Cutting Edge

The Whole Universe Dancing

Nathan Brown, winner of the AnchorPoints essay contest, sent the winning entry on Creation.
Remembering the Sixties

Roy Adams' remembrance of the sixties is good in its balance (“I Remember the Sixties,” Nov. 19 Cutting Edge Edition). It was a time of protest against social and political ills but also a time when personal morality, in many respects, went out the window, from which there seems no sign of recovery.

My problem is with his view of the forties. While Christians in Germany did forsake their principles in allowing the Nazis to come to power, perhaps one had to live through those years to appreciate fully the resistance provided by people in Europe and America, and the horror felt because of the torture and death of the people who did resist. A little there was some hesitation on the part of the United States to declare war (for understandable reasons), the challenge of the Nazi war machine was eventually met with total commitment. To say “God forbid that we today should repeat the shameful silence, the scandalous cowardice, of the forties” is to overlook the hundreds and thousands of lives sacrificed during that decade to cleanse the world of the monstrous evil.

What paved the way for the sixties was the failure to take advantage of the victory of the forties and allow the freedom gained to motivate us to higher standards of social and political life. Being rich and increased with goods has the power to corrupt and destroy from within unless there is constant vigilance. A dams’ appeal for that vigilance now is right on. I share his dream that “the present generation of Adventists would be...totally and unashamedly committed to the message and mission of Jesus Christ.”

—Steven P. Vitrano
Auburn, California

Yes, I remember the sixties. My friends liked pizza, the music of the Beach Boys and Elvis Presley, and that girl on Dobie Gillis. They knew how to work and sweat and serve God and country. To read that draft-card burning was one of the shining moments of the sixties really bugs me. My heroes were not Dr. Benjamin Spock, Jane Fonda, and draft dodgers fleeing to Canada.

—Tom Emde
Apopka, Florida

A dams criticizes the church for not standing up to Hitler and his godlessness while holding up those who refused to fight against Communism in Vietnam. I went to Vietnam with two purposes in mind—looking after the medical welfare of my assigned unit and doing my part to fight against a form of government that was (and is) causing hardship for my church. Granted, the time was turbulent, but please quit slapping Vietnam vets in the face. It’s one thing to go through a war and quite another to have to fight against constant criticism for having answered your country’s call, even 30 years after the war. Why not offer us the same amnesty as offered those “brave” souls who fled to Canada?

—John W. Neumann
Auburn, Washington

We knew then, know even better now, that Communism is a terrible political/economic system, so defending South Vietnam was a noble cause, as noble as the defense of South Korea. But unlike Korea, Vietnam resulted in America’s first defeat in war. Why? Because leaders lacked the will to win. Why? Because a generation of cowardly, unpatriotic, spoiled, irresponsible Spock brats didn’t want to risk their lives and were allowed to defy their parents and all authority.

Why anyone would have given 20 years of his or her life for the privilege of living in the sixties mess is beyond me. Except for the civil-rights movement, the sixties should be regretted, not celebrated.

—Hector Hammerly
Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada

Gen Xers are criticized for not taking up some cause like the generation of the sixties. Many Gen Xers come from broken homes where their “Do your own thing” parents did their own thing, and now they are left to pick up the pieces, so there isn’t much time left to fight for the right to rebel. There isn’t anything left to rebel against; our entire social structure has been dismantled in a greed-driven
frenzy perpetuated by the “do your own thing” generation.

The only thing left to do is to try to follow our grandparents’ example and stay together, to try to make a better life for our children. Then, possibly, in a few generations they will be able to rebuild the moral structure of our country. What has taken place cannot be undone in just one generation; it will take many years of self-sacrifice to turn around, if ever.

—Brent Snyder
Loma Linda, California

Health Versus Faith?
Ella Rydzewski is right on with her analysis of what’s been happening in Adventism regarding the oft-maligned term health reform (“Health Versus Faith,” Nov. 19). It is a curious phenomenon that as secular culture has become more concerned about diet and health, many Adventists have become less so. I believe that Rydzewski’s diagnosis identifies at least a major reason for such a departure. We need to hear more such candid acknowledgments regarding some of our faulty perceptions of what constitutes our citizenship in the kingdom.

—Jim Kaatz, President
San Diego Adventist Forum

Inside a Splitting Church
How I agree with the sentiments in Anna Wood’s “Inside a Splitting Church” (Nov. 19). The devil is very active in every aspect of life. The church is not a safe haven, unfortunately. Having been in two church wars, I know the devastation can be severe. No war is the same. The participants are different, the outcomes are different, but the master planner is the same—the devil. Nevertheless, God is in charge and can use these situations powerfully.

—Tabitha Abel-Cooper
Via e-mail

Thanks for giving the young adults of our church an active voice. Anna Wood’s six-point summary, “Holding On to Your Faith in a Splitting Church,” was excellent. We would all do well to follow it.

—Althea Roderick
Pleasant Hill, California

Reclaiming the Sabbath
Regarding Sarah E. Coleman’s “Reclaiming the Sabbath” (Nov. 19). How much I have learned about the individuality of each walk to perfection. Over the years our home saw a steady stream of students on leave from academy and college as our children passed through the educational system. I learned to appreciate fresh, growing relationships, to enjoy the searching that I saw, and to perhaps help guide that searching in a small way.

What I read in this article is exactly the same theme I have heard from many lips and hearts in our home—and continue to hear from my friends in their early 20s. It does not necessarily mean that their relationship with Jesus is disintegrating or that we must fear for their spirituality. It does mean that our relationships are not static—that theirs are evolving from ours, just as ours evolved from our parents.

Some activities that the “younger generation” participate in during Sabbath hours I quite frankly tell them would not bring me closer to my Lord; other activities would find me bent over, gasping for breath. But if the result of these activities is a closer relationship to God for the participant, then how can we fault them? We need to look to Jesus, not declare our young friends in danger of being eternally lost because they find their closeness to Jesus in a different manner than we do.

—Jeanie H. Reed
Albany, Oregon
Fresh Voices—
The First Wave

What if no one responds?
The thought did cross my mind a time or two after we made the call last January in our "Fresh Voices" contest. But only a time or two. Somehow I had the confidence there'd be a response.

And there was. A trickle at first—perhaps one or two a week. Then one a day. Then two, then three. Until the number had swelled to some 120. From the Philippines, Panama, the United States, Germany, Ghana, Peru, Russia, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, Benin, and Australia. They wrote about the Creation, the Sabbath, Christian behavior, church unity, the Trinity, spiritual gifts—altogether about 23 of our 27 fundamentals.

How the Idea Started
It was the latter part of 1991. The editorial staff had discussed the concept and were all agreed. Now we found ourselves staring at a blank flip board, wondering what to call the vision we'd seen. Finally, after two brainstorming hours, a name emerged: "AnchorPoints."

What were we after? "The great task of every community," said Elder Charles Bradford as I drove with him a few weeks ago down in Orlando, Florida, "is to nurture its own 'culture.' " Without articulating it quite that way back in 1991, that's what we were about. In a world buffeted by every imaginable form of sophistry, is anything stable? In a society chronically infected by relativism, is there certainty? In a culture awash in conflicting ideas, philosophies, opinions, questions, theories, and ideologies, does our belief make sense? And does it make a difference?

AnchorPoints. It was meant to focus on those things we consider solid, unshifting. We sought writers for the new feature, and scores of them responded, taking us through our 27 fundamental beliefs at least twice. The reception was positive—so much so that the Review and Herald moved to capture the first articles of the series in a book. The first article in the series ("Jesus: Center of All Our Hopes," by William Johnsson) was dated March 5, 1992.

Twice the series lapsed. But each time the people missed it, and we brought it back. This time we do it with a twist—presenting younger writers, new perspectives, fresh voices. And in this issue's cover piece we have the first installment.

With the volume of work in our editorial office already at an all-time high, it was not easy handling the flood of manuscripts that rolled in in response to the call. Former Adventist Review editorial secretary Beverly Koester labored many hours cataloging, numbering, filing, duplicating, sending off acknowledgments, and blocking out author names to ensure anonymity during the evaluation process.

Suspecting we'd be overwhelmed if we attempted to do the job ourselves, we secured the assistance of competent judges outside our staff. For the first round in this process—perhaps the most difficult—we turned to Dr. David Newman, formerly editor of M inistry and now a pastor in the Potomac Conference. His job, a labor of love, was to sift through more than 130 manuscripts and, on the basis of a set of given criteria, pick out the best.

Those selected in this way (27 altogether) were then sent out to three other judges for final evaluation. All three (Denise Dick Herr, of Canadian University College [English], Gregory Allen, of Oakwood College [Theology]; and Pastor Alex Bryan, of the New Community Adventist Church in Atlanta) bent over backward to accommodate us in the midst of their own hectic schedules. In the end they brought to the top of the pile the six essays from which the final winners were chosen by the editors.

