" to local Christian Coalition chapters by November 2000. The Christian Coalition said the plan will "place family issues at the forefront in the next two election cycles and into the new century."

The Families 2000 blueprint included a "menu" of "issues for state and local action," including abortion, parental notification of government actions affecting children, school curriculums, homosexuality, legalized gambling, pornography, drugs, and covenant marriage contracts.

Coalition spokesperson Arne Owens said the initiative would focus on voter registration and education, and avoid partisanship.—*Religion News Service.*

For Your Good Health

Wear Sunglasses Year-round

Winter sun contains the same amount of ultraviolet radiation as summer sun and may increase your risk of developing cataracts. So remember to use sunglasses throughout the year, not just in summer.—*Health After 50.*

Smoking, Drinking, and Drugs: Starting Younger Makes Quitting Harder

Young people who experiment with tobacco, alcohol, or illicit drugs at an early age are less likely to quit their habit than those who start later. A new study shows some children take their first drink as early as age 10, while drug usage began at age 11 or 12. Nearly 60 percent of young people who begin smoking marijuana before age 15 are still regular users after eight years, while only 20 percent of those who start at age 19 or older are still users eight years later. Researchers urged that abuse-prevention programs for alcohol, prescribed drugs, and hallucinogens begin as early as middle and late elementary school years.—*Health Education and Behavior.*

—"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

religion was two thirds of the penalty for defaming a majority religion. In its opinion the court stated that discrimination of religions based on size was "unacceptable."

"This is another step on the religious liberty road leading to equality of all religions before both the state and the law," says B. B. Beach, director of interchurch relations at the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department.

Conference on Compassion Convenes in May

If you have an interest in ministries of compassion, then the eleventh annual training conference of the Coalition for Compassion, meeting in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, May 12-16, is for you.

The coalition provides a professional support network for leaders of inner-city programs, Adventist Community Services centers, disaster response teams, van ministries, and other social action projects. For more information, call Rhonda Whitney at (503) 775-6741, ext. 115; or fax (503) 775-2884.

News Notes

✓ **Adventists in Norland, Florida,** are testifying to the power of radio to spread the good news of Jesus

Christ. As a result of the *Voice of Hope* radio broadcast on WAVS in south Florida (which they sponsor), 16 persons have joined the Adventist Church in the past 30 months, reports Burnett Robinson, a correspondent of the Florida Conference Communication Department.

Church members processed 500 telephone calls and letters and distributed 100 Bibles and 500 copies of *Steps to Christ*. "Every interested listener receives a follow-up visit and Bible study," Robinson says.

✓ **Andrews University's honors program** is the only Adventist honors program listed among the 200 programs in *Peterson's Guide to College Honors Programs*, according to a university spokesperson. *Peterson's Guide* is a leading listing of colleges and their programs, says Richard Osborn, North American Division education director. The guide lists honors programs that are members of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC).

Membership in NCHC indicates a high level of quality for the university's honors program, says Malcom Russell, professor of economics and program director.

What's Upcoming?

Apr.	18	Literature Evangelism emphasis
Apr.	25	Christian Education Day
May	2	Community Services emphasis

Forgive Us Our Debts

Credit card debt was sucking the financial lifeblood from us.

BY LESLIE KAY

THE PHOTOGRAPHER CAME on a bright, breezy Friday to take our pictures. With the debut of my column in the *Adventist Review* in five weeks, I was to appear on the cover, an unaccustomed distinction for a housewife from obscure Chloride, Arizona. Ever wary of the limelight, I reluctantly submitted to the camera, dragging my family and even my dog into the picture whenever possible. But as the session came to a close, I was surprised by an unfamiliar sensation—the faint but unmistakable twinges of impending celebrity.

The next day my family and I departed on the 25-mile trek to church. But not in the car. The car was deader than a doornail, and had defied my husband's best efforts to resurrect it. It reclined in the sun, smug and inscrutable, as the four of us filed past into my husband

Don's gritty '72 Ford pickup with advanced rustitis.

