“Coming at You”
Are you ready for this fall’s crowd?
Back Home
What an uplifting June 18 Cutting Edge Edition! A great big welcome back to David and Marian Lewis and their beautiful family (see Andy Nash’s interview “Always . . . and Forever”).

I’m so glad that I came back several years ago. May each of you young adults continue to stand firm—we love and need you.

—Loretta Slack
Caldwell, Idaho

This issue was a real winner. I was immediately drawn to your cover story and read it with deep interest and lots of head-nodding. To hear from two young people who left to see and experience the world and are “back home” is most refreshing.

If young people are still coming (even occasionally), that’s some indication that there is something we have offered—or are expected to offer—that they feel in need of. When they “drop in” for the occasional visit, let’s not turn them away by our inappropriate and sometimes outright un-Christian attitudes.

—Glen G. Cross, Pastor
Saint Kitts, West Indies

Why did you have to ruin a beautiful story about David and Marian Lewis with a provocative picture? Very inappropriate for a Christian magazine.

—Shirley Finneman
Via E-mail

To David and Marian Lewis: Welcome back!

Steve Case, President
Piece of the Pie Ministries

I have not yet formed the words to describe adequately my distress upon reading this article. To say contrived, banal, and suspiciously saccharine isn’t putting it boldly enough.

The biggest problem I had was the smug legalistic edge it presented. Certainly I took issue with Marian Lewis’s comment that the church is beginning to compromise. On what? Some theological issue? What’s the theological issue in wearing jewelry? She asks, “Don’t we realize the advantage we have over those who don’t know Jesus?” May I just ask what advantage not wearing jewelry would give one?

And then David Lewis’s comment: “But we don’t want the gospel/jazz, gospel/rhythm-and-blues type of sound. We want to keep it beautiful.” OK—the Lewis family has a right to their opinion, but I think they should be careful about putting that opinion out as Adventist fact. There are other “beautiful” types of music, with drums or without. Drums are a cultural part of music for some, and I don’t think that it dishonors the Lord to have an upbeat song. Obviously, if you can’t hear the words, you defeat the purpose of a praise song.

But neither will we all homogenize into the Heritage Singers/Del Delker/King’s Heralds sound.

—Tanita Davis
Vacaville, California

On the Level
Steve Divnick’s comparison of multi-level marketing (MLM) with church organization and growth was fascinating (see “On the Level,” June 18). A few years ago my husband and I were being recruited for one of these organizations. After coming home from one of the rallies, I remarked to my husband that it almost seemed like an evangelistic meeting. Divnick’s description of the passion and commitment required to make MLM a success paralleled devotion to God. Uncomfortable exactly because of this, we became “quitters” in secular MLM and channeled our zeal into the MLM of Jesus’ church.

—Cheryl Campbell
College Place, Washington

“On the Level” pictures the Adventist Church in a very realistic way. Our focus has been on administration instead of individual members. To wake us up, I suggest that each church distribute copies of this article to those not receiving the Review and thus redirect our focus. Let initiative flourish, and there will be a revival.

—Henry Baerg
Yountville, California
The Bible Code

As I was reading Ed Christian’s review of Michael Drosnin’s The Bible Code (see Book Mark, June 18), I recalled my own reading of this intriguing volume about a year earlier. Perhaps the best “critique” of the book arises from what the author, a self-described nonreligious skeptic, says toward the end. Dismissing salvation from a supernatural source, Drosnin declares: “The message of the Bible code is that we can save ourselves” (p. 179).

For those who believe the biblical truth that humans can be saved only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, this anti-Christian statement should end the debate about the merits or demerits of this spellbinding but heretical work.

—Ron du Preez
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF RELIGION
SOLISI UNIVERSITY, ZIMBABWE

Young Adult Writers

Many thanks for two articles in the June 18 issue.

Andy Nash really hit home in “Our Church Paper.” As a teacher in North America’s largest Adventist academy, I can tell you that our kids are begging for complete honesty from us!

Andra Armstrong offered the unique perspective of a young adult in “Standing Firm” and helped the reader to understand the storm of emotions when parents make such a drastic reversal of an earlier commitment.

Thank you for making young adult writers an important part of the Review.

—Bob duBose, Jr.
LOMA LINDA ACADEMY
LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

A Third Opinion

As I read the first few paragraphs of Robert Oster’s letter (“A Second Opinion,” June NAD Edition), I found myself agreeing with him. As a 17-year-old Adventist, I do feel that the youth are sometimes sadly neglected or discouraged by the church. My agreement ended, however, when Mr. Oster wrote: “Do you see great things happening in North America? The answer is an unqualified no.”

I am a member of the very active youth group at Azure Hills church in southern California. Our youth pastor is sincere in his love for Jesus and every member of the group. The other adult leaders are also committed to guiding us in our spiritual growth. Our leaders have started many ministries so that all the members of the group can use their talents for Christ. We have an active drama and puppet ministry, a youth-run newsletter, a youth-run planning committee for spiritual and social activities, and several Bible studies throughout the week. We are all encouraged to help out in song service and to give testimonies during Sabbath school.

It might be true that clichés prevail during board meetings and in surveys, but only real, down-to-earth Christianity is alive in the Azure Hills youth group.

—Rachel Anderson
AZURE HILLS, CALIFORNIA
"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

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

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As another academic year spins in, we might be smart to recap what we’ve covered—or should have covered—up to this point. No, I’m not speaking of the quadratic formula or the rhyme scheme in “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” or the distinction between stalactites and stalagmites—as compelling as these things are.

Instead, I’d like, for a moment, to focus on the basics, the essentials, that which matters most, that which you simply must not forget. Above all else, keep these things in the front of your mind, the heart of your heart. They—and only they—make a difference. All the difference.

Jesus created you. There’s no escaping it. At some point in time—quite possibly, before time—you and He first met. One quiet moment; just the two of you, in His grand plan, before you ever were. In “the secret place” of Psalm 139 (NIV) He dreamed you, the unique and perfect you—perfect in appearance, perfect in character, perfect in every way. But being fair, He released you from the secret place, and being sin-plagued, the world perverted the perfect you. And today you don’t look as you’re supposed to look, act as you’re supposed to act. None of us do. The only people to look right were Adam and Eve. The only person to act right was Jesus.

But because this same Jesus knew the perfect you, He determined long ago to restore the perfect you. So . . .

Jesus died for you. You don’t need to know all that transpired on that old rugged cross your grandparents sing about in quaking voices; you just need to know that something incredible did happen, and because it did—because of that horrible moment when Satan “wrung the heart of Jesus” (The Desire of Ages, p. 753)—you can have a clear slate, a fresh beginning. This fresh beginning is called grace, and it’s a concept unique to Christianity. In other religions you work your way to God; in Christianity you simply accept His work. No matter where you’ve been, what you’ve done, who you are, grace continues to be there for the tasting. And once you truly taste it, you’ll know it. Because you’ll never be the same.

Jesus, though, didn’t promise only a gracious tunnel of light in a world of darkness, but an entire world of light. And so one day . . .

Jesus will return for you. You memorized the passage as a kid, but you might not have thought about it in a while. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:1-3, NIV). We don’t, in this desensitized age, seem to talk about heaven much anymore, but that doesn’t make it any less a reality. That kingdom is real, and in more ways than one, it’s “forcefully advancing” (Matt. 11:12, NIV). On one hand, then, you must continue to keep watch. On the other hand, don’t bother with those who tell you, in any form or fashion, exactly when it’s coming. Jesus Himself didn’t know; neither do they.

We do know one thing: Heaven will be breathtaking. If you’ve ever been tempted to think anything else, you might consider that the same Jesus who designed you is also designing your place. In other words, your new home will fit you to an absolute tee. I happen to picture lots of water slides. You might picture something else. But we can all smile in confidence that heaven (and the new earth) will trigger a collective “Yes!” from the moment we set our eyes on it.