Over the next few months we'll be evaluating many of the other entries and expect that some will be accepted for publication. We express our thanks to all participants.

Our Dream
We're delighted with the response from the younger members of the family. We're thrilled to the core that we can offer our readers fresh voices of Adventist faith. Our dream is that the idea catches fire, and that the response we've seen already is only the first wave of a swelling tide.

2 The first article in the series ("Jesus: Center of All Our Hopes," by William Johnsson) was dated March 5, 1992.
3 AnchorPoints: Adventists Tell Why They Hold Fast to Our Fundamental Beliefs (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1993).
4 Some participants submitted more than one essay.
was never much of a science student. I admired Louis Pasteur and George Washington Carver, but my own ingenuity with dairy products and peanuts stopped with a homemade parfait in our shake maker (some people call it a blender). The periodic chart left me feeling out of my element. "Science fair" was the biggest oxymoron I could possibly think of. You get the idea.

Of all my years of science, just one went well. Sixth-grade science was taught by a dude named Mr. Kath, who sported whiskers and blue jeans, which seemed to disturb the other teachers. Of the many projects assigned that year, I actually found success in two.

The first project was self-propelled boats. Mr. Kath told us to construct something that would, by its own strength, travel the length of an eight-foot water tank. The year before, someone’s older brother had done it using a piece of plastic, a balloon, and a straw, and once the word spread, Woolworth’s was experiencing a run on plastic, balloons, and straws.

My dad, however, encouraged me to be more creative. “How about a chemical reaction?” he said.

“What’s that?” I asked.

Ten minutes later, armed with two empty film canisters, a flat piece of foam, and some baking soda, my dad and I strutted up to the bathroom. There we popped holes in the canisters (jet engines), attached them below the foam (main deck), poured in water and baking soda (fuel), set our boat in the tub (Lake Superior), and watched it spout and sputter 20 nautical inches. Not quite enough power.

Back at the cabinet for more baking soda, I noticed a box of Alka-Seltzer tablets. “Hey, Dad,” I said. “Will this work?”

“Yes,” he said, chuckling. “I imagine it will. Good thinking, pal.”

The next Tuesday my classmates stood in awe as my twin-engine Alka-Seltzer boat jetted the length of the tank, then halfway back again. “Unbelievable,” said Mr. Kath. I tried to take it in stride.

The second project was the circulatory system. (Mr. Kath assigned us each a bodily system.) For some freak reason I was able to remember that blood traveled from the heart to the arteries to the arterioles to the capillaries to the venules to the veins to the heart again. And after Michelle Hill blushed her way through the embarrassing excretory system, I lectured my fellow sixth graders on the important journey our blood takes.

“So as you can see,” I concluded, “without the circulatory system, nothing else can really work right.”

From there my science career began to noseive, ultimately hitting rock bottom on a certain required bird-watching expedition 6:00 one Sunday morning in academy: “See that speck up there, students? I identify it.”

Yet to this day I can still draw useful lessons from my science classes. Take, for example, the circulatory system—that marvelous flow of blood throughout our bodies. In one sense, the heart is everything. In another, it isn’t. If the blood stayed in the heart, the rest of the body would dry up.

Over the years—and especially recently—I’ve heard a lot of people insist that all we need is Jesus. And in one sense, that’s true. Jesus is the heart, the center, the sustainer. A part from Jesus, nothing else matters. Jesus is everything.

Yet in another sense, Jesus isn’t everything. Our Saviour didn’t spend His ministry preaching “Me, Me, Me, Me, Me.” He drew people to Himself, then taught them His truths. So when I hear people blanket-mock our 27 fundamental beliefs, I don’t follow their reasoning. One of those beliefs (No. 4) is Jesus. And the others simply stem from Him.

Now, I’m the first to agree that our doctrinal code has some problems: the preamble is all but ignored; the list as a whole lacks prioritizing and organizing; “Christian Behavior” (No. 21) is mortifyingly weighted toward purity and away from love. These things need attention, Toronto delegates.

Still, a larger problem is the seeming downplaying of every scripture short of John 3:16. Let’s not swing too far. Where would our nighttime thoughts be without the knowledge that life is no accident (“Creation,” No. 6), that suffering isn’t from God (“The Great Controversy,” No. 8), that unsaved relatives won’t burn forever (“Death and Resurrection,” No. 25)? These are the arteries and the arterioles, and people need them to bridge the experiential (the heart) with the practical (the capillaries).

Unclog our cynical systems, Lord. Let Your blood flow freely.
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**ADVENTIST LIFE**

Several years ago, at the conclusion of an evangelistic series, I baptized Bob and Betty Alarcon. After the series, the next big event was camp meeting.

I urged Bob and Betty to attend camp meeting at Campion Academy in Loveland, Colorado, and with all the excitement and first love of new converts, they loaded their van and headed to camp meeting after work on Friday, arriving late at night. Since it was warm, they parked the van on the lawn and rolled out their sleeping bags, not knowing that they had parked beside the railroad tracks and the old girls’ dorm, which was being demolished.

At about 2:00 a.m. a freight train rumbled through, its horn blowing and its headlight sweeping the campus. All the noise awoke Bob, and in the brilliant light of the train he saw the silhouette of the half-demolished building and felt the ground shaking. Shouting out for joy, he thought for sure that the end-time events he had been studying were actually happening and that Jesus was coming. Buildings were falling, the earth was shaking, and the sun was shining at night.

Bob is now an Adventist pastor, and we still laugh about that experience and long for the day when it really happens.

—John R. Martin, Greeley, Colorado

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**LET'S PRAY**

Have a prayer need?

Have a few free minutes?

Each Wednesday morning at 8:00 the Adventist Review staff meets to pray for people—children, parents, friends, coworkers. Send your prayer requests and, if possible, pray with us on Wednesday mornings. Let’s share in each other’s lives.

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**WE NEED YOU**

Send Give & Take submissions to . . .

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

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**A REASON TO SMILE**

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**WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT: More and more Andrews University students and local church members are participating in Benton Harbor Street Ministry. Benton Harbor, Michigan, is a low-income, high-crime area located 25 minutes from Andrews. The Adventist volunteers reach out through Sabbath afternoon children's ministry, health ministry, ROCK street ministry, and nursing home visitation, as well as midweek tutoring. Here Arnol Jimenez plays with a few of his young friends. Visit the Benton Harbor Street Ministry website at www.Adventists.edu/~bhm.**
BY NATHAN BROWN

Last January we launched an essay contest on the fundamental doctrines of the Adventist Church, open to writers 35 years or younger (see editorial, p. 5). It was a call for “fresh voices,” and we are pleased to present below the winning essay. In the coming months we will feature the runners-up, as well as several other entries in the contest. Look for them under the category we call AnchorPoints.—Editors

THE ENGLISH science fiction writer Douglas Adams tells of one of his characters being confronted by the most astounding music on board an alien spacecraft. According to Adams’ story, the music is produced by a supercomputer able to convert the pulse and energy of all life on earth into a purely musical form. The music, somehow both amazingly complex and confoundingly simple, was, above all, incredibly joyous and beautiful.

Later the character described the music: “Such music . . . I’m not religious, but if I were I would say it was a glimpse into the mind of God. Perhaps it was and I ought to be religious. I have to keep reminding myself that they didn’t create the music, they only created the instrument that could read the score. And the score was life itself.”

A reflection on the Creation
i verse D ancing
In the Beginning, God Created...”

C. S. Lewis once described the universe as a grand dance, with our small planet the only fragment of the vast swirling mass that is out of step. It is this huge, spinning outpouring of life, beauty, and joy that God created. The awesome scale of this creative work is the most obvious demonstration of the greatness of God. Lewis suggests that “God carried in His hand a little object like a nut, and that was ‘all that is made.’”

The magnitude of this creative work is dwarfed by the apparent ease with which God brought “all that was made” into being. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth.” For God, creating the largest solar system to the most “bizarre” and beautiful creatures to the smallest grain of sand was as simple as breathing.

However, merely to create this multiplicity of beings and things was not enough. The still greater complexity lay in ordering the incredibly intricate web of interactions between all the components of the created world. The sun and moon are so ordered as to affect the water masses on earth and to be the life source for the microscopic creatures living in the oceans, their distances being calibrated for optimum effect and efficiency. Innumerable interactions across the world could be similarly examined to discover the perfection of the balance of life, brought into being by an omniscient Creator.

Amid all these delicate balances we might consider the standard of the purely functional to be reasonable. However, God did not stop there in His creation. In the world around us we are able to experience an awesome variety of colors, shapes, smells, textures, and tastes. It is obvious that God wanted to create not merely a world that worked but also a world that was inherently beautiful and could be enjoyed. Thus He gave us, as a part of His creation, the ability to perceive the beauty around us.