Clattering down the highway, bouncing in our Sabbath best among the wrenches and the welding apparatus, I noticed the twinges becoming fainter. By the time we reached our windy hilltop church and half-clambered, half-fell out of the great white beast, definitely undignified and reeking of exhaust, I knew the video crew of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* would not be visiting me any time soon.

I can't say this was the Lord's way of nipping my overreaching ego in the bud, though it no doubt needed nipping. The real reason is a lot more mundane and closer to home. The truth is that our little wagon had been out of commission for a month—and we were still too broke to fix it. And seven months and another breakdown later, we still are.

Why We're Broke

There's a reason we're so broke, a dirty little reason we don't enjoy admitting. It's called debt—massive credit card debt—and it's been sucking the financial lifeblood from our family for the past couple years. And the funny part of it is, we never thought it could happen to us.

For years my husband and I had resisted the urge even to own a credit card. But when we became convinced that it was to our financial benefit to establish a credit identity, we acquired our first department store cards, then graduated to the heavy hitters—major credit cards with ridiculously high credit limits.

At first it had been easy to honor our decision not to



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

carry a monthly balance. Even after the arrival of our first child, the loss of my income, and the birth of our second child, we kept our commitment. But with the purchase of our first home our commitment wavered and finally snapped.

We had agreed to find a modest older home in our city of Tucson until we could afford some outlying acreage. But as I toured the beautiful new homes, I developed a bad case of amnesia. What modest home? I coveted a new home that was just beyond our means, and I got what I wanted. Within a year, with the bulk

of our income swallowed up by taxes and mortgage payments, we had racked up a national debt trying to keep up with expenses that were both real and imagined.

It had been so easy to rationalize, so easy to give in. *The kids need shoes—what can I do? Christmas already? Time to whip out the plastic.* I convinced myself that somehow it would all work out. Don's commissions would increase; our multilevel marketing business would take off; the Lord would provide.

Don saw the danger long before I did. At first I blamed his misgivings on

a pessimistic, overly cautious nature, and berated him for his lack of faith. But over time even I could see the destruction that lay before us. Eventually we decided to sell our home, buy a modest mobile home, and start a new life on our unsettled desert inheritance. But bad habits die hard, and I clung tenaciously to mine, stubbornly dragging them into our "new life." Though our debt didn't increase quite so breathtakingly as before, increase it did, inexorably.

Something—or someone—had to give, and it wasn't Don, who had remained true to his renewed commit-

ment to reserve the plastic for real, dire emergencies. The problem lay with me. I just didn't know how (and I didn't want to know how) to adjust my spending to our level of income. And though my patient husband never nagged me about it, the Lord, in His mercy, did—relentlessly. He spoke to me about it day and night, until I couldn't stand it any longer; until I fled into the desert, desperate and ashamed, and broke down before Him in a sandy wash in the shade of a spreading scrub oak.

"I can't keep doing this," I told Him, "but I don't know how else to live anymore."

"Get rid of them," He replied. "Go home right now and cut up your cards. And don't use them anymore."

"But Lord," I gasped, "how will we live? How will I buy the things we need? We don't have enough money!"

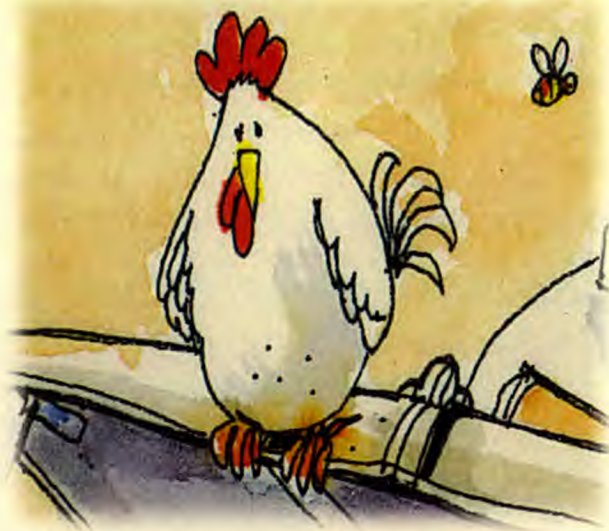
"You used to trust in Me," He said sadly. "Now you trust in your credit cards. Come back to Me and let Me take care of you. Let Me set you free from your bondage."

My Moment of Truth

I couldn't argue with Him; I knew that my moment of truth had come. I trudged home and found my wallet. Firmly I grabbed the scissors. Less firmly and confidently I took hold of the worst offender and held it gingerly, even reverently, in my hand. Taking a deep breath, I prayed, "Help me, Lord," and positioned the card for execution.

But as I squeezed the scissors against the well-worn plastic, I was swept by an eerie feeling. It seemed as though the card had become a living, breathing thing, and I half expected that when I severed its account number from its expiration date, it would jolt off into eternity with a bloodcurdling scream.

I shuddered, and dismissed the feeling as the product of an overactive imagination. Gathering my resolve, I snapped the card into neat halves that clattered mutely to the counter. The



spell was broken. The remaining cards soon followed suit.

I wish I could say our fortunes improved after that, but they didn't. They got worse. And when we thought they could only get better, they got worse still. Those were dark days, when the bitterness of our debt bondage oppressed our spirits, and we understood the proverb "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave" (Prov. 22:7, NASB).

But the Lord is merciful and faithful. By His grace we clung to Him. When the bills piled up but the money didn't, we clung to Him as our great provider. When shoes and cars and patience wore out and broke down, and the temptation to "charge it" was fierce, we clung to Him as our deliverer. When bankruptcy appeared tantalizingly and supremely viable, we clung desperately to Him as our only Saviour. And He always came through.

And as we clung to Him, we formulated a simple debt-reduction plan that's worked well for us:

■ We contacted our credit card companies and requested acceptance into their hardship programs, which resulted in significantly reduced interest rates and in one case zero interest. In exchange, our cards were "frozen," which was fine with us.

■ We reserved one card for extreme emergencies and the occasional tele-

phone order, with the stipulation that the balance be paid monthly.

■ We realized that the bulk of our net income went to mortgage and groceries. By moving, we reduced our mortgage by \$65,000 and our monthly payment by more than \$500. And we discovered that beans and potatoes are really very versatile foods.

■ If we can't afford it, we don't buy it; we pray about it. Period.

■ We always put aside our tithe first, before we're tempted to spend it on something crazy, like the electric bill.

We realize that any lasting change of behavior always begins with, and is sustained by, deep, lasting repentance. So we continue to cling to the Lord as our only sufficiency; as the one whose complete forgiveness comprehends not only the dismissal of our sin, but its total eradication from our lives. We look to Him to give us the strength and the resources to live with the consequences of our (mostly my) covetousness and unbelief, consequences that will require years to resolve.

And because I don't get out much now, I have lots of time to contemplate these consequences—especially when I glance out the window at our dismantled heap of a car, perched forlornly on blocks, its innards strewn ignominiously across a scrap of warped plywood. I try to remember how it used to look when it perched on four wheels and actually *moved*. I try to remember how respectable we felt the last time we drove it to church four months ago; how comfortable I felt the last time I drove it to the mall . . .

On second thought, some things are probably best forgotten. ■

Leslie Kay writes a monthly column, *On the Home Front*, for the *Adventist Review*. She lives with her family out in the desert in Chloride, Arizona.



One Size Does Not Fit All

A. ALLAN AND DEIRDRE MARTIN

I was an Adventist 20 years ago and slipped out the back door. I came back thanks to an awakening of the Christian spirit through the adoption of my child and my subsequent introduction to Christian home school moms. They were the first nurturing, Christian group of people I had been among in a long time, and my daughter and I have been involved in home schooling now for about three years.

Last year my daughter was in Adventist church school for the last three months of her studies. She also joined Sabbath school and Pathfinders. This year we decided to return to home schooling, but because of our positive experience with the church school teacher we continue to support the church school with donations of time, money, and equipment.

Recently it was suggested that I call the other home school moms and get their "news" included in two- to three- sentence items in the church school paper. The intent was to keep all the children within the fold of communication, to let those who might enter the church school at some time know that it is open to them. I thought this would be a nice way to let home schoolers and even public school students know that they are in our thoughts.

When I brought this to the church school paper editor, the idea was denied. It would be "advertising home school," she said, "and the school needs numbers and tuition."

Why can't we talk openly about home schooling? It seems that among our Adventist churches and schools when a student is taught at home it's mentioned in whispers, as if it were a death in the family.

Deirdre's reply: Let me start by saying that home educators like you are afforded a unique opportunity of showing their children how much they are loved all day, every day. They're taking seriously the admonition of Proverbs 22:6: "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (NIV). Training your child means teaching her something. If it's by you, I see it as no less a blessing than to drop her off at a school for someone else to do the training.

Home schooling can provide a child with comparable socialization and learning opportunities as those afforded in public and private schools. There's much merit to your efforts to make choices about your child, for her benefit.



Regarding your question, my answer is: we can and we should speak openly about home schooling. I share your frustration with the apparent prejudice that some have against home schooling. And given your account, these prejudices seem to have little to do with the best interests of the children or the primary responsibilities of the parents. I've heard stories in which home schooling has been viewed by some as inferior in quality, only for marginalized children, even a threat to the church school system. Some basic research on home schooling would dismiss these faulty assumptions.*

I encourage you to continue to educate those in your community who are less informed about home schooling and help

dispel these misgivings.

As your daughter's mother, you are certainly called by God to make wise choices about her education and training. I think the world of your personal commitment to this endeavor.

* The World Wide Web is a good place to find information about home schooling. If you're interested in learning more, check out the following sites:

Alternative Education: (http://www.columbiaunion.org/visitor/vol102/sep-tember_1_1997/a6.html) how home schooling is working for one Adventist family.

Home Study International (<http://www.petersons.com/private/sites/inc/005756ps.html>) contains information about Home Study International, the Adventist home education agency.

The Teaching Home: (<http://www.teachinghome.com/>) the Web site of a Christian magazine for home educators.

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>





S T O R Y

The Test

*I thought I'd teach
him a thing
or two . . .*

BY KEM TILLEY

I'M PRETTY LUCKY; THE local public library is only about a mile from my office. Often during my lunch breaks I'll go there, seeking refuge from the pressures of my work.

One cold winter day I expected nothing unusual from my noontime jaunt. I was only hoping for about 50 minutes of solitude in my favorite corner seat.

An Unwelcome Visitor

I was making myself comfortable when I saw him. I looked up and made momentary eye contact with him, and that's all it took. He began making his way down the aisle toward me. So *much for my solitude*, I thought as I helplessly watched this figure, a caricature of everything you would not want your son to be, draw inexorably closer.

He was young, early 20s, unshaven, unkempt. His face showed several nasty cuts and bruises. His jeans and jacket were wrinkled and soiled. As he walked I could detect just a slight stumble in his steps. He plopped down into the vacant seat next to mine. "How ya doin'?" His breath, fouled by cigarette smoke and alcohol, made me instinctively pull back.

"OK, I guess," I responded tentatively. "And you?" I looked into his deep-brown eyes, eyes that even though dim with despair and blood-shot from the effects of alcohol still twinkled—barely.

"Well, I'm not doin' too good."

Oh, no, I thought, *here comes the hard-luck story*. I had two options; I could cut the guy short, get up, and leave; or I could sit and listen. "What's the problem?" The words were out of my mouth before I knew it, and with a convincing tone of concern.

"Some guys beat me up and robbed me night before last; it was in the newspaper. Here, look." He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a newspaper clipping. His hand shaking, he presented it to me proudly. "Go ahead, you can read it." I took the article and began reading:

"January 17—Daniel Douglas, age 23, no address available, was found unconscious at approximately 1:30 a.m. at the Eighth Street Car Wash by city police officers. After medical treatment was administered, Douglas informed police that he had been assaulted and robbed by two unidentified males about 1:15 a.m. Douglas reported \$35 in cash and a gold wedding band stolen in the incident. Investigation is continuing."

I handed the article back to him. "And you're Daniel?" I asked.

"You can call me Danny," he said, extending his hand limply. I shook his hand hesitantly. Judging from his mild manner and subdued voice, I decided that he was relatively harmless, and he obviously wanted to talk.

An Unexpected Twist

Feeling unusually bold, I said, "Danny, can I ask you something?"

"Yeah," he responded.

"What were you doing out on the street at 1:30 in the morning in the dead of winter?"

"Well, my wife kicked me out last week 'cause of my drinkin'," he admitted. "She said this was it; I either straighten myself out, or she's gonna file for divorce."

"Don't you have any friends to stay with?"

"No, we ain't been here that long."

"How about the rescue mission?"

"I stayed there one night, but they caught me with a bottle. I guess I was gettin' a little crazy, and they made me leave. I saw my wife last night."

"You talked to her?" I asked.

"Wouldn't she let you back in?"

"No way, man; she smelled the booze on me and slammed the door in my face. She says she ain't gonna bring up the baby in this kind of home."

"You have a baby?"

"Yeah, a little girl, just over a year old."

"Do you have a job?"

"I ain't found anything yet."

"What are you going to do, Danny?"

His eyes found the floor, searching the carpet for an answer.

"I don't know. I don't know what I'm gonna do or where I'm gonna go. I've been here all day 'cause it's warm an' it's a good place to . . ." He suddenly looked at me and turned away, realizing that he had almost let something slip.

"It's a good place to what?"

He looked at the floor and mumbled something inaudible.

"Go ahead, you can tell me."

"It's a good place to hit people up for a handout, that's all. I'm hungry, you know."

"But if I gave you money, what would you do with it?"

"Whadda ya mean?"

"Well, I can smell alcohol on your breath right now, so you must have been drinking."

He dropped his head and nodded slightly.

"Did you buy it this morning?"

His head still down, he mumbled, "Yeah, but it was just a pint. That's all I had enough money for."

"So if you were hungry, why didn't you buy yourself something to eat?"

His reaction surprised me. He stiffened, and I saw his hands clench into fists as he leaned toward me and locked his eyes onto mine with a resolve I didn't think he possessed. "Man, you just don't know what it's like. I had to have it. You're just like my wife; you don't know what it's like. I can't go all day shakin' and goin' crazy. I just don't have enough power to stop. I've tried, and I just can't do it."

Danny had raised his voice to a conspicuous level. I looked around to see people taking note of this minor disturbance. I began to feel uncomfortable. I looked at my watch.

"Look, Danny. I've got to get back to work." I felt that I had done Danny a service just by talking with him. I began to gather up my books when he leaned uncomfortably close to me.

"I know you're a religious man," he said quietly and deliberately. "I can see it in your eyes."

The statement stunned me. Why would he say such a thing? All I could think to do at the moment was to look directly at him and reply, "Yes, Danny, I'm a believer in Jesus."

"Yeah, you're a religious man, but you've got to go," he said sarcastically. "It's always that way with you people." I was dumbfounded. My defenses went up; I wasn't enjoying this anymore.

"Danny, I wish I could do something to help you, but . . ."

"Don't worry about me," he said with a pout.

I yearned for the safety of my nice warm office. I couldn't do anything for this guy. He needed professional help. I stood up and started away. "Take care of yourself, Danny."

There was no response. I left him sitting there, staring at the floor.

An Unusual Feeling

Outdoors the cold air hit me like a slap in the face. I got into my car, started the engine, and sat for just a minute before driving back to the office. As I reflected on what had just happened, a verse of Scripture flashed uninvited into my mind. In it Jesus was talking about the hungry, the poor, the prisoners, the strangers. He said that if we did not do it for one of the least of these, then we did not do it for Him. I tried to insulate myself from the accusation of this verse, but in light of the chance encounter I had just had, it made me shudder. I felt an uneasiness stirring deep down inside me that I couldn't calm.

I pulled into my parking place at work. Not until I turned off the ignition did I realize there were tears on my cheeks. I took a deep breath and tried to shake the convictions I felt, but it was no use. I just sat in the car.

I learned a long time ago that you can't argue with the Holy Spirit. "Lord, I really blew it," I prayed. "I'm sorry. What do You want me to do now?" I looked at my watch. It was 12:32 p.m.; it had been five minutes since I had said goodbye to Danny. I kept hearing Jesus' words: "You did not do it for Me."

I started the car, jammed it into gear, and set out. In one minute and 15 seconds I was back in the library parking lot. I went back inside, back to the corner, but there was no Danny. I began patrolling the aisles; no Danny. I tried the audiovisual room, the children's section, even the restroom, but Danny wasn't there. From the windows I looked out into the surrounding streets, but I didn't see him.

I went back to the corner where the whole thing began. I wanted to see Danny, to tell him I was sorry. I said I was a follower of Christ, but I didn't let him see Christ in me. I wanted to put my arm around him and tell him that even though I *didn't* understand why he had to buy booze instead of breakfast, I cared for him because Christ cares for him.

I wanted to take Danny to the lunch counter down the street and buy him something to eat. I wanted to tell him what Jesus had done in my life, how He had changed me, and how He could do the same for him. I wanted to help him find a warm place to sleep. I wanted to lead him to some professional help. *I've got time for you now, Danny*, I thought. *Come back.*

The minutes ebbed away. I watched the aisles, the entrance, and the exit,

*"I know you're
a religious man,"
he said. "I can see
it in your eyes."*

but I didn't see Danny. I looked at my watch again. I had three minutes to get back to work. I felt sick as I drove slowly back to work. I scanned the side streets, hoping to see him, but it was no use.

When I left work I decided to try again. I got to the library about 10 minutes before it closed, just long enough for me to search the place one more time. But I never saw or heard of Danny again. But I've thought a lot about that encounter, and I've asked myself a lot of questions about it.

The Making of an Uncommon Disciple

How was Danny able, in his condition, to look at me and conclude that I was a religious man? How was he able to make me confront the genuineness of my Christianity by speaking a few challenging words? How did he manage to disappear so completely in the short time I was gone? I've even

wondered if God had sent an angel to confront me who was disguised so thoroughly that even his breath would reek of booze and cigarettes.

I know that God chooses to speak to us in many different ways. And I may never know whether Danny was a heavenly messenger or just a down-on-his-luck mortal whom God used as an instrument of communication. But I'm thankful that I met Danny that day. Because of that encounter I went

home and began reading in the Gospels about the selfless love of Jesus and what being His disciple really means. I began taking a hard look at my own life.

It's easy to go to church dressed up and smelling nice and embrace my brother who is also dressed up and smelling nice, tell him that I love him in the Lord, and encourage him when he's having problems.

But what about that homeless, dirty, downtrodden beggar who asks me for a quarter? Do I ignore him, stepping clear so as not to stop? Or do I give him some change, spend a moment with him sharing Jesus, even give him a brotherly hug? I'm learning what to do by looking at Jesus. It's not easy, but He's helping me. Many things in my life have changed because of a chance encounter with an unlikely teacher.

Yes, Danny, whoever you are, wherever you are, I thank you. You were talking to a religious man. And by the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit, that religious man is becoming a Christian. ■

Kem Tilley wrote this when he was working as a pharmacist's assistant in Johnson City, Tennessee.



I Wanted to Be a Nun

LAURA HAMILTON

My career goal was to become a nun. I am the eighth of 11 children born into a German Catholic home in Texas where we attended Catholic schools and worked hard on our parents' dairy farm. As I grew older, I changed my career goal from becoming a nun to becoming Ms. Career Woman.

After graduating with a B.S. degree in chemical engineering, I secured a job in Bakersfield, California. My career meant everything to me, and I enjoyed living in California. Then one day I met a young man—a Seventh-day Adventist and a vegetarian. I was a health food-oriented person, and when he invited me to attend the Adventist church on Sabbath, I was interested.

At this point in my life I had left the Roman Catholic faith and attended every church in the yellow pages, seeking for “the truth.” I was studying into world religions and comparing them with Christianity, but I never told my family of these activities.

Then something happened in my life that changed it forever—I attended a Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic campaign.

As I listened to the evangelist, I marveled at his understanding of the Catholic Church and its doctrine. I knew with keen awareness that what he was saying was so very true. It was all I could do to remain seated, and my heart leaped with a wonderful joy that words cannot describe. I found in Jesus, His Word, and His truth the happiness for which I had been searching.

Each night between 1,000 and 2,000 people would come to the meetings, and I would silently slide in and out, with no one noticing me. Each day I studied the Bible they gave me for about five hours. What a thrill it was to read the Bible for the first time in my life. I became convicted that what the evangelist said was the truth and that for which I had searched.

But I knew the cost if I chose to follow what I had learned. My parents would disown me; my brothers and sisters would shun me. I would be an outcast. And I would have problems at work. Emotionally I was not ready for this, and all I could see were great difficulties. I decided to wait two years before I would follow the Adventist message.

However, I continued to attend the meetings. One night

when the evangelist said something I did not understand, I waited in line to speak to him. “I need to talk to you,” he began. “Are you baptized? What church do you attend? When I was speaking, I saw your face light up three times, and I knew that I must tell you to be baptized right away or you will never be baptized. You cannot wait.”

How did he know that I was going to wait? How did my face light up when the entire auditorium was dark? How did he know me? I was so upset I walked out of there determined not to return.

The next night a girlfriend and I went shopping. As I was getting out of her car I saw another car strike a blind man who was crossing the street. His body bounced several times from the impact, and as I watched I heard a voice from behind me say, “Take heed! You should have died when that large jeep rolled over your little car and the patrol had to cut the metal to release you. But you’re not dead, and yet this man is dead. Don’t worry about the obstacles before you—your parents, your siblings, your job. They will take care of themselves. Go get baptized.”

Yes, I should have been dead, but I was not. I was extremely upset by what I heard because I knew it was right. But the next night I returned to the meeting and requested baptism.

On the day of my baptism the pastor asked, “Why are you white and shaking?”

I replied, “You would turn white and shake too, if you were me.” I knew the price I would pay for this decision. It would cost all I had.

My parents did disown me, my siblings shunned me, and my employer tried to fire me because of my Sabbath. But God worked all these problems out in ways that I couldn’t have imagined. Two years later the Lord brought Greg Hamilton into my life, and together we have served the Lord in a variety of ways.

Baptism was the best decision I ever made. I found the source of all happiness and joy. I found the Desire of my heart and my reason for living.

*I knew the price—
it would cost
all I had.*

Laura Hamilton wrote this article while living in Truckee, California.



Why We Make Scarecrows



ROSY TETZ

Have you ever seen a scarecrow? Sometimes people stuff straw into old clothes and hang it on a pole in their garden. They call this a scarecrow because it is supposed to scare away the crows and other birds that like to eat their corn, strawberries, and other goodies.

Now, why do you suppose the birds are scared of scarecrows? You probably think they are afraid because the scarecrows look like people and birds are afraid of people. But that's not the reason.

Would you like to guess again? You might think the birds get scared when the wind blows the clothes on the scarecrow—the movement startles the birds. But that's not the reason either.

You have these ideas because you think like a human. If you were going to be scared of a scarecrow, those would be the reasons.

If you want to know why a bird keeps away from a scarecrow, you have to think like a bird. Well, actually, "think" isn't exactly the right word. "Smell" is more like it. Birds stay away from scarecrows because the old clothes smell like people. You smell scary!

Sometimes God asks us to do something, and we don't know why. We can't understand because we think like humans. When we look around, we just see the way things look to us. But God can see more. God sees everything clearly. He sees how things will work out in the end. So when He asks us to do something, He has a good reason—even if we don't understand.

That's why we need faith. When

we have faith, we trust that God knows best. When we have faith, we can look to the past and see that things worked out when people followed God's plan. When we have faith, we can know that God will be with us too and that He will help us do what He wants us to do.

And when you do what God wants you to do, you start to understand. The

more you follow God's plan, the more sense it makes. When you have faith, you begin, in a small way, to think like God. You begin to see things more clearly. The Bible says, "Only the Lord gives wisdom. Knowledge and understanding come from him" (Proverbs 2:6, ICB). God will give you understanding, but you have to do your part. Obey. Have faith.

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A Train With No Caboose

BY DAVID S. GERSTLE

The 4-year-old boy's eyes lit up when he saw the wooden train for the first time. "Is it really mine? Can I really keep it?" he exclaimed. His eyes never left the train, as if it might disappear if he should lose sight of it.

"Yes, it really is yours," I replied.

"Oh, boy, oh, boy, thank you, thank you!" the little hospital patient repeated again and again as he played with his toy train. Around and around the bed the train went, with wooden wheels rolling over imaginary tracks.

This toy train isn't just any toy train. First of all, it is a wooden toy train crafted by hand. It has an engine, a coal car, a flat car complete with a load of wooden logs, a boxcar, and a caboose. Another thing that makes this train very special is that it was made and given by someone who simply wanted to give trains away to children who are patients in hospitals.



Several years ago a man whom I'll call Charles was going to an outpatient clinic weekly for chemotherapy to treat cancer. As he waited each week at the clinic, he befriended a little boy who was going there for chemotherapy as well. The two became fast friends. One week Charles brought the boy a wooden train engine. The little boy was just thrilled with the toy. So each week when Charles met the little boy, he would give him another train car.

Charles was looking forward to completing the wooden train for the little boy, and finally the week came for the caboose. He sat down in his usual place at the clinic and waited and waited, but the boy did not come. He went to the reception desk to ask if his young friend had canceled or changed his appointment for the day. One of the nurses explained that the boy had been admitted to the hospital and had died only the day before.

This was a crushing blow to Charles. In addition to feeling the loss of the child, he felt terrible that he didn't get a chance to give the little boy a caboose to finish his train. And now, years later, he gives toy trains to children who are patients,

although he insists on giving them *complete* toy trains.

The 4-year-old at the beginning of the story was one of many patients who received a toy train at the hospital

where I worked as nurse manager of a pediatric floor. It all began when the train maker came to the Respiratory Therapy Department for pulmonary treatments. He asked if he could bring the trains to be given to the children who are patients.

Upon their admission to the hospital, each child was given a wooden toy train, and a Polaroid picture was taken for the train maker. Many smiles were recorded each week as the trains were handed out, giving

comfort to the receiver and giver as well.

Just as this toy train maker wants each child to have a complete train, Jesus wants each of us to have a complete life in Him. Many of us are not complete—we may be physically, emotionally, or spiritually incomplete.

Jesus, the divine maker, has promised that He will return again and make us whole. We must talk to Him daily and allow Him to lead in our lives so that we will be ready to meet Him at His coming. And what a coming that will be! As His followers rise up to meet Him, immortality will replace mortality, physical perfection will replace physical deformities, and eternal joy and happiness will replace emotional turmoil and pain.

Perhaps as all of this is taking place, the toy train maker and the little boy who had suffered from cancer will meet. The man will reach down into his celestial robe and pull out a wooden toy caboose. Giving it to the boy, he might say, "Son, I've been saving this for you when we would meet again in eternity."

Are you ready to let Jesus make you complete? ■

David S. Gerstle is a registered nurse and writes from Ooltewah, Tennessee.



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS



Dwight K. Nelson,
NET '98 Speaker

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*Compiled from the writings of E.G. White

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