Even greater, of course, than the place and the people will be the Person—the physical, visible presence of Jesus Himself. Not only will He stand among the great palm branch-waving multitude (see Rev. 7:9, 10), but it’s quite possible that one day, one designated day, He’ll take you alone to that secret place where He first dreamed you. There He’ll turn to you, the perfect you, and say, “Welcome back, My child. You have no idea how much I’ve missed you.”
In the last weekend of June the Atholton Seventh-day Adventist Church and the St. John’s Lutheran Church, of Columbia, Maryland, prayed together. Atholton is my home church. St. John’s had used our facility for four months earlier in the year while they searched for new quarters. Thus our friendship began and blossomed into a three-day prayer conference.

Such friendships are not unknown in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but neither are they sought after. For many years ours has been perceived as an exclusive denomination. I’ve heard the complaint both in and out of the church. Perhaps we have let our fear of “clasping hands” with opposing doctrines keep us from sharing ourselves with other Christians. Certainly welcoming others to our churches and joining them in Bible study in theirs is far from accepting postbiblical doctrines.

God has not limited Himself to one denomination. Many Adventists have gone to work in the world and found the “salt of the earth” already there and making an impact. I remember my first job—as secretary to Paul Foley, an honest and kind Catholic who could not be bought or sold. An executive in medical licensure, he turned down bribes with decisiveness. As a secretary at a Presbyterian church and then an assistant at World Vision in California, I enjoyed the camaraderie with others of faith. These experiences let me know that my church is not alone in worshiping God, claiming Jesus as our Saviour, and having the fruits of the Spirit.

I observed this truth again at the prayer conference. Both churches shared a love for music as our choirs and congregations merged to sing. The friendship of our two pastors moved us as we heard how together they visited with and prayed for other pastors. We learned that we all had concerns for the unchurched around us. We expressed compassion for our community as we went prayer walking, bringing to God our regard for our neighbors. We called on and prayed for the sick in the county hospital. There is no act of kindness that we cannot do together. And together we can study the Word, applying it to our lives today and later to the end times.

St. John’s Lutheran members are much like us. They have been blessed; they have problems, and prayers they want answered. They know Christ as their personal Saviour and long to know Him better. At my church we have learned a lot from the Lutherans, and we hope they have learned truths about us. When the end-time comes and the truth that surrounds Christ gets distorted and our precious day of meeting with Him is presented by Satan as legalistic manipulation, our Christian friends will know better. For we have taken the time to share with them now.

On an international level the report “Adventists and Lutherans in Conversation” (supplement to the Adventist Review, June 25, 1998) will enlighten both denominations and help our people in Europe. On the local level our little meeting with St. John’s Lutheran would not seem to matter much. But if Adventist churches everywhere invited neighboring churches to cosponsor prayer conferences, imagine what could happen.*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has the remnant message for this time. But why not respond to the remnant movement in other churches? We have truths to share. It is time to stop others from distorting our beliefs; to, as much as possible, make friends of our enemies. We do this by letting them know the truth about our God. Perhaps other Christians will see that although the frame may be a little different, the picture is of the same God. To the Jew we may become Jews in telling them of our common Sabbath. To the Lutheran we can become Lutheran in sharing our common roots with Luther and righteousness by faith. To the Catholic, by letting them know we understand the sacredness of the cross. And with all who will, we can rejoice in the gospel of Christ.

* Ruthie Jacobsen at the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists is available for coordinating prayer conferences.

God, be with us as we move forward in friendship, not to attempt to change others, but to allow Your Holy Spirit to work through all of us. Amen.
THANKS AGAIN

For two years now we’ve printed brief thank-you’s from one Adventist to another in our Thanksgiving issue. The tradition continues.

Send one tribute (40 words or fewer) to “Thank You” at the Give & Take address below. Be sure to include your city, state/country, and phone number. And where possible, also include a photo of the person you’re thanking.

Deadline for submissions: September 28.

Remember—if you don’t get the weekly Review, you won’t get this special feature. To subscribe for yourself or someone you love at a discounted $33.97 for one year, call 1-800-456-3991. Thanks.

“PERFECT CONDITIONS”

Last winter when we ran the winning entries from our summer camp photo contest, we invited readers to submit their best church-related winter photos, which, we promised, we’d publish this summer. Apparently your cameras were too cold to click, because we received just one entry. It’s a good one, though.

Here are three shots from an Adventist outing to Camp Polaris in Aleknagik, Alaska. “We try to take children out winter camping once a month, November through March,” writes Joy Crow, of Dillingham. “They learn winter survival techniques and ski or sled. On this trip we had perfect conditions—zero degrees and new snow—for our 50-mile round trip on Lake Aleknagik.”

WE NEED YOU

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

GIVE & TAKE

ADVENTIST LIFE

Years ago, in my former church, we received a new young “Pastor Dan,” who had a deep, rich, sonorous voice—the kind that radio announcers are made of. One evening we were sharing our most embarrassing stories, and Pastor Dan’s wife told of the very first wedding at which he had officiated. After pronouncing the couple man and wife, Pastor Dan had intoned in that deep, rich voice, “What God has torn asunder, let no man join together!”

—Len Cornwell, Berrien Springs, Michigan

Our grandson, Kody, had just turned 3 and was learning to dress himself. Early on a recent Sabbath morning he pulled on a play shirt with a large tiger head emblazoned on the front. Just then Mom came into his room to see what he was doing, and before she could question his choice in Sabbath clothes, Kody looked up and said, “This shirt reminds me of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Kody wore the shirt the rest of the day.

—Grover and Joy Barker, Durango, Colorado
Satellite evangelism through small group ministry combines both high tech and high touch.

“COMING AT YOU”

BY RON SCHULTZ

THE SCENT OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS seemed to hang in the air. With one year of college behind me, I had traveled to Bristol Bay, Alaska, to make enough money gill-net fishing to finance my next year at Walla Walla College. The skipper provided the power boat and the necessary gear. What he and I lacked in experience we made up for with a “can-do” attitude.

One morning we headed for our boat, eager to get our nets in the water. But when we arrived at the harbor, we discovered that our boat was “high and dry.” Due in part to my inexperience, I had simply failed to read the tide book correctly. That day’s fishing, as well as the entire summer’s experience, “netted” us little success.

Another “fishing season” is about to open, and it holds great promise. NET ’98 will provide great opportunities for local congregations. These meetings are designed to assist the local church in calling people to a discipleship relationship with Jesus Christ to share the truths essential in helping them navigate through the white water of the end-time, and to gather them into a church community that is sharing with the world an accurate picture of a trustworthy God.

But when the series ends, will congregations feel it was a “high-water mark,” or will they feel “high and dry” with expectations that didn’t materialize? The local church can choose to be a passive recipient of the satellite signals—simply project an image on the screen, simply wait to see what happens. Such an approach will likely “net” dismal results and lead some to say satellite public evangelism doesn’t work.

Contrast that scenario with the experience of one congregation that has creatively blended the “high tech” of satellite evangelism with the “high touch” of an active discipling community. The Lewiston, Idaho, Seventh-day Adventist Church has learned that if we expect satellite evangelism to have a long-term, positive impact on the church, it must meaningfully connect our members with guests the moment they take their seats the first evening.

Diana Schult walked through our church doors for the first time during our most recent series of satellite meetings featuring Doug Batchelor. Ten months later, on July 18, both she and her husband became members of our congregation—all because of the powerful synergy of blending satellite evangelism with small group ministry. “I know we would never have made the rapid progress we did without the small group,” she says.

The challenge is: How do we create natural discipling relationships from the outset between our members and the people we are trying to reach?

Experimental Religion

Like many churches across North America, the Lewiston congregation participated in the NET ’95 and NET ’96 satellite evangelistic series led by Mark Finley. Some Lewiston members wondered if people would actually come and continue to stay without an on-site speaker. Without a visiting evangelist, the responsibility to disciple those who attended fell squarely on the local congregation.