“And but for our body one whole realm of God’s glory—all that we receive through our senses—would go unpraised. For the beast can’t appreciate it and the angels are, I suppose, pure intelligences. They understand colour and taste better than our greatest scientists; but have they retinas or palates? I fancy the ‘beauties of nature’ are a secret God has shared with us alone.”

The music of life is beautiful because it was created to be beautiful. Rather than one consistent note, which would probably suffice for filling the formless void for most practical purposes, God created a symphony of intertwining variety, beauty, and joy. We have to keep reminding ourselves that we did not create this music—God did that. We did not even create the senses by which we perceive this beauty—God did that. God created a world filled with joy for us to enjoy. God created joy itself.

“...And God Saw That It Was Good.”

The challenge we have in trying to discover the world as God created it and the world that God pronounced good is that we have only a damaged product to observe. To attempt to discover what the world was like as it was created by looking at the world around us is similar to trying to determine what a motorcar looks like when the only example available is an auto that was involved in a serious road crash.

The world is twisted and broken, and in some respects looks nothing like the newly created original it once was. However, we’re able to find some hints—both as to what the world once was and indeed what the creation made new in eternity will be. “All the beauty and joy we meet on earth represent ‘only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never visited.’”

To appreciate the true joy of creation—a joy and pride that God Himself felt, the challenge is for us to somehow recapture the magic moment of creation. Considering this challenge in his book Disappointment With God, Philip Yancey tells the story of...
famous English naturalist who fell asleep while sheltering from a storm. When the naturalist awoke, he found that he was being watched by a small fox, so young that it had not yet learned to be afraid of humans. The tiny animal picked up a bone, and instinctively the naturalist grabbed the other end of the bone, leading to a playful wrestle between the old man and the young fox.

The naturalist suggested that this game was “the gravest, most meaningful act I shall ever accomplish. It was, in reality, a child’s universe, a tiny and laughing universe.” Despite the awesome emptiness,” Yancey concludes, “despite the pain that haunts it, something lingers, like the scent of old perfume. . . . At the heart of creation.”

If we look closely—or indeed, if we look broadly—we can see this pulse of joy still echoing around us. I was recently privileged to observe two Aboriginal girls just playing between themselves. Compared to other Australian children, “by virtually every test on the range of usually accepted social indicators such as rates of unemployment, rates of custody, rates of infant mortality, life expectancy, household income, and other indicators, Aboriginal . . . individuals and communities are now, and have been in the past, at a serious disadvantage.” In addition to these social disadvantages with which their lives are and, unfortunately, probably will continue to be plagued, these children are very small for their age and are residents of an isolated community that offers little real prospect of any dramatic improvement in their lives and the lives of their families.

However, the play I witnessed between these two girls that day was infectiously joyous. Their main game was simply to stand with their faces only a few centimeters apart, with the object being not to laugh. In spite of all their external disadvantages, the sad statistics collected about their race, and their position as the real living victims of what are too easily dismissed as mere numbers, their pure joy was irrepressible. The overall game continued for a long time, but each round within the game was surprisingly short-lived before yet another wave of laughter would bubble up from inside of one or both of these little girls. Their joy overcame their childish earnestness not to laugh, and brought one more echo of that universal pulse of joy, created by God in the beginning.

“In Bible study we start as flies on words to them and theirs to Him, noting the outcome of their faithful or faithless living. But then we realize that the God whom we were watching is watching us, and that we too are wholly in His hands, and that we are no less called and claimed by Him than were the Bible characters.”

The relationship that God had originally with Adam and Eve is the same as He wants to have with us. And the reason for the Son of God coming to this earth to die for our sins was that this relationship can be restored. It is in that kind of relationship that we will find our greatest joy.

And it is possible to have something of that joy in our present lives: “Life in Christ . . . is a life of joy; above all else, such joy is to characterize the Christian community.” However, this relationship with God and our ultimate joy will be realized fully only when the world is completely re-created. Then the original joy, created by God in the beginning, will be ours once more.

“... At the heart of the universe is a smile, a pulse of joy passed down from the moment of creation.”

Nathan Brown, a freelance journalist, is currently pursuing studies toward a degree in literature. When he wrote this piece, he was also serving as a volunteer pastor in Tennant Creek in the Australian Outback.
In this new feature, Adventists share what’s on their heart. We welcome your brief but deeply spiritual stories, insights, struggles, even drawings and photos. Send to Cutting Edge Meditations, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. As with Give & Take, we don’t pay for or return submissions to this feature.—Editors.

In My Father’s House

At our church in Whittier, California, we have music groups that stay after church and practice. Many members stay and listen to the music and, as the afternoon wears on, lie down in the pews and sleep.

Lie down and sleep! Can you believe that? Lie down in God’s house and sleep? Wow!

Well, one day I decided to try it. It was about 2:00 p.m., and I was tired. So with my shoes hanging over the pew, I slept while the music played. I slept for one hour, and it was the most beautiful sleep I have ever had.

Imagine a God who invites you over to His home and lets you sleep—like any guest—on the sofa or in one of the beds. I am tired of having God portrayed as someone who zaps and punishes His people for every sin they commit. If you don’t watch out, kablam! You can’t love a God like that!

The God I worship lovingly invites me into His home. After all, I’m His child.
—Ricardo Melendez, Lynwood, California

God’s Signature

The Lord loves to talk to me just after I’ve gone to bed. I guess it’s because I stop talking long enough to listen.

One night He showed me something I had to jump out of bed and write down! We know that God put His signature on Creation when He created the Sabbath. But He also showed me that He did sign His name.

Within the word Sabbath we find His name: Abba, Father, God.
—Myrna D. Sage, Newport, Washington

Rooting Them On

The crowds, the cheers, the excitement. The atmosphere was so electrifying, the energy could practically be felt through the television.

I’m not a sports couch potato, so it was a rare moment for me to be lying on my couch Tuesday, September 8, 1998, at 9:18 p.m.—just in time to see St. Louis Cardinals slugger Mark McGwire make history with his sixty-second home run in a season.

As he circled the bases—grasping hands, waving to the ecstatic fans—I could feel the excitement. I didn’t even know the man, but for a brief moment I entered into his joy and was rooting him on. I was so thrilled that he had achieved his goal and reached his dream.

And then a thought came to me. How I wish we could
have this same enthusiasm in the body of Christ. When was the last time we cheered a person accepting Christ as their Saviour? In the parable of the lost coin, Luke says that “there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10, NIV). When a person comes to Christ, the angels have a party! And what do we do when a person accepts Christ and is baptized right before our eyes? We say amen, but not so loud that we might make a spectacle of ourselves.

I’ve had this dream of watching a baptism in which a person comes up from the water and the congregation breaks into rounds of clapping and not-so-muffled amens. The energy in the room would be electrifying! And along with the angels, we would celebrate as another sinner rounds third and heads for home.

—Bonita Shields, Takoma Park, Maryland

Prison Clover

I have a purple cross that a friend gave me. Usually I just put the cross in the window of each cell I am in. One night I was moved to a new cell. This was a disciplinary move, but one that I felt was extremely unjustified. I placed my cross in the window and went to bed feeling angry at the system, the individuals involved, and the world in general.

I awoke in the morning feeling no better. I sat down at my table and was preparing to eat breakfast. I looked at the window and my cross. I noticed that outside my window there was a small patch of purple clover. Nowhere else in the two-acre field was there purple clover, only white clover.

I thought, Thank You, Lord! I guess things aren’t so bad after all.

—Mike Rose, Shelton, Washington

Pharisees at McDonald’s?

My 6-year-old son, Alex, and I were eating a late breakfast at McDonald’s. While eating his pancakes, Alex must have realized that it was close to lunchtime. He asked, “What if they had a rule where they took away your pancakes if it was french fry time, even if you weren’t done with your pancakes? That would be a Pharisee rule, wouldn’t it?” I laughed and agreed.

I’ve often thought of that breakfast conversation. Like the hypothetical Pharisee rule at McDonald’s, are there Pharisee rules in our lives that keep us from feasting with the Lord and enjoying blessings from His table?

We’re guaranteed that His blessings are better than breakfast at McDonald’s, and no one, Alex, can take that away from you.

—Nancy Larsen, Bemidji, Minnesota

A Memorable Show

I have questioned whether or not skating was my calling from the Lord. There have been times I’ve thought He was politely telling me to leave the sport. Other times I’ve felt that this is what He wants me to do.

People, including my friends, have wondered about my chances of being an Olympic figure skater. They’ve been especially concerned about the Sabbath; almost all competitions take place on Saturdays. But I believed that God would make a way for me. “God,” I said, “I need help. I cannot do this on my own.”

As I prepared for a recent competition in New Jersey, I wrote the referees and asked if there was any way I could skate on another day. A week later they granted my request. I achieved third place in that event and was most overwhelmed that I actually got to compete. My coach said, “You got to skate? I cannot believe that they actually changed it for you. That is a first and a last.”

Every time I think about it I laugh. I laugh because I know that my coach has no understanding of the power of God. He had never seen anything like this before, and with the help of my Deliverer, a new light came into someone’s life. It might have been the first time, but it definitely won’t be the last.

—Jason Fedusenko, 16, Newark, Delaware

My Windows of Heaven

When I was converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, much emphasis was given to Malachi 3:10: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

I thought that if I was faithful in my tithes and liberal in my offerings that He would pour out an abundance of money. But it did not work out that way. My income has always been below the national average. I was slow to realize that “blessing” does not always mean money.

Now I see that money is not always a blessing. It can be a curse, as in the case of the rich young man in Matthew 19. If God had prospered me, I might have become so self-sufficient that I would have been hopelessly lost. A s it is, I am 88 years old, in good health, and still holding a job. All three of my children are firm Christians and active in the church. This is a greater blessing than any amount of money could ever be.

—James H. Wright, Jr., Spirit Lake, Idaho
A lot of people have given up on him. But God hasn’t—and neither have I.

BY CHERYL L. GILBERTSON

HAVEN’T HEARD FROM MY BROTHER, TIM, since I got married. At the time he had bought fireworks in Tennessee on his way to our wedding in Ohio, and set them off in the church parking lot at the end of our reception. Most people had gone home by then, but I had stayed, not wanting to leave the family who had traveled so far to be there. I wanted to be where I could touch them a while longer.

The fireworks were big, beautiful bursts of color and sound, one after another, some overlapping. My sister’s sons helped light the fuses, standing and watching the colorful explosions in awe and excitement. Seeing the joy on my face as each light exploded in the sky, they giggled and laughed as they rushed in to light another. They called from the darkened distance at the end of the parking lot, “See, Aunt Cheryl!” “Aunt Cheryl, look!”

Then kisses, hugs, and goodbyes as they all loaded up into the van. Headlights turned to taillights and then to black. My husband and I stood outside in the church parking lot, still dressed in our wedding attire, now ready to leave.

Memories Good and Bad

I remember a little boy dressed in a white shirt and baby-blue bibbed shorts standing with one hand on the back of the church pew, his other hand in the air, bouncing and shouting “Amen!” at the end of a church prayer, joy spread all over his face.

I vividly recall that same little boy kneeling on a Friday night. After Mom had read us our Bible story, he spontaneously prayed his first prayer: that Jesus would bring Daddy home safe, when we all knew that Daddy had gone out drinking with his buddies after work that afternoon.

I remember the young boy who came home crying because
Brother
he didn’t have anyone to invite to the father/son banquet. It was the same boy who took a taxi home by himself from the bus station the day my father sent him home unannounced. Tim had wanted to spend the summer living with our father, but Daddy didn’t want Tim spending the summer with him.

I think of the boy who spent afternoons unsupervised in friends’ homes after school so he wouldn’t have to be alone at home. I remember him coming home in the early evening with red eyes, slow speech, and a resigned spirit. There were arguments late at night after Mother had gone to work.

A few years later this young man lay in a hospital bed with gravel ground into the skin on the left side of his body from a motorcycle accident early one Sunday morning. After an evening of drinking and doing drugs, he had been driving without a helmet and had turned a corner and skidded across a paved road into a neighbor’s yard. After turning a corner and skidded across the street to greet her, only to be struck by a school bus.

I remember a man that week who insisted on taking his mother out for dinner at the most expensive restaurant in town. Tim had already taken her to a beauty salon to get her hair cut, permed, and styled, a manicure, and a makeover. He spent the afternoon in the waiting area, surrounded by the smell of beauty tonics.

I remember the conversations that contained bare challenges “not to talk religion” to him, while he himself expounded on his own beliefs. We’d talk about the Bible, but he’d steer clear of the idea of absolute truth, and his soul would erupt when we talked about “Christians.” He hasn’t any understanding of the love and freedom of the former, but remembers well the pain from the latter. Each discussion left me with the keenest sense that he wanted me to convince him that the conclusions he’d reached during his lifetime were wrong. Yet it wasn’t the painful memories that wrenched him, but the abandonment. He’d stretch a teasing smile over his words, as if to say he doesn’t want my sympathy or pity.

Unsure about what to say, I remained silent on the issues he raised. I simply returned his smile. I didn’t step up to the challenge inherent in his tone, in his words. Yet after each dialogue I wondered if I’d wasted another opportunity to share how very much Jesus loves him. Did I say enough? too much? What words can heal a fractured soul? How can I pour my Saviour’s love into the deepest recesses of a heart so far away?

Can’t Let Go

I remember Tim’s kind eyes and his radiant, encompassing smile when he hugged me tightly as I stood in the church parking lot; and the bright laughter as he drove away, waving, into the night.

I awake in the night and my heart hurts, my eyes are wet. I hear the comforting words of friends, soothing voices in the darkness. “Don’t give up.” “Keep praying.” “God understands.” “God hears your prayers.” “It takes time.” I know they’re right, and I’m reassured by their kind words.

And I know that for me it’s impossible to give up—to stop praying, to stop hoping and longing for the one I’d love so dearly to return to the Master. It’s the readiest plea of my prayers, the strongest cry of my heart, the deepest desire of my soul. The softest whisper envelops me as I lie in my bed at night: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). It’s the promise God gave me eight years ago when I returned to Him my own wanderings.

I wish I could say that this story has a happy ending. But in fact, Tim’s story is still being written. Only God knows his spiritual condition, and whether Tim realizes it or not, God is doing all He can to bring Tim back to Him. I only hope that the people who come into Tim’s life will be as loving and forgiving as God is. A fter all, he’s my brother, but he’s also one of God’s children.

I think often of my little brother so far away, and I wonder how he is. In these eight years, and in all the years previous, I have seen God’s hand leading me, holding me, lifting me up. And in the darkness I know that He is promising to do the same for my brother Tim, wherever he is.

Cheryl Gilbertson lives in C enterville, O hio, where she works for a computer soft-ware company.
As a professional who works with athletes, I’d like to know why sporting events on Sabbath are considered a “sin”? If my job requires working some Friday nights to care for athletes, how is this any different from nursing or doctoring on Sabbath?

Allan’s reply (with Dee’s permission): I find your question quite intriguing, and I know that even for myself it’s hard to understand the Sabbath if I choose to look at it from the “What’s forbidden?” angle. I’ve found it more beneficial for my understanding of the Sabbath to look at it from a “What’s the relationship?” angle.

Let me share a story with you that really opened my eyes to the Sabbath from a relational point of view.

When Dee and I got engaged, I was attending graduate school at Fuller Theological Seminary and was serving as the youth and young adult pastor for a large Adventist church in Los Angeles. Dedicated to my young people, I had great support from the church for this thriving ministry. During my Christmas/New Year’s break from school, I traveled to the East Coast to be wed in Dee’s hometown. It was a beautiful wedding, and afterward we flew to San Francisco for a brief honeymoon. From there we were to return to Los Angeles for my ministry and schooling.

We were having a great time in San Francisco, enjoying the romance of the city and relishing the time we had exclusively to ourselves as wife and husband. After all, it was our honeymoon, a special getaway we had planned and set aside just for ourselves.

Coincidentally, my youth group had planned a Christmas program that would take place while I was away. I had carefully planned it out with the youth group, and my youth leaders had it all under control. But being an overly conscientious youth pastor, I made a call from my honeymoon suite to see how things were going. I chatted with the young people and youth leaders briefly, all of them assuring me things were going just fine. Satisfied, I hung up the phone.

Curious, Dee asked me whom I had been talking with. I hedged a bit, then told her I had called the church to see how the youth group was doing. I could see the pain in her eyes, and I knew she had every right to feel hurt. Although she did forgive me, it took a while to heal the hurt I had caused her.

To some the incident may sound rather insignificant. But on a weekend when Dee and I were to have some exclusive time to ourselves—a once-in-a-lifetime experience—my phone call demonstrated to her that my mind was hundreds of miles away. And in some unintentional yet poignant ways my actions revealed that she was less than the most important person in my life. The time we had set aside for just us I had made seem secondary and unimportant.

That experience sensitized me to the sacredness of the Sabbath, a weekly honeymoon with God. The Sabbath was made for us, a time set aside to be holy and exclusive. I can either cherish and honor that time or show with my actions that my mind is a million miles away. My observance of Sabbath is a reflection of my relationship with the Bridegroom.

From the “What’s forbidden?” angle, you and I could pose all kinds of case-in-point examples that could show that caring for athletes is similar if not identical to caring for patients; but they would still miss the point. I hope that looking at Sabbath from the “What’s the relationship?” angle will make it obvious that Jesus Christ is the MVP in your life.

Send your questions about young adult life, Christian lifestyle, and Generation X culture to: The X-CHANGE, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, or via e-mail to dream_VISION_ministries@CompuServe.com.

A. Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dre•am VISION ministries, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.
Patients who open the doors at Kettering Medical Center’s new Sycamore Primary Care Center do not sign in to see the doctor. They are issued a beeper and then invited to view videos about their health-care needs or use computers that link them to information on the Internet that speaks to their concerns. They have access to desks for their laptop computers so they can work while they wait to see their physician. They find a play area for sick children separated from the play area for healthy children. They will not find any waiting areas; only activity areas in enticing, comfortable places that make the Sycamore Primary Care Center feel more like a bookstore than an office.

The new 25,000-square-foot state-of-the-art medical facility opened June 1, 1998, on the Sycamore Hospital campus of Kettering Medical Center in Kettering, Ohio. Planned by teams of people representing all kinds of caregivers and users, Kettering’s center is an example of how medicine and health care are shifting their focus from the curative approaches of the past to the preventative approaches necessary for the future. Such a vision has defined Seventh-day Adventist health care from its inception. Now that more of the dollars spent on health care reward prevention and wellness, the Adventist vision of what needs to happen for the community is becoming the national vision as well.

Dr. Richard Schuster, internal medicine specialist and director of the Sycamore Primary Care Center, wants patients to learn about their health needs in ways that are helpful and not dependent on large blocks of physicians’ time. “We looked very carefully at what things people are most troubled with in going to see their doctor. We found that many people are unhappy with a loss of control, and people hate to wait,” Schuster said. Thus the Sycamore Primary Care Center gives people more control by providing opportunities to learn more about their health instead of simply waiting for their physician.

For example, the Sycamore Primary Care website (www.ketthealth/sycamore_primary_care/) contains a page that assesses overall health and provides question-and-answer sessions. Links are also available to other medical sources, such as the Mayo Clinic library.

The facility is also a joint learning center for student health professionals through Kettering Medical Center, Wright State University School of Medicine (WSU SOM), and the Ohio Northern University School of Pharmacy. It is a major teaching site for the WSU-SOM Pediatrics and Medicine departments via the establishment of faculty and resident teaching practices. This is an important educational effort, because health-care dollars are flowing more rapidly to the outpatient setting as opposed to the hospital setting. Future physicians can operate more efficiently in the office setting.

“We wanted to create a learning environment for patients and for health-care professionals,” said Frank J. Perez, chief executive officer and president of Kettering Medical Center, “and we’ve provided the technology needed for a high level of learning to take place. We believe that this is going to be used as a national model.”

Through a joint project, city of Miamisburg computers located in the Miamisburg Youth Center and the Miamisburg Senior Centers are linked to the Sycamore Primary Care website. “We want people to be able to access us not only by walking in the front door but also from home computers or from our area centers,” Schuster said. “We want to reach people of all ages who will, as a side benefit, develop computer skills.

“Sycamore Primary Care is the beginning of our extension into the community, meeting people where they live, and helping them to improve the quality of life.”
International Health Food Association Continues in Ministry

BY EUGENE GROSSER, INTERNATIONAL HEALTH FOOD ASSOCIATION DIRECTOR

At a conference in Durban, South Africa, the International Health Food Association (IHFA) invited 46 representatives from church food industries to join with church administrators to discuss matters of mutual interest.

The conference gave attendees an opportunity to review progress in introducing a system of evaluation and accreditation similar to that which is used for church educational and medical institutions. IHFA members gave their enthusiastic support to this program, which will accomplish the initial evaluation of all companies by the end of this quinquennium.

For more than 100 years the Adventist Church has been engaged in the manufacture and distribution of healthful foods in support of its emphasis on health of body, mind, and spirit. From modest beginnings in local communities this ministry has developed into a highly competitive, successful (more than $285 million turnover in 1992), 25-country industry that produces approximately 160,000 tons of product per year.

Through the years the health food industry has retained its focus on ministry and on the counsels given through Ellen White. One of her themes in particular has shaped IHFA’s recent work:

“The Lord’s design that the poorest people in every place shall be supplied with inexpensive, healthful foods. In many places industries for the manufacture of these foods are to be established” (Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 125).

New Commitment

In response to this counsel, IHFA has committed itself, with the support of member companies, to the establishment of a food-processing-based humanitarian project in Tanzania, East Africa. Malnutrition and poverty present major social problems in this country. Jose Luis Gomez, an experienced food industry administrator from Spain, will move to Arusha with his family to develop this project. IHFA believes that working to satisfy people’s physical needs, a prominent feature of Jesus’ earthly ministry, will prove to be equally effective today in reaching the poor with the good news of salvation.

Adventists Unharmed After Air Attacks in Iraq

After air attacks on Iraq that began on December 16, leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church report that members are unharmed and the church buildings and offices in Baghdad are intact.

Basim Aziz, president of the Adventist Church in Iraq, who is currently in Jordan, reports that he has been in regular contact with Adventists after the bombings.

“Friday night was the worst of the three nights of bombing,” says Aziz. “Missiles rained on Baghdad and other places in Iraq. Nine big targets in Baghdad alone were destroyed completely, among them a cotton factory. Our church members started the Sabbath meeting in the church as usual, and all the members were present for the services.”

Local church leaders in Iraq report that water and electricity supplies have not been hit. However, the military action is expected to have a devastating effect on an already-damaged country.

“Eight years of embargo have hurt the country’s economy,” says one Iraqi church leader. “The bombardment taking place will devastate the country completely. Four hospitals were hit, two private and two government ones. The oil refinery in Basra (the main city in southern Iraq) was destroyed.

“Iraq used to sell oil from that refinery to cover many of its expenses. No one can predict how Iraq will fare after the bombardment is over. We are waiting for the end of the strikes to see what the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) can do if it is permitted by the Iraqi government to work in Iraq.”

— Adventist News Network.

Thousands Join Adventist Church as a Result of NET ‘98

Anticipated 30,000-40,000 will join the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a result of the NeXt Millennium outreach programs of NET ‘98, according to latest church estimates.

While reports are still coming in, and Bible studies are continuing in many parts of the world, the best estimate is around the 30,000-40,000 figure, according to Brad Thorp, director of Adventist Global Communication Network (AGCN).

“Nearly 8,000 baptisms and professions of faith will come from NET ‘98 in North America, according to a survey of participating pastors completed during the last week of the satellite-linked evangelism initiative of the Adventist Church.”

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Editing God?

BY ALEX BRYAN, PASTOR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Recently a new version of an old story was released in theaters around the world. In The Prince of Egypt, DreamWorks SKG produced an animated rendition of the life of Moses. “We have 88 minutes to tell 70 years in the life of Moses,” says Jeffrey Katzenberg, who led the project. “We can never be a literal retelling of the Bible. We’ve edited God, but we have not rewritten him” (Time, Dec. 14).

Editing God? A startling concept. But not without significant research. Katzenberg consulted dozens of Christian and Jewish religious experts during production. (Many liberal and conservative scholars have given their thumbs-up to the film.) The producers also spent time studying Genesis and Exodus and even flew to Egypt to get a better picture of the local culture.

Cleric critics remain, of course. One rabbi argued that “God has a great line” that was left out, and a fundamentalist minister didn’t like the drawings. Time also reports that:

“In the Bible, Moses is rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter, but the filmmakers decided a close relationship between Pharaoh’s son Rameses and an adopted brother Moses would be more compelling than their interacting as uncle and nephew.”

Editing God? A startling concept! The trouble is Bible readers have to do it. Enjoying an Old Testament story almost always prompts creative imagination. (Some of the best preacher are wildly creative in Bible storytelling).

Systematic approaches to theology—such as our 27 fundamentals—require an editor who decides what portions of Scripture belong in what topical categories.

The key is editorial reverence. To consult wise Christians (as Katzenberg did). To study history (as Katzenberg did). To ask God for a spirit of understanding and humility. Spiritual integrity and a vivid imagination can work together in telling the greatest collection of stories in the world.
News and World Perspectives

**Christian Radio, Television Programs Increase**

More of America’s television and radio stations are carrying Christian programs, National Religious Broadcasters reports. There are 51 more television stations featuring religious programs this year. In 1997 there were 191. Now there are 242, according to data from the new 1999 Directory of Religious Media published by the NRB.

Twenty-eight more radio stations are broadcasting religious programs, increasing from 1,588 in 1997 to 1,616 in 1998. “The increase in the interest in Christian broadcasting attests to the hunger of the American people for something better,” said NRB president E. Brandt Gustavson. “We’re delighted that these stations are meeting spiritual needs.”

The state with the largest growth in TV stations broadcasting Christian programs is Texas, which now has 23. “In spite of reports to the contrary, Christian television is alive and growing,” said NRB chairman David Clark, president of FamilyNet Television. “I see this interest in Christian programming expanding as low-power stations are able to increase power and with the exciting prospect of digital cable carriage.”

**Islamic Pathfinder Society Initiated in Cyprus**

The Adventist Church in the Middle East recently approved a new Pathfinder society in Jordan. The society is aimed at Muslim children attending Adventist schools, reports Raffy Manassian, communication director for the East Mediterranean Field.

Operating on a one-year trial basis, the new society will teach moral and ethical values without direct references to religion. “If the program proves successful, the system would be used in Adventist schools throughout the Middle East,” Manassian says. “It will also mean that Pathfinder outreach could be used in other institutions.”

**News Notes**

- **David Osborne**, who pasters the Adventist Church in Carmichael, California, was recently elected secretary of the North American Division Ministerial Association. The post has been vacant for more than a year after William Scales retired. While serving as ministerial secretary, Osborne will maintain his current pastoral duties. A associate secretary Eradio Alonso will continue to work full-time in the division office.

- **Mary Maxson**, an administrative assistant for Adventist World Radio based at the General Conference, was recently appointed director of women’s ministries for the North American Division.

**What’s Upcoming**

- **Jan. 23** Health Ministries Day
- **Jan. 30** Religious Liberty Day
- **Feb. 6** Bible Evangelism emphasis
- **Feb. 13-20** Christian Home and Marriage Week
- **Feb. 20** Youth Temperance Day

**For Your Good Health**

**Accentuate the Positive**

People have long been told about the power of positive thinking to improve health and well-being. Now research suggests it may be even more important to avoid negative thinking. An Ohio State University study has found that avoiding pessimism may have more of an influence on well-being than embracing optimism in reducing anxiety and stress and improving health.—Health and Fitness News Service.

**If You Can’t Say Something Nice . . .**

A common psychological phenomenon plays a role in how people form impressions of others. Specifically, researchers have found that when someone attributes positive or negative traits to another person, the listener will often attribute those same traits to the speaker. For example, politicians who allege corruption by their opponents may themselves be perceived as dishonest, critics who praise artists may themselves be perceived as talented, and gossips who describe others’ infidelities may themselves be viewed as immoral.—American Psychological Association.

—“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.
Betting Their Lives

To increasing thousands, money is literally worth dying for.

BY JONATHAN GALLAGHER

In the cold of an Illinois winter, a housewife drops her children at school as she has many times before. She then returns home and kills herself.

Why? In a word, gambling. As her losses had mounted, she had tried to “win them back,” using all the money she had. By January 1995 she had gambled away their home, and in despair she took her own life.

Another tragic statistic in an increasing tide of life-or-death betting, with everyone the loser except the gambling trade.

The Cost in Lives

In 1994 Americans gambled away a half trillion dollars in their attempts to get rich quick. The cost in battered, broken, destroyed lives is impossible to calculate.

But on the individual level it’s obvious. Press reports tell the tragic stories:

On the night of April 13, 1991, John Lee, a 19-year-old college student in St. Paul, Minnesota, returned to his apartment, kicked down the door, took a shotgun, and shot himself.

Why? John had won big in gambling and then lost even bigger. His last words to his cousin who drove him home: “I just wish I was dead. I’ve lost $30,000.”

In August 1994 Linda Raasch, 46, a state clerical worker, walked to her garage, started her car, rolled down the windows, and just sat there and died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Why? Because Linda liked to play video poker machines, and the coins just kept adding up. On her dining table she left a foreclosure notice and several demands for unpaid bills. Her electricity was about to be turned off for nonpayment.

In May 1994 Catherine Avina, 49, a former deputy state attorney in Minnesota, lay down to sleep and never woke up, leaving behind two empty bottles of antidepressants and a suicide note.

Why? Because Catherine played blackjack in a casino and lost. She died leaving an accumulated debt of $7,000 and $600 in bounced checks. She was still making payments for gambling addiction therapy she had received a year earlier.

Gambling: money to die for? As with other addictions, why not a government advisory— “Warning: Gambling Can Seriously Damage Your Health”?

In a 1995 survey of 184 gamblers, all members of Gamblers Anonymous, researchers found “very high levels of . . . suicidal behavior,” with 79 percent of the gamblers saying they wanted to die, 66 percent admitting they had thought about suicide, 45 percent having made a plan to kill themselves, and 16 percent having attempted suicide.

The link between gambling and suicide is demonstrated conclusively by a recent study revealing that suicide rates in Las Vegas, Reno, and Atlantic City are four times higher than comparable cities where gambling is illegal. The study, published in the December 1997 issue of Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior, the official journal of the American Association of Suicidology, also reveals that the Atlantic City suicide rates climbed after gambling was legalized there.

Researcher David Phillips, professor of sociology at the University of California at San Diego, compared suicide statistics across the nation and discovered much higher suicide rates in cities with casinos compared to those without.

A Harvard study reported by the New York Times showed
a major increase in compulsive gambling, with a 60 percent increase between 1994 and 1997, and estimated that seven out of 100 North Americans had gambling problems.

In Australia doctors are so alarmed at the impact gambling is having on patients and their families that the Australian Medical Association launched a series of seminars in September 1998 to train every doctor in treating compulsive gamblers.

One in five compulsive gamblers attempts suicide. One in four is involved in a car accident on their way to gamble, and half admit to speeding regularly. Half of all compulsive gamblers admit to substance-abuse problems.

Damaged Families

But the destructiveness of gambling is not limited to those who gamble. Consider the families. Broken promises, repeated lies, associated violence and abuse. The National Council on Problem Gambling says that those married to compulsive gamblers are three times more likely to commit suicide than the general population and also have a high incidence of stress-related illnesses. More than one third say they have physically abused their children.

The children, meanwhile, attempt suicide twice as frequently as their peers, struggle more at school, and are prone to substance abuse. They also are more likely to suffer depression and have eating disorders.

The disruption of families and society as a result of gambling tragedies is immense. An estimated 12 people—usually family members, friends, and employees—are adversely affected when someone becomes addicted to gambling.

Economic Costs

The cost to society in purely economic terms is, quite simply, astronomical. According to statistics from the National Council on Problem Gambling, compulsive gamblers cost the state economy almost $514 million annually in New Jersey alone. Insurance-related fraud by gamblers seeking to fund their habit is estimated at $1.3 billion nationally, a cost passed on to all who use insurance. (The American Insurance Institute estimates that 40 percent of all white-collar crime is committed by or for compulsive gamblers.) The average debt of gamblers beginning treatment programs is around $72,000 each. How many are problem gamblers? The estimates range from 1 to 4 percent of the population—that's plenty of problems and billions of dollars of debt. The argument that gambling brings money into local economies simply does not add up.

Add to all that the unknown costs of lost work time, crime (compulsive gamblers often resort to embezzlement and fraud to fund their habit), and family disintegration, and you wonder why gambling is ever seen as a way of funding even the “best” of causes.

Yet many states and countries seem not to see gambling as any kind of problem, and many use it to fund a wide variety of programs. State and national lotteries for “good causes” such as support of the arts and education are increasingly common. Scratch cards are played by the billions, often for huge amounts of money. Many do not make the connection between gambling problems and the “innocent” lottery ticket.

But consider. Though purchasing a single lottery ticket may not make you a compulsive gambler, the principle is the same. The habit can be induced in the same way as “social drinking” turns into alcoholism, or as “soft” drugs lead to hard-line addictions. Some researchers have identified problem gambling as the fastest-growing addiction.

Gambling and the Christian

So what is the Christian's response? To turn a blind eye and say that it doesn’t really matter? Or even to admit that once in a while it's OK to bet on a horse, put money in a slot machine, or buy a lottery ticket?

After all, the Bible never says “Thou shalt not gamble,” does it?

But it does say “Love thy neighbour as thyself.” That's the problem at the heart of gambling. The objective is to try to win through others' losing. One analyst called gambling “theft by mutual consent.” The concept of Christian responsibility and care for the welfare of others is not part of gambling. Rather, gambling focuses on self, wishing to be the one who wins at the expense
The Bible clearly teaches that the assets we possess are to be used for good. Money is not there to be gambled, for the "thrill of the roll of the dice" or for self-advancement without honest labor. Gambling’s “get rich quick” mentality concentrates on selfish motives and the gratification of personal desires. This is not the selflessness that Christ taught, placing the needs of others before your own. In contrast, gambling places your selfishness above the necessities of others. Where does the massive win on the lottery come from? From money that should have been spent on food, clothing, and rent—especially by those who could truly not afford to lose any of their low income. Instead of trying to meet the needs of those less fortunate, the gambling industry actually takes away from them the little that they have.

The Bible says, “Love does no harm to its neighbor” (Rom. 13:10, NIV). Gambling says, “Take from your neighbor whatever you can.”

The Bible says, “Spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed” (Isa. 58:10, NIV). Gambling says, “Spend on yourselves, and satisfy your needs at the expense of the hungry and oppressed.”

The Bible says, “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12, NIV). Gambling says, “Do others down.”

As a result, “the Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty” (Isa. 3:14, 15, NIV).

For gambling’s big winners (in reality, the gambling operators are the real “winners”), “the plunder from the poor is in your houses.” All the evidence points to a greater percentage of income spent by the poor on gambling than by any other sector of society. In other words, those who can least afford it gamble most.

**Thrill-seeking**

In describing the future, Ellen White reveals the kind of empty “thrill-seeking” that has become a keynote of today’s society. “There is coming rapidly and surely an almost universal guilt upon the inhabitants of the cities because of the steady increase of determined wickedness. We are living in the midst of an ‘epidemic of crime’ at which thoughtful, God-fearing men everywhere stand aghast. The corruption that prevails is beyond the power of the human pen to describe. Every day brings fresh revelations of political strife, bribery, and fraud; every day brings its heart-stirring record of violence and lawlessness, of indifference to human suffering; of brutal, fiendish destruction of human life. Every day testifies to the increase of insanity, murder, and suicide.

“The cities of today are fast becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah. Holidays are numerous; the whirl of excitement...
Losing the Battle?
Pro-gambling forces notch wins in recent election.

BY BILL KNOTT, ADVENTIST REVIEW ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Last November’s U.S. elections sharpened the public debate about gambling and further illustrated how difficult it will be for anti-gambling forces to make headway on this important social issue.

Pro-lottery candidates unseated anti-gambling governors in Alabama and South Carolina, confounding pundits who have long noted the region’s conservative trend. Georgia’s pro-lottery governor retired with an 80 percent approval rating; his would-be successors, both Democrat and Republican, “almost fell over each other”1 to pledge the continuation of the popular lottery, whose proceeds now provide scholarships for tens of thousands of Georgia college students.

Illinois voters elected a gubernatorial candidate who favors continuation of the state’s controversial riverboat gambling law, by which floating casinos are allowed on inland rivers and waterways. Only in Maryland did a publicly anti-gambling candidate, Parris Glendening, win re-election as governor.

Expansion of Native American gaming on tribal lands was approved by voters in California, consolidating a trend that first began in Connecticut and New York and is now sweeping through tribal reservations in the Midwest and West. Missouri voters opted to allow expansion of riverboat gambling on both the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, despite the vocal opposition of the state’s United Methodists.

Only two U.S. states had legal gambling 20 years ago; today 48 states have approved it, frequently quelling public outcry with pledges to use gaming income to support important public policy concerns such as education. Thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia currently run lotteries; 23 states allow casinos.

“Ten years from now, the issue of gaming won’t be an issue,” predicts J. Terrence Lanni, chair of the MGM Grand and a member of the Federal Gambling Commission. “I think it’s mainstream now.”2

For information about efforts to oppose legalized gambling, contact the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling at 1-800-664-2680.

1 Time, Nov. 9, 1998, p. 58.
2 Frontline Interview, WGBH Frontline (see http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/gamble/procon/).

and pleasure attracts thousands from the sober duties of life. The exciting sports—theatergoing, horse racing, gambling, liquor drinking and reveling—stimulate every passion to activity "(Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 89).

Gambling fits nicely into this apocalyptic scene. Like other activities mentioned, it appeals to the “instant thrill” of the senses, the excitement of the possible (but exceedingly unlikely) win.

Ellen White also rejects the forms of gambling sanctioned by some churches as “a method invented by carnal minds to secure means without sacrificing" (Review and Herald, Nov. 21, 1878). She goes on to portray the effects of such church-sanctioned gambling: “A youth is surrounded by temptations. He enters the bowling alley, the gaming saloon, to see the sport. He sees the money taken by the one who wins. This looks enticing. It seems an easier way of obtaining money than by earnest work, which requires persevering energy and strict economy. He imagines there can be no harm in this; for similar games have been resorted to in order to obtain means for the benefit of the church. Then why should he not help himself in this way? He has a little means, which he ventures to invest, thinking it may bring in quite a sum.

“Whether he gains or loses, he is in the downward road to ruin. But it was the example of the church that led him into the false path” (ibid.).

The Adventist Church has consistently opposed gambling, primarily because of the damage it causes to individuals and society. Other reasons are important, but the tragic impact, the “downward road to ruin,” is surely the most important. Lives eaten up by this obsession, this addiction; lives wasted; marriages broken; families destroyed.

The promoters from the gambling industry can say what they want. “People should have a choice...” “Gambling is just a form of entertainment...” “Everyone can be a winner!”

Just tell that to the families of John Lee and Linda Raasch and Catherine Avina and all the others who saw their only escape from the trap of gambling as suicide. Tell that to all the others who live in a continuing nightmare of compulsion and debt. Tell that to the children whose lives are stunted and blighted by gambling.

Warning—gambling kills. Now and eternally.

“You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it” (Haggai 1:6, NIV).

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Why a little bag of peanuts meant so much.

Love
AFTER EXPERIENCING A very painful divorce, I considered my options. There was no guarantee I would ever fall in love again. Consequently, I just might be making my own living from here on out. So, being a teacher and figuring I might as well make the best living possible for myself, I headed for Andrews University to work on a terminal degree.

After a year at Andrews, my son Ty returned to the South to spend the summer with his father. I remained at Andrews for summer classes. Imagine my surprise when the phone rang one day and I answered to hear the voice of my ex.

"Hello, Anne? Ty and I are coming your way in a few days. There is a place in Ohio that restores and sells old Corvettes. I figure it would be about a three-hour drive for you. We'll be arriving there next Thursday about 10:00 a.m. to look around, and if you'd like, you can meet us there and visit a few hours. I know you miss Ty, and I thought you'd like the opportunity to see him."

I thanked him and told him I would take him up on the offer. The next day while shopping at Apple Valley Market I saw some dried Turkish apricots. My son loved dried apricots, so I placed them in the shopping cart as a little treat to present to him on Thursday. As I was about to move on, a sack of shelled raw peanuts caught my eye. My ex-husband loved raw peanuts, and out of old habit I reached to buy a treat for him as well. I stopped.

"Why should you buy him anything?" a little voice whispered in my mind. "Everything he promised you at the altar he gave to another woman."

Another voice responded, "Yes, but he called and offered this opportunity to visit your son. That was kind. He didn't have to do that." Back and forth my mind struggled, until finally I snatched the peanuts and headed for the checkout. I was tired of agonizing over it. This was a nice thing to do, so I would just do it and be done with it.

Thursday arrived, and I made the trip to the car dealer in Ohio without too much difficulty. Since I was the first to arrive, I had a little time to look around. There was a bulletin board in the main entrance with lots of papers posted. One I remember distinctly. It was a credit card receipt drawn on a bank in Hollywood, California. Burt Reynolds had bought a sports car and charged it—all $45,000. Interesting.

They arrived, and after hugs (for son) and polite greetings (for ex) we began the serious business of scrutinizing each road-eating, gas-guzzling machine in turn. They were beautiful, I had to admit, but in my opinion there were big drawbacks to ownership. They were expensive, they drank gas, the insurance was out of sight, and they held only two people and very little luggage. I was just too practical to enjoy ownership.

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**ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS**

**YOUR EX?**
We were out on the playground the other day, and a couple kids wanted to play rock, paper, scissors. It was fun. After a few rounds, one of the kids made a strange symbol with his hand—it looked like the rock symbol, but his thumb was sticking up. I said, “What’s that?” And he said, “It’s dynamite!” A nyway, it was all beyond me, but I did enjoy being with my son.

The day ended all too soon, and it was time to leave. My son surprised me with a parting gift—a video he had made of himself visiting my parents and helping around their farm. I, in turn, called him over to my car and presented him with the dried apricots and the peanuts for his father. I expected he would give the peanuts to his dad while on the road back home, but to my surprise he did something else. He rushed back to his dad, face beaming, and said, “Look, Dad, Mom brought you something too!” After a rather awkward moment between my ex and me, we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways.

On the way back to Andrews I had time to reflect on the happenings of the day. I was haunted by the beaming face of my son as he presented the humble peanuts to his dad. “Look, Dad, Mom brought you something too!” I kept hearing it again and again. A realization was growing inside me. It was very important to my child for me to be kind to his father. This day, with my child’s beaming face and haunting words ringing in my ears, I found a new incentive for being kind to someone who had hurt me. Not just because it was the right thing to do. Not just because the Bible said so. But for the good of my child, for his mental health and happiness. Kindness was best.

This tiny gift of peanuts had netted me a valuable insight. As the fable about the mouse who pulled a thorn from the lion’s paw teaches, no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

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In Memoirs of a Lunatic, the great Russian author and Christian convert Leo Tolstoy (who was also a spiritual mentor of Mahatma Gandhi) recounts how tepid routine negates our wonder in encountering the passionate love of God.

“I well remember the second time madness seized me. It was when Auntie was telling us about Christ. She told her story and got up to leave the room. But we held her back.

‘Tell us more about Jesus Christ!’ we said.

‘I must go,’ she replied.

‘No, tell us more, please,’ Mitinka insisted, and she repeated all that she had said before. She told us how they crucified Him, how they beat and martyred Him, and how He went on praying and did not blame them.

‘Auntie, why did they torture Him?’

‘They were wicked.’

‘But wasn’t He God?’

‘Be still—it is 9:00; don’t you hear the clock striking?

‘Why did they beat Him? He had forgiven them. Then why did they hit Him? Did it hurt Him? Auntie, did it hurt?’

‘Be quiet, I say; I am going to the dining room to have tea now.’

‘But perhaps it never happened; perhaps He was not beaten by them.’

‘I am going!’

‘No, Auntie, don’t go . . .’ And again my madness took possession of me; I sobbed and sobbed, and began knocking my head against the wall.”

The picture of little Leo slamming his head against the wall has stuck with me. At times I have felt a similar urge when I’ve been exposed to responses and broadcasts of amazing gracelessness. Like a small ringbearer at a wedding, we appear fidgety and bored by all the hoopla: “Yes, I’ve heard about Jesus and all that [yawn], so . . . what?” A sweet rush to our teatimes and tee times, is God’s sacrifice that easy to leave behind?

If it were your earthly father who had been betrayed by a traitor, beaten and bone-whipped senseless, tortured, tried and found innocent, then spiked to a stake and left to die, and if he did it all to take your place so that you could live, do you think you would be saying glibly, “Yes, I’ve heard all that about my father”? Would you not brim with tears each time you thought of him? Could you shrug it off if someone spoke poorly of him, or would you speak up indignantly in his defense? Could you forget about him—ever?

Perhaps we’ve been inoculated with just enough Jesus to become immune. In one of his remarkable tales from Lake Wobegon, Garrison Keillor describes an older relative who cried whenever he prayed publicly as he got to the part about Jesus dying for us.

“Everyone else seemed to have gotten over it,” Keillor deadpans.

I remember when I first encountered Yeshua, the rabbi from Nazaret, small-town carpenter, fearless denunciator of oppression, healer of loathsome disease, friend of sinners. I couldn’t get enough of Him. Any possible opening to bring Him into the conversation, I snatched it. A bout a year after my baptism, when I was attending something called vespers, my friend Warren picked up his guitar and started singing a tune I’d never heard: “Let’s talk about Jesus, the King of kings is He . . .” I nearly wept for joy. That song was living bread to my hungry soul; it sopped up all the thickening soup of my life.

A bout that time I came across the chapter “The Test of Discipleship” in Ellen White’s book Steps to Christ, detailing the only way we can know if we are Christ’s, in which she exclaims, “Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ’s, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him” (p. 58).

These days I find it increasingly difficult to talk about Jesus. There are so many “good” topics to take His place, even on Sabbath. So many comfortable discussions. But so you know, if you ever get to talking about Jesus when I’m around, you’ll have a willing audience, a rapt listener, an eager conversational partner. Just don’t flit past the subject. That tends to give me a headache, if you know what I mean.

Chris Blake talks about Jesus in every class he teaches at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.
At first glance I thought this book looked like one of those permissive why-are-we-worrying-about-all-these-standards books. As I took a closer look, I realized that the book is not an attack on church culture, but a call to look beyond our outward behavior to inner balance. By looking at underlying issues and bringing our hearts into a right relationship with Jesus, the outer stuff comes into balance. Sometimes it’s easier to focus on external behaviors than to admit what we really think and believe at gut level.

Steven Mosley entertains us while addressing some of the most painful personal spiritual issues that Adventists struggle with today. I felt as though he had written some of his chapters in my living room—about me and my family! For example: “Today, my son—on the way out the door with his skateboard—wears these incredibly baggy things.

You could drive a pickup through his pantleg.” My son too!

We used to rebel and wear long hair—today they shave their heads. Is the issue really the clothes or the hair? Mosley believes we need to define worldliness by inner terms, not outer behaviors. Thus the book takes a fresh look at our standards and definitions the real issues. It looks at our “monopoly” on truth and how we need to get a good sense of balance. Do non-Adventists have anything to offer us? If you think no, think again.

The third quarter of the book is devoted to “The Church: Us Versus Them.” The author encourages more honesty in our communication with others in the church; to be who we are, not who we wish we were. This could make our fellowship more like an AA meeting—a group of struggling people with a common goal, encouraging one another, even nudging one another along our chosen paths. God doesn’t ask us to be what we aren’t—why do we feel so obligated to pretend in church?

Each section of the book moves progressively into more intimate territory. The last section deals with our hearts, our innermost thoughts and attitudes. He writes about the inner conflicts we have between our intellectual religion and what we practice and believe in our guts. This is where righteousness by faith can be overcome by gut-level guilt. We have lived with this guilt so long, we ultimately act as though we believe in it as a higher truth. The result is legalistic thought and behavior. He points out that legalists can be liberal or conservative—struggling with adultery or a favorite food.

His final word encourages us to put away our Martha behaviors, our worrying, our resentments and struggles, and just admire and appreciate the beauty of our God. By looking at Him, we can put the other stuff into perspective and become more like Him.

Mosley has given us a worthwhile read that is guaranteed to give us a chuckle or two along the way.
If archaeologists ever uncover one of the disciples’ diaries, I believe his rendition of the classic scene of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) would read something like this:

I’ve been following Jesus for a year now. We’ve eaten with all kinds of people in the strangest combinations: tax collectors and zealots, Pharisees and drunkards, prostitutes and priests, and all the normal God-fearing folks who are drawn irresistibly to my Master.

But this place is different, peaceful. This is a home Jesus loves. I’m sitting on the smooth floor of Martha’s immaculate dwelling. Not a speck of dust, not a hint of foul odor. Not with Martha around. She cooks the finest lamb in Galilee. She always gets the job done: church potlucks, community service, youth programs. She’s always doing something for God. Martha seems to be like the noonday sun—a glowing center of passion sending forth gentle beams of adoration, touching selected portions of the earth with all the intimacy of a lover. While Martha zooms past me, Mary comes over to ask how I’m feeling. I admire her so.

Mary leaves me to greet Jesus. She flies into His arms and embraces Him like a little girl running to hug her big brother. Whenever she sees Him, the rest of the world fades away into insignificance—they’re alone in the center of the universe, two friends from two different worlds. You can see it in her eyes—the hope, the promise, the dreams. And yet a year ago Mary was as good as dead. All she saw was darkness until He came and gave her the sunrise.

Ever since then Mary’s been sitting at His feet. She’s apparently doing nothing, but it seems to mean everything to Jesus. Sure, Jesus smiles when He tastes Martha’s delicious entrées, but His soul is moved when that simple woman sits at His feet, listening to His words and loving Him. Meanwhile, Martha’s eyes are firmly fixed on the tasks at hand. Will there be enough food for Jesus and all those ordinary guys who follow Him? And why isn’t Mary helping—or at least worrying? Martha turns to Jesus and voices her complaints against her “lazy” sister.

Jesus lovingly sets her straight, reminding her how well He made do with feeding that pack of hungry listeners with some bread and a couple overgrown minnows. Then He deals with the larger problem: Martha is missing out on life. She’s eating the peels without tasting the fruit. She’s seeing the storm and missing the rainbow. She’s glancing at God and gazing at her problems. She’s trying to please Jesus with quantity and quality, never knowing He only desires her heart. He gently reminds Martha of a crucial truth: while she’s desperately trying to polish her filthy rags (Isa. 64:6), Mary is at His feet asking Jesus for a change of clothes and a change of heart. Certainly Jesus appreciates the fact that Martha has opened her home to Him. But Mary opened her heart.

I know I was meant to hear that conversation. Jesus might as well have been talking to me. When Jesus sent me out as part of the power 70 (Luke 10), I did it “Martha-style.” Sure, I opened my ministry to God—I asked Him to come in and bless it and the people involved. I didn’t sit on the dusty earth with those eyes that cry, “Let me know You more, Jesus, so that I can love You more!”

In the years that I’ve known Him, I’ve seen Jesus approached by Roman soldiers, members of the Sanhedrin, millionaires, and scholars. They all seem to want something from Him: the Pharisees want blasphemy, the seekers want truth, the dying want life, and the sinners want grace. But all Mary wants is Him. Not for what He can do, but for who He is. She doesn’t question; she doesn’t accuse. She simply looks, listens, and adores. And I’m left here on the floor, marveling at Mary and gazing at God in the reflection of her eyes.

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