In Judge Anderson’s Courtroom:
Why This Woman Is on the Cutting Edge

Ten Ways to Say “I Love You”

John Nixon: The Price of Freedom
Debating Rahab
Roy Adams did us all a favor in his “In Defense of Rahab” (December NAD Edition). Too often the nice thing to do with streetwise Rahab is to quickly pass over her impulsive decision to protect the spies as a pagan’s stab of kindness, but not an example for sensitive Christians who have an eye on the ninth commandment. In turn, Christians through the years have been wrestling with “lying” when faced with lousy alternatives.

In one brief article Adams laid out the big picture of Rahab’s “lie”—not only with common sense but with a biblical setting that should put to rest the porcelain argument that no one should lie under any condition.

Herbert E. Douglass
Weimar, California

Roy Adams’ article left me struggling with the question “Can wrong really be right?” Rather than justify Rahab’s lie, should we not include her in the group referred to by Paul in Acts 17:30 and Romans 3:25 as having their sins “winked at” or “passed over” when committed in ignorance of God’s law, but immediately called to repentance when informed of His righteous judgment? Is our faith so weak that we cannot believe our God could have hidden Joshua’s spies if Rahab had told the truth? Likewise if you have a houseful of Jews and the Gestapo is at your door? Have we forgotten Daniel, who refused to even close his windows and pray in private because he was unwilling to give a false impression, and the resulting magnificent witness God provided in the lions’ den?

In a society seemingly comfortable with constant compromise, pervasive infidelity, and rampant immorality, I wish the Adventist Review would have published Adams’ piece as “opinion” rather than “theology” and taken a stand for right rather than expedience.

Byron L. Scheuneman
Via E-mail

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

A Contest for Fresh Voices
If you don’t get the weekly Review, you missed our announcement of a special contest for Adventists age 35 or younger (see Roy Adams’ “Fresh Voices,” in the Jan. 8 World Edition). Here again are the specifications and guidelines:

1. Write an essay about one of the Adventist Church’s 27 fundamental beliefs. Tell what the doctrine is all about, what it means to you personally, and how it’s made a difference in your life or in the life of someone you know. (You may find it helpful to refresh your mind on the 27 fundamentals by consulting the Adventist Church Manual, your baptismal certificate, or another source.)

2. Articles should be 1,700 words or fewer, typewritten, and double-spaced.

3. The Review staff will award three prizes—a grand prize of $700 and two runner-up prizes of $500 each. Other articles accepted will merit an honorarium according to our regular rates.

4. To qualify, your article (on paper and on a three-inch disk, if possible) should reach us no later than July 31, 1998. Please include your complete address and telephone number (if any); your age; a photo of yourself; a one-sentence bio giving your occupation (student, homemaker, electrician, whatever), and your Social Security number (if you live in the U.S.). Because of time considerations and logistics, nothing sent to us can be returned.

5. Send your article to: AnchorPoints Contest, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A.

And if you don’t already subscribe to the weekly Review, call 1-800-456-3991.

Having hoped for some opportunity to comment on readers’ letters about my own article (“In Christ There Are No Moral Dilemmas,” July NAD Edition), I welcome the possibility of responding to Roy Adams’ “In Defense of Rahab” (December NAD Edition).

A dams’ position and mine are the same as far as Rahab is concerned. He says, “The tacit condemnation of this great woman . . . is unwarranted.” He is right. God honors faithful efforts on His behalf, though all of us act ignorantly to some degree. Moreover, once we know His evaluation as with Rahab, second-guessing it is not helpful. She has been saved by grace through faith as declared in Hebrews 11:31, the pas-
sage Adams quotes, and that ends the matter. So far, we agree.

But such assertions bypass the real question Adams has presented: “What should the Christian do when telling the naked truth can result in the direct loss of innocent human life?” A few lines further Hebrews 11 honors Samson, but neither Adams nor I would take that as an endorsement for the mass murder of gentiles.

I wish that instead of limiting himself to arguing eloquently for redefining the word “lie,” Adams had specifically stated what he seems to imply—that an untruth is sanctified if one tells it for good reasons. Such an open claim would have made the moral pitfall obvious. The human heart does a poor job of defining “good” on its own, especially under the pressure of fear. Of course Adams could want us to focus on the critical word “faith” in the quoted text, yet he does not use the word himself. So his actual recommendation seems hazy, especially as it relates to faith.

Adams’ statement that Rahab’s telling the truth “would have led to” the Israelites’ “certain imprisonment” gets to the heart of the problem. As mentioned in my own article, we have no ability to make such predictions. Our God-given task in facing what appears to be a moral dilemma is not to forecast possible outcomes, but to grip the faith that lets God work His will His way. Though a good-hearted lie is the most natural option (which a modern pagan would readily choose), it is the opposite of faith in God’s salvation, and blocks Him ability to work a miracle that faith would have allowed.

I fear that Adams’ actual position may be this: “Faith may move mountains, but the gestapo is another matter. Just take care of things with an untruth, and God will understand.” That would be unfortunate advice to people trying to assemble such faith as will sustain them in a world of trouble soon. We should be encouraging each other with a different message.

—Jan Haluska
Collegedale, Tennessee

A dams returns briefly to this topic in a March 5 editorial.—Editors.

When the Family Splits (cont.)

As I read William Jonsson’s “When the Family Splits” (November NAD Edition) I thought of at least a dozen examples of breakaway congregations that I have observed at close range.

Like Jonsson, I have heard people say “No matter what happens, I will never give up the Sabbath” as they were leaving the organized church. But in just a year or two they had forgotten the Sabbath. Small groups meeting in houses have grown to congregations of 400 in just months, only to evaporate a year later. I have seen a group split only to split again when their leaders suddenly turned on each other.

The day is coming when we will be meeting in small companies cut off from the rest of those who believe as we do. Lawsuits by unhappy individuals may drain our church dry and bankrupt us. Laws may be passed that put us out of business. Until that time, the best thing is to stay with the group, just as Jeremiah stayed with the rebellious remnant who fled to Egypt at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. I am sure he did not want to go, and he warned them not to go. Yet he went with them and did not give up on them.

—Marland Hansen
Via E-mail

Letters Policy

The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617,15.
Keeping it all going—the family, the marriage, the career—sometimes that’s the easy part. But how do you keep it in balance? Where do the values come from? And how do you give those values to your kids and the ones you care about? My mom did for me. Now I’m trying to do it for them.
“Wide was his parish, houses far asunder,
But never would he fail, for rain or thunder,
In sickness, or in sin, or any state,
To visit to the farthest, small or great.”

I remember muttering those words on storm-swept April afternoons as my Subaru and I climbed the hill roads of central Massachusetts in search of wayward sheep. Such is the mystery of the mind that in a moment quite unconscious, treasured words assert themselves with brave new meaning, illuminating a task, a job, a life’s calling.

Pinned to the wall back in my office were 50 lines from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, picturing the country parson. Somewhere, deep in college, I had marveled at how well they summed up all I hoped for in a pastor: rich faith, straight talk, clearheadedness, bold effort. And when that calling became my own, I fixed them on the corkboard where my wandering eye might find them.

But now, out making visits on raw, rainy afternoons, I began to understand those fourteenth-century words in powerful new ways. There was a line connecting me, I saw, not only to my God, to truth, but to the men and women of all ages who have spent their lives as pastors for God’s people. All alone in my rusting red import, I began to sense a solidarity with thousands of my peers who daily opened Scripture, prayed for the sick, comforted the grieving, taught the Word. Yes, my parish was wide—60 miles by 50—and the houses were “far asunder”—180 souls scattered through a hundred towns and villages. But my duty to God’s people was identical to theirs. By God’s grace I wouldn’t fail to be a shepherd worthy of the flock.

Those were afternoons I won’t soon forget, for they transformed the singularity of my personal journey with God into a standing among—a standing with—all who minister in His name. Even now, a step (perhaps, a chair) removed from daily pastoral ministry, I find myself defensive—yes, defensive—when I hear my old profession “dissed” and minimized. It’s a loyalty I’m proud of.

Here’s a call to pray for all who pastor. Pray urgently, regularly, generously. Any pastor worthy of the flock would rather have your prayers than cards or kind words in the foyer. Pray for the sermon you will hear on Sabbath—that it will be saturated with the Word, drenched with the Spirit, and targeted for your heart. Pray for the time your pastor spends in prayer—that the forgiveness and healing preached from the pulpit will first have been experienced in the life. And pray for the people your pastor will visit this week—small and great, in houses far asunder. Pray that they will be as receptive to your pastor’s ministry as the Spirit is teaching you to be.

What seems different about this moment is the volume and the vigor of the criticism. Either Seventh-day Adventist pastoral ministry is in its darkest hour (as some claim), or some members have discovered a new and questionable freedom to say whatever comes to mind about the gifts, the competence, even the commitment, of the men and women who stand before them each week.

As secular models of leadership proliferate, pastors are evaluated by standards nowhere broached in Scripture: “Did he reach his budget goal last year?” “Did she get the newsletter out before the big Thanksgiving social?” “Was I moved to laughter or to tears by the sermon?” Consumerism, affecting all our lives, has made us judge those who serve more harshly. Few can match the smooth assurance of Schuller, the gravity of Graham, the humor of Hybels.

Wherever I’ve served, and wherever I travel these days, I meet pastors struggling with both the weaknesses they confess and the ones asserted by their critics. Many are hurt beyond repair. Not a few leave ministry altogether, replaced by those with similar gifts but not always with equal spiritual maturity. It’s not just “upward mobility” that causes shepherds to look for greener pastures: it’s the discovery that some sheep have teeth and aren’t at all reluctant to use them.

Pray for All Who Pastor

Bill Knott
Late last year I got an advance copy of the women’s devotional book for 1998. Rose Otis, the editor of the book and also vice president for ministries in the North American Division, was kind enough to share it with me.

A devotional book is compelling. The messages are brief yet vital. Each day’s passage is life-inspiring, and I find it difficult to read only one message a day. That’s why I usually enjoy having two or three—or more—devotional books at hand.

But I find it hard to wait for the appropriate day to read the meditation for that particular date. Before the year began I had already read several of the meditations from the women’s devotional book, From the Heart.

The story for January 15 really touched my heart. It’s by Veyrl Dawn Were, about a time she and her husband were traveling in the Australian Outback. They saw no one for three days. When another vehicle finally came into view, it was a road-hogging truck that forced their car into the ditch. The truck driver proceeded to stop, come back to their car, and berate them for being so foolish as to be out on the road alone.

Within moments a second vehicle, a flatbed truck, came along. This second vehicle appeared empty except for a length of chain, which they used to pull their car from the ditch. The flatbed truck driver barely acknowledged their thanks, drove off, and almost immediately they were left alone again.

But not alone. “We stood amazed,” she writes, “feeling we were on sacred ground, that an angel had been sent to deliver us. We continued bumping along on our journey, very conscious of the Lord’s protecting care.”

The January 18 devotional—I told you it’s hard for me to stop reading—is by Kay Kuzma about a woman named Denise, who hated washing dishes. Denise’s outlook changed when she noticed Ephesians 6:7: “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord” (NIV). Denise began to think of her kitchen as part of God’s palace. “Upstairs was the throne room. Just imagine what it would be like if Jesus had just given a banquet, and He personally had asked her if she minded doing the dishes for Him!”

I couldn’t quit reading. The January 20 devotional from Celia Mejia Cruz is about her first experience canning tomatoes. Three days after canning, she smelled something unusual in the kitchen. She found the tomato jars: “Every jar lid had popped and a pinkish-orange foam was oozing out of the jars and dripping down the shelves.” Friends later told her that she probably had left out a step in the processing, or perhaps failed to cut some soft spots out of the tomatoes. “Sin is like those tomatoes,” she writes. “When we allow resentment, anger, unresolved conflicts, or any other sin to remain in our lives, it begins a process of fermentation—slowly destroying our connection with God.”

There’s so much value packed into those few moments of reading. I remembered that angels protect me. I recalled that mundane tasks are part of God’s plan for my life each day. And I felt convicted that sin must be eradicated from this planet— and from my life.

I hope you’re using a devotional book. There are several wonderful books to choose from this year. In addition to From the Heart, there’s the book Energized, devotions for body, mind, and soul, by Jan and Kay Kuzma and DeWitt Williams. Another book, aimed at adults, is Portraits of Jesus, by George W. Brown. The preteens in your house will enjoy reading Sunny Side Up, by Celeste Perrino Walker and Eric Stoffle. My Father Owns This Place, by Gary Swanson, will give your teens a spiritual boost. There’s even a devotional book for the preschool children you know: Little Talks With Jesus, by Nancy Beck Irland.

It doesn’t matter which book you read for your devotional. I know many enjoy reading the devotional books published each year by our publishing houses, but I know there are others who reread such timeless classics as Ellen White’s Patriarchs and Prophets and The Desire of Ages.

Whichever book you choose, I know your life will be blessed as you spend a few moments each morning reading that day’s devotional message.

If you can stop with just one day’s devotional, I can’t.

Alfred C. McClure is president of the 850,000-member Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.
SUMMER CAMP PHOTO CONTEST

In August we invited readers to submit top-quality photos of summer camp and offered a $100 prize for the best entry (voted by the Review staff). Since two of the photos received all of our votes, we've added a $50 second prize. Thanks for contributing!

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

BEATING THE HEAT:
Campers enjoy a cool dip on a hot summer day at Camp Winnekeag in Ashburnham, Massachusetts. Photo by John R. Loor, Jr.

RUNNER-UP

SWEET SORROW: On the last day of family camp at Camp Ida-Haven in McCall, Idaho, Brandon Culbertson learns that activity director Patty Evans won't be back the next summer. "She loves me the bestest!" said Brandon, who was baptized the same week. Photo by Donita Culbertson.

AND NOW: INTRODUCING OUR "WINTER PHOTO" CONTEST

We realize not too many conferences have "winter camps," so we’re inviting you to send photos of winter happenings involving your local church. The Review staff will judge photos based on both quality and content, and award two prizes: $100 and $50.

GIVE & TAKE

FIGURING IT OUT: Kayla Mitchell toys intently with a Rubik's Snake at Camp Au Sable, Grayling, Michigan. Photo by Carol Corbin.

ROCK SOLID: Junior campers at Camp Wawona, in Wawona, California, have a strong faith in Jesus Christ. Photo by Erin Lombard.

MUD IN THEIR EYES: There's been only one Cowboy Camp mud challenge at Leoni Meadows summer camp in Grizzly Flats, California, and here's the result. Pictured are the permanent staff freshly mauled by 60 campers and their counselors. Photo by Monica Dudar.

AND SARAH: INTRODUCING OUR "WINTER PHOTO" CONTEST

Send prints/slides, captions, and Social Security number to: Winter Photo Contest, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. (Limit: three submissions per photographer.) Look for results sometime this summer.

SAVING THANKS: "Thank you" spelled in snow at Camp Mackenzie, Canaan, New Hampshire. Photo by Sunday School of Canaan, New Hampshire.
ALL RISE! THE MUNICIPAL court for the County of Monterey is now in session. The Honorable Judge Marla O. Anderson presiding. "With that clarion call from Bailiff Richard Perez, the morning session in Judge Anderson’s court had begun.

I’d gone to the town of Salinas, California, that November Monday in 1997 to observe the judge in action, and to find the answer to a persistent question that had lingered in my mind for months: How could the mild-mannered, soft-spoken woman I’d been interviewing face down the hostile protagonists in a trial situation? Did she have the nerve, the toughness? This morning I would get my answer.

Standing accused before the bar was 25-year-old Stephanie Joanne McCoy, charged with the criminal offense of driving under the influence, and about to face the scrutiny of a dozen of her peers, with Judge Anderson in the chair. As the jury selection proceeded, I tried to study the various sides of this complex woman who holds down one of the 10 judgeships in the county of Monterey in west central California. And as the trial unfolded during the rest of the morning, I told my notepad exactly what I thought, in as jumbled a fashion as the impressions came to me: “gentle,” “tough,” “friendly,” “calm,” “informal,” “firm,” “sympathetic,” “humorous,” “no-nonsense,” “competent.”

What woman is this who in one moment can sentence a criminal to the county jail, and in the next have a plaintiff (unfamiliar with the formalities of courtroom protocol) feel so comfortable in her presence as to call her “Judge Marla”? Who is this person that, even though she knows she has the freedom and well-being of her fellow citizens in her hands, refuses to put on airs, to become arrogant? Who is this baby boomer with office walls covered with plaques and certificates and honors—from the government, from community organizations, from educational institutions, from legislative representatives, from student associations? Who is this distinguished woman that within her first two years on the bench had the honor of being asked to serve as a faculty member for the California Center for Education and Research, an educational association for judges?

Maria Osborne Anderson, J.D., was born at Hadley Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C., in 1959 to Wendell and Cora Osborne. Deeply committed to Christian education, the couple had immigrated to the United States from Panama so that their four girls could
have access to the best. (Wendell's oldest child, a boy, had remained in Panama through high school.)

As I sat down with Wendell and Cora in their home in Maryland one evening this past November, they talked about those difficult early days in the United States. Their first residence was in Washington, D.C., but they had their eyes on Takoma Park, home to the most prestigious Adventist schools in the area. And how lucky they must have felt when they found a house just two blocks down the road from the J. N. Andrews Elementary School (JNA) on Elm Avenue!

But their trusting innocence was about to be shattered as JNA officials flatly refused to accept their children because of race. Turning to Sligo Adventist School, about two miles away, they ran up against a similar resistance; and for weeks the status of their children’s application hung in limbo as board meeting after school board meeting debated what to do. “We virtually had to crawl on our hands and knees,” Wendell said. Finally Sligo decided to admit the two older girls—Marla would have to wait another year, the admission of her sisters having brought the school, officials said, to its “yearly quota” for Blacks. As it turned out, Marla may have been the lucky one that year, for as she peacefully attended public school, her two sisters had to run a daily gauntlet of insults and physical confrontation from White students at Sligo.

The next year, however, Marla was in, entering Sligo in the third grade. “She was focused from the start,” her parents told me, “engaging in sports, but never becoming distracted by it.”

I wanted to get Marla’s own sense of those pivotal years. Did she ever dream that she’d be what she is today?

“I always knew I wanted to do something,” she said, “to be something. But exactly what, I had no idea. Growing up just outside Washington, D.C., was always exciting to me, and I was always interested in politics to some degree.”

In fact, the evidence had already
begun to show. In high school she was always running for some office. She was captain of the tumbling team, co-captain of the girls’ basketball team, and active in student council and government. Today she looks back on that period as formative for her career. “I think that having opportunities as an academy student in a small, nurturing environment gave me the confidence I needed to go ahead and get my feet wet in the cold, cruel world of politics.”

From Takoma Academy Marla went on, in 1977, to Loma Linda University’s La Sierra campus (as it was then) for her college work, graduating in 1981 with a bachelor’s degree in mass communication. She then enrolled at the University of Southern California (USC) and graduated two years later with a master’s in communications management.

But it was not all study for Marla. And for some 17 years—all through college and university, and well beyond—she utilized her communication skills, working part-time with the Breath of Life telecast ministry as an announcer, writer, and production assistant, traveling with the staff to such exotic places as Israel, Costa Rica, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.

When she graduated from USC in 1983, she immediately embarked on what would become the main focus of the rest of her life—the study of law. She chose the University of California at Davis, from which she graduated in 1986 with a Juris Doctor degree. And when she sat for the tough California bar exam that same year, she passed it the first time around, an accomplishment pulled off by only 38 percent of candidates.

A fter one year as an associate in the law firm of Weintraub, Gensheia, Hardy, Erich, and Brown in Sacramento, the state capital, Anderson became deputy district attorney with the Monterey County district attorney’s office. At Monterey she’d be close to the man she’d been dating—Fredrick J. Anderson, a computer information science instructor at Hartnell College in Salinas. When she married him in 1987, she also became stepmother to 16-year-old Stacey and 12-year-old Kyle, Frederick’s children from a previous marriage. Today both Frederick and Marla are supportive members in their local church.

But how did Marla become Judge Anderson? And how did this youthful attorney move so rapidly up the ranks from attorney to deputy district attorney to judge? It’s a story of human initiative combined with divine timing and providence.

It all began with a California Superior Court judge by the name of Jonathan Price. “One day he called me back in chambers,” Anderson said, “and I began to wonder, What did I do wrong now?”

“You know I’ve been watching you do your work,” Price said, “and I began to wonder, What did I do wrong now?”

“You know I’ve been watching you do your work,” Price said, “and I think you’d make a good judge. Have you ever thought about filing for a position on the bench?”

“A nd I said, ‘Sure.’”

“But not now, I thought as I left his chambers—what with my limited experience as an attorney. And my age! But finally I decided I might as well try now, go through the process, and see what happens. A judge of the municipal court had retired with time left in his term. When that happens, the governor of the state appoints someone to fill out the remaining period, and I decided to go for it.”

It’s a long and grueling process for the would-be successor, Anderson said, involving endless questionnaires, evaluations, and interviews. Surviving the ordeal with flying col-
Adventists came out. And Price, in connection with the church he once frequented.

It all came out when Anderson invited him to swear her in. As they talked, the story of Price's brush with Anderson said. As he recounted to him the long, grueling application process, his response surprised her. "Well, you know," he said, "all things work together for good. If you trust in the Lord, things work out right in the end."

"And I was sitting there saying, 'Where did he get all that from?''" Anderson said. As a story they talked, the story of Price's brush with a Seventh-day Adventist friend and he knew of Douglas Weliber, a well-known Adventist attorney in the area. And though he never became a Seventh-day Adventist, Price had probably imbibed enough from his fellowship with us to recognize something familiar and attractive in Anderson's conduct at the bar, though at the time he had no idea of her religious persuasion.

It's a no-nonsense approach that has become vintage Anderson. As I watched her on the bench that day, she provided a veritable study in total focus and concentration—even as our hired photographer (by prior permission) snapped flash pictures in her courtroom for this story. Not once did she give the slightest evidence that anything except the parties in the case before her mattered. Completely undistracted, she handed down her rulings on motions and objections almost before attorneys could get them out.

This element of her courtroom demeanor does not go unnoticed, either by those who stand accused before the bench, or by those who work with her. "I've been very impressed with her," defendant McCoy told me during a break, "because she takes charge of her courtroom." Hours later, as it turned out, she'd be found guilty, sentenced to five days in jail with a fine of $1,250, and ordered to enroll in a state-operated alcohol program.

A signed to Anderson's courtroom, Bailiff Perez has seen her hand down such tough sentences many times, but he is not hesitant to sing the praises of the woman on the bench: "She's very good," the 29-year law-enforcement veteran said to me."Very fair, very caring—one of the few."

The bailiff couldn't know, of course, how proud I was to hear his testimony. Nor could McCoy. For however much I tried to be objective and dispassionate, I couldn't help thinking: That's one of us up there, sitting on that bench, a graduate of the same schools my kids attended. That's an Adventist there, telling lawyers, plaintiffs, defendants, witnesses, and jury what to do!

I t did me proud. And I wanted to hear Anderson reflect on her A dventist roots, on the training that got her started, on issues facing the church. Here, now, are a few excerpts from our conversation:

Q: To a considerable extent you are a product of Adventist education. How do you rate the preparation you received at Adventist schools?

A: I rate it very high. We often make the mistake of thinking that education consists of just reading books, following through the materials, and receiving a grade. But education also includes the environment that you're in, the concern that teachers have for you. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the preparation I received from our schools was that of a wholesome atmosphere in which to study. I had teachers and instructors that really cared. I had a nurturing environment that gave me the opportunity to feel comfortable and to excel. And I think I took that self-confidence with me into the larger society.

Christian education gave me an ethical base, crucial in any kind of professional environment. You need to understand where you're going to stand on issues. You need to understand your own perception of life and what your ethical boundaries are.

H ow have your family contributed to your career goals?

I have to start with my parents primarily, because they were the big advocates of education. They're both immigrants, and the main reason they came to the United States was to educate their children.
A nd educate us they did. Today the first child—half brother Julian—is in the Navy. Oldest sister Nuria Feit has a Ph.D. in methodology and research in O hio. A nd N eda Stafford, the youngest in the family, is a public accountant in San Francisco. (Yvette, who came just before me, is deceased).

Were your parents wealthy? H ow were they able to put all of you through church school?

M y mother, a nurse, would sometimes work double shifts. M y father owned his own photography busi- ness, and whatever moneys came from that was spent on the children’s education. So it was a lot of sacrifice, a lot of praying, and a lot of hard work. A nd the kids pitched in. M y older sisters worked, and I worked—as a col-porteur, selling magazines on F Street in Washington, D.C. O ur parents pushed us, gave us confidence, worked with us.

W hat advice do you have for A dventist young people preparing for careers in the secular world?

T he first thing is to know what you believe and who you are. If you don’t know that, then the secular world will consume you. If you’re going to be out there, you have to set your own parameters as to what your own ethics are going to be, as to your commitment to C hrístiÁ nity. Because you’ll be constantly tested—not intentionally per se, but that’s the way things are.

W hat is your sense of the spiritual tone of the C hurch today? W hat challenges do you think we face?

I think we face the challenge of what I might call secular humanism—a lot of people wanting to feel good about their religion, wanting to hear only feel-good sermons.

But I think our biggest challenge is wanting to fit in with the other denominations, and not wanting to be regarded as a peculiar people. W e’re so afraid of being defined as a sect, so afraid of being different, that we’re often trying to mimic other churches, coming to the place where we believe that everybody’s religion is O K. I think that’s a large challenge—the ability to maintain our doctrines, to be proud of them and not to be ashamed of what we believe. W e need the ability to face other religious bodies and people and say “Yes, this is what we believe,” and “N o, we’re not a sect.”

A nother challenge has to do with making the church relevant to baby boomers and young people. You often hear the voice of boomers arguing against what they call institutionalized C hrístiÁ nity—why is it important to be a part of an organized body? W hy is it important to attend church regularly? Indeed, why do I need the church? O ur challenge is to address these questions, to show why C hrístiÁ n values are important.

W hat is your level of satisfac-
tion—or dissatisfaction—with the role of women within the A dventist C hurch today?

I would say that women are much more confident in themselves today, much more eager to become involved, to tackle difficult leadership roles—in the local church and in the church at large. So that’s an area of satisfaction for me—the fact that they want to become participants rather than just observers.

The dissatisfaction would be the perception that only men are capable of being appointed by G od to do certain things. If E llen W hite was used by G od, then how can we maintain that she was the only woman in the history of the A dventist C hurch that G od could use? Is it possible that there is a female on earth today that G od can do the same thing with? Is it possible that there are women out there who are capable of being used by G od? A re we limiting G od?

D o you have a sense that your gender could be an impediment to your future career goals?

N o.

A s a judge, how are you accepted in the A dventist C hurch?

By and large, I find that people are very proud to know that someone has chosen the judicial profession. It’s not a profession that A dventists generally think about, let alone aspire to. A nd so many people are simply curious about my being a C hrístian and being able to maintain that type of position.

Do the two collide? D oes my C hrístian belief system conflict with what I have to do? I run into a lot of young people who, with their own personal aspirations, are inspired to know that there is someone else who is into the same pursuits, somebody they can ask questions of, that they can talk to. A nd so I find a very warm reception in the church generally. C urious, yes, but warm.

S o that is M arla A nderson, a woman whose uncommon competence and professionalism is changing the way justice happens in M onterey. A nd she credits it all to her C hrístian background. T hat’s what governs, she says—“how I treat members of the public, how I treat defendants, how I treat witnesses, my willingness to listen, to be open, and to treat people with respect. T hat doesn’t mean that I don’t make tough decisions. But it does mean that as I’m handing down a stiff sentence, it still happens in an atmosphere of consideration and respect.”

“W here do you see yourself in 10 years?” I asked A nderson finally. “W hat is your dream for yourself?”

“S o far in my life, I’ve left it up to G od. A nd that’s been the best thing, because I’m today where I couldn’t even dream. A nd I think that is how I’ll continue the rest of my life. W hatever I can dream is nothing close to what G od dreams for me. So as long as I listen to G od’s voice, then I’ll be where I can’t even imagine.”

Roy A dams is an associate editor of the A dventist Review.
As General Conference president, I often receive letters from sincere saints the world over regarding problems in the church. "Why aren't you stopping this or that?" is the usual refrain.

They write because they assume I have the authority to change anything and everything in the church. Though the Acts 15 model shows there are times that demand the authority of broader constituencies, our church has been structured so that much of the authority resides at the local congregation, a system known as "constituent authority."

The model comes from the New Testament. Local congregations had the power to elect their own leaders (Acts 6:1-6), to select messengers to other churches (Acts 11:22), to exercise discipline (Matt. 18:15-17), and to be represented at larger meetings (Acts 15:1, 2). Though the churches were part of a larger body that exercised some authority, each congregation exercised great autonomy in dealing with their own spiritual and ecclesiastical issues.

It's the same with today's Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although I'm in a position of influence, my authority is exceedingly limited. I have absolutely no power to rescind, overturn, or reverse a local church board in any matter whatsoever. In fact, neither I nor the General Conference Executive Committee nor any division committee has that authority.

Thus however much conferences, unions, or divisions might not like what local congregations do, according to the bylaws of the church they don't have the authority to overturn those decisions. Our founders organized the church this way to protect local congregations from what was known as "kingly power." In many ways we are a limited democracy, facing all the advantages and disadvantages of that system of governance.

Congregations are the fundamental authority in the church. Its spiritual vitality, doctrinal purity, and commitment to the message and mission are, in many ways, in the hands of 42,349 Adventist congregations around the world (at end of the first quarter of 1997).

Of course, with authority come responsibility and accountability. We Seventh-day Adventists have voluntarily joined ourselves to a global body, a world movement unified in mission, message, and commitment to Christ. Just as congregations in the early church recognized their place as part of a larger body, so we too are not congregation-alists. A Seventh-day Adventist congregation exists only upon the approval of the sisterhood of churches, and is therefore accountable to that same body. The authority of a congregation is limited by the broader authority of clusters of congregations making collective decisions. And the larger the number of congregations, the greater the authority, but the narrower the agenda. We could have no church as we know it if the authority of a congregation was not limited by the authority of a group of congregations (conferences and unions).

The New Testament shows that local churches were deemed part of the larger body. Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, said they were to see themselves united "with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," who is "their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2, RSV).

The authority in this church, from an organizational perspective, flows from the congregation up, not from the top down. Every member and every congregation are accountable to the other members and congregations. Our personal conduct and our collective responsibilities—whether exercised in a church board, a conference executive committee, or a union session—reflect certain values, beliefs, and objectives that harmonize with the decisions of the world church.

As the General Conference president, I too get exercised over many of the same things that cause people to write my office. But because of the way we are structured, constituent authority determines which group is designated to make these decisions. So while I can voice my convictions, only you, the local member, has the authority to make changes.

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
DURING AN INTERVIEW JOSEPH HODGES Choate, former U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, was asked who he would like to be if he could come back to earth again after he died. Without hesitation this man, who enjoyed a spectacular career as a trial lawyer and diplomat, responded: “Mrs. Choate’s second husband.”

Surely that simple, sincere compliment was a great source of pleasure to Choate’s wife. Obviously Joseph Choate knew how to convey love and appreciation for his spouse. Couples like the Choates maintain lifelong closeness and intimacy by demonstrating the gestures of love. They know the prime importance of saying, speaking, and showing love. Through a variety of ways they consistently, clearly, and powerfully send important messages of love and admiration to their partner. Here are 10 great ways to say “I love you.”

1. **Apply the three C’s.** Seize every opportunity to compliment, commend, and congratulate your partner. A pply to your marriage the advice of Paul: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8). Think about your partner’s personality and actions. Identify those things that are “excellent or praiseworthy” and compliment your spouse for them. Lavish him with praise. Heap words of appreciation upon her. Caroline, happily married to James for 30 years, stresses the importance of paying compliments. “Study your partner until you know him better than he knows himself,” she advises. “Watch carefully as your spouse relates to friends, and observe what kind of compliments are responded to. I try to remember to tell James anything nice that someone else has said about him, because I know those words are greatly valued. Never forget, a sincere compliment is a tremendous gift.”

2. **Turn off the TV.** Most couples are extremely busy. Both usually work outside the home and must juggle other demands for their time, such as parenting, household management, and community organizations. This means they have very little discretionary time to spend together. Thus many couples use television as a time to relax. However, the TV can arrest a relationship. Consider this experience: “For years Harry and I walked into the house after work and turned on the TV to catch some news as we prepared dinner,” says Jennifer, a West Coast teacher. “Then we got hooked watching other programs that followed. Before we realized it, it was 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. and we were too tired to talk, so we drifted off to sleep.”

Although Jennifer and Harry could have explained the latest political issue or talked about the most recent international conflict, they didn’t know how the other was doing. “We knew more about Russian politics than we did about each other,” Jennifer recalls. “I didn’t know Harry was concerned about losing his job because the company was bought out, and he didn’t know how inadequate I felt as a parent.” Their solution was to turn off the TV. “Of course, we still watch some television, but now we deliberately leave it off while we prepare dinner, eat, and clean up. During that time we discuss our day and our worries, and share happy occurrences.”

3. **Have a fair division of labor.** With more and more couples working outside the home, it’s only fair and right that household responsibilities be shared equally. Resentment builds quickly when one partner feels the burden of doing most of the home management—grocery shopping, laundry, cooking, cleaning, etc. Make sure there is a fair division of labor in your home. A good example comes from Denis Thatcher, British business executive and the husband of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. When the Thatchers moved into 10 Downing Street, the British prime minister’s official residence in London, a reporter asked Denis, “What wears the pants in this house?” He answered, “I do, and I also wash and iron them!”

4. **Show patience.** “The key to everything is patience. You
get the chicken by hatching the egg, not smashing it open,” wrote author Arnold Glasgow. You may not always understand your partner’s actions, nor can you always appreciate a partner’s attitude. During those times, extend the courtesy of patience. Give your partner the benefit of the doubt. No matter how close you may be to your partner, it isn’t always possible to be fully aware of the struggles with which they are wrestling. Remember that the Bible instructs us to a duty of sympathetic love and unselfish living: “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1).

5. Be a genie—grant your partner three wishes. Most people are more comfortable giving rather than receiving. They find it hard to ask for special favors. An effective way to cut through that obstacle is to be a genie—grant your partner his or her wishes. One man asked his pharmacist for 52 large, empty capsules. He listed 52 things his wife would love to do or have done, wrote them out on small slips of paper, and filled the capsules. Then he instructed his wife to select one each Saturday evening for a year.

6. Think before you speak. “Raised voices lower esteem. Hot tempers cool friendships. Loose tongues stretch truth. Swelled heads shrink influence. Sharp words dull respect,” writes William Arthur Ward. Behind his observation is the reality that words are weapons. They can inspire or injure, hurt or heal. Do your best to spend your words as wisely as you spend your money. While it’s right to let your partner know how you feel, choose the words carefully. Think before you speak.

7. Routinely send love signals. Small gestures often convey large meanings. Express your love through small acts of kindness, tenderness, and gentleness. Here are some ways to send love signals:

- Let him hang the picture he loves but you hate.
- Do one of her regular chores for her, just as a treat.
- Sympathize instead of pointing out how he helped create the problem.
- Brag to a third party about something she did well—in front of her.
- A whisper to him that he’s the most handsome man in the room.

- Pick up a book for her the next time you are at the library.
- Support him when he has an argument with someone.
- Tell her that it will all work out and that you’re behind her 100 percent.

8. Lighten and brighten life with laughter. “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (Prov. 17:22). In addition, author Tim Hansel says, “Laughter adds richness, texture, and color to otherwise ordinary days. It is a gift, a choice, a discipline, and an art.” His observation is validated through a study done by Finnegar Aiford-Cooper, a sociologist and gerontologist at Long Island University. Recently he studied 576 couples married at least 50 years. Ninety-three percent of the long-term spouses described their marriages as “happy.” Aiford-Cooper discovered that one key to their marital longevity was a sense of humor. Seventy-nine percent said they laughed together every day. One 83-year-old man, married 64 years to the same woman, said: “We laugh at each other’s jokes we’ve heard a million times. We have a great rapport.”
9. Listen with your heart. The Bible offers this wisdom: “He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise” (Prov. 15:31). When your partner is upset, allow free expression of feelings. Don’t correct her inaccuracies. Don’t refute his logic. Don’t explain how unreasonable she is. Don’t pick away at details. Just listen. The only appropriate comments are those that seek clarification and understanding. Later, when there has been time to process the information and when feelings are cooled, there will be a better time to respond. As a receptive listener you show great respect by allowing your partner to share thoughts and feelings.

In order to assess and improve listening skills, counselors at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, suggest that partners ask themselves these questions:

- Do you make eye contact with your partner and ignore outside interferences?
- Do you really listen instead of thinking of your reply?
- Do you wait until your spouse is through before commenting?
- Do you try to provide questions or comments that will help your partner clarify his or her own thoughts?
- Do you encourage positive comments by accepting them in a positive way? If your spouse says “You look really nice tonight,” do you say “Oh, and do I usually look terrible?” or “Thank you; your compliments always make me feel good”?

10. Be generous with forgiveness. Fred P. Piercy, a marriage and family therapist and director of the marriage and family therapy doctoral program at Purdue University, is often asked if a relationship can be saved. His standard response is “No, but you can build a new relationship. Forgiveness allows that process to begin.” Piercy knows that generous doses of forgiveness can unclutter a relationship and pave the way for deeper satisfaction. “Forgiveness involves letting go of anger, restoring respect, and offering acceptance,” he explains. “If you can find a way to offer the gift of forgiveness, you will have discovered one of the strongest circuit breakers of all, one that allows you to put down the burden you’re carrying. With your hands and heart free, you and your partner can begin building a new, more fulfilling relationship.”

* Scripture references in this article are from the New International Version.

Victor M. Parachin is an ordained minister, counselor, and author who writes from Claremont, California.
Teaching table manners to preschoolers demands more patience than any parent can naturally supply. Just when you think you've civilized the little philistines, they surprise you with some unsavory new twist.

If smearing applesauce into her hair brings instant notoriety to Jenny, to what new heights can she take her celebrity with an application of oatmeal with honey? This inspires Becky with an educational insight: do we know that peanut butter and jelly have similar adhesive properties, as illustrated by the colorful display on the roof of her mouth?

Actual consumption of food is irrelevant to preschoolers. If any of the smeary stuff finds its way into their digestive tracts, it's a fortunate accident. These guys are into texture. I can appreciate this. But do they have to make so much noise in the pursuit of the ultimate squish?

I yearn for the good old days when my husband and I could actually hear each other conversing in complete sentences. "Honey, do you remember . . ." I begin wistfully, but am drowned out by the sharp drumming of Jenny's spoon against her toddler dish.

"Jenny, that's not a bongo; it's your plate!" I admonish as the table rocks and rolls to the rhythmic knocking of Becky's spoon against her toddler dish.

"Girls, please! We're not practicing for the percussion section of the Phoenix Philharmonic. We're having breakfast!"

A t last, time draws its merciful curtain over another meal. I've survived this latest whirlwind encounter with my children's manners-in-the-making. And they've survived another encounter with mine.

Not that I've smeared oatmeal in my hair or shown everybody what's on the roof of my mouth. But inside, whether my children have recognized it or not, I've been similarly immature and self-absorbed. I too have wanted the best seat in the house and the biggest piece of pie. And I haven't always felt like being polite to the person sitting next to me.

None of this ever bothered me until I met my Saviour and saw something of His gracious heavenly courtesy. In His presence I began to see my manners for what they were—a thin veneer of self-serving civility. And I didn't want to drag them into fellowship with Him.

So I embarked on a stringent self-improvement program. I prayed hard, read hard, and tried hard. But beneath my new and improved exterior, the same old me cried out for fellowship and cleansing.

Thank God, He didn't leave me to my own inadequate devices. He has shown me that I've become like Christ just as I've come to Him—by beholding. He instructs me to "consider Christ continually and intelligently, just as He is" (E. J. Waggoner, Christ and H is Righteousness, p. 5), because "by beholding the matchless love of Christ, [my] selfish heart will be melted and subdued" (Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 394). And as I lose confidence in my ability to fit myself for His company, I become prepared to receive His gracious manners of kindness, forgiveness, and patience.

This morning I was given the opportunity to model these gracious manners to my daughter. Becky rolled up to the breakfast table in characteristic windmill fashion. Neither of us knows the details, but somehow, with all that flailing, she became airborne, catapulted over her chair, and came to rest with her dish of soggy Grape-Nuts and granola dripping from her hair, onto her clothes, and into the carpet.

I missed my opportunity. I was not patient; I was not kind. I fumed as I cleaned. And as I cleaned, I remembered another little girl who had a gift for spilling it, dropping it, and breaking it. I was taken back to the Great Spaghetti Debacle of my youth.

It happened as I carried a plate of spaghetti to the dining room, where I turned a little too abruptly toward my seat. As my mother watched in helpless horror, the slippery red stuff slid from my plate, quivered in midair for a breathless moment, then plummeted to the freshly cleaned carpet. (She's never forgotten the exact spot.)

Not exactly management material for the Miss Manners School of Advanced Etiquette—who was I to fume? I apologized to my daughter, reassured her of my love, and returned to the foot of the cross for another much-needed lesson on Christian courtesy.

Illustration by Terry C rews
On November 7, 1997, hundreds of Russian citizens marched in the streets of St. Petersburg. Bands played, and speeches were given in honor of the eightieth anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917, which changed the course of events in Russia and the whole world.

Another event was staged that weekend that honored a different type of life-changing event. In 1897 the first Seventh-day Adventist church was established in St. Petersburg. One hundred years later, on November 8, 1997, a new church was dedicated in the same city. In the early part of this century there were several Adventist church buildings in St. Petersburg, but this new one is the first building Adventists have owned in more than 60 years.

The Loma Linda University church was the major sponsor for this building, which seats 700 people. Thirty members of the church, including Pastor William Loveless and North American Division president Alfred C. McClure, attended the festivities.

Construction began on the church in 1994, after the city gave the Adventists a choice piece of property. Peter Koolik, a builder from Australia, played a major role in the construction. One of Peter's foremen, Nicholas Ramensky, came to supervise the completion of the building last spring.

Preceding the dedication ceremony, Pastor Oleg Arefiev gave a history of the St. Petersburg church. For a few years after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Adventists experienced a measure of religious freedom. They rented large halls and preached the Adventist message. In 1922 some church leaders visited Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, and asked for help in establishing churches. With Lenin's assistance three more Adventist churches opened.

Religious oppression began in 1928 and became especially intense during 1936-1938. In 1938 all Adventist leaders (along with those from other denominations) were arrested. Three months later they were shot and buried in a common grave outside St. Petersburg. Pastor Arefiev's father was one of these martyrs.

While Adventists were celebrating in St. Petersburg, the news media in Russia were interviewing the public and asking opinions of the Revolution holiday. Media reports indicated that schoolchildren were confused as to what the November 7 holiday was about. To most, it was just a day off from school. The government has changed the name of the holiday to the Day of Reconciliation and Accord.

Church members in Russia realize that with religious freedom there is a possibility that new generations of Seventh-day Adventists will grow up forgetting or not knowing important historical lessons. The new church in St. Petersburg stands as a symbol of past spiritual victories and a reminder of the goal of true reconciliation and accord that will take place when Jesus returns to this earth.
Ohio Students Assist in Community Outreach

BY JEANIE HALDEMAN, ASSISTANT DEAN OF WOMEN AT MOUNT VERNON ACADEMY IN OHIO

This past fall more than 40 students at Mount Vernon Academy played a major role in an Ohio outreach series that resulted in 51 individuals recommitting their lives to Jesus Christ. The students assisted lay evangelist Frank Runnels, of New York City, in meetings held at the Knox County Memorial Theater in Mount Vernon.

The story began this past summer when several students sought, through prayer, for a way to share Jesus Christ with their peers. When school started, students interested in helping in the outreach meetings became part of the campus ministries council, which assisted Chaplain Scott Christen in planning the school’s spiritual focus for the 1997-1998 school year. Through Friday evening services, campus prayer, and touching lives in the community, the students lifted up Jesus Christ in every way possible.

About 70 students began preparing the community for the outreach meetings through their Prayer at the Square program, which they conceived and organized. Each Sabbath afternoon groups of students went door-to-door in the neighborhood adjacent to the Mount Vernon city square. A fter introducing themselves as students of the academy, they asked if the residents had requests for prayer. One student in each group recorded the requests in journals. Following these visits, students met at the square for a praise and prayer service. Many of them reached out in friendship and encouragement to those who passed by the square.

The students prayed, asking God to reveal His will for a location for the evangelistic meetings. A large prominent hall was the answer to those prayers.

“It has been exciting to have so many students interested in evangelism,” said Christen. “I’ve never seen anything like it! The students often called me and asked if I could take them to witness.”

The academy staff and students are thrilled that 24 students were among the 51 individuals who publicly responded to the gospel message heard each evening at the theater. Several families made the decision to accept Christ together.

Former Adventist Pastor Held on War Crimes Charges Now Released

Former Seventh-day Adventist pastor Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, arrested in 1996, was released on December 17, 1997, by a federal magistrate in Laredo, Texas. Ntakirutimana, 73, was held to answer charges of genocide in Rwanda in 1994, made by a United Nations tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania.

Judge Marcel Notzon ruled that Ntakirutimana could not be extradited since the tribunal's jurisdiction was not recognized in the absence of a treaty.

A Reuters news report quotes the judge as saying that the case against Ntakirutimana was weak and full of irregularities, and that “the possibility of inaccuracy or incredibility in the witness statements is high.” Ntakirutimana's lawyer, former United States attorney general Ramsey Clark, said that the charges are false and motivated by revenge.

“He's a man that in all his life has never had any charge of violence against him, but because he's a Hutu and in a position of power, the Tutsis are saying he's guilty of genocide,” Clark told the Associated Press last July.

However, the U.S. State Department expressed disappointment at the release, calling it “a serious matter” and indicating that they may seek further legal proceedings. A U.N. spokesperson indicated they would like to have seen Ntakirutimana handed over, since the tribunal had found reason to indict him.

The position of the Adventist Church remains unchanged. Speaking at the time of his Ntakirutimana's arrest, Emmanuel Nlo Nlo, Africa-Indian Ocean Division communication director, made it clear that the church condemns violence and also that guilt must be proven.

“The Adventist Church does not support killing in any form,” said Nlo Nlo. “We have no way of knowing whether Elizaphan Ntakirutimana is guilty or not. We are supportive of the initiative of the U.N. and the Rwandan government to bring to justice those who are responsible for those illegal activities in that country's crisis.”—Adventist News Network.

New York Youth Respond to New England Ice Storm

Aventist Community Services volunteers in the Greater New York Conference are shipping supplies to disaster areas struck by a severe ice storm in upstate New York. President Clinton has declared five New York counties disaster areas.

Youth and young adults from the Youth Emergency Service Corps assisted in loading and driving two trucks, says Monte Sahlin, assistant to the North American Division president. A C S is cooperating with the American
Rehabing Ahab?

When a distinguished scholar announces that his published conclusions have been wrong, the world, at least the academic world, takes notice. This is an occurrence of such rarity that credibility inevitably attaches to his new position, whatever its actual merit.

The world of biblical archaeology is currently passing through just such a mea culpa and “Eureka!” sequence. Israel Finkelstein, director of the well-known archaeological institute at Tel Aviv University and a leading Israeli scholar, has announced that his previous research establishing the reigns of David and Solomon as the apex of Israel’s Golden Era is all wrong. Scholars, including Finkelstein, have misdated crucial evidence by as much as a century. In reality, he now says, David and Solomon were little more than tribal warlords, while the much-reviled King Ahab, whom the Bible treats as a weak and corrupt figure, should be viewed as a great warrior/builder who effectively organized the nation state of Israel.

The “Finkelstein Correction,” as its supporters call it, is stirring up Near Eastern archaeology as few things have recently. While Finkelstein has received some scholarly support, most scholars are still gathered around the traditional view of David and Solomon, though not primarily out of a desire to establish the historicity of the biblical account. Recent decades have seen many scholars dismiss or diminish the importance of such biblical narratives as the Exodus from Egypt (with all that means for a belief in the Sabbath and the sanctuary), the conquest of Canaan (there were no walls at Jericho, we are now told), and the settlement of the 12 tribes.

Believers who affirm the historicity of the Old Testament have the satisfaction of watching the current fuss with a certain bemused detachment. When your primary confidence is grounded in the trustworthiness of a God-breathed Book, the vicissitudes of the pick and trawl—and the scholarly debates that attend them—seem like so much shifting sand.

Red Cross to provide help to thousands of families that were forced from their homes.

GC Staff Commemorates the Work of Evangelist Charles D. Brooks With Special Ceremony

Robert Folkenberg, General Conference president, and Alfred C. McClure, president of the North American Division, honored evangelist Charles D. Brooks for his 25 years of service as the founding speaker-director of the Breath of Life television broadcast.

Brooks, now Breath of Life speaker-emeritus, was honored in a special ceremony on December 18 at the world headquarters of the Adventist Church. In the ceremony, Walter Pearson, Breath of Life’s new speaker-director, presented Brooks and his wife, Walterene, with a portrait of the couple. Pearson also honored Pastor Reginald O. Robinson, who served as associate speaker for 14 years. Robinson now pastors the Pacoima Adventist Church in California.

New Satellite Spanish Network Will Serve the Americas

A new network in the Spanish language will soon be delivering Adventist World Radio (AWR) programming to more than 40 local radio stations and several international shortwave stations in the Americas.

“We will cooperate with local stations to provide an international programming service that should bring a new standard of quality and value to people in the Americas,” says Greg Scott, new AWR-PanAmerican region director.

Scott and AWR vice president Allen Steele met with South American representatives in January to organize the new network, which will rely on local stations to join AWR by contributing programs to create the 24-hour program service.

GC Employees Reach Out to Community

Nearly 5,600 persons visited the General Conference headquarters for the second annual Walk Through
Per Capita Giving to World Missions

Adventists have been giving generously to world missions for more than 100 years. During the third quarter of 1997, Adventists gave an average of $6.01 to world missions. The top five conferences in per capita giving during the third quarter:

- Michigan $12.25
- Kansas-Nebraska 12.11
- Bermuda 11.87
- Dakota 10.63
- British Columbia 10.38

— Kermit Nettburg, assistant to the North American Division president for communication

For Your Good Health

Keep Your Cool

While many believe that outward aggressive displays of emotion are healthy ways to relieve anger and tension, men who regularly “blow off steam” are almost twice as likely to have a stroke as those who are able to diffuse their anger. While it’s normal to get angry at times, the key is to keep it from reaching explosive levels.— American Heart Association.

Arguing Can Be Unhealthy

Even couples who have been happily married for decades have their health affected by the stress of marital arguments. Ohio State University researchers have determined that abrasive arguments between couples—married an average of 42 years—led to a weakening of certain aspects of their bodies’ immune responses and increased levels of stress hormones. These changes could make people more susceptible to illness.— Health and Fitness News Service.

— Compiled by Larry Becker, editor of Vibrant Life, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-6955.

— Compiled by Kermit Nettburg, assistant to the North American Division president for communication.

Bethlehem, December 10-15 (except Friday night, December 12).

More than 200 volunteers worked together to construct an interactive village with more than 20 shops; visitors encountered costumed soldiers, priests, Wise Men, shepherds, soldiers, and a live manger scene.

As they waited to tour the village, visitors listened to music performed by choirs, soloists, and several instrumental groups. During the five days more than 1,200 Steps to Christ were distributed, says Thomas Neslund, who coordinated the program.

News Notes

- Harold Lee, Columbia Union secretary, was elected union president on January 11. Lee replaces Ralph Martin, who retired.
- CompuServe Users. You can access the Adventist Review online each week within 48 hours of presstime and several days before the magazine reaches your home. The Review is available free of charge in the Adventist Online Forum (section B, GO SDAOLB).

If you have E-mail, you can also contact the Review staff online. Send letters to the editor, prayer requests, and subscription requests to reviewmag@adventist.org.

Adventist Communication Network Broadcasts

Here are a few of the programs planned by the Adventist Communication Network for March 1998. Call (800) ACN-1119 for complete program listings, time, and channel information. All times shown are Eastern time.

Mar. 4 First Wednesday—church news, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Galaxy 9, channel 22
Mar. 14 Cross Training—Church Elders, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Galaxy 9, channel 22
Mar. 14 Cross Training Extra—Community Service, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Galaxy 9, channel 22
Mar. 21 The Acts Files—Adventist Review concert, 4:30-6:00 p.m., Galaxy 9, channel 11
Mar. 31 PREACH seminar, 1:00-5:30 p.m., Galaxy 9, channel 2
He obviously was not a part of the program. (I could tell by the confusion on the faces of the platform participants.) But right after the announcements he just stood up and began to talk. My heart froze. Would he disrupt the service? complain about the pastor? drag someone’s name through the mud because of the nominating committee report? None of the above. He was standing to express thanks.

“Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your support during my recent bereavement. And a special word of thanks to the pastor who went out of his way to lend a helping hand. Even though the family decided that another pastor would be in charge of the service, our pastor was right there, volunteering his services and showing his love.”

He talked for two and a half minutes, the church breathed a collective sigh of relief and gave him a hearty “Amen,” and I knew that I was in a special place.

Shiloh has about 500 members. By the time the official welcome came I already felt very welcome, so I opted to remain seated. To my pleasant surprise, the clerk noticed, and kindly, but with resolve in her voice, indicated that all the visitors were not standing. The members sitting close to us then (on cue from the pastor) reached out with warm handshakes and hugs. Of course, by this time I was all set and comfortable, because we had already received many spontaneous greetings, warm welcomes, and even a dinner invitation!

The pastor preached about the woman with the issue of blood, and ended with a moving personal testimony of the Lord’s healing power. Then the request came: “If you need healing in your life... if you believe that the same Jesus that healed the woman can heal you... I have tried Jesus. [In the background a soloist began singing “Give Me Jesus.”] He healed me. If you want that healing, come. No, this is not like TV. There won’t be any deacons behind you to catch you when you fall. There is no power in the oil. The power is in Jesus Christ.”

And the people came: babies carried by their mothers, fathers and sons, the elderly and the teenagers. It was very moving to see that as Seventh-day Adventists we still hold firm and fast to Jesus and His healing power. I applaud the pastor for his courage and willingness to remind us that Jesus is real and that He really does heal.

Another aspect of the service that I really appreciated was the way the pastor referred to Ellen White. His reference did not assume familiarity with her and the Spirit of Prophecy, so that had I been a non-Adventist I would not have felt as though I was missing an important piece of a complicated puzzle.

Just one area of improvement. The older youth were somewhat disruptive. They all sat in one area and passed notes, talked, chewed gum, etc. I happened to sit just a row in front of them, and it was quite distracting. I do applaud the brother who caught his daughter’s eye and had her move and sit beside him. One parent at a time—that’s how this problem can be solved. Thanks for setting the example.

Shiloh really is a special place, and my overall experience was a good one. I could not accept the dinner invitation, but I am sure that if the physical food was anything like the spiritual food and friendly atmosphere of the church, I would have enjoyed it!
FRONT LINES OR SIDELINES?

Are we carrying arms in the great controversy, or are we noncombatants? In I Was Just Wondering Philip Yancey tells the story of a man among the first American military units to liberate the Dachau concentration camp from the Germans in early 1945. The man, now a pastor, says nothing could have prepared him for the experience.

Their first job was to help unload corpses from the boxcars. The smell, he says, was stomach-wrenching. Next the commander asked for a volunteer to escort the SS guards to the interrogation area. He chose Chuck—loud, brash, five-foot-six, but built like a gorilla.

Flaunting his submachine gun, Chuck made the guards put their hands behind their necks. They headed down the hill and behind a small ravine. Suddenly a machine gun shattered the silence. The American soldiers ducked, fearing enemy snipers.

A few moments later Chuck emerged, leering. “They all tried to run away,” he said. Chuck had murdered the Germans in cold blood.

That day in Dachau changed this soldier’s life. He says that for the first time he realized the power of evil. He had witnessed what the Nazis had done to the Jewish people. But then he also saw what Chuck—one of the “good guys”—had done. It disturbed him to think that if he had been asked to escort those guards, he could easily have done the same thing. The battle between good and evil ran straight through him, too.

That day he devoted his life to serving God. That day he chose to become a pastor—a soldier in the battle against good and evil.

As the soldiers lifted the bodies from the boxcars, they discovered some were still alive. Recounts the soldier: “Our medics stayed up all night to save them; some in our company lost their lives to liberate them. . . . I learned that day in Dachau what ‘the image of God’ in a human being is all about.”

Are we on the front lines sharing God’s love, or are we busy doing our own thing somewhere on the sidelines?

— Gary Krause, Global Mission communication director

TELL ME STRAIGHT

“If we are more interested in maintenance of the institution and status quo, then we will find ourselves and our organizations growing in committee structures and bureaucracies but not accomplishing much in terms of mission.” — A I M cC lure, president, North American Division, at 1997 year-end meetings.

TRANSLATING THE MESSAGE:

The unique needs of the Maori people of New Zealand are the focus of a new video series funded by the South Pacific Division and Global Mission. Maori Adventists are now using these videos as a witnessing tool to their fellow Maori people, a Global Mission target group. The videos draw from Maori heritage and culture, and address the unique needs of these indigenous New Zealanders. Entitled Whare Tapa Wha (“a four-sided house”), the videos stress the importance of each wall: Te Wairua—the spiritual, Te Hinengaro—the mental, Te Tinana—the physical, and Te Whanau—the family and social. The presenter in both videos is Kingi Williams, a Maori theology student at Avondale College. The videos were produced by the South Pacific Adventist Media Centre in consultation with a wide range of representatives from the Maori community.
THE SUN LINGERED ON THE horizon, kissed night farewell, and gently lifted into the sky. The fields came alive with a panoply of color—the safflower (a rich gold and nearing harvest), the corn (dark green and tressed with brunet tassels), long rows of light-green sugar beets with short shaggy leaves, and bright-yellow mustard and star thistle completing the montage.

I was in a hurry to deliver my load of bees, but I paused to enjoy the morning. A cool breeze playfully brushed my face as I stooped to lock the gate I’d just exited.

It was then I noticed him: an Indian—tall, gray-bearded, and dressed in traditional Indian garb, complete with turban and sandals. He walked swiftly toward me. I greeted him. Lips moving though making no sound, he raised his hand as if to say, “Wait a moment, please.” He rested his elbows on the now-closed gate and continued to talk silently.

“A h, now,” he said, turning toward me, “good morning. I am walking and praying. I walk and talk to God.” Reverently he lifted his hands to indicate his God was upward. His smile was all the more joyful for the chipped or missing teeth he proudly displayed. He’s a spiritual mystic, I thought. I love mystics. Embracing a refreshing iconoclasm, they walk in the presence of God, not without religion or dogma, but somehow beyond or above. I had serendipitously discovered a kindred spirit.

“Yes,” he continued, “I walk and pray, repeating a special prayer. It takes about 20 minutes.”

My budding sense of comradeship came to an immediate death. Repeating? Twenty minutes? My mind halted here, unable to control the dissonance created by associating repetition with spirituality. It sounded liturgical, rote, and therefore shallow, unreal, mindless. The disparity of the outwardly holy man, a purported seeker after truth, relying on the brainless rehearsal of an extended mantra was too much. I needed to think. I moved toward my truck. The now pseudo mystic grasped my hand, eagerly pressing toward some indication that we would be friends. I feigned a smile and slipped into the truck.

I hope I didn’t hit him with any of the gravel shooting from beneath my spinning tires, really. But I needed space. I’m always honest with myself, however, and before I rounded the first corner I realized my discomfort was not over repetitive prayer or an eccentric path toward spirituality. It really had nothing to do with the Indian man at all. I was upset with myself. I had shut him out of my affections over a trivial notion. As I relived our short conversation, I reeled with disgust over the speed at which I had judged him, boxed him, and shut him out. I loathed the instant defense I had unconsciously, I’d taken stereotyping to a new low.
erected at the first sign of “unlikeness” to me.

What I’d experienced was one of religion’s red flags of warning. These flags wave vigorously at the first sign of an intruder venturing across the landscape of one’s religious learning and experience. The Holy Spirit has a similar function, of course, but I think the Holy Spirit would not appreciate the “credit” for this particular red flag. Many, if not most, of the red flags I see wave because I’ve programmed them to do so, having little or nothing to do with the Holy Spirit.

Where did I get this prejudice against repetitive spiritual exercises? It certainly wasn’t from Scripture. I’d have to lay the blame on the Adventist milieu in which I was raised. I cannot count the number of Bible classes in which we carefully vetted the errors of our closest denominational nemesis. Not completely biblical, but thoroughly cultural.

I’m incurably soaked in Adventist culture. The power of culture is such that I find it easier to grapple with major doctrinal issues, even those with salvific import, than to evaluate or challenge the “far weightier matters” of Adventist culture. Try it. Put on a somber face (this indicates you are prepared to discuss doctrine), speak in sepulchral tones with confidence and authority about a Bible “biggie,” and your church popularity will reach scary heights. Now bring up a weightier matter, such as “Do you think there might be a better approach to Ingathering?” and watch the emotions fray.

Recently I received a forwarded message on E-mail entitled “You Might Be a Seventh-day Adventist If . . .” This thoughtful and clever quasi-chronicle contained no fewer than 104 test observations about Adventist culture. Some were funny, some sad, all were much too close to home.

For example, you might be a Seventh-day Adventist if you have ever asked for a veggie Whopper at Burger King; you don’t drink Coke or Pepsi, but can’t pass up that Hershey bar; on Sabbath you tell your children, “You may wade, but don’t swim”; you can tell the difference between Linkettes and Veja-Links with your eyes closed, and so on.

Funny? Try these more pointed ones: You have forgotten that the food you eat is much less important than the food you share; you will not drink coffee, but you drink Postum with six NoDoz tablets in it to stay awake for final exams; you won’t watch a movie until it comes out on video; the words “Sabbath” and “Saturday” are interchangeable, depending on whom you are talking to.

And the sad: The first thing you do when introduced to a woman is to look at her ears; you decide to go hear that new pastor . . . because your church happens to be holding Communion this Sabbath; you can calculate sundown for Lincoln, Nebraska, from the Gleaner from Portland; you find yourself counting 10, 9, 8, 7 . . . seconds before sundown Sabbath evening; you deliberately look for work in hospitals because Sabbath work there is “justified.”

I read and reread the 104. I felt like crying. How changed my life is because of the church I belong to. But in many, many ways the change is trivial, laughable, and disturbingly far from the essentials of the kingdom. I think Jeremiah had me and my ilk in mind when he cried, “Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?” (Lam. 2:13, NIV). Indeed, here I welcome a shaking—to shake out relationships of convenience, a fetish with biblical mites, the dusty church furniture of antiquated mores cluttering my heart, and the glitzy stained glass of pseudo-Christianity covering my soul, leaving me with a clear view of God. Nothing more. This would be, in essence, to allow the Holy Spirit to clean out the worthless red flags of religion and sensitize me to the true flags of the kingdom.

I unloaded my bees. A few vigilant bee guards felt it necessary to remind me that I had invaded their territory. I casually (a learned stoicism) scraped away the stingers and continued my work (it isn’t cool among beekeepers to moan or weep over a sting). It occurred to me that I’ve never seen a bee do anything not for the benefit of the hive, even to the point of sacrificing life, as these wary guards did.

I admire their focus on the essentials. I’ve enjoyed the sweet results. God, could I be more like a bee?■

Mike Peterson writes from Citrus Heights, California.
Linda Chavez: On Welfare Reform and Moral Renewal

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN CHAVEZ

Linda Chavez, wife of assistant editor Steve Chavez, frequently hears from people who confuse her with the nationally syndicated columnist (no relation). Steve contacted columnist Chavez, founder and president of the Center for Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C., and obtained the following interview. The Adventist Review does not take sides in the political arena; we share Linda Chavez’ comments to stimulate discussion regarding the legitimate way religious organizations can serve their communities. Note that the United States provides the context for Chavez’ observations.—Editors.

Welfare reforms voted in 1996 have brought the most sweeping changes to the welfare system since its inception. What are some of the weaknesses of the welfare system as practiced over the past 30 years?

It was well motivated, and people thought they were helping. But what happened is that the welfare state created a huge bureaucracy that treated people not as persons who had dignity as individuals, but rather as recipients of government benefits. It made them dependent on government services.

You remember the old adage “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Well, that’s the difference between government and individuals. The government has not been very good at helping people become self-sufficient. That’s been a very pernicious effect of our welfare system: making people dependent, no longer resourceful, and no longer self-sufficient.

What’s been accomplished so far in the reforms enacted by Congress?

The welfare rolls have been declining since the beginning of this debate. There are a couple reasons for this. One is that the economy is better and there is more opportunity out there, but the other thing is that the very discussion of the need to change welfare and the need to make people more independent and more self-reliant has gotten those who are on welfare to think about these things. They’ve become more concerned about their own destiny and take it upon themselves to do what they can. It’s really helped give some initiative to people who needed a little push.

So we’ve seen a decline in the rolls. But we’re also seeing a tremendous amount of experimenting going on by the states. Because what this welfare bill did, which was very different from any previous welfare reform, is that rather than the federal government directing people at the state and local level to make things exactly the same from one end of the country to the other, it said, “We don’t really know how to solve this problem. So we’re going to throw it back to the states and let the states decide...
what best suits their communities.”

And it’s hard to say that any one thing is going to work everywhere. What works in Mississippi may not work in New York City; what works in Florida may not work in Utah. These are very different regions of the country. That’s a positive aspect of the current welfare reform effort.

The Welfare Reform Act decreased the federal government’s role in taking care of the less fortunate, and put more of the responsibility on state and local governments. What role(s) can nonprofits and religious organizations play in meeting the needs of their communities?

One of the things that used to be true of charity in the past—particularly Christian charity—is that it was given freely. But there was also a sense of obligation on the part of the person who was extending the charity to try to engage in some sort of moral uplift; you weren’t just giving someone a dollar.

It’s like giving something to the homeless guy on the street. If you give him a dollar, the odds of it being used for alcohol or drugs or gambling are pretty great. It’s better to say, “I have a job for you, and I’ll pay you to do it.” It teaches him self-respect.

Nonprofits and church groups can play a role in trying to reemphasize that our helping hand cannot become a crutch; it has to be something to help bring a person along and teach him or her that behavioral and attitudinal changes are necessary for successfully fending for himself or herself.

What about “religious intrusion” into the public sector? The United States has a strong tradition of the separation of church and state.

Religious groups have received federal funding in the past to provide services to the less fortunate. A lot of people feel that the “separation of church and state” is necessary, but, in fact, in the history of our country there wasn’t such a great separation.

The difference is that we don’t have an established church in the United States. We don’t recognize the right of one sect over another. We don’t say that only Christians, or only Protestants, or only one group or another’s view should dominate. This is left up to the individual.

For that reason, when you have religious groups offering help, it isn’t appropriate to proselytize in a religious fashion as part of the dispensing of the federal money. That would be the same as having that money go to help support the establishment of that particular religious point of view.

But you don’t want to say to churches that they can’t have certain moral codes or universal notions of right and wrong. For example, I would be distressed to find that religious groups weren’t teaching welfare recipients that they can’t steal. That’s universal. It crosses all religions. It’s not recognizing one religion over another. It’s a universal moral precept. It ought to be something that a church group can do, even if it’s doing it with federal funds.

What would you say to nonprofits and religious organizations that are scrambling to get federal funds?

One thing you don’t want is to

Welfare Reform and Adventist Community Services

It’s been only a few months since the “welfare reform” law went into effect, but already there’s been an increase in the number of families coming into the 200 accredited Adventist Community Services (ACS) centers across the United States. Local churches that sponsor these centers are being asked for more funds and volunteers to meet the needs.

That’s a key part of the strategy envisioned by the U.S. president and Congress—shifting more of the burden to voluntary and faith-based charities. Local ACS directors are unwilling to be quoted in a way that reflects any hint that they don’t want to help the poor, but they are worried about the capacity of their centers to meet the growing needs.

There’s a larger opportunity in the view of some directors. Gail Williams, director of the Samaritan Center, the ACS agency in Chattanooga, Tennessee, has piloted the JobNet program that helps people on welfare find employment. In the past five years it has placed more than 1,000 individuals in jobs. Good Neighbor House, the ACS agency in Dayton, Ohio, recently took on a number of job trainees under a contract with the county.

“If we could get our centers and local churches to implement the JobNet program, we could make a real difference,” says John Gavin, national executive director of ACS in the U.S.

Too often Adventists seem to focus more on emergency relief than on long-term change. Four out of five local churches in the North American Division (NAD) report that they operate a community food pantry to help families who need emergency groceries—more than the number of churches that still sponsor the traditional Dorcas Society clothing program.

Programs like JobNet require more planning, more volunteers, and more money than do simple feeding programs or recycling used clothing. Yet the Chattanooga pilot project demonstrates that they have a very positive impact.

“We’ve seen lives turned around,” says Williams. “We protect the privacy of our clients, but I often marvel over the ways the life of a family can be changed with some careful listening and personal attention.”

In order to help churches and ACS centers reposition their community service activities, a series of quarterly training events will begin on March 14 via the satellite linkage of the Adventist Communication Network (ACN). These Community Impact seminars will teach interested individuals the step-by-step process for organizing a community action project, and announce opportunities for new approaches as they open up.

Monte Sahlin is ADRA director for North America.
There's a real moral crisis in America.

Which of society's problems do you feel that religious organizations are uniquely qualified to solve?

There's a real moral crisis in America. It's not just the problem of out-of-wedlock births (although that's a huge problem and it's one that churches need to be more involved in solving); there's a moral decline throughout our society, and it affects the affluent as well as the poor.

We've become far too materialistic. We need to place constraints on our own consumption, constraints on our materialism. Churches need to be more involved in trying to get people to understand that life is not all about money, consuming, and buying things.

The decline in morality seems to be well recognized across the political spectrum. Do you see the pendulum swinging back the other direction?

If it doesn't, we will decline as a nation, and we'll lose the right to be the leader of the free world. The twenty-first century will be a century in which the United States may continue to be the most powerful and richest country in the world, but we are losing the right to call ourselves the most moral country in the world. Even though we have high church attendance, I sometimes believe that people's attitude about church is that it's just another social club. They go to Rotary on Wednesday night and to church on Saturday or Sunday, and it's just another club they belong to. I worry about that.

If you look at the immorality and violence that permeate our popular culture, when you look at the way in which adults no longer spend as much time as they should with their children, when people are so narcissistic and self-centered—I mean, we have a magazine called Self.

What about the future of religion's influence on society?

We've come to a crossroads in this society. And the only way we continue to be leaders is to have a kind of moral renewal. That isn't going to start from the top down; it has to happen at the grass roots. People have to say "Enough is enough." People have to start turning off the television, and they have to stop going to the movies that promote bad values. They have to stop giving their kids so much freedom, money, and time to get themselves into trouble. They have to start spending more time with their families. There needs to be a revival in this country of those values that made us great as a nation.

We've survived for more than 200 years. We have the longest history of democracy of any nation in the world. But there are no guarantees. It was called "the American experiment," and it's still an experiment. It remains to be seen what the end of the story will be. I'm hoping for a happy ending, but there's been some very disturbing things we've seen over the past 25 to 30 years. We need to turn the corner again and begin to have a religious and moral renewal.

Stephen Chavez is assistant editor of the Adventist Review.
Two weeks before his assassination Malcolm X articulated an uneasy alliance between freedom and death. He had long since given up his rhetoric of hatred against Whites when he made the following statement: “It’s time for martyrdom now, and if I am to be one, it will be in the cause of brotherhood. That’s the only thing that can save this country. I’ve learned it the hard way, but I have learned it.”

For his part, Martin Luther King, Jr., had come to the same conclusion eight years earlier when, one week after the bombing of four Black churches in Montgomery, Alabama, he broke down in public and prayed that if anyone had to die for the cause of freedom, it might be he. One week later an unexploded bomb consisting of 12 sticks of dynamite was found smoldering on the front porch of King’s home. King responded publicly again, this time without tears: “Tell Montgomery they can keep on shooting, I’m going to stand up to them; they can keep on bombing, I’m going to stand up to them. If I have to die tomorrow I will die happy because I’ve been to the mountaintop and I’ve seen the promised land.”

In February 1965 Malcolm X was gunned down in New York City. That evening, watching the news report, King said he knew he could not survive. He predicted that he would be dead before he reached the age of 40. Three years later, on April 4, he was dead—at the age of 39.

The price of freedom has often been death. The United States was built on the blood of people who preferred death to enslavement. And the concept of freedom has been refined and ennobled through the efforts of men and women who, like King, believed in something for which they were willing to spend their lives.

The will to die for a noble cause is rare in any age. In just a few short decades we have seen our society decline from heroic social consciousness to shallow self-centeredness. Neither civil rights nor any other social movement seems inspired by the spirit of self-sacrifice or concern for the greater good anymore. Politics, commercialism, and the financial bottom line appear to have won the day. We see self-promotion more than self-denial, and we find ourselves suspicious of every national voice, whether it emanates from the White House, the Capitol (either side of the aisle), or the best-seller lists.

Is it possible that the social landscape presents an opportunity for the church?

Jesus taught that the bondage of sin is the greatest slavery of all. Largely unrecognized by the secular world, it is the root of every societal ill and pertains to every person: “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34, NIV). The only liberation from this bondage is in Christ: “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (verse 36, NIV). Thus the hidden answer to every social problem is a saving relationship to Jesus Christ. “Christ is the answer” is more than just a slogan; it is a declaration of freedom. But it costs something to know this freedom, and the cost is what it always has been—death.

And we are back to where we started—to the connection made by Malcolm and Martin, to the sacrifice paid by the noble-minded in our nation going back to the American Revolution. To the spirit of self-sacrifice, which liberated peoples and gave birth to nations in every generation. Wherever there was true freedom, there was spilled blood. And the affiliation between freedom and death is still binding.

Perhaps the question for us is Who today is willing to pay the price? Who believes to the point of death? Jesus died to purchase a freedom that is higher than any the world has ever envisioned. But the road to this freedom is the way of the cross.

Are we, the church, willing to pay the price that the true freedom in Jesus might be realized?

2 Ibid., pp. 104-108.
It's one of those days. Too tired and discouraged to tackle another obstacle, I sulk in my self-pity. I wallow in my perceived loneliness. I wrap my arms around myself and hide from a world that's out to get me.

The weather matches my dismal mood. A weepy sky. Just cold enough to chill. Just dark enough to keep me in my own little cell.

Along with Jesus' disciples, I whine, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60, NIV). It should be just a bump in the road, but to me it's a gigantic failure. Things were going so well, perhaps too well. I should have seen this coming. I should have known, should have braced myself, should have prayed more. Lot of good "should have done."

"Lord, I'm not sure I can do this. Is there an easier way?"

"Lord, isn't there an easier way to follow You?"

He answers me. Not right away. He has to pry apart the stubborn layers of my cowardice. And when He does, He offers me no soothing words or anesthetic peace.

But through my inner fog come the voices of those who've gone before me . . . those whose lives were never theirs . . . those whose way was never easy.

"I followed Him," says A braham, "and He asked me to kill my son."

"I followed Him," says Joseph. "He led me through slavery, imprisonment, and separation from my family."

"I followed Him," cries M oses, "and I died alone on a mountain, kept from my only dream."

"I followed Him," reminds D avid, "and I was a hunted, hated man."

"I followed Him," says I saiah, "and He let me die in a hollow tree."

"I followed Him," weeps J eremiah. "I traded peace and quiet for a life of complete rejection."

"I followed Him," says H osea, "and He told me to marry a prostitute."

"I followed Him," cries J ohn the Baptist, "only to watch the promise fulfilled through prison bars."

"I followed Him," whispers M ary, "and I became an unwed mother."

"I followed Him," says Stephen, "and they used death to silence me."

"We followed Him," say J ames, P eter, and P aul, "and they killed us for our loyalty."

"T he Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing," C hrist says (John 6:63, N IV). "F ollow Me."

So there it is. Not easy. No skating along with the wind in my hair and the sun on my back.

Look, He reminds me, this is a battle. If you're not fighting, you've already lost. And victory won't be sweet until the end.

But, He says to me, sitting beneath my rain cloud of self-preoccupation, this is what I've called you to do. I've called you to pick up the sword of the Spirit and start flailing. I've called you to be a kamikaze, a fearless warrior, a soldier who stops running from the enemy and starts fighting for M e.

"You're going to get hurt," He says, "but let Me take care of that. I promise you this, you're on the winning side."

And through my tears, the Son begins to shine.

Larisa Brass writes from Greeneville, Tennessee.
What do you like best about Valentine's Day? The candy is very nice, especially those little heart-shaped candies with the messages written on them. And sometimes we get chocolate— it doesn't get much better than that.

It's also fun to decorate for Valentine's Day. There's lots of red and pink, and it seems as if everything is heart-shaped. You probably know how to fold a piece of paper in half and draw that curve that is round at the top and pointed at the bottom, and when you cut it out it takes the shape of a heart.

But the valentine cards are probably the best part of Valentine's Day. First, you get the cards. Maybe you make them yourself, which is very cool; or maybe you pick out the cards you like best at the store. Then comes the hard part— you have to decide who gets which card. And you have to write your name on the back and their name on the envelope.

It takes time, but it's worth it. Because when the time comes to exchange cards, you'll also get a bunch of cards. The fun part of Valentine's Day is when you can sit around and look at the pictures on the cards you got and read the messages and look at who wrote their names on the back.

I imagine that everyone's secret nightmare might be that they wouldn't get any Valentine's Day cards.

We all want to be loved. That's what makes Valentine's Day such an important holiday. On Valentine's Day we have to admit that we are glad we have classmates and that we have friends, and we really do love each other.

We all want to be loved. That's why you give a card to everyone in your class, even the ones you don't particularly like so much. It's the polite thing to do. It's the right thing to do. It's what Jesus would do.

The Bible says, "My children, our love should not be only words and talk. Our love must be true love. And we should show that love by what we do" (1 John 3:18, ICB).

It's good that we give each other cards on Valentine's Day. If we ask Him, Jesus will help us keep that spirit all the year. Jesus will help us learn to show a love beyond cards and words. He will help us show our love in everything we do.