As in many other churches, people walked into our church auditorium and sat in pews to watch the telecast on a big screen. In the end, we experienced delightful but limited...
success with both series of meetings. All told, 15 people became members of our congregation through baptism or profession of faith in Christ.

During NET ’96 we tried some creative methods that moved our members into more natural discipling relationships with those who attended. Still, most of the time I found myself as a pastor being the exclusive or primary discipler of those who attended. Despite good intentions, we hadn’t broken through the “pastor-dependent” model for satellite public evangelism.

The breakthrough came on our third try. Led by our Outreach Ministry team, the Lewiston church decided to participate in Doug Batchelor’s satellite series in the fall of 1997, using a small group approach to connect with visitors.

Five years’ experience with team ministries had prepared our congregation to accept the merits of small group process. We had restructured the organization and leadership of our church around seven team ministries that greatly empowered members to believe and understand that the church belonged to them, and not to the pastor. With this helpful attitude in place, it was natural for us to extend the concept of team ministry into the arena of public evangelism. As we reshaped the plan for satellite evangelism, we wanted to maximize our members’ ability to connect with and disciple those who attended.

The first noticeable change came in moving the seminar site out of the large, darkened, impersonal church auditorium, where people sat passively watching a big screen. Instead, we moved the meeting to our fellowship hall, where people gathered around tables viewing three strategically placed televisions. This created a “let’s get acquainted” atmosphere. The lights were up so people could actually read their Bibles and study guides.

The second major change came in the connections between people. From the moment a guest entered, he or she was welcomed by a greeter and then
introduced to a “table host” who acted as a small group leader. Each table group consisted of one or two leaders (called spiritual coaches), several church members, and eventually one or more persons from the community. This approach promised more opportunity for church members to naturally build relationships with those attending.

Creating Trust at the Table

One question remained: Would people feel too exposed, too threatened, by being placed immediately into a small group? Frank and Lori Mesa, parents of two young boys, decided to come the first night. Although Frank had considerable experience dealing with the public as a service manager for an auto dealer, he still felt timid that first evening. “I wasn’t real sure what to expect,” he says. “As we went further along and got to know everyone, it has been the best experience I’ve ever had. Everyone was really open. We had a lot of personal questions that were heavy on our hearts that I wouldn’t have felt comfortable in a large group or in an auditorium to stand up and ask someone.”

Rather than run a big-budget series with mass advertising, we targeted our interests and encouraged members to invite friends and family. About 15 people attended the first weekend of Doug Batchelor’s meetings. Nine of these individuals continue to attend church and actively participate in the life of our congregation eight months later. Five have become part of the church family with at least one more planning this step.

One of these is Diana Schult. “The first time I stepped foot inside the church was the Doug Batchelor series,” she says. “I started on the second night. What I expected was just kind of fade into a large crowd of people.”

When placed in a small group, she stayed quiet at first. After the fifth or sixth meeting, something happened to Diana. “At that time I connected with the group. They became my family, and to this day, I have very strong ties to my spiritual coaches.”

Diana’s husband, Frank, wasn’t interested in attending because of the numbers of people at the event. But as Diana came home night after night, the two would open the Bible between them in bed and discuss what she had been learning. Frank finally attended the meal Diana’s small group hosted for the showing of the last video, after which he started attending church consistently with her. Their spiritual coaches began helping them prepare for baptism and church membership.

For the body of Christ to truly advance, we discovered that the discipleing of people must be transferred from the professional clergy to the members of the body. This approach builds on the scriptural imperative of the priesthood of all the believers in 1 Peter 2:9 and the empowerment of members described in Ephesians 4.

Each One Reach One

The spiritual journey of Ed Dawson may best reflect the paradigm shift our congregation has made in using satellite evangelism. Up to the time Ed walked through our doors for our first satellite evangelistic meeting in the spring of 1995, he was a secular, unchurched man operating his own construction business.

“In ’95 we came into the auditorium and sat and watched. There wasn’t really any accountability there. [In the] ’97 meetings we were in the small groups; we had such a one-on-one connection with everybody that the people felt responsible to be there. It was important to be there every night.”

During the Batchelor series, Ed and his wife, Kim, volunteered to be small group leaders. “Being secular,” Ed shares, “I’d never read the Bible at all. So now I’m going from barely knowing anything in the Bible to teaching it. Which in the end is the greatest thing, because I’ve learned more by teaching, of course, than ever by sitting in a group as a student.”

Ed’s experience shows the power of small group ministry to make a difference in the lives of the spiritual coaches as well: “This [small group ministry] brings our members into a better connection with the Lord. They are now responsible for somebody else.

Building Relationships Through Discussion

Following each video viewing, the group leader facilitated discussion on the topic for 15 to 20 minutes. Questions had been prepared for each topic by the pastor to assist the discussion. These questions focused on building relationships and incorporating truth into one’s practical daily life.

Scheduling the Meetings

To allow for a more natural pace in the discipleship process, each small group set up its own schedule after the first weekend. Most groups met twice a week. Several continued to meet at the church, while others met in homes. By empowering each group to set up its own schedule we found that people were very loyal and dependable in their attendance. To make these multiple viewings possible, we downlinked the satellite signal into five VCRs. A signal amplifier is necessary to split off this many signals.
And by being responsible, you have true discipleship there. It makes me more accountable. It brings me closer to the Lord every day.”

This small group approach builds natural bridges to the extended church family as well. According to Ed, “we’re able to cover all the people who have come. They all have a personal connection with us. When they come to church on the next Sabbath, they can say, ‘I know this person.’ When I came into the church [in 1995], the only person I knew was the pastor.”

Not only has our congregation empowered the members to disciple people during the satellite series, but we’ve also entrusted the preparation for baptism to these same spiritual coaches. Because they have spent dozens of hours together, because they best know the spiritual heart of the person, it’s only fitting that they prepare the candidates for baptism with the support of the pastor.

Using a specially prepared baptismal curriculum that thoroughly covers all areas of biblical truth through a discipleship paradigm, Ed and Kim prepared Frank and Lori Mesa for baptism. When I returned from a continuing education trip to Israel last February, Ed informed me that a date for Frank and Lori’s baptism had been set. He had just one question: Would I show up?

Doing What the Spirit Says

Will this small group discipling approach work in other communities? Only the Spirit knows for sure. But Lewiston, Idaho, seems like much of America. It’s a city of nearly 30,000 that serves as a central hub for medical services and shopping. The major employment opportunities are in the manufacturing, medical, and educational sectors. A four-year state college is located in the city, with two state universities within easy commuting distance. The community is comprised primarily of Caucasians, with a fairly even spread of lower-, middle-, and upper-income people.

Our congregation’s average worship attendance is 135, with a membership of about 260. Our church family reflects the social and economic mix of our community as well as having a good representation of all age groups.

Since the Batchelor series, the Dawsons and the Mesas have continued to meet with others from the church who were part of their small group. Their group has been hosted by our first elder and his wife, Dick and Mary Jo Hays. Having the support of this spiritually mature couple has allowed Kim and Ed to take risks in discipling others. These weekly gatherings continue to be a place of deep spiritual grounding and a safe place to grow in Christ.

What about NET ’98? “If everything works out,” Frank Mesa concludes, “we want to open our home and have people come to our house and have a small group setting in our home. We’re trying to contact several people to get them involved, to help them receive the peace that we’ve received.”

The shift to members discipling others is best summarized in the words of Sue Geffre, now an active participant using her skills as a graphic artist to design our church newsletter. “I came to the meetings in 1995,” Sue says. “I like the small group way you did this much better.”

The principles on which we have built this blend of “high tech” and “high touch” are timeless: the plans can be creatively adapted to the unique demographics of most regions and to churches of varying sizes. This has been our church’s way of being obedient to the words of Jesus: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV).

Ron Schultz pastors the Lewiston and Juliaetta churches in Idaho.
Adventist Higher Ed

Six share their perspectives.

Adventist education works! Ten years after graduating from college, my husband and I are still Adventist Christians, and our experience in Adventist schools can take some credit for that.

In college I saw Christ clearly in my teachers. For example, there was not a day that my chemistry professor, Dr. Tom Tatum, did not begin with a word of prayer, down on his knees. When ever talking about a concept that seemed incredible to him, he always credited our God as an awesome God to have created such an intricate, complicated process. (In contrast, my chemistry professor at a community college always referred to how great evolution was to have evolved such systems.) Our schools gave us every opportunity to experience and develop spiritual lives—whether it be short-term or long-term mission projects, or participating in Weeks of Prayer or a soup kitchen. A “Christian education” can be found in any of our schools. And it does make a difference in whether you will remain in the church for years to come.

But I cannot end my response here. Most of our high school and college students really don’t know how to answer questions about their faith, nor the whys or hows of pr acticing Adventism. Nor are they interested. I was not taught the fundamentals of Adventism in academy or college. It was later that I searched for myself. It would seem sensible that Adventist higher education would make that a priority.

When introduced to the “real” world, many of our young people are overwhelmed with all the choices they are made to make.

As Dr. Ketting stated, we must listen to our young people and not be afraid to let them question. Let them question, then help them walk down the road of decision-making.

— Cheryl S. Toscano, Killeen, Texas

Following Ginger Ketting’s “A College Professor Shares Her Heart” (April 16 Cutting Edge Edition), we invited readers who were attending had attended Adventist colleges to tell how the experience affected their personal spirituality and Adventist beliefs. As we expected—and hoped—the response was overwhelmingly positive. Here’s a sampling.—Editors.

Though I have never had a class from Dr. Ketting, many of my friends would testify that she is one of many Adventist teachers who exemplify the positive godly qualities outlined in her article. Having been involved in Adventist education for a year as a teacher and 15 as a student, I have a great amount of faith in our system, despite its shortcomings. I encourage our community to commit themselves to be not only supportive of, but involved in, the education of today’s Adventist young people.

— David Phillips, student, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California

My first year in Adventist higher education has been a very positive experience. Most of my teachers have been very good at bringing God into lectures— even into composition, anatomy and physiology, and other classes. I really appreciate that.

The most memorable thing I have learned this year is that knowing Jesus and being His friend is what eternal life is all about. I knew that before, but I concentrated fully on doing the right things and stuff like that. I look at it differently now. If I don’t have that close relationship and really know who God is, the works are just works.

I thank my teachers, other staff members, and some students for helping me to see that. They’ve made a difference in my life.

— Kelley Edney, student, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee

A dventist education works! Ten years after graduating from college, my husband and I are still Adventist Christians, and our experience in Adventist schools can take some credit for that.

In college I saw Christ clearly in my teachers. For example, there was not a day that my chemistry professor, Dr. Tom Tatum, did not begin with a word of prayer, down on his knees. Whenever talking about a concept that seemed incredible to him, he always credited our God as an awesome God to have created such an intricate, complicated process. (In contrast, my chemistry professor at a community college always referred to how great evolution was to have evolved such systems.) Our schools gave us every opportunity to experience and develop spiritual lives—whether it be short-term or long-term mission projects, or participating in Weeks of Prayer or a soup kitchen. A “Christian education” can be found in any of our schools. And it does make a difference in whether you will remain in the church for years to come.

But I cannot end my response here. Most of our high school and college students really don’t know how to answer questions about their faith, nor the whys or hows of practicing Adventism. Nor are they interested. I was not taught the fundamentals of Adventism in academy or college. It was later that I searched for myself. It would seem sensible that Adventist higher education would make that a priority.

When introduced to the “real” world, many of our young people are overwhelmed with all the choices they are made to make.

As Dr. Ketting stated, we must listen to our young people and not be afraid to let them question. Let them question, then help them walk down the road of decision-making.

— Cheryl S. Toscano, Killeen, Texas
Having spent 21 years in the Adventist school system (including Andrews University and Loma Linda University), I think I've seen the gamut of Adventist faculty and staff. And while none of the schools I attended was without a wayward apple or two, I can wholeheartedly say that my experience was spiritually positive.

While most of these teachers were impressive in their respective fields and could easily make way more in a non-Adventist institution, what really impressed me was their attitude and actions outside the classroom. I was invited to their homes for vespers and parties, saw them practice "blue jean Christianity" on mission trips, and watched them demonstrate that Adventist Christians could have fun on retreats. And on the playing field, where Adventist athletics tend to get too competitive at times, the faculty best represented what Jesus must have been like when He played in Nazareth as a youth.

So while the reports may be true about a few rogue teachers in our Adventist system, I won't be worried about quality and spirituality when our 10-month-old Summer Alyssa is ready to begin her formal schooling, for I know that legions of faithful teachers, faculty, and staff toil in the trenches, pointing the way toward Christ through their actions and words.

— Ernie Medina, Jr., Dr. Ph.D., Loma Linda, California

I am a 48-year-old third-generation Seventh-day Adventist. The spirituality of our schools is why I have remained a Seventh-day Adventist. I find it much harder to be an Adventist outside of our schools. Our church seems to be stuck in the 1800s. While in school we could question; "out" in the church I find that our education [system] is questioned, and if not verbally approved by Mrs. White, then we are damned. Our educational system nurtures a growth environment; it is also tolerant of a variety of views. In my opinion, it is our higher educational system that keeps one in the church; it is the church's response to this system that forces people out.

— Karl F. Hafner, M.D., M.P.H., via e-mail

I am no longer a Seventh-day Adventist, but I still have some emotional ties to my church and gratitude for 20 years of education. Like me, most of my friends were hesitant to tell their families that they've left the church. On the way to our class reunion, my best friend put on her jewelry in the car rather than in her parents' home.

I think that is what struck me the most when I returned—the covertness. Almost no one seems free to be themselves. Everyone is hiding something. All my life appearances were what counted. The schools liked me better drunk and quiet than sober and questioning. The only times I got in trouble were when I wasn't drinking. I've quit since leaving the church; I no longer have to sedate myself.

Teachers who question God are not the problem. They are merely showing us their human side and giving us an opportunity to deal with doubts and questions. Teachers who do not show God's love are the problem.

— Vicki L. Soloniuk, M.D., Titusville, Pennsylvania
PREVENTING ADDICTIONS:
It’s All About Relationships

BY V. BAILEY GILLESPIE and GARY L. HOPKINS

PARENTS, TEACHERS, COMMUNITIES—well, everyone seems to be running around wondering what can be done to prevent addictive behaviors in our kids. Young people in the world—and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church—are using drugs, having sex, and getting involved with all kinds of dangerous behaviors at earlier and earlier ages. So what can be done? How can we effectively prevent dangerous and addictive behaviors in our young people today?

A statement that we commonly hear is “We have our heads stuck in the sand.” It’s certainly true; we do. But it isn’t because we don’t care; it’s because we simply don’t know what to do. Dangerous and addictive behaviors in our own kids scare us. We have tried everything we can think of, and nothing seems to have worked.

Can we protect our kids from harm?

Let’s begin by seeing what we know about some of the underlying causes of “at-risk behaviors” in teens, then take a hard look at what can be done.

We know that youth from single-parent homes, people whose parents do not take an active role in their lives, who are economically disadvantaged, and who are not supervised are at unusual risk.

Approximately half of all babies born in America are born into single-parent homes today, where proper supervision may be a problem. Note: most teenage girls who become pregnant do so between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. in their own homes. Half of teenage crimes are committed between the hours of 3:00 and 8:00 p.m. One glaring problem is that young people are often unsupervised while their parent(s) are at work.

Many youth, including Seventh-day Adventist youth who come from families where opportunities seem to abound, continue to get involved with drugs and sexual behaviors. We ask ourselves, “Where did we go wrong?” And then we blame ourselves and seldom advance to any positive solutions.

What has the home and church done to try to solve these problems? Our response has been similar to that of the secular community.

1. We have increased the amount of drug and sex education in our schools.
2. We teach kids about sex, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and teen pregnancy at earlier and earlier ages.
3. We bring in specialists in the area of drugs to speak to student groups in schools.
4. We show videos that cover these topics.
5. We increase drug awareness through social programs.

But in spite of these valid and commendable efforts, more young people are using drugs and having sex outside of the benefit of marriage than ever before. These strategies, though useful because they do increase awareness and often offer excellent instruction, simply have not worked in reducing rates of dangerous behaviors in kids—behaviors that often lead to addictions. After all, if information was the answer to this problem, no place has more of it than right here in the United States, and certainly in the church community.

So let’s get a grip, as they say, and recognize that what we have been doing just isn’t working. We need to rethink this problem and do something that does work. We must do something different from what traditionally has been done.

It is important to face some grim realities before discussing what might help. Some kids come from homes in which parents are using drugs and engaging in sex with partners out of wedlock. In fact, some people just don’t have a knack for being good parents. Many parents do not demonstrate critical spiritual values. And to be blunt, some parents are just lousy.

Couple inadequate parenting skills with the fact that American children have watched 22,000 hours of television by the time they turn 18 while having attended only 12,000 hours of school, add in the discovery that more than 50 to 60 percent of Seventh-day Adventist youth don’t have the benefit
of Christian education, and you have a major problem. In addition, the popular culture shouts advertisements for tobacco and alcohol, and social environments are sometimes terrible.

So what can we do?

Here’s a plan: Let’s make parents go to church, quit taking drugs, and stop inviting friends to spend the night for immoral purposes. In other words, let’s live the spiritual and moral lives we all know to be biblical and practical. While we do that, let’s get everyone to take the televisions out of the homes, pass laws that outlaw tobacco and alcohol, and remove all drugs from culture and society.

Guess what?

That isn’t going to happen. The political and economic climate in the United States will not allow that to occur.

Here is a better plan: let’s do whatever we can do to make kids resilient to these external influences. Research is available that describes these “resiliency factors” that can be encouraged in youth. Here is what is helpful in providing substantial protection from at-risk behaviors. Young people who:

1. have higher levels of self-worth,
2. have commitment to school,
3. internalize spiritual values,
4. build relationships with non-family adults,
5. achieve higher levels of academic attainment,
6. have supervision, and
7. experience a sense of connectedness at home and at school
8. enjoy substantial protection from at-risk behaviors.

Central to building resiliency skills in youth is helping teens see that the odds can be surmounted. This comes with self-worth. It is clear that self-worth is enhanced by supportive relationships. The resilient youth in one study were those who had at least one person in their lives who accepted them unconditionally, regardless of temperament, physical attractiveness, or intelligence.

W henever the Lord is doing good things, the devil is doing bad things.

Sounds like the “gift love” Jesus modeled to us during His life on earth. Relationships. Say it again—relationships.

Here is a plan, not necessarily the final version of it, but a plan, nevertheless, that we feel has wonderful potential. Here are its elements:

1. have higher levels of self-worth,
2. have commitment to school,
3. internalize spiritual values,
4. build relationships with non-family adults,
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What’s So Amazing About Grace?


I've enjoyed reading several of Philip Yancey's books. The Jesus I Never Knew, Yancey's last before this one, was such a blessing that I started reading it again immediately after I finished my first trip through it. It clearly was a book that he had devoted a lot of time, thought, and effort to.

When Yancey's So Amazing About Grace came out within two years of the time, thought, and effort to the book that he had devoted a lot of time, thought, and effort to. Yancey's last before this one, was such a blessing that I started reading it again immediately after I finished my first trip through it. It clearly was a book that he had devoted a lot of time, thought, and effort to.

The early chapters of the book illustrate the meaning of grace. Yancey then moves quickly into the topic of forgiveness, for this is the clearest expression of grace. Stories of those who have forgiven much and who have failed to forgive even small offenses illustrate how necessary and rare a commodity grace is. No doubt most Christians will say amen often as they read the early chapters.

But when Yancey moves on to topics such as homosexuality and religion and politics, some may find themselves uncomfortable. Still, he challenges us: Who is our role in the world? Can we apply grace to those who seem most sinful to us? Who needs it more than the outcasts of society? How are we to change the world—through legislation or through grace-filled infiltration?

A great book, full of thought-provoking stories and challenges. If we believe that we are saved by grace, why is it that so much of our world, even within the church, is filled with “ungrace”? asks. Do Christians approach the world with an atomizer filled with the grace of God, dispensing the sweet aroma of love and forgiveness? Or do we attack with a can of roach spray, hoping to wipe out sin with poison? And is there a missionary emphasis of conservative Christians, do non-Christians think of grace, forgiveness, and love? Or do they think of people who try to legislate morality, with little concern for meeting people’s real needs?

The conservative Christian community in which he was raised will sound familiar, with the only differences being diet and day of worship. He mentions Seventh-day Adventists twice: once, unfortunately, when he tells of the funeral of an Adventist who starved himself to death worrying about what was right to eat.

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chilly November evening in 1996, right arm firmly twisted halfway up my back, I arrived at Regent Hall, Oxford Street, London, England, waiting to experience what was billed as “the gospel event of the year.” To my great surprise and utmost satisfaction, it was. A gape, an Adventist drama group that has been serving the church and the community for 15 years, spread their wings and ventured into what for them was the unchartered waters of the gospel musical.

Redemption Song premiered that weekend and was a great success. Combining original writing and songs with quality drama and voices, the troupe produced a musical that since then has blazed a trail through Leicester to Holland and the Edinburgh Festival. Not wanting to rest on their laurels, Redemption Song—The Musical recently completed an eight-city summer tour of England.

It was early 1996 when a series of meetings involving Patrick Bernard, Sean Brown, Colin Anderson, Mark Grey, and Paul Lee took place in south London. The central purpose of the discussions was to find the most effective way to harness the abundance of creative, dramatic, and musical talent in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in England into achieving the most immediate priority for every Christian—carrying the Advent message to all the world. The challenge was there; the gauntlet had been thrown at their feet. As individual artists in their own right, they had from time to time bemoaned the dearth of quality dramatic productions with positive Christian themes to offer to Adventist audiences and the general public. Through the discussion it became crystal clear that they would have to take up the gauntlet themselves.

Out of these meetings Bagel Productions was born. The drama troupe had two objectives: to produce quality Christian musicals that proclaim the good news of salvation in a manner palatable to the hardest cynic and to address moral issues with provocative quality theater.

It’s About Love

For their first project, Bagel wanted to capture the essence of Christianity, to try and declare to the world, “What’s it all about?” The answer: it’s all about love, and everybody loves a love story. They knew that the critics would be waiting, pens and knives poised, so they had to tell a great story, one that could compete.

Mark was inspired by the fact that the greatest story ever told is the story of redemption. The greatest love story is in Bagel’s essential source document, the Bible. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay...
Churches Respond to Papua New Guinea Disaster

Following the series of tidal waves that struck the north coast of Papua New Guinea on July 17, Adventist organizations and aid agencies are on site and active in responding to the disaster. Reports indicate more than 3,000 persons are estimated dead, many injured, and up to 5,000 homeless.

"In what is predominantly a Catholic area, the immediate relief and rescue work is being carried out by mission priests and workers," reports Ray Coombe, communication director for the South Pacific Division.

"Royden Howie, Papua New Guinea director for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, is now in Aitape, and together with aid workers, medical personnel, and volunteers they are addressing the immediate needs of the disaster, which is the provision of fresh water and medical treatment for the tidal wave survivors."

ADRA was one of the first humanitarian agencies to reach the disaster site. ADRA is shipping equipment and relocating personnel to aid in relief efforts, says Beth Schaefer, public information officer for ADRA International, based in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The worst-hit area is a 15-mile stretch of coastline west of Aitape, where villagers live along an isthmus of land between a lagoon and the sea. The series of three tidal waves was caused by an earth tremor off the coast.

"This tragedy has a significant impact for me, since I was in Papua New Guinea just a few days ago," comments Robert S. Folkenberg, General Conference president. "I had met with the people and received such warm hospitality during my visit; my heart goes out to them at this sad time. I know our church and aid organizations will be working hard to do what they can to alleviate the suffering this disaster has caused."

A small Adventist congregation, with five baptized members and 30 persons studying for baptism, was recently established in the immediate region.—Adventist News Network.

Philippine Women Celebrate 100 Years of Women’s Ministry

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Robo-Church

BY ANDY NASH, ASSISTANT EDITOR, ADVENTIST REVIEW

A few months ago at the Adventist world church headquarters, Dwight K. Nelson, face and voice of the largest technological thrust (NET ’98) in church history, issued a warning. “We will,” said Nelson, “never be saved by technology—never, ever, ever.”

A few years ago at a town hall meeting at Southern College (now Southern Adventist University), world church president Robert S. Folkenberg was asked, in the context of an embarrassing bash-the-pope billboard campaign, about the general effectiveness of mass media evangelism. “Nothing,” said Folkenberg, “can ever replace one-on-one, tear-in-your-voice sharing of what Jesus Christ has done for you.”

Both statements are helpful to remember now, as 18-inch dishes continue to sprout through the Adventist landscape, and in the future, as new technology will undoubtedly dazzle our eyes and ears.

Indeed, the Barna Research Group predicts a day when many people will turn primarily to the Internet for their spiritual needs. Already, 12 percent of the adult population and 17 percent of young adults (ages 18 to 32) use the Internet for religious purposes, reports Barna. And one out of six teens (16 percent) expect to substitute the Internet for their current church-based experience within the next five years. “Fifteen years from now,” says Barna, “you may tell your grandchildren that back in the old days, when people wanted a religious experience they attended a church for that purpose. Chances are good that your grandchildren will be shocked by such a revelation.”

While a “cyberchurch” can be a literal blessing to those unable to leave home, the concept contrasts sharply with the injunctions in Hebrews not to “give up meeting together” (Heb. 10:25, NIV). Nothing compares to a bear hug in the church lobby, and nothing ever will—never, ever, ever.

Health Food Company Poisoning Threat Over

Following the voluntary product recall after a poison threat (see last week’s Newsbreak), the Sanitarium Health Food Company (SHF) in New South Wales, Australia, announced on July 16 that the threat is over and that its liquid products would be on sale once more. Health inspections turned up in nothing that could be linked to the threat.

The health food company first learned of the poison threat to its liquid products on June 29. After contacting the police and the department of health, SHF voluntarily recalled the targeted stock. The company already had a crisis plan and an emergency response team in place, and as part of the investigation more than 300,000 products were tested for contamination.

“What we undertook was the most extensive testing that has ever been undertaken of this kind anywhere in Australia, and we’re confident that it is up to the highest standards in the food industry,” SHF chief executive officer Robert Smith said.

Police investigation into the threat continues despite the stock returning to the shelves. “We don’t want to hinder the police with their investigations,” says Smith. “We are in contact with the police on a regular basis.”

Smith identifies the scare as the result of a grudge against the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which owns the company. “It’s a sad commentary when what we’ve come to is consumers’ safety put in jeopardy.”

The threat has cost SHF more than $1 million (US$630,000). However, there has been an overwhelming public support during the ordeal, and the company...
Religion in the News

Salvation Army Says No to San Francisco

The Salvation Army is stopping some programs in San Francisco because the city’s “domestic partners” law violates their religious beliefs, the group has announced.

The Army said it will lay off 60 of 390 employees in the city and cut three programs as a result of the decision. “The [partners] ordinance does conflict with our basic theological position, primarily the recognition of the traditional family,” said Salvation Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Richard Love.

The ordinance requires all companies doing business with San Francisco to give the same medical and retirement benefits they give to married couples to employees who live with domestic partners.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco brokered a compromise with the city allowing Catholic groups to continue to work in San Francisco without explicitly giving approval of the domestic partners law. Catholic charities, for example, will offer “spousal equivalent” benefits to anyone an employee designates—a sibling, spouse, or unmarried housemate.—Religion News Service.

For Your Good Health

The Battle Rages On

Smoking kills more Americans each year than died in battle during World War II and the Vietnam War combined. More than 1,200 Americans die each day from smoking-related causes.—UC Berkeley Wellness Letter.

Hollywood’s Magic?

While smoking rates in real life have declined, movies are depicting smoking at a rapidly increasing rate. University of California at San Francisco researchers report that tobacco appeared in films about once every 10 to 15 minutes during the 1970s and 1980s, but now someone lights up on screen every five minutes on average. Researchers add that the female teenage character in the film Titanic smoked vigorously, even though in 1912 very few young women smoked. —UC Berkeley Wellness Letter.

—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.
WHAT DOES THE SABBATH MEAN to you?

The best place to begin thinking about the value and meaning of Sabbath time is the ministry of Jesus. I will look at six Sabbath-related incidents in Christ’s earthly ministry and then attempt to show how the Sabbath can help heal some of our most persistent spiritual maladies.

Six Incidents—All on Sabbath

1. The man with a withered arm. In a synagogue the question arose, “Is it contrary to the Torah to heal on the Sabbath?” Jesus responded, “If a farm animal fell into a hole on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you get it out? And isn’t a person more important than an animal?”

2. A woman crippled for 18 years. While teaching in a synagogue on another occasion, Jesus healed a woman who had not been able to stand up straight for 18 years. The leader of the synagogue objected, and said to the people, “Come any other day to be healed, but not on the Sabbath.”

3. A man with edema. At the home of a prominent Pharisee for Sabbath dinner, Jesus noticed a man suffering from edema and asked the biblical scholars and others there whether or not healing was permissible on the Sabbath. They had nothing to say, and Jesus healed the man. Then He again asked, “If a child or an ox fell into a well, wouldn’t you immediately pull it out on a Sabbath day?”

4. A man paralyzed for 38 years. At the Bethesda Pool in Jerusalem, Jesus told a sick man, “Stand up, take your mat- tress and walk.” When the man did what he was told, he was accosted by people who said it was against the Torah for him to be carrying his mattress on the Sabbath.

5. A man with congenital blindness. When a man who had been blind from birth was asked how he was suddenly able to see, he explained that Jesus had made some mud, spread it on his eyes, and told him to go to Siloam and wash. Some Pharisees said, “The man who healed you can’t be from God, because He doesn’t observe the Sabbath.”

Clearly, as far as Jesus was concerned, Sabbath time was time for healing. Caring for those who are sick, physically or spiritually, is, in principle, a good way to experience the Sabbath, a good way to use Sabbath time.

6. One Sabbath Jesus was going through some fields of grain, and as His disciples made their way they began to pull off heads of grain. Some Pharisees said to Jesus, ‘Look, why are they doing what’s not permitted on the Sabbath?’

And He said to them, ‘Haven’t you ever read what David did when he and his men were hungry and needed something to eat? While Abiathar was high priest David went into the house of God and ate the bread of the presence (which no one but the priests were permitted to eat), and he gave some to those who were with him.’

And Jesus commented, ‘The Sabbath came to be for the sake of humanity, not humanity for the sake of the Sabbath. So the Son of man is in charge even of the Sabbath.’

As far as we know the teaching of Jesus, this is the most important thing He ever said about the Sabbath: “The Sabbath came to be for the sake of humanity.” The Sabbath is time not only for bringing healing to others but also for experiencing healing ourselves. Indeed, Sabbath time can...
help to heal some of our most persistent diseases of the spirit.

The Things That Crush Us

Among our diseases of the spirit are our anxieties and obsessions. I put these two together here because much of the time they are two sides of the same coin: our obsessions are the unhappy expression of our anxieties.

Here are four familiar ones:

- We are anxious about possessions, and we are obsessed with acquiring. We never seem to have enough, so we keep purchasing and accumulating "goods and goodies." We may sneer at the bumper sticker that says "He who dies with the most toys wins," but we have to admit that we want to live as well as we can, and we worry about the gyrations of the stock market.

- We are anxious about performance, and we are obsessed with achievement. We worry about our productivity and our accomplishments. We evaluate each other's performance and worry about our own—professional, spiritual, and even sexual.

  Performance anxiety is everywhere: How well are we doing? Are we doing well enough? Are we working hard enough? Are we working smart enough? What should we be doing that we're not doing?

- We are anxious about our status, and we are obsessed with our image. We worry about what others think of us, and what they think, or will think, motivates much of what we do. At one time or other we have all asked, "What will the neighbors think?" or "What will the church members think?" or "What will my colleagues think?"

  To some extent, of course, this is healthy, for our concern for our image encourages good behavior that might not otherwise occur. From my childhood I still remember my mother's admonition to straighten up the house before we went to bed: "If the house should catch on fire and firefighters come in, I wouldn't want them to think I'm a messy housekeeper."

  But many people are more image-conscious than is healthy. Much of our everyday dishonesty is motivated by a desire to protect an image. Someone is late to an appointment and blames the traffic when the real reason was that they overslept. A young attorney in Los Angeles tells me that his fellow attorneys often work horrendous hours—not because they need (or want) to earn more money, but because they need (and want) to seem important. In the most extreme cases, people who cannot face a loss of status and a tarnished image try to escape by committing suicide.

- We are anxious about our authority, and we are obsessed with control. We not only want to control our own lives; we also, in some delusion of deity, want to control the lives of others. Sometimes, of course, a parent needs to exert authority. At one time or other every parent has announced in exasperation, "Because I said so, that's why!" It may be impractical or even impossible to explain to a 5-year-old the reasons it is time to go to bed.
But too often in life—in families, in institutions, in governments—"Because I said so" seems to be the only reason there is. When maintaining one's authority and control is the primary reason for doing or saying something, we ought to think again. How many wars—national, ecclesiastical, and institutional—have been fought over issues of authority and control! Community existence is never simple, and I have observed that most theological battles are complicated by questions of authority.

The Healing

For all of these diseases of the spirit, Sabbath time offers the possibility of healing.

For our anxiety about possessions and our obsession with acquiring, Sabbath time is time when things are less important. Sabbath time is time saved, liberated, from the objective of earning money to pay for things—brick and stucco things, silk and wool things, horsepower things. Sabbath time is time when we don't have to worry about paying the bills or washing the car or buying groceries or mowing the lawn or cleaning the house.

Sabbath time is time for attending to the essential relationships that make us who we are—relationships with God, with family and friends, with the whole human family, and with all of creation. These relationships give us our identities and give our lives their most important meaning.

For our anxiety about performance and our obsession with achievement, Sabbath time is time for spiritual enjoyment. Sabbath time is not primarily for doing, but for being. The word "sabbath" is the English form of the Hebrew word shabbat, which is connected with a verb that means to stop, to cease, to desist—to quit doing something.

In the story of Creation, God's Sabbath time came when the work of Creation was complete. And what it tells us is not that God was tired and needed to recuperate, but that God was pleased and wanted to celebrate. God's Sabbath time was time to experience and enjoy, to appreciate and affirm, the outcome of the divine Creation.

For us, Sabbath time is time to remember, affirm, and enjoy what it means to be human, created in the image of God. It is time for me to remember and enjoy the fact that the meaning of my life does not depend on what I achieve or accomplish or produce, on how well I do as a teacher and scholar or as a husband and father. Sabbath time is time not for doing, but for being, time to remember that we are not human doings, but human beings. Sabbath time is time for gratitude. As one of my friends put it, Sabbath time reminds us that we ourselves are gifts of grace, not "self-made" persons.

We didn't create ourselves. We aren't gods; we are creatures. We had to have our diapers changed and our spit-up wiped off our faces. We had to be carried from one place to another. We were helpless creations of others.

This awareness frees us of many burdens—the burden of perfection, of control, of playing god (to ourselves as well as to others). It also helps us be a little more humble. And you know the saying—there is no humiliation for the humble. So it frees us of some of life's pains.

This awareness is liberating and healing.

Sabbath time is time to appreciate the blessings that grace our lives. When we think about how much pure grace we have received, it is hard to worry about how much authority we have.

So Sabbath time is time par excellence, time for the relationships that make us who we are, time for enjoying the goodness of being human in God's world, time for reaffirming the values that give moral quality to our lives, time for gratitude for all of God's good gifts.

This is indeed time for healing—not only for bringing healing to others, but also for being healed ourselves.

4 See John 5:2-18.
7 See Mark 2:23-28.
8 I am indebted to Wil A. Alexander for this phrase.
10 Ibid., p. 29.

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nce when I was editor of Insight we printed, in
the course of 400 issues, an article on wearing
makeup. The article was scripturally based
and sensitively written, and proposed a mod-
erate stance. Soon we received a letter from a
church informing us that their board had decided, on
the basis of their disapproval of that one article, to cancel all
subscriptions to Insight, thereby cutting their youth off from
a voice— a consistently Adventist voice— that prayerfully
delivered hundreds of other articles each year on themes as
varied as temptation, evangelism, and how to avoid divorce.

I thought of that church board’s decision when reading
the letters in the June 1998 North American Divi-
sion edition of Adventist Review, in which Dan
Lopez declares that “we make [our youth] very uncomfortable to the point of leaving
the church.” Robert Oster maintains further, “We need people who are understand-
ing and caring, and who show it by their actions. We need people who are not
afraid to stand up and be counted, and are willing to take the flak that inevitably will
darken their skies.”

The fact is that too many people are bullied out
of our churches. Spiritual bullies impose their tastes on others, insisting that only one type of music or appearance
shows reverence, and demanding that everything in the church be acceptable to them, whether or not they are the
target audience.

We cannot allow the elbows in Christ’s body to deter-
mine our direction. When they do, we become sharp, hard,
and reactive. We also cannot afford to indulge all the whims
of demanding older children, however “influential” they are. Such indulgence, frankly, keeps small churches small and
large churches sterile.

In addition, we must recognize spiritual bullying in our-
selves, and in humility pull back. In Toxic Faith: Understanding and Overcoming Religious Addiction (Thomas N. Elson, 1991),
Steve Arterburn and Jack Felton list 10 rules for a toxic faith
system: control, blame, perfectionism, delusion, perpetual
cheerfulness, blind loyalty, conformity, mistrust, avarice, and
spotless image. Could I be projecting these poisons myself?

Standing up against spiritual bullying requires discern-
ment and gracious tenacity—not allowing anyone to be
battered or maligned. “Speaking the truth in love” (Eph.
4:15, NIV) is living the tough love of Jesus. This also
means standing up for something— especially for risky, fun,
sacred involvement. This is how wonderful short-term mis-
mission projects, Excite98, student missionaries, the Giraffe
Society, church plantings, Youth to Youth, prayer confer-
ences, and soup kitchen ministries began, even if “friendly
fire” at first darkened their skies.

One more story: In the late 1980s the Review and Herald
Publishing Association began a Resurrection memorial
enactment. It was creative, moving, musical, passionate—a
highlight of my spiritual experience. The city of Hagers-
town, Maryland, discovered that Seventh-day
Adventists believed in revering the Resurrection,
that the risen Christ was indeed at the
heart of our message, and in the memori-
al’s second year more than 500 people
gathered at the base of a grassy hill to
worship the Son.

Not so fast! Two local Adventist pastors
didn’t approve of our starting time; you see,
Jesus had the bad timing to be resurrected
around sunrise on Sunday, so in commemorating
the event at that approximate time we were mani-
festly worshiping “the sun.” The pastors and a few mem-
bers voiced their complaints, and the memorial was halted.
It has not been seen again.

I’m still bothered by this (obviously). I regret not protest-
ing more when that plug was pulled, and when the church
canceled the subscription. I fervently believe I let God
down, and I vowed after those incidents no longer to allow
spiritual bullies to have their unopposed way. I also wish
more people in decision-making positions would, with calm-
ness and courage, say, “Yes, we will receive criticism. But
this is the right thing to do, the godly path. And based on
our prayers, our love for God and people, our best thinking,
and His Word, we will go forward.”

That’s the type of revival God needs to see.

Chris Blake teaches at Union College in Lincoln,
Nebraska.
If you think the United Center roars, wait till you enter heaven.
BY DAVID B. SMITH

I T WAS JUST A FEW Sundays ago that nearly the whole world watched game six on television, a climactic matchup in the NBA finals, coming out of Salt Lake City. And unless you’re one who studiously tries not to hear such news, you’re aware that one Michael Jordan, pretty much all by himself, engineered a second “three-peat” championship for the Chicago Bulls, who captured their sixth NBA crown in the 1990s for the Windy City.

With less than a minute left, the Bulls were suddenly down by three when Utah’s John Stockton broke a tie by drilling a long-range shot. But Jordan calmly brought the ball back down, sank a difficult driving layup, got back on defense, stole the ball right out of the hands of Karl Malone, drilled a long jump shot to put the Bulls ahead, then played a brutal defense during the last five seconds when the Jazz tried their last shot. In the end it was all Jordan. He played all but four minutes of the game, and scored 45 of the team’s 87 points.

Another Kind of Victory

Connecting the exploits of Michael Jordan to the doctrine of heaven isn’t automatic, but several ideas do come bouncing like basketballs into our minds. First of all, the Bible teaches that heaven is a place of triumph, of everlasting victory. When you walk in through the front gates, you can just sense that Someone has won—and won big.

Every time a team in North America experiences an NBA crown or a World Series victory in game 7, or brings home the Stanley Cup after a nail-biting overtime win in hockey, there’s an electric celebration complete with a parade. Those who have won are honored, but the entire city rejoices. And heaven’s going to have that.

I like Revelation’s description of how Jesus Christ receives the great silver cup of victory, so to speak: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev. 5:12, NIV). And then one verse later: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!” (verse 13, NIV).

The apostle Paul gives the play-by-play in which God the Father rewards His Son after the victory at Calvary: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9, NIV).

I wish sometimes that the excitement of Jesus’ victory over death was as easily identified today as the championship game or the Stanley Cup. But I think we can write down a few verses. “Or simply the word ‘perfection.’”

A Classy Place

And what about the quality of those mansions, the streets of gold, the throne of God, and the great banquet hall? We won’t know all the details until we get there, and our imagination is way too limited to be able to distinguish between what is a figure of speech and what is tangible reality. But I think we can write down another Michael Jordan-ism regarding heaven. The expression “first-class” comes to mind. Or simply the word “perfection.”

A Time magazine cover article right after this year’s championship tells how Michael Jordan is never seen shirtless in the locker room. Even on that short walk between the hotel and the team bus, he’ll always be wearing a very nice suit. (Maybe to make up for what teammate Dennis Rodman is wearing.) For an athlete who’s been responsible, through increased ticket sales, merchandising, endorsements, etc., for some $10 billion in generated revenue, image is everything and class is everything and excellence is everything.

Now, that’s an argument you could take in several directions, some of them very troubling to the Christian who wants to put self last and who wants to live a quiet, sober, humble life. But when we get to heaven, I think we’re going to discover that in the very best of its sense, the word “class” is seen in all four corners of that great city.

Everything will be perfect. Everything will be in place. In terms of sports arenas, it will be the kind of park with no trash, no graffiti, no cracks in the cement, no chipped, faded stadium seats. No, just this grand, pristine,
glowing, wonderful place that vibrates with quiet, heart-stirring power because it exudes perfection—a perfection prepared with each of us in mind.

**Beating the Odds**

And how about the effort it took to put the championship banners up on the ceiling? In the Time article, David Halberstam writes that North Carolina coach Dean Smith saw in the young Jordan a brilliant offensive player. All the moves came so easy: the high-flying dunks, the 360s, the turnaround jump shots. But it was on the defensive end that Michael worked and sweat and struggled, while other players were taking it easy. He made himself a star on both ends of the court, winning in 1988 both the honor of Most Valuable Player and Defensive Player of the Year.

When that enemy, age, crept in and a little bit of jumping ability began to go from his legs in recent years, Jordan pushed himself and pushed himself, working double and triple overtime to develop his patented fallaway jump shot that groaning opponents throughout the league concede is just plain unstoppable.

This year and every year, of course, Jordan has faced the very best the NBA offers. Night after night, 82 games a year, plus in the postseason, enemy coaches would tell their players, “Whatever you do, stop Jordan!” And yet he toughed it out, the trips up and down the court, the body bumps, the fouls, the double-teams. He faced the opposition and he won.

Well, how about Jesus? If heaven is His trophy room, which we’re invited to share, can we possibly imagine the punishment He took to get us there? For 33 seasons down here He accepted the beatings and the boos. Crowds heckled Him far worse than the Salt Lake City fans got on Jordan, Pippin, and Rodman. Even Jerry Sloan, Utah’s head coach, never suggested that Jeff Hornacek put a crown of thorns on Jordan’s head, or drive nails through his hands and feet, or give him the 39 lashes that often took the life of a prisoner in Jerusalem. On that Thursday night in Gethsemane, Jesus got trash-talked by His enemy, Lucifer, in a way that Shaquille O’Neal and Michael Jordan could never envision. And yet Jesus Christ, our MVP, played every game, won every game, and then invited each of us to wear with Him the crown of victory.

**Giving Credit Where It’s Due**

I hear they still call Yankee Stadium “the house that Ruth built.” And certainly the United Center in Chicago, at 1901 West Madison Street, is Michael Jordan’s own turf, his palace, with the six championship banners. Well, Jesus Christ has a place too; it’s called heaven. It’s a winner’s place, a place where the word “defeat” has no meaning... except as we’re always reminded there how death was defeated—along with sin, suffering, and sorrow. And a certain defeated player, a losing player, an over-the-limit-in-his-fouls, ejected-from-the-game player named Satan.

Well, maybe we’ve gotten a bit carried away with our heavenly hoop dreams. But I remember an anecdote Pastor Morris Venden shared from a little question-and-answer session he had with some kids once. “What’s the first thing you want to do,” he asked them, “when you get to heaven?”

And he got all of the traditional kind of “kid” answers: “I’d like to try out my wings and fly around.” “I’d like to see my mansion.” “I’d like to pet a lion.” “I’d like to ride a lion.” Things like that. And yes, they were fantasies that recognized the “class” of heaven, the wonder of it all. But as Venden read through the pile, one answer was painfully missing.

Venden writes: “My heart was sinking, until I came to one that I’d been hoping to see. ‘When I get to heaven, the first thing I want to do is to cast myself at Jesus’ feet and thank Him for making it possible for me to be there.’”

Listen, heaven is nothing without Jesus Christ. Without Him and His great effort and His great victory at Calvary, none of the rest of it would matter. Mansions, streets of gold, fruit from that tree they call life—it wouldn’t matter. It wouldn’t be there. Not without the MVP.

Let me ask you right now: Is Jesus your most valuable player?

David B. Smith is writer/producer for the Voice of Prophecy radiobroadcast. He lives in Newbury Park, California.
A. ALLAN AND DEIRDRE MARTIN

Learning and Loving

How should Adventist colleges/universities treat non-Aventist students? Specifically, to what extent should our faith be pushed on them? Should their conversion to Adventism be our primary focus?

Allan’s reply: Non-Aventist students attending Adventist schools provide us with a wonderful opportunity to share the best of who we are. For that matter, Adventist schools provide both non-Adventists and Adventist students with an enriched, spiritually intensive environment in which to learn about both academics and life. Our campuses can provide students—regardless of religion—not only the highest standard of education, but also a nurturing community in which issues of faith and Christian lifestyle can be developed.

To no extent should our faith be pushed on non-Adventists or on Adventist students. In my experience coercion has been one of the least effective methods in creating authentic spiritual growth. It’s like trying to force a seed to sprout. