Still “People of the Book”?  
Ed Christian on Word-driven Worship  
Lee Gugliotto on Serious Bible Study
Collegians and God
I read “Letters to God” (compiled by Dick Duerksen, March 18 Cutting Edge Edition) through tears of joy, understanding, and longing for those who wrote them. I had a strong desire to hug each writer and share my own feelings about God. I’ve “tasted” the Lord, and He is very, very good.

My young friends, don’t ever give up. You will find Him if you continue to search for Him with all your heart (Jer. 29:13). The sooner you find Him, the more you’ll be thankful for the choices He’ll help you make. And your scars of life will be greatly decreased.

—Velma Beavon
Dayton, Montana

One Lovely Evening
I have just read your March 18 issue. Thank the Lord for young men like Andy Nash (see “One Lovely Evening”). Talented, able writer, and loves the Lord. Hopefully the church will survive the X generation after all.

—Warren Thomas
Adairsville, Georgia

Jeans and Jesus
I enjoy reading Allan and Deirdre Martin’s X-Change column. As for wearing jeans in church (see “Jeans and Jesus,” Mar. 18), yes, God is glad you came, and so should everybody else be. What a person wears should not reflect our attitude toward them.

However, what a person wears does reflect their attitude toward God. When the children of Israel prepared to meet with God before Mount Sinai, God gave them several days to prepare themselves and their clothes. They would not have dared to meet God without first getting themselves physically and spiritually.

—Joan Crosby
Cleveland, Tennessee

What’s Your Story?
The Adventist Review is open to all Adventist writers—young and old. And though we can accept only 10 percent of the 60 to 80 unsolicited manuscripts we receive each month, we’re always looking for fresh, clear, real voices.


Length: 800 to 2,400 words (725-750 for Reflections).

Payment: $40 to $200.

Unsolicited manuscripts are evaluated the first week of each month. Attach a brief cover letter to a typed, double-spaced manuscript and mail to: Manuscripts, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. No e-mail submissions, please.

—Won H. Bae, D.D.S.
Marlboro, Massachusetts

If Ellen White was inspired by the Lord to guide the remnant church, Jesus is concerned about what we wear when we come to worship on His holy Sabbath. “Many need instruction,” she wrote, “as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship.” Surely, this also applies.

Should we do differently today? Is God to be reverenced any less just because He does not speak audibly from a mountaintop? Those who understand this and love God enough to show Him reverence will want to also prepare themselves physically and spiritually.

Surely the matter of fabric does not come in when establishing one’s relationship with Jesus, but should we end there? What should we do to maintain the good relationship? Why do we wear suits or formal dresses at weddings, funerals, or dinner parties of one’s friends? Could we wear jeans to these occasions? Sure, but we dress up to respect the host or person(s) being honored.

Shouldn’t we likewise pay our utmost respect to Jesus in the house of God during the worship hour? Some may say that it is uncomfortable to dress up. But shouldn’t we sacrifice our comfort to follow Jesus? Let’s pay our due respect and honor to Jesus at all times.

—Won H. Bae, D.D.S.
Marlboro, Massachusetts

If Ellen White was inspired by the Lord to guide the remnant church, Jesus is concerned about what we wear when we come to worship on His holy Sabbath. “Many need instruction,” she wrote, “as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship.” Surely, this also applies.

Should we do differently today? Is God to be reverenced any less just because He does not speak audibly from a mountaintop? Those who understand this and love God enough to show Him reverence will want to also prepare themselves physically and spiritually.

Surely the matter of fabric does not come in when establishing one’s relationship with Jesus, but should we end there? What should we do to maintain the good relationship? Why do we wear suits or formal dresses at weddings, funerals, or dinner parties of one’s friends? Could we wear jeans to these occasions? Sure, but we dress up to respect the host or person(s) being honored.

Shouldn’t we likewise pay our utmost respect to Jesus in the house of God during the worship hour? Some may say that it is uncomfortable to dress up. But shouldn’t we sacrifice our comfort to follow Jesus? Let’s pay our due respect and honor to Jesus at all times.

—Won H. Bae, D.D.S.
Marlboro, Massachusetts
God’s house” (Testimony Treasures, vol. 3, p. 22).

Perhaps our older generation has failed to instruct the youth properly in some of the important phases of worship. Or the young generation has not listened or has little belief in the guidance and teachings of Ellen White. Maybe the editors should review materials before they go to print to see if the authors are giving out counsel that conforms to our church standards.

Wearing casual clothes to church just might have a negative effect on what the church is trying to do—win souls for Jesus. Or Ellen White was not inspired when writing about dress for Sabbath worship.

—Ferd Moreno
PORTLAND, OREGON

The Business of Schools

Should Adventist schools be run like businesses? Should the parents be stockholders and the students our clients? How about full disclosure of our financial statements? Should we focus on making money? Should principals be held accountable for the outcomes of the students?

I, too, have just come short of yelling out at board meetings, “Why don’t they just let us run it as a business!” A truism they did let me, when they needed to reel back from any abysmal operating deficit and debt leveraging, and an unbelievable cash deficit. I contend that if the business-like posture can save our schools financially, it can also be the sustained posture for growth and long-term success.

The fact is that we do everything else like a business: hiring, firing, promoting, politicking, and massaging our major donors/clients. We establish lines of credit with banks, invest in equity holding of major corporations, and call our leaders presidents. We travel to meet with major suppliers, encourage our customers to use debt to pay for our services, and charge interest to anyone who owes us money. Our workers are stuck on “busyness”—they burn out, die from stress, and feel underpaid like everyone else in America. So who are we kidding when we raise our chest above our shoulders and say we are not like those other businesses?

Surely we cannot kid our vendors: they have no problem turning off the lights or water; they will leave our trash uncollected; and they will shut the school down for violating pollution laws. Well, you say, we ran up these debts providing goods and services to advance the education of precious children who will improve our society. See how far that gets you.

You see, we really are businesses—whether we like it or not! Plant, property, land, labor, and information—we have the factors of production. We produce and sell education, excellent education. We package it, label it, benchmark it, then sell it to those who will buy it. We choose our clients, and our clients choose us. We strive to retain old customers and go out looking for new ones. We make budgets, do forecasts, and hedge against bad times.

And yes, we care about the bottom line. We need profit to survive. This task of training God’s children for service in His courts is a business. A God-sanctioned business. One that God expects us to perform according to His will.

—Dave C. Lawrence
VICE-PRINCIPAL, FINANCE
LA SIERRA ACADEMY
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

Letters Policy

The Review welcomes your letters. Short, pointed 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, A adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617,15.
In my young and callow days in the ministry, I used to preach a sermon titled “The Ten Commandments of Answered Prayer.” As I think back on it, the message, though well-intentioned, was all wrong.

First, the presentation seemed to put God out of reach. You had to go through 10 steps, satisfy 10 stipulations, before your prayer got through to Him. And that is simply wrong. God hears and answers the cry of every broken heart, every sincere plea that casts itself upon His love.

Jesus taught us how to pray. He told us to call God “our Father” and to bring all our petitions to His feet, that God is infinitely more ready to give us His good gifts than any earthly parent is to offer food to a hungry child (Matt. 7:9-11). Our heavenly Father cares for the robin, the bluejay, and even the humblest sparrow; how much more does He take notice of us (Matt. 6:26).

My old sermon missed the mark on another count. Without stating the idea explicitly, it implied that if you only got the formula right, you could be sure of the result. I don’t think prayer works like that. Yes, I believe that prayer packs incredible power and that, as Ellen White stated, it has a “divine science” about it (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 142), but prayer can never be put into a neat package, never reduced to an automatic teller machine.

In essence, prayer is one-on-one communion with God. When we pray, we exercise the highest level of our faculties; we reach the summit of experience available to humanity in this life. Nothing mechanical or formulaic here.

Think of the person you care for more than anyone else in the world. When you are with him or her, you exchange words but much more. You don’t have to be talking all the time; you commune just as much in the silence. And even when you are apart you have a sense of being together in heart and spirit.

Surely Paul had this sort of thing in mind when he admonished the early Christians to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). That is still the secret of Christian living in these pressure-packed last days— to be continually in touch with God, open to His direction, empowered by His Spirit.

The people who go through to the kingdom when Jesus comes will be a praying people. Only God knows the true state of the Adventist Church, but I see evidence of more and more people taking prayer seriously.

We have always had devoted men and women among us who knew what it meant to wrestle with God in personal communion, but corporately— as a people— we Adventists haven’t stood out for our reliance on prayer. We have been so busy that we have forgotten where the power lies. The longer the agenda, the shorter the prayer. We have assigned someone to “do” the prayer, as if prayer were just another activity in our worship service.

In fact, the busier we are, the more we need to get up early to pray. The longer the agenda, the longer we should spend on our knees. And in public we lead the congregation as we all open our hearts together before God.

My heart rejoices to see many young people setting the pace for the whole church. Adventists in their teens and 20s are going apart to pray together, sometimes with fasting. They pray for their unconverted friends, for leaders, for the church. And prayer is changing them and changing us all.

So long as we focus on our efforts, our plans, our resources, prayer takes a back place. Only when we acknowledge that we cannot make it on our own, that the task is totally beyond us, do we open the way for God to work as we pray (see 2 Chron. 7:14).

Early this year Adventists faced a grave situation. With the resignation of the chief officer of the world church, we found ourselves in uncharted waters, hiding shoals that threatened to wreck the good ship Zion. But around the circle of the earth members turned to God in earnest prayer. As our leaders assembled in the General Conference auditorium for the critical meeting on March 1, others gathered in the little chapel on the second floor in nonstop petitions.

And God came through. He delivered His people. He always does— if we will only wait upon Him.
Spring cleaning can also apply to unused editorial ideas. Here are a few scattered thoughts that, in the spirit of the original "Nash Ramblings" (Mar. 19, 1998), I’m flinging to the wind (beep, beep). Take what you like; the birds will eat the rest.

This week in church, don’t say “Amen” to the ideas you already support or champion. That’s too easy. Say “Amen” only to the ideas that newly challenge you.

What's the point of constantly berating secular society? Which did Jesus spend more time admonishing—secular Rome or His own religious community? Preachers and writers: It’s too easy to take swipes at Hollywood, etc. Everyone knows it’s garbage. Far better to spend our time and ink calling ourselves to repentance and a higher standard (as Paul and Peter and Ellen did).

Which do we neglect more: evangelism or nurture? I hear a compelling case that we minister only to ourselves. But I hear an equally compelling case that we don’t tend to the “back door” of our churches.

In multipastored churches does the senior pastor always need to be the main preaching pastor? Or could the senior pastor simply be the vision-casting administrative pastor?

Speaking of pastors, I recently witnessed my first pastoral search committee and was very impressed with the respectful, light-handed manner with which the “conference guys” allowed us to find our person. Neville Harcombe and Rob Vandeman, we need more like you.

Are you feeling worthless? Like you’re contributing zilch? Take a simple positive step: tithe. Yes, I know—I have my reservations about “where our money goes” too. I shudder to think of expensive satellite programs (not the NETs) that few actually watch. But that’s on someone else’s conscience. All God asks is that we honor Malachi 3:10.

Since no one was buying Pacific Press’s excellent Bible Amplifier study aids, the series has been discontinued and heavily discounted. I’ve used John, Hebrews, and Matthew (the latter two in a small group setting) and recommend them highly. You’ll see things you’ve never seen before.

What’s the meaning of “keep watch” in Matthew 24:42, NIV? Some say that it means monitoring current events—like a shepherd keeping watch for wolves. Others say that it means loving those in your care—like a shepherd keeping watch over his sheep. What do you think?

During ConneXions99 at the world headquarters, I participated in a group recommending a revision to one of our 27 fundamental beliefs. We simply think, as do many, that No. 21, “Christian Behavior,” might not only mention what we shouldn’t do, but what we should do. Our suggested addendum includes a call to commune with God and to love others.

Are you phobic about catching a cold from someone nearby? It probably shows. Rather than move one foot away from the “unclean”—as if it’s going to help—why not move one foot closer? As Jesus did.

Speaking of illness, I felt sick when I received this personal note from a 21-year-old Adventist in Ghana. “Please . . . ,” he wrote, “I am writing for information about our church and other necessary information being hidden by the Sunday worshipers.”

I like the openness of the South Pacific Division—with president Laurie Evans. During the Folkenberg situation Evans fostered refreshingly open communication with his pastors and membership. That’s all people really want.

I admire the Adventist Church’s condensed salary structure (whereby the president doesn’t make much more than an entry-level worker). Yet while the church supports the idea of one parent staying home with young children, low denominational salaries essentially require both parents to work anyway. I don’t know what the answer is.

What’s the balance between using our heads and following the Spirit?

Review reader Michelle Candy, of Lawai, Hawaii, tells me it’s time I accept the fact that Christian singer/songwriter Michael Card is nearing retirement. She suggests that the deep and biblical Wes King appears to be Card’s heir apparent. She’s right—Wes King is good. So is Chris Rice.

With the world ending this year, is now the time to take advantage of that “no payments until 2000” furniture sale?
ADVENTIST LIFE

My family was discussing the fine points of playing hide-and-seek, a family tradition. “I know a perfect time to play,” said my 9-year-old, Timothy. “At the end of the world—when the sun is as sackcloth and the moon turns to blood. It will be real dark then.”

“A ctually,” I added, “people will be playing hide-and-seek with God then. They will hide in the rocks and caves.”

“Yes,” my 6-year-old, Rebekah, added. “And God will always get to be it.”

— O. Kris Widmer, St. Helena, California

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Recently we invited readers to tell us about an “unusual pet” they (or another Adventist) might own. Among our favorite submissions were . . .

Daniel Ulvocsky and his pet chickens, Pici and Baba, of Metuchen, New Jersey

Robbie Reynolds and his pet duckling, of Kingsville, Missouri

Chris and Dale Fairchild and their pet male emu, of Pleasant Hill, Missouri

Thanks to Daniel, Robbie, Chris, and Dale for sharing your unusual pets with us. As a token of thanks, we’ll mail you a Review cap—which might come in handy should your birds ever be flying overhead . . .

Daniel Ulvocsky and his pet chickens, Pici and Baba, of Metuchen, New Jersey

Robbie Reynolds and his pet duckling, of Kingsville, Missouri

Chris and Dale Fairchild and their pet male emu, of Pleasant Hill, Missouri

Matthew Moores, North Highland, California

WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to . . . Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74617.15@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.
“Don’t Adventists Use the Bible Anymore?”

A call for Word-driven worship—like it used to be

BY ED CHRISTIAN

After avoiding Him for 20 years, my eldest sister has come back to God. Oh, how my family and I are praising God for this wonderful answer to our prayers!

Her journey home began three years ago, as our grandmother lay dying. At this spiritually vulnerable time, my sister asked if she could have one of our grandmother’s copies of The Desire of Ages. Who in the family could possibly say no to such a request?

Within six months my sister read through the entire Conflict of the Ages Series. Then she asked my mom for a church hymnal.

Shortly thereafter my sister became involved with a vibrant women’s Bible study group that meets one morning a week at a large nondenominational church. More than 200 women meet together to read the Word—this year the book of Acts, last year Romans—then divide into smaller groups for discussion. My sister finds this careful study thrilling and life-changing.

That fall she began calling me with questions raised by the study—ideas at odds with her vague recollections of Sabbath school lessons and 12 years of church school. What does it really mean to be “born again”? Does the Bible really teach “once saved, always saved”? What about predestination and limited atonement? I delightedly led her through what the Bible really teaches about these, preparing written textual studies where helpful.

One night her husband coughed for hours from asthma and a bad cold, unaided by medications they had on hand. My sister, rather uncertainly, decided to pray for him. At once his coughing ceased and has not returned, astonishing them both and giving her a testimony to share with others.

Tripped Up

Of course, my family had been praying that my sister would return not only to God, but to her Adventist roots, and her study had been leading in that direction.

But her spiritual journey hit a snag, a dangerous impediment. My sister called again last spring, this time with a complaint. It seems she had felt a need to return to the Adventist Church and had begun attending the nearest one, a church with several hundred members.

“What’s going on?” she asked me. “Don’t Adventists use the Bible anymore? The pastor talks for only 10 minutes, and I don’t think he even takes a Bible to the pulpit. He sure doesn’t preach from it. There’s a responsive reading projected on a screen, but I don’t know if it’s from the Bible. Is this a church? Where’s the Bible? I thought Adventists brag about being called ‘people of the Book.’ What book? Certainly not the Bible!”

My sister has a point. There are still thousands of fine pastors who “preach the Word” and “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” However, a growing number cater to those who “will not endure sound doctrine” and want “to have their ears tickled,” who “turn away their ears from the truth” and “turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:2-4, NASB).

The sad fact is that more Scripture is read aloud every week in the average liberal Episcopalian or Lutheran church—they have specified weekly readings from the Epistles and the...
Gospels—than in a great many Adventist churches, where the “Scripture reading” may be two or three verses. Throughout the Dark Ages Benedictine monks sang their way through the entire book of Psalms every week. Few of us have ever read the Psalms through even once.

One pastor friend of mine who rarely uses more than one text in a sermon justified this by saying, “Jesus taught by telling stories, and so do I.” People love stories. So do I. Pastors can teach important lessons in memorable ways through the use of parables—but these pastors aren’t Jesus. What is more, their stories seldom offer the systematic biblical teaching so much needed by those in the pews whose mission, in turn, is to “preach the gospel” to the world around them (Matt. 28:18-20). Some pastors offer baby food when solids are needed (1 Cor. 3:1-3; Eph. 4:11-14).

We need to be thorough students of the Bible—knowing it, immersing ourselves in it, loving and treasuring it above all worldly things. It should be our joy, our meat and drink. Yet those of us who still carry our precious Bibles to church sometimes have no occasion to open them, even during the lesson study. This is a travesty, a horrible error, a deadly sin keeping us from “the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:5), even though we may think we know Him and may claim to know Him.

The Need

Whatever our “itching ears” may want to hear, we need to hear carefully crafted expository sermons revealing the meaning of long passages. We need thorough sermons on important biblical topics, drawn from texts throughout the Bible. A series on the fundamental beliefs of the church (both the Adventist Church and the wider Christian church), explaining the scriptural support for each one, would be invaluable.

What I most long to see, though, is careful and prolonged reading of the Word of God—chapters, whole books, read straight through in church with occasional commentary on difficult verses.

Paul tells us that “the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, . . . and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12, NASB). He tells Timothy the Scriptures “are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15, NASB) and cautions him to rightly divide “the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). He tells us that “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16, NASB).

Jesus told the Sadducees the reason they erred in their biblical interpretation was that they did not know the Scriptures (Matt. 22:29).

If these things are true, and they are, then why are we messsing about in the pulpit with anecdotes and funny stories and parables we’ve invented? Why are we amusing the saints instead of training them? Do the saints assemble to be entertained, to be marginally enlightened, to be educated, or to worship? If we dare answer “to worship,” then we would do well to consider what that means.

From the Psalms and from the hymns of Revelation we learn that the primary purpose of worship, of ascribing “worth-ship” to God (to return to the meaning of the original Old English word), is to praise God for His love, His justice, His mercy, His deliverance, His mighty acts, His salvation. The primary method of worship is praise through testimony, through fervent congregational singing, and through prayer. A secondary purpose of worship is supplication through prayer.

One could argue that announcements, children’s stories, special music, perhaps offerings, and even preaching are not really worship, because they are aimed primarily not at God but at the worshipers.

Do we worship a silent God? Is worship only about our talking to God, or is it also about God’s talking to us? We might answer, with the Quakers, that God speaks wordlessly to our hearts, to
our spirits, impresses us, moves us, if we are open to being moved. But is there more? There is. Ideally, preaching is God's response to His people's worship. God has often reached me through today's preaching, but in too much I do not sense God's voice (Rom. 10:14; 2 Tim. 4:2).

If we want to hear God speak to us in words, then we need to hear God's Word. Jesus says of the Scriptures: “It is these that bear witness of Me” (John 5:39, NASB). If we want to know the Word, we need to know His Word.

When the Israelites heard God's voice at Sinai, they begged Moses to ask God to be silent—He was too frightening. By marginalizing the Bible in our worship services, are we again asking God to be silent? Do our pastors take the place of Moses as they offer parables or platitudes in place of the voice of God read aloud (Matt. 23:2)?

Word-driven Worship

I have a dream—a dream of worshiping a God enthroned in the midst of His holy ones, a dream of worshiping a God who speaks, a dream of worship dominated by the Word of God.

Here is a radical proposal. What if once or twice a month, or even nearly every week, we returned to the primary biblical model, used in the synagogue, used by Jesus in Nazareth: the reading of Scripture as the center of worship, as God's response to our worship, with commentary to explain it where necessary (but with that commentary clearly secondary to the reading of God's Word)?

Not all pastors are capable of developing and delivering a great sermon, but they should all be able to read the Scriptures aloud, and given a bit of training they could learn to do it well. Many small churches depend on a local elder for most sermons. This is quite a burden (for all involved, sometimes), yet most elders would find reading Scripture aloud easier and more life-changing than preaching.

Surely one of the great occasions in the early church must have been the arrival of a letter from Paul or Peter or some other apostle. Surely much of the service must have been devoted to reading these revelations from God. Surely approaching both with humility.

If the congregation insists on hearing sermons every week, why couldn't lengthy readings from Scripture be part of every service? How about a chapter each Sabbath from each of the following: the Law, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Epistles? Would five chapters of the Bible be too much for us to bear?

Thank God, my sister recently joined an Adventist church an hour's drive from her home where God's Word is proclaimed and the members have surrounded her with love. How many others like her, though, have turned from us because they could not in good conscience attend a church in which the Bible is not read? How many of us hesitate to bring Christian friends to our church because our pastor is “a good preacher” who holds the attention, but doesn’t “preach the word”?

God's Word, rightly read, will cut us to the core, break us open, expose us to the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness. It will lead us to radical surrender and transformation and service. It isn't soft and sentimental—it’s harsh medicine at times—but it's effective in preparing us for that consummation we so devoutly desire: Christ's soon return.

Ed Christian teaches English and Bible at Kutztown University, an 8,000-student state school in Pennsylvania. Contact him at christia@kutztown.edu.
ON AUGUST 31, 1983, Korean Airline Flight 007 departed from Anchorage, Alaska, bound for Seoul, South Korea. Despite intense preflight preparations, the crew failed to uncover a one and one-half degree routing error in the flight navigation system. One hundred miles into the flight, it remained unnoticed. As the 747 passed over the Aleutians and out over the Pacific, the plane strayed increasingly from its intended course. Eventually and unintentionally, it entered Soviet airspace.

Soviet fighter jets scrambled to intercept the wayward plane. Before long they targeted Flight 007 and shot it down. No one aboard survived. The fate of Flight 007 emphasizes the importance of knowing where you are going—from the beginning. Although it may seem harmless for a while, the longer you go in the wrong direction, the more harm it does.

Bible study is like that. Even the slightest inaccuracy at the start can seriously skew your results. The best way to arrive at the truth in the text is to begin with (1) a healthy attitude toward God’s Word, (2) a sound grasp of Bible study principles, and (3) a firm command of proven tools for its interpretation.

A Healthy Attitude Toward God’s Word

Bible study rests on the claim of the Bible writers that God communicated with them. Solomon, for example, considered God the source of his remarkable insights: “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6, NASB). The apostle John made a similar claim in Revelation 2:1: “To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write: These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars”—and six verses later challenged his readers to listen for God’s voice in the text: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (author translation). Ellen G. White, the dean of Seventh-day Adventist expositors, subscribed to this dynamic model for Bible study. She told her readers: “The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears” (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 393). So Bible study begins with listening for God’s voice in the text—rather than settling for faint echoes of it in commentaries or in the opinions of scholars. By speaking to us through His Word, the God of the Bible has demonstrated His desire for us to communicate directly with Him.

Whether or not we accept this model affects how we study God’s Word. According to Ellen White, “if we realize this, with what awe we would open God’s Word, and with what earnestness we would search its precepts” (ibid.). Overwhelmed and inspired, we would approach God’s Word with a healthy respect and study it with the thoroughness it deserves. From the start, “the reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One” (ibid.). We would treat the study of God’s Word as a face-to-face conference with Him in His most holy place. Awed and speechless in His presence, we would listen to Him and hear Him speak with greater enthusiasm than ever before.

In its purest sense, then, Bible study
is listening for God's voice in the text as a personal interview with the One who knows everything. It is always a learning experience in which God does all the instructing—rather than our stringing texts together to prove or express our points of view, telling others what we think the Bible says, or persuading others to see the Scriptures as we do.

**Bible Study Principles**

People used to study the Bible a whole book at a time. Before trying to understand a single verse, they acquainted themselves with every circumstance, character, and theme in the book. They took the time to get the big picture of the text before zeroing in on its fine details.

People today, however, seldom study the Bible that way. Caught up in the rush of end-time living, they rashly bypass the big picture and zero in on pieces of the Bible to find out what an isolated passage means or to collect texts they think teach a particular subject. Typically they read a text over a few times for the gist of what it says, then try to explain it with the help of other texts chosen for them by a concordance, by the publisher in the margin of their Bible, or by denominational literature.

Concordances enjoy widespread use because they quickly link together a number of verses that say the same thing(s). According to a concordance, for example, Matthew 24:37-42 and Luke 17:26-37 both mention “the days of Noah.” Most people assume that by saying the same thing this means that both passages mean the same thing.

These passages do share similar content, but the context reveals that (1) Matthew focuses on the need for watchfulness to avoid being overwhelmed by Christ’s return— it will take away in judgment all those who are surprised, while (2) Luke features the need for decisive commitment to Christ to avoid being left behind at His return—He will take to safety only those who are ready to go with Him.

So before you tackle a passage, get in touch with its context— everything that shapes its meaning: (1) the verses before and after it, plus (2) the parties, circumstances, and issues behind the book. Take the time to get the big picture, so you can see the whole book as the author originally laid it out. Then you will be less likely to underestimate the setting for your passage and leave out something important. As Ellen White reminds us, “understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons” (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 1). Unless we take into full consideration the “time and place” of the writing of the passage, we may “misinterpret and misrepresent” what the author intended (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 57; italics supplied) and never get to the bottom of things in the text.

**Proven Tools for Interpretation**

The search for God’s voice in the text begins with prayer for the Spirit’s guidance and a desire to learn more than we already know. As the Lord’s messenger warned us long ago, “a spirit of pharisaism has been coming in upon the people who claim to believe the truth for these last days. They are self-satisfied. They have said, ‘We have the truth. There is no more light for the people of God’” (Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 34). Never be satisfied with what you know.

Truth is worth the search—even if it modifies, corrects, or exceeds what you already believe.

Take, for example, the prophecy in Daniel 12:14. Look at verses 1, 2: “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (NASB).

Verses 1 and 2 obviously refer to the climax of the great controversy between the forces of good and evil, because they describe the time when God (1) rescues His people once and for all, and (2) separates the dead into two groups: Daniel’s people, raised to everlasting life, and the rest, raised to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Together they date the prophecy with four end-time events: Michael’s rising up, the worst conflict ever, the saints’ rescue, and the separation of the dead.

Verse 3 adds another: “And those
who have insight will shine brightly like the firmament, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (author translation). This verse is an example of synonymous Hebrew poetry. It consists of two lines placed side by side to work together. The second line repeats the thought of the first with synonyms to make it plainer, as follows:

1. "Those who have insight" (line 1) are "those who lead many to righteousness" (line 2).

2. "Will shine brightly" describes the radiant behavior of both parties, even though it is only understood in line 2.

3. "Like the firmament" (line 1) is the same as "like the stars" (line 2).

4. Daniel adds "forever and ever" to line 2 to make up for the shortage of syllables created by leaving out "will shine brightly" (Hebrew poets balanced lines by the number of syllables).

In other words, in the age of confusion and conflict described in verse 1, those who have insight will shine with light that shows the way for others. So we now have a fifth end-time event to date the prophecy: people with insight will lead many to righteousness.

Gabriel brings the prophecy to a head in verse 4: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the scroll until the end of time; many will go back and forth and knowledge will increase" (author translation). In contrast to those who will "shine" in the future, Daniel is supposed to (1) conceal the words of his prophecy (roll up the scroll on which they were written), and (2) seal up the scroll (tie it shut and store it away in a jar—as the Dead Sea scrolls were). This will preserve the scroll and the knowledge it contains for the end-time, when many will go back and forth and knowledge will increase. But does knowledge increase because (1) by going back and forth many spread what they know? or (2) many gain knowledge from going back and forth?

Those who take the first position assume the "stars" already have the knowledge to share, but lack the means until the end-time to "run to and fro" and spread (or increase) it—an idea they inject into the context! Based on this assumption, they think the postponement of verse 4 is a delay for advanced technology and consider it a prediction that knowledge will increase when the means to spread insights from Daniel's prophecies into all the world become available.

On the other hand, those who take the second position believe that reopening the scroll that Daniel stored away for the end-time and going back and forth in it leads to insights that add to existing knowledge—an idea derived entirely from the context. In view of the five events that date this prophecy, they recognize that the "stars" must wait for Jesus to enter the picture (Michael, verse 1) to illumine Daniel's prophecies and enlighten them. They see verse 4 as a promise that end-time people will gain deeper insights into God's plan of salvation from Daniel's prophecies, through Jesus, that light the way to the kingdom and lead many to righteousness.

Here are four skills that will help you on your journey toward truth:

1. Observation: Noticing what God wants you to see in the text so you can learn what it says.

Your search for truth begins with the context. Derived from the Latin words con (with) and texere (weave), the context is the way the Bible author wove the book together, the way he shaped the content to meet the needs of his audience. So interview him about it with the five W's and an H (who, what, when, where, why, and how). Ask him: "Who are the main characters? What do you say about them? Where were you when you wrote this book? When did you write this book? Why did you mention the others in it? How do you get your point across? How do you expect your audience to respond? How do the others help you?"

For instance, when we examined Daniel 12:1-4, we arrived at our conclusions (1) solely from the facts in the text (2) after we "heard" everything Daniel had to say. Like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, we waited until our teacher finished teaching before we evaluated his lesson. Observation is not the time to conclude anything. For now, simply gather the facts from the author.

A s you interrogate the author, the main things in the text will stand out by their frequency and importance. You will be able to (1) identify the theme that captures the spirit of the book, and (2) give each chapter a title or titles based on what it says about its main character, subject, lesson, or event. A chart with this information will show you the big picture of the book at a glance. For example, the book of...
Observation gets Bible study off to a healthy start. The remaining skills can keep you on course until you arrive at the truth in the text.

2. **Interpretation**: Allow the text to explain itself so you can learn what it means.

   The Bible writers use plain, figurative, and symbolic speech to express themselves. To take the mystery out of their expressions, you must reduce everything they say to plain language—(1) deciphering all the figures of speech and (2) decoding each symbol in the text. The process of understanding them begins with looking up unfamiliar words in Strong's Concordance. You will find them listed in alphabetical order. When you locate a word, verses containing it appear in the order of the books of the Bible. The number to the right of each verse identifies the root of the word in the Old Testament or New Testament dictionary at the back of the concordance. The definition in italics is the root meaning of the word. The context will help you to understand how the author used it in the text.

   When you come to something in the text that (1) doesn't make literal sense or (2) stretches the natural meaning of the word, follow the author's complete flow of thought to see if he is making a comparison or a contrast (figure of speech) or pointing to something beyond the word itself (symbol). Explain the overall idea of what you find in a simple, literal way.

Next, look up the text's people, places, events, and things in a Bible dictionary to get in touch with the history, culture, or customs that define or explain them.

   Then pull together all the information you have collected and, hitting the highlights instead of every little detail, write out brief explanations that summarize each complete unit of thought in the text (usually several verses in length).

3. **Application**: Allow the Bible to show you the relevance of the text for today.

   As we study the Bible, we come across all kinds of people in an assortment of situations. How did the Bible authors always manage to say the right things at just the right time? With the help of timeless principles—fundamental truths or laws that speak to people regardless of who they are, when or where they live, or what is happening to them—The Bible authors applied these principles to their audiences by rewriting them in the form of advice—designed
to fit their particular predicaments.

   Though written long ago, these principles can speak to modern audiences with their original force and relevance—when we strip away the history and culture attached to them in the text. Just list the different parties or subjects in the text along with the instructions they receive or the observations made about them in the text. Whatever they have in common will lead you to the principle. In 1 Corinthians 14, for example, Paul orders prophets, tongues-speakers, and women to keep silent during church meetings. All three groups have one thing in common—selfishness, gaining personal satisfaction at everyone else's expense. Tongues-speakers spoke whether or not their gift was needed at the time; prophets refused to yield the floor to others who wanted to use their gifts; and wives satisfied their curiosity with loud conversations while others tried to exercise their gifts. Each of them needed the advice (the principle) in verse 40: “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

   To apply this passage today, you don't need tongues-speakers, prophets, or overzealous conversation-ists in your church—just selfish people who need to set self aside for the good of the congregation. Remind them to (1) unsel-fishly exercise their spiritual gifts, (2) yield unsel-fishly to others who want to exercise their spiritual gifts, and (3) behave unsel-fishly while oth-ers exercise their spiritual gifts.

4. **Presentation**: Preparation of the text to share its application with others.

   Presentation and the previous three
skills work together in a process that looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Author speaks to us</td>
<td>We dialogue with the Author and the other Bible writers</td>
<td></td>
<td>T he A uthor speaks through us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jesus called us to be witnesses who tell what we know rather than scholars who collect degrees for what we know. So Bible study isn’t finished until we share what we have learned with others—so they can respond to the voice that we have heard in the text. In order to communicate with your audience, however, you must tailor your presentation to their needs rather than your strengths. Regardless of their age, the setting, or your goals—to prepare the text for presentation:

- Analyze your audience and location: Identify the kind of audience you will face, decide on an approach, and settle on a location.
- State your purpose, goals, and theme: Know where you’re coming from and where you want your audience to go.

- Select applications that go with your presentation theme: Connect everything you want to say with your strategy so your lessons will have the force they need to reach the audience.
- Choose the main media for your presentation: Decide whether drama, music, a sermon, or a Bible study will shape your presentation.
- As you advance from point to point, mix and match supporting media with your main one: The blend will add variety to your presentation and create interest throughout your delivery.

**Conclusion**

Discovery is the greatest strength of Bible study. Nothing binds us to truth better than mining for it ourselves. What we find belongs to us—and because we own it, what we find stays longer with us.

Though the method we have outlined requires more effort and time than many others, it pays large dividends to those who invest in it. In addition to greater firsthand knowledge of God’s Word, you will have (1) a stronger relationship with God through more active interaction with God Himself, and (2) a transformed life, from listening to God rather than others and from putting into practice His truths rather than perpetuating the practices of others.

Not only will it get you off to a good start in your study of God’s Word—it is also the safest way to navigate the text and arrive at its truth.

---

Don’t Depend on Others (Not Even Her)

**BY LEE J. GUGLIOTTO**

An Adventist man once asked, “Sister White, do you think we must understand the truth for ourselves? Why can we not take the truths that others have gathered together; and believe them because they have investigated the subjects?”

She replied: “It is dangerous for us to make flesh our arm. We should lean upon the arm of infinite power” (Review and Herald, Mar. 25, 1890).

By Ellen White’s own declaration, “the Testimonies were not given to take the place of the Bible” (Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 663). She wanted her readers to study her writings so they would go “back to the Word that they have neglected to follow” and to call attention to “general principles [from the Word] for the formation of correct habits of living” (ibid., pp. 663, 664). She advised others to “prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God” (Evangelism, p. 256).

Lee Gugliotto serves as senior pastor of the West Covina Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in southern California. His Handbook for Bible Study (Review and Herald) was awarded a Gold Medallion in 1996 by the Evangelical Christian Publisher’s Association as its international, interdenominational Bible study book of the year. His most recent book, Interactive Bible Study (Nelsen Press), is a manual for personal and group Bible study.
Parents, Piercing, and Pain

**Pierced:** I’m a 19-year-old college freshman with a question about eternal life. I’m an active Seventh-day Adventist who has a relationship with Jesus, but I recently got my tongue pierced. I knew my parents would be angry, but my mom basically said I’m going to hell. I want to live up to the fullest potential God has for me and go to heaven, but can’t I do that with a piercing? I have prayed and prayed, but I want your advice.

**Deirdre:** Now that you’ve prayed, it’s time to listen to what God has to say.

**Allan:** I’m eager to hear more about why you got your tongue pierced. What is that about? And why would your mom be so upset?

**Pierced:** One of the reasons I got my tongue pierced is that I think it looks cool. I see people on TV and in movies, and I think it looks nice. I have no other piercing or tattoos, just the one. I also felt that I had never really done anything that I could look back on and say, “WOW!” My mom thought that the devil was getting me to do his will, that I will never go to heaven with a jewel in my tongue. It scared me to hear her say that, because heaven is my number one goal.

**Allan:** I appreciate your honesty and willingness to talk about these things. That’s cool. A few questions:

1. How are you looking to accomplish God’s will through your piercing? I’m interested.
2. How is your relationship with your mom? How do you feel about her objection to your piercing your tongue?
3. What do you feel the Bible has to say regarding your situation?

**Pierced:** One of the reasons I got my tongue pierced is that I think it looks cool. I see people on TV and in movies, and I think it looks nice. I have no other piercing or tattoos, just the one. I also felt that I had never really done anything that I could look back on and say, “WOW!” My mom thought that the devil was getting me to do his will, that I will never go to heaven with a jewel in my tongue. It scared me to hear her say that, because heaven is my number one goal.

**Allan:** I appreciate your honesty and willingness to talk about these things. That’s cool. A few questions:

1. How are you looking to accomplish God’s will through your piercing? I’m interested.
2. How is your relationship with your mom? How do you feel about her objection to your piercing your tongue?
3. What do you feel the Bible has to say regarding your situation?

**Pierced:** One of the reasons I got my tongue pierced is that I think it looks cool. I see people on TV and in movies, and I think it looks nice. I have no other piercing or tattoos, just the one. I also felt that I had never really done anything that I could look back on and say, “WOW!” My mom thought that the devil was getting me to do his will, that I will never go to heaven with a jewel in my tongue. It scared me to hear her say that, because heaven is my number one goal.

**Allan:** I appreciate your honesty and willingness to talk about these things. That’s cool. A few questions:

1. How are you looking to accomplish God’s will through your piercing? I’m interested.
2. How is your relationship with your mom? How do you feel about her objection to your piercing your tongue?
3. What do you feel the Bible has to say regarding your situation?

**Pierced:** One of the reasons I got my tongue pierced is that I think it looks cool. I see people on TV and in movies, and I think it looks nice. I have no other piercing or tattoos, just the one. I also felt that I had never really done anything that I could look back on and say, “WOW!” My mom thought that the devil was getting me to do his will, that I will never go to heaven with a jewel in my tongue. It scared me to hear her say that, because heaven is my number one goal.

**Deirdre:** I’m confused. You want to say “wow” about your life. Are you wanting people to say “wow” because you’re following God’s will for your life or because you’re following what you see in the entertainment world? Is your pierced tongue turning you away from God, or toward Him? What is that spiritual voice inside telling you as you pray?

**Allan:** God’s Word has much to say, and I hope you’ll prayerfully take full advantage of its counsel (I would suggest for starters Exodus 20:3-17; 1 John; and John 17). A’s you shared, the picture that came to my mind was that as you pierced your tongue you also pierced your mother’s heart. What a painful moment. I’m relieved that although painful words were exchanged, both of you are still close and talking. If you’re wondering whether God can accept pierced people, He can and He does.

**A’s you make decisions to live a full and “WOW-worthy” life, will you, by your choices, knowingly continue to cause your parents pain? If so, does God share their pain? I hope that as you search the Scriptures, and as you remain in constant conversations with your mom and God, it will be revealed to you how to live to the fullest for Jesus.

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

A’s you shared, the picture that came to my mind was that as you pierced your tongue you also pierced your mother’s heart. What a painful moment. I’m relieved that although painful words were exchanged, both of you are still close and talking. If you’re wondering whether God can accept pierced people, He can and He does.

A’s you make decisions to live a full and “WOW-worthy” life, will you, by your choices, knowingly continue to cause your parents pain? If so, does God share their pain? I hope that as you search the Scriptures, and as you remain in constant conversations with your mom and God, it will be revealed to you how to live to the fullest for Jesus.

A’s you shared, the picture that came to my mind was that as you pierced your tongue you also pierced your mother’s heart. What a painful moment. I’m relieved that although painful words were exchanged, both of you are still close and talking. If you’re wondering whether God can accept pierced people, He can and He does.

A’s you make decisions to live a full and “WOW-worthy” life, will you, by your choices, knowingly continue to cause your parents pain? If so, does God share their pain? I hope that as you search the Scriptures, and as you remain in constant conversations with your mom and God, it will be revealed to you how to live to the fullest for Jesus.

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

A’s you shared, the picture that came to my mind was that as you pierced your tongue you also pierced your mother’s heart. What a painful moment. I’m relieved that although painful words were exchanged, both of you are still close and talking. If you’re wondering whether God can accept pierced people, He can and He does.

A’s you make decisions to live a full and “WOW-worthy” life, will you, by your choices, knowingly continue to cause your parents pain? If so, does God share their pain? I hope that as you search the Scriptures, and as you remain in constant conversations with your mom and God, it will be revealed to you how to live to the fullest for Jesus.

Send your questions about young adult life, Christian lifestyle, and Generation X culture to: The X-CHANGE, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, or via e-mail to dream_VISION_ministries@CompuServe.com.
Near the cross stands His mother. She has suckled Him, cleaned Him, tickled and laughed with Him, taught Him, and watched Him grow to be a man. God's man. Though she hasn't always understood Him, He's been an unfailing comfort and joy to her. Now she's watching and enduring the most ruthless, humiliating ordeal imaginable, aimed at her boy. Yet not her boy. God's Son. She has known this might happen, as if she were the only one who heard when He spoke of His impending death. This is too horrible to believe, though.

If there's one person who doesn't deserve this . . .

Jesus reads His mother's posture, downcast, crying, bereft of hope, the light in her eye extinguished. He notes her standing next to John, His most trustworthy disciple. Fixing His sight on His mother, Jesus says, "Dear woman, here is your son." To John: "Here is your mother." A gift from the cross. In time she will know one more.

Grimacing, He pushes off again, a figure bleeding and naked, arms stretched out like wings to the open air. What manner of God is this? He moans as His shoulders dislocate ("My bones are out of joint," says the psalm). His aching lungs steal another breath.

At noon a phalanx of leaden clouds scud across the land. An eerie mantle of darkness, murky as midnight, descends on Jerusalem, cloaking the disgrace of the Son. The darkness lasts three hours—the crowd thins considerably. At the center of the solid darkness the Sin-bearer cannot sense His Father's presence. Pinned under humanity's free choice to separate from God, Jesus is experiencing the ultimate separation, the second death, the void of eternal nothingness. For three hours He strains desperately to see through the palpable darkness. Raising His battered, puffy face, He screams: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There is no response.

Jesus must endure two more intolerable afflictions. As the pericardium slowly fills with serum and compresses the heart, a crushing pain squeezes His chest. With the loss of tissue fluids His heart struggles to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood. Jesus tastes blood in His breath, on His tongue, in His nose. He knows now that He is mortally wounded. A death chill creeps through His body. His throat is dry, thistled, and burred—He can't swallow. As He craves fluids to replace the lost blood volume, Jesus blurs, "I'm thirsty!" One of the soldiers sticks a sponge on a stalk of hyssop and dips into a deep jar filled with posca, a drink of sour wine, water, and beaten eggs. He lifts the dripping sponge to Jesus' cracked lips, then retreats to sit and wait.

A window opens in the dense black clouds, and a brilliant shaft of sunlight illuminates Jesus. He feels an erratic hammering in His chest, a pounding timpani gone mad. His diaphragm is paralyzed, starving for oxygen, the effect of respiratory acidosis. The end is here. Quivering leg muscles strain to push off, to stand up on the brutal nail again—one more—and with His last breath He shouts: "It is finished! Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." And then He dies.

The bruised, lacerated, swollen body sags on the cross. There will be no more pushes.

Darkness again envelops the scene. A low rumble builds to a wailing roar, wind screeching, thunder booming, lightning bolts lashing. With the middle cross at the epicenter, a rock-splitting earthquake shakes the cowering spectators in heaps. Creation seems to be disintegrating.

At this precise moment at the Temple the innocent lamb representing the Messiah is before a priest for the evening sacrifice. As the priest raises his knife to slay the lamb the Temple quakes, and his knife drops to the heaving floor. Suddenly the broad inner veil of the Most Holy Place is torn with unimaginable force from top to bottom, exposing the secret space where the Shekinah glory of God has dwelt. Once a year the high priest enters this compartment to make atonement for the sins of the people. Now laid open to view, the space's sacred significance is annulled. No earthly power could rip the curtain from top to bottom. In the rumbling confusion the lamb escapes. The true sacrifice is already accomplished.

Chris Blake teaches at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. This excerpt is taken from his newly released book Searching for a God to Love.
A Path to Adventism for the World

Via e-mail, prerecorded messages, and by telephone counseling, Bibleinfo.com touches people around the globe.

BY THOMAS A. DAVIS, WHO WRITES FROM ARMSTRONG, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Build a better mousetrap,” goes the proverb, “and the world will beat a path to your door.” While we are careful about the mousetrap analogy, the rate at which people in the computer and telephone world are taking the path to the Bible Online service suggests that the Upper Columbia Conference in Spokane, Washington, has come up with a “better mousetrap.”

The Bible Information Line (Bibleinfo.com) ministry originated with UCC president Max C. Torkelsen II. It began in 1993 as a result of the Branch Davidian tragedy in Waco, Texas. Torkelsen’s concern grew after some news media connected David Koresh and his Branch Davidians with Seventh-day Adventists. Torkelsen, who at the time was conference health and communication director, decided something needed to be done to let the public know who Adventists are and what the church really stands for. He also had been a pastor in Hawaii when the church lost several members to the Davidians.

The service started in 1995 with the telephone number 1-800-967-BIBLE. After TV, radio, and billboard advertising, calls started coming in. Volunteers began working the phone lines answering Bible questions. A name was chosen for the ministry—the Bible Information Line—and the phrase “It’s in the Bible” was chosen as a slogan to emphasize that the Adventist Church is Bible-based and that all questions answered had to be approached biblically.

The project has since evolved into a worldwide ministry, Bibleinfo.com, which began Internet service in 1996. Bibleinfo.com offers services through two main channels, the Internet and telephone. By e-mail (Bibleinfo@uccs-da.org) an individual anywhere in the world may send a Bible question to the Spokane office. Ministry operators Nancy Martin and Jennifer McGhee refer the question to a volunteer specialist who answers it, e-mails the answer directly to the questioner, and forwards a copy to Spokane operators.

The toll-free phone line (1-800-967-BIBLE) gives anyone in North America 24-hour access to recorded Bible discussions of 345 topics, including such issues as abortion, child training, depression, heresy, hell, the occult, and signs of Jesus’ coming. The same phone number puts the caller on “live” with a counselor who is happy to talk about Bible questions or personal spiritual problems. This service is available every day from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Pacific time.

Prayer Requests

The website http://www.iiw.org/discover also gives access to the pre-recorded discussions. Requests for prayer or for free books may be made both by phone and on the website.

The program’s worldwide reach is evidenced by numerous questions that come from 136, or 90 percent, of the 150 countries with Internet capabilities. More than 300 people contact the service every day.

The credibility of the service is indicated by the fact that questions have been fielded from professors at Oxford University, England, the Jewish University, Jerusalem, and the director of the Catholic Youth Evangelical School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

I do not become easily stirred by statistics, but I was excited when Nancy Martin shared with me the figures for November 1998. During that month there were 10,553 visits to the site and more than 600 questions were asked and answered.
Colombian Adventist Taken Hostage

Seventh-day Adventist Abner Duarte was among the 46 passengers of an Avianca plane taken hostage by hijackers in Colombia on April 12.

Duarte, president of the national gas corporation Ecogas, was on the flight leaving Bucaramanga for the capital, Bogotá, when hijackers forced the plane to divert to a remote airstrip in Vijagual, 220 miles north of Bogotá. On April 18 a rebel group claimed responsibility for the action. Nine hostages have been released to date.

Bernardo Rodriguez, president of the Adventist Church in Colombia, confirmed that Duarte was among the hostages but had no additional information regarding his safety or whereabouts.

"Abner Duarte is a member of the Adventist Church in Sotomayor, Bucaramanga, and is very active with the young people there," said Rodriguez. "He was also a good witness for the church among government and business leaders. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family at this difficult time."

Duarte, 36, by training a petroleum engineer, is married to Sandra, with a 1-year-old daughter, Valentina. Seventh-day Adventists in Colombia number more than 150,000 baptized believers.

Seventh-day Adventist Leads NASA Expedition to North Pole

Michael Comberiate, a scientist with NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center and a committed Seventh-day Adventist, is leading a NASA expedition to the North Pole that began April 19.

The "Cool Space" expedition will be tracking floating ice sheets using six satellites, and assisting Inuit students to process satellite data of the polar weather. In addition, the team will be taking soil samples at Resolute Bay, making ozone measurements.

Comberiate is the instigator of 53 "Cool Space" projects such as this over the past 15 years at NASA. He links his work closely to his belief in God.

"My chief concern is to develop my relationship with God in this process," says Comberiate. "As I travel to all the nooks and crannies of this planet, I find that I want God to be right there with me."

Comberiate is currently working on a book on tape entitled Why a Rocket Scientist Trusts God to develop his ideas that faith and science are not incompatible.
Need a New Bible?

BY DICK DUERKSEN, VICE PRESIDENT FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT, FLORIDA HOSPITAL

Andrew Hoyem of San Francisco’s Arion Press is producing 400 very large copies of a very perfect Bible. The metal type is hand-set 16-point Romulus, and each of the 1,234 pages will be 18 by 13 inches. The paper is being custom made in England, and each unbound Bible will weigh 25 pounds.

This Bible, “the greatest challenge of modern bookmaking,” according to printer Hoyem, will be typeset, printed, and bound almost entirely by hand. “It will be a work of art, a thing of beauty,” says the San Francisco Examiner.

Price? $7,250 for the unbound edition, $8,500 bound in leather. Hand-illuminated initial letters add $2,500 to the total.

It seems crazy that the world’s least-read best-seller needs an $11,000 reprint. A B C s, Barnes and Noble, and boutiques in Topeka all carry Bibles. The G ideons have placed copies in every dresser ever made. A irliners carry one beside Fortune, and even O prah says it’s a good read. So why a biblical art book, a “statement of typographical excellence at the end of the century” that no one will ever read?

Maybe it’s because we like to be around Bibles. A fter all, they do speak clearly about God and the future. They describe how to live and how to die. They challenge us to become better than we could imagine being on our own, all the while reminding us that we are not our own. Bibles are holy books. Maybe we believe that having a big expensive one will cause some of its holiness to rub off.

You can reach the publisher of the pretty heavy Bible at www.arionpress.com. Or you may want to pull an old Bible from your shelf, blow off the dust, read a couple chapters, bow your head, and contact the Author directly.

ITALY’S PRESIDENT VISITS ADVENTIST FACILITY

Italian president Oscar Luigi Scalfaro recently visited the Casa Mia Old People’s Home in Forli, a Seventh-day Adventist institution. Scalfaro was accompanied by members of Parliament, senators, mayors, military officials, and bishops from the Catholic and Anglican churches.

Founded in 1983, Casa Mia houses 70 retirees, reports Maurice Verfaillie, Euro-Africa Division communication director. A fter visiting many residents in their rooms, Scalfaro told Adventist leaders, “I feel quite at home here. I have a special admiration for the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the realm of religious liberty and social action in Italy. This visit, which I thought would be merely a friendly one, turned into a genuine blessing for me.”

NEws Commentary

There are 5,500 Adventists in Italy today.

Former General Conference Officer Dies

Elder A. L. Ham, a longtime educator in China, recently died in Loma Linda, California. He was 99. Ham established a mission school for boys in 1915 in Canton, China. He was the first Asian to write one of the Week of Prayer readings. He later became a General Conference vice president in 1954. For the past 70 years his students filled the ranks of church leadership as educators, church administrators, evangelists, mission hospital personnel, and pastors.

Adventist Review Wins Four Church Press Awards

The Adventist Review received four awards on April 20 at the eighty-third annual convention of the Associated Church Press in Portland, Oregon.

The Review received an Award of Merit in the Magazine Graphics category for the January 29, 1998, article “A Winter’s Tale,” designed by Bill Tymeson. The article “A Winter’s...”
Christian Coalition Says It Will Raise $21 Million for Election Campaign

The Christian Coalition says it will mount a campaign to raise a record $21 million for its effort to mobilize 15 million conservative voters in the 2000 presidential election.

“We are launching, effective today, the most massive effort to mobilize the grassroots in our history,” said coalition founder Pat Robertson.

Robertson said the campaign, called 21 Victory, “may be the most important initiative of the organization in its 10-year history.”

The announcement came on the heels of recent speculation that its influence on the political process was in eclipse. Christian Coalition leaders have been quick to deny such allegations. Robertson characterized the resignation of several top coalition officials as part of running an organization and dismissed allegations of unethical business practices.

The coalition’s strategy calls for training 1.5 million political activists and expanding conservative influence beyond its stronghold in the South, Southwest, and Midwest.—Religion News Service.

School or Sick Day?

How can you tell if your child is too sick to go to school? Dr. Jane Corboy, assistant professor of family and community medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, says these symptoms can warrant keeping a child at home:

- A fever of 100.5°F or higher
- A rash that might be contagious
- Vomiting

If a child complains of headaches or stomachaches, which are hard to verify by observation, Corboy recommends looking for additional symptoms such as a pale or flushed face, or a low energy level, to confirm the child isn’t just trying to play hooky.—Baylor College of Medicine.

Give, and You Shall Receive

Those who volunteer enjoy benefits to their psychological well-being. Volunteering boosts self-esteem and energy—particularly for retirees—by providing a daily sense of purpose and fostering improved social relationships.—Cornell University.

—“For Your Good Health” is compiled by Larry Becker, editor of Vibrant Life, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-6955.
A surgeon wrestles with how much to share

BY JOHN B. WONG

You could hear the siren of the ambulance blasting its way to the emergency room entrance. As the vehicle rolled to a stop, EMTs with brisk efficient movements transferred the patient to the gurney with all the paraphernalia of life support.

A tearful woman, wife of the patient, rushed through the ER door, screaming for help. With firm courtesy, she was led to the waiting room while doctors and nurses moved quickly to care for her 71-year-old husband, now in shock.

My assistant and I worked on the patient for four hours in the operating room to save his life, repairing a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm (abnormal enlargement of the main artery). I breathed a prayer of thanks when Peter Magnuson was wheeled back to the recovery room after a successful resection of the aneurysm and placement of a prosthetic graft. As is typical in cases of this kind, seven units of blood were used.

One year later I was informed by the Red Cross that one of the seven units of blood used for Peter’s surgery had come from a donor now turned HIV positive. Ordinarily, this type of situation, though bad news for everyone concerned, is of no grave ethical or moral consequence. My first inclination was to call both Peter and his wife, Maggie, to come in to talk things over and to inform them of the new development. I did neither, however, at least not then. And why not?

You see, Maggie Magnuson was a very devoted but fastidious woman who ran the house (and probably her husband) with order and efficiency. I remembered that on one occasion when Peter had a urinary infection (which is not contagious in the usual sense), Maggie had absolutely forbidden him to play with their two grandchildren (whom he adored) or even to allow the children to come to the house.

The next morning I called Maggie (she was invariably the one who answered the phone) and asked her to drop by the office at her convenience. She pressed me hard as to what it was all about: the answer of “something on a report” didn’t satisfy her. She insisted on coming to the office right then, which she did. I wasn’t at all surprised when she reminded me that if her husband had another urinary infection, he must not hug his grandchildren or play with them in the house.

I mumbled a few brief remarks, explaining that the culture report from a specimen taken two weeks earlier was essentially negative. I knew that if I told her about the HIV positive blood, Peter would be totally isolated, not only from the grandchildren he loved and played with often, but also from his wife. Everyone around the family knew how Maggie felt about AIDS. Her aversion toward people afflicted with AIDS through no fault of their lifestyle was equally strong.

For a week I struggled with how to handle the situation ethically. In the year since his aneurysm surgery, Peter had suffered a heart attack. Though he had recovered from that incident, he had told me repeatedly that he wouldn’t want to live if he came down with another serious illness. His only incentives to live lay in the arms of his grandchildren.

Maggie’s opinion about AIDS and people with positive HIV or AIDS was unalterably set. Previous attempts at education and discussion on this subject had been fruitless. Should I now send Peter to be tested for HIV? What if the test result
was positive? Such news would surely spell his physical and emotional isolation from the ones he loved. Even if he tested negative for HIV at this time, he would need continuous monitoring. Maggie’s anxiety and fear about him turning positive would likely drive her to isolate Peter no less than if he was HIV positive. One thing seemed certain: Eric and Tammie would not be visiting their grandpa.

From a professional perspective, the easiest way out might be simply to tell Peter and Maggie about the blood report and let them face whatever consequences that might ensue. But human factors had to be considered as well.1

Is Silence Ever Golden?

Two weeks after my ethical striving with Peter and Maggie, I stood at the foot of a hospital bed in a surgical intensive unit talking with a woman injured when the car in which she and her husband had been riding was hit by a drunk driver. “How is Joe?” Jeannie asked in a quavering voice, still groggy from the four hours of surgery it had taken to repair her severe abdominal internal injuries.

There seemed to be no good way to break the news: it had been a terrible accident, and her husband had sustained massive brain damage and died in the operating room. Complicating things still further, their daughter, Jolene, was a second-year internal medicine resident at the hospital and was waiting in the corridor while I spoke with her mother. Jolene had urged me to promise her that I wouldn’t tell her mother about Joe’s death until Jeannie recovered enough from her own surgery.

Jolene’s request wasn’t at all irrational: six months earlier, while in the hospital recovering from another surgery, Jeannie had gone berserk at the news of her father’s death, yanking out all the IV lines in her arms. I had personal knowledge of that incident and several similar ones.
Physically tired from hours in the operating room, saddened over the whole senseless auto accident, I debated how to answer Jeannie's insistent question, "How is Joe?"

On a principle level, telling the truth is always the right thing for a Christian to do. But how to tell the truth and when to tell it are not always easy decisions. The apostle Paul's well-known phrase "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) comes quickly to mind. Paul is referring among other things to doctrinal truth, truth about Christ, or the truthful, loving, maturing Christian life. But the principle of speaking both candidly and compassionately is applicable to many other situations as well.

Telling the truth in love requires at minimum that we think of all the people at risk, their vulnerability, their emotional resilience, and intellectual understanding. Our sensitive, measured, quantified disclosure, whether in a lump-sum fashion or incrementally, reflects our Christian respect for the well-being of the recipient of the "truth." We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person's ability to deliberate so as not to overwhelm him or her in the process.

Telling the truth also means relating and explaining the facts of the situation in the most honest way one knows how. Deception is stating what is untrue or omitting what is true as one perceives it. Intention clearly counts.

For Bible-believing Christians, truth-telling is grounded in the ninth commandment, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16, NIV). This commandment not only has its relevance in a court situation but is by extension applicable in all our relationships with others. Love, deliverance, covenant faithfulness, justice—all reflective of God's character as exemplified in the preamble to the Ten Commandments (verse 2)—must be the final arbiters of truth-telling.

Truthful disclosure in our society is often legally required as well. For health-care providers such as myself, there are professional oaths and codes of ethics to adhere to. Being truthful is implicitly and explicitly required in these declarations.

But it is possible to tell the truth in a brutal fashion that may well be morally reprehensible. ("The pathology report says you have grade 4 cancer, and according to statistics, you are going to die in three months. There is nothing I can offer.") Without love, truth-telling can even be self-motivated: we quickly salve our conscience by "getting it off our chest" and bring our anxiety to an end. With love, however, not telling the truth in entirety at one installment may require greater energy and thought. It may even make us targets of criticism.

If we are living real lives in the real world, then we are painfully aware that life sometimes presents us with tragic moral choices. Compassionate people must ask, "If the facts have no implication for the other person's deliberation and choices, can the disclosure wait?"

And if the revelation may well lead the other person to make a wrong judgment (based on his/her past behavior) that would be detrimental to health and life, is it justifiable to hold off the truth for a while?

We must grant that there may be compelling reasons why persons such as Maggie and Jeannie need to know the entire truth at one moment, heart-breaking and devastating as it may be. Individuals need the truth in order to make rational decisions—planning for funerals, drafting wills, making peace with God and amends with fellow human beings. Concealment runs the risk of undermining genuine relationships, either professional or private. In sickness and vulnerable situations, in instances in which persons have unequal power, such trust is crucial and pivotal.

Any lingering perception in the public mind that those with information have either deceived them or treated the truth in cavalier fashion will erode the trust that is essential for healing and growth. People in need will not seek help if they fear being deceived. There are psychological studies that illustrate that harm cannot be correlated with honest disclosures to patients. Even the presumption of a physician's "therapeutic privilege" to withhold information under special circumstances is refuted by lack of evidence of harmful effects of truthful disclosure and by what a reasonable person in a similar circumstance would want to know.

A Principled Approach

A century ago Ellen White articulated a principle for the physician's relationship with the patient that I believe is applicable to many relationships, including those of health-care professional to patient, minister to parishioner, teacher to student, counselor to counselee, even friend to friend: "Though the truth may not all be spoken on all occasions, it is never necessary or justifiable to deceive. Never should the physician or the nurse stoop to prevarication." 1 In sum, the burden of proof rests on the one with the information as to why he/she does not fulfill the basic ethical obligation of telling the truth to the one in need.

How can we go about telling the truth both clearly and compassionately? By putting real people at the center of our model.

This approach can be represented by a triangle. At the apex of the triangle are the Christian norms—the Ten Commandments, biblical rules, principles, models—all including such qualities as love, justice, truth, freedom, creativity, trust, obedience, human value, stewardship, humility, and...
We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.

We need to gauge the telling of bad, brutal news according to the person’s ability to deliberate.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the power of grace of God, Christians can make good ethical decisions. Understandably, these will never be perfect in this fallen world, especially with our sinful natures and faulty perceptions. At their best, our conclusions are only approximations of God’s ideal. Thus, how I dealt with Peter’s blood report and what I told Jeannie are less important than how you will do when circumstances require you to tell a difficult truth.

But if you find yourself curious about what I did, read the endnotes.
Every day Rose came into the store I worked in, sauntering dreamily among the people, a statuesque head taller than most. Her face was always in full makeup, the alluring colors blending perfectly into porcelain skin. A walking mannequin if ever there was one. She never spoke, until I broke the ice one day.

“Hi, Rose!” I chirped, ringing up her order. She murmured a smoky hello and took the change I handed her in her Jergen’s hands. “So,” I mused, “what will make the Rose bloom today?”

Rose tossed her perfect blond head slightly, gazed into the light with half-closed Maybelline lids, and sighed, “A handsome man.” I shot her a look. Was she serious? She stood frozen, her cheeks as hollow as her soul, her eyes beholding a hallucination only the vain could see. She was serious! She was the image of perfect superficiality, and proud to admit it. I held back the laughter she didn’t know I felt as she floated out of the storefront into the ogling world. I should have cried. That poor woman. Someday she will be old, wrinkled, and incontinent, and then who will she be?

Her male counterpart may be my friend Scott, who is a born calendar boy. He’s a six-foot-three, square-shouldered, chisel-chinned, dapper Dan with an attitude. That attitude comes from knowing he turns pretty female heads wherever he goes, but Scott will be the first to tell you it doesn’t make for a quality existence. One cover girl after another has walked through his life, but today he is alone. When the surface is so pretty, sometimes it’s hard to get down to the deeper stuff that makes a relationship work.

Ellen impressed me in the opposite way. She glided into my life through her numerous books, which I devoured with intensity. She wrote 25 million words throughout her life, the most published woman author of her time. She wrote with both analytical prowess and pathos, a rare combination, and for me the words fairly jumped off the page into my craving soul. What an impact this woman has had on me and countless others, but did you know? Ellen White was . . . well, slightly disfigured.

Not born disfigured, but made that way by a rock thrown to taunt her. God allowed that rock to smash her nose into an incongruous twist that marred her once-beautiful face for life.

She learned that “our personal appearance often makes a difference in the treatment we receive from our companions. . . . A pretty face, a handsome dress, attracts them; but let misfortune take these away, and the fragile friendship grows cold or is broken” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 11, 12).

Jesus learned that lesson young as well, for He had “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2). God didn’t advertise for a perfect heaven by making Jesus a model of physical attractiveness. I don’t think His mother was the paragon of beauty that the artists have depicted her to be, either. Where did Jesus get the genes that made Him average-looking? Not from God, but from Mary.

Christian psychologist James Dobson makes the observation that the current obsession with sex in our culture causes physical beauty to take on an unnatural significance. “Simply stated, the more steamed up a culture becomes over sex, the more it will reward beauty and punish ugliness” (Focus on the Family, May 1997).

Thank you, Ellen, Mary, Jesus. Remembering your plain, devout faces, I can see through the latest magazine cover to what really makes for a life. Lo and behold, in spite of all that the media, Rose, and Scott have told me, the way you look may not be all that important after all.

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer is a wife, mother, and musician who writes from Putnam, Connecticut, where she directs a music and seminar ministry.
Local Dining Hall Employees Disagree

Headquarters seeks early arbitration

BY E. MAXINE GRANT

Fussville, U.S.A.—Open disagreement between two leading chefs at King’s Dining Hall resulted in a visit today from the home office’s reconciliation specialist, Spirit Agent.

Sources close to the dispute say that it came about in response to practices involved in serving the establishment’s living bread and sparkling water of life. Those who respond to the advertising slogan “Taste and See” state that the bread satisfies the appetite and the water thoroughly quenches thirst.

Chef Al Ways Traditional insists that the bread be centered on small pure-white plates and the water be poured slowly into tall crystal goblets. He believes that subdued lighting and soft music best provide the required solemn, awesome atmosphere, in keeping with the superior quality of the company’s unique products.

Chef Letus B. Modern prefers rainbow-hued plates and tumblers. He favors brilliant lighting, joyous music, and alternating the sequence in which the bread and water are served.

President I. Am King, who, jointly with Savior Son and aforementioned A gent, owns and operates the company, states that he has had a longstanding relationship with both chefs and has no plan to terminate either of them, believing them both to be sincere. He says he hopes neither is guilty of pride of opinion, which is strictly forbidden in the chain’s operating manual. He also expresses concern as to the possibility of undue influence in pressing their views on those who have only recently begun tasting the bread and sipping the water.

He further declares, “King’s Dining Hall has long required three specific traits of its employees: trust, optimism, and love. The most important of these is love.”

“In fact,” he observes, “counterfeit dining halls attempting to cash in on our reputation often fail because of a lack in this area. Observers can distinguish genuine King’s Dining Hall employees by their love.”

Organizational principles for King’s Dining Halls are the same worldwide. Waiters in each local establishment are charged with various responsibilities, all of which contribute in some way to promoting the well-advertised products.

Waiters at the local King’s seem to have chosen sides in the current debate, with support almost equally divided between Chef Traditional and Chef Modern. Participants who partake regularly of the living bread and water of life are also said to be embracing one or the other of the opposing views. Some even speak of leaving to form a new dining hall and escaping the confusing atmosphere.

Athough it is unclear exactly when the King’s Dining Hall chain was founded (some claim prehisoric beginnings), there is no doubt as to its future. In many parts of the world franchises are thriving and new branches are springing up on a regular basis. The local establishment has more than doubled its participant statistics during the past few months.

As King explains: “Growth is owing in large part to the love requirement. Chef Traditional and Chef Modern are both aware that it was through the dedicated service of the chefs, waiters, and participants as they worked together in the most recent advertising campaign that such results were achieved. We are confident that as Agent works with them in regard to their differences, love will bring a speedy and peaceful reconciliation. The bread and water have not changed; they are still the most fantastic products available anywhere.”

It seems that the company’s continued success is not in jeopardy. A spokesperson for the establishment says that plans are underway for a soon-coming worldwide banquet. King himself is expected to serve the multitude of guests. A though the exact date has not been announced, company officials affirm that spotless apparel is being offered free of charge to those who want to attend. The local King’s Dining Hall can provide more information to all who are interested.

E. Maxine Grant attends an Adventist church in North America where God’s love embraces both modern and traditional believers.
Hyveth Williams: Senior Pastor

ELLA RYDZEWSKI INTERVIEWS HYVETH WILLIAMS

Hyveth Williams is the senior pastor of the Campus Hill church in Loma Linda, California. Before that she pastored the Boston Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Massachusetts, where she built up membership and became known as a dynamic preacher. Her autobiography, Will I Ever Learn? can be purchased at Adventist Book Centers.

RYDZEWSKI: We worked together in the General Conference Ministerial Association office years ago when you were a theology student at Columbia Union College. Did you ever imagine then that you would be senior pastor of a large church?

WILLIAMS: No! I would have been happy as an associate pastor somewhere. I never thought that women would be allowed more than that. And I didn’t care what I did as long as I could preach and teach the Word.

You have a son. What does he think about having a pastor for a mother?

I have a 32-year-old son, and he loves the idea of my breaking the norm. He is quite excited about it.

Do you see things changing for women in ministry?

I am not sure that they will. I think just about everyone knows my dream—to be a chaplain in the U.S. Senate. So whatever happens in the denomination won’t affect my dream, though it may affect my feelings about fairness in the church.

I read your autobiography a few years ago. You went from your home in Jamaica to England. And then came to the United States, where you got involved in politics.

Yes, I was an actress and model in England. Then I came to Hartford, Connecticut, worked as a secretary, and did a radio show. That show led me into the political arena.

Did you have your son with you when you came to the United States?

Yes, he was 5 years old. I was married then, but a couple years later I found myself a single parent.

What was your religion at that time?

I was a committed atheist and didn’t like people who tried to change me. But then I met God. I returned to England after I had this horrendous encounter that threw my life into an upheaval. Nothing that I knew as reality before was dependable. Everything became skewed by this intervention. Sounds like a Damascus road experience.

Absolutely, and I never thought I would land on my feet again. A text in Job comes to my mind: “The end of Job was much better than his beginning.” That is my story.

You had some supernatural experiences, didn’t you?

Yes, from both sides. Primarily from the side of evil, because that is where I had been going with my life. I grew up in a family that took the spirit world seriously. So when I needed counsel, it was natural for me to seek them for help.

A fter your conversion you went back to England and became involved in Adventism.

Yes; it was through a young woman who became an attorney. I came back to the United States determined to do some sort of ministry.

In spite of the challenges that women faced in ministry?

Yes, and I believed some of the reasons people gave for not ordaining women. I was scared— running from God because I knew what He wanted me to do.

A fter taking theology at Columbia Union College, I
worked at Sligo for two years and then went to Andrews University to complete my M.Div. on campus. I returned to Sligo for a few weeks after graduation and then went on to Boston Temple.

The church at Boston seemed dead. They couldn't find a minister. Many of my friends thought it was a setup—being offered a church no one else wanted—I was a woman and would surely fail. But I felt that God wanted me there. In my spiritual journey at the time I felt God was appealing to me for my own salvation. That I had to show I was safe to save.

You weren't assured of salvation?
I was assured of salvation before I became an Adventist. But when I learned all the doctrines and theories of Adventism, it boggled my mind. God healed me of my emotional brokenness at Boston Temple. I believe God has a pattern for our lives. Sometimes we don't go with Him on the journey, so He has to wait for other circumstances to come together to form the beautiful pattern that He wants to weave for us. It is not that He was incapable of healing me somewhere else, but I saw a glimpse of the design He was making and realized all the threads pulled together at Boston Temple.

Tell me about some of your programs here, especially for the students.
We have a Friday night program called Back to Basics. When school is in session we sometimes have 400-500 students; 150 during vacation. It's a contemporary worship service. At first I preached every Friday and then I turned it over to the university students, who do a marvelous job. The contemporary Sabbath morning service is at 8:30. The students say that's too early, and they tend to come to the 11:00 traditional service.

Then the students don't have to have a contemporary worship service?
They don't have to have it, but they prefer it.

How do you feel about the celebration versus traditional approaches to worship?
Contemporary worship is less formal and more personal. But ours differs from celebration. We combine the seeker service and the traditional. We have a praise section, but spend much more time on preaching. We believe the Word is the transforming force. The Cross Cultural Church is our contemporary service at 8:30 a.m. It is called Cross Cultural because we emphasize first the cross, and second we want people to know that the twenty-first century is about diversity.

There are many ethnic churches; do you want to bring them together?
No, because the first and second generations are steeped in their culture. But the children raised here are like tumbleweeds being blown and tossed about, because they can't find a place to belong. I hope to draw some of these young people back to a relationship with God. When they go out into the world, I want them to stay connected with the church and with God. It's not about today—it's about tomorrow.

Some time ago Time magazine did an article on the future of this country—not a melting pot or salad, but a blending of mixed-race bloodlines. I am trying to prepare my church for that. Things that show up down the road must start in some small corner now. We are beginning here, and it's working.

Are you happy about the new trends in worship style?
Many of our church leaders and pastors have attended Willow Creek. Good as they are, these programs do not have our unique philosophy. And that is why so many who try them find they don't work at home. Eventually they split from the denomination or the church divides and dies. I prayed and thought about this, and concluded that we have the resources to do something as good as Willow Creek using our philosophy. We pulled together some of the best leaders in our denomination and had a conference here at a pri 17-24.

The devotional life of the pastor is so important. How do you handle this?
My devotions are to me like breathings. Without them I couldn't live. I keep my devotional life active and varied. My day is busy and long. I am up between 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning. That's my private time when I talk with God, read, study, and do personal research. I am insatiable when it comes to spiritual things. I read everything—I want to learn and grow.

My invalid mother lives with me, and she wakes up at 6:00 a.m. Even though I have help with her, she still needs my attention. By then the focus is broken, so I guard that early-morning time.

That's quite a schedule; do you ever fall asleep during prayer?
Not usually, but if I do I don't feel guilty. I begin by talking to God as His child. I lay out my life, and then I keep silent. This is not a one-sided conversation. Sometimes I might be inspired to read a text or impressed to open a book, where I find an answer I need. After my meditation, I read the Bible. If the Word says to be generous, I focus on that during the day. God communicates in many different ways. He does not communicate with me in the same way as when I was an atheist and He had to get my attention.

How long are your devotions?
It can be 10 minutes or two hours, depending on what happens. I'm not one of those who feel that if I don't put in an hour, God doesn't love me. We just have an honest, authentic relationship. You need to understand my work is about God, my reading is about God; my eating—everything is about God. So sometimes I say, "God, give me a break." On an occasional morning my devotion may be reading the biography of someone who has made a difference in my life. So it doesn't need to be the Bible or Ellen White. I needn't feel guilty, because I'm in a relationship with God. Whatever vitamins He feels I need, that is what I take.

What about personal retreats?
Yes, I do them much more than people guess. Every now and then I slip away for a day, a week, or a weekend. I also have this wonderful yard, and I might take a day off and hide there, soaking up the Son of righteousness.

My time with God is so precious to me that it is the untouchable area of my life. It doesn't matter where I am—up in the air flying or at home. It's like mealtimes; no clock tells us when to eat—our body demands food. And my spiritual life demands spiritual food.
Ben Franklin stares greenishly up at me from the face of a crisp $100 bill. My hand flutters toward him and shrinks away.

“I can’t take this, Grandpa,” I finally quaver. “It’s just too much.”

He looks at me through the bifocal section of his glasses and silently presses the bill into my hands.

“Go ahead,” Grandma urges. “We want to help you out.”

“But . . .” I begin. “You can’t afford this.” The words stick in my throat, and my eyes cloud with tears. I can’t even manage a “Thank you.”

“T hanks . . .” Grandpa explains. “Take it, and don’t worry.”

I nod meekly and close my fingers around and over Ben’s benevolent gaze. “T hanks . . .”

Grandma and Grandpa clear their throats and start bustling around the kitchen as though nothing unusual has happened. I’m left standing at the counter, staring after them in awe.

C ome in, come in!” Grandma sang from the porch on the night Chris and I arrived. She awarded us both with a strong-armed hug and an earsplitting kiss. “We have beds for you inside.” Her face haloed by wispy reddish hair, Grandma looked like an angel in a housecoat. Grandpa grinned from the steps—her bathrobed companion.

In the morning Chris was reintroduced, hugged, questioned, and fed—a proper welcome to the Coleman house. Old journals and dusty drawers produced unrivaled treasures: love poems from a teenage Grandpa to his “little Miss Mary”; antique watches and razors; faded family trees.

“Let’s go for a walk!” Grandma suggested before the last “aah” of intrigue had faded away. “I love the rain,” Grandma enthused, gazing lovingly at the dripping trees. “I can just imagine that we’re adventurers discovering a new territory. Sarah, that reminds me of when you were little . . .” A nd so our journey progressed. O ver logs, through brambles, lost in the trees and then found again, and finally back on the trail toward home, my fearless grandma leading our safari. Leave it to Grandma to find an adventure.

“T hey’re the most giving people I’ve ever met,” Chris concludes softly, and I have to agree. Leave it to Grandma and Grandpa.

Leave it to Grandma and Grandpa. H ow many times have I thought these words without realizing the striking parallel? Christ’s love glows brighter now that I’ve seen its effects in my grandparents’ lives. T hey gave $100. H e gave it all. T hey welcomed us. H e w oos us. H is arms out-stretched on Calvary. T hey care for their relatives. H e died to save H is persecutors. Leave it to Jesus. Leave it to H im.

O ne question still bothers me: H ow can I ever repay my debt to Grandma, Grandpa, and other generous benefactors? H ow can I repay my debt to Christ? A n image comes to mind, and I try to shake it off. I’m so selfish, so slow, so unfit to compare! T he image persists. I see hands, my hands, outstretched toward a person in need. I’m holding a gift. B ehind me, Grandma and Grandpa hold out their gifts as well. A nd behind them, Jesus holds open H is arms, giving H is life as the greatest gift of all.

I shrink from the thought. I’m so selfish, so slow, so unfit to compare! W here will I find the selflessness to give as freely as they have?

T he image stays steady, and suddenly I know. Leave it to Jesus. Leave it to H im.

Sarah wrote this article during her internship at the Adventist Review. She currently attends Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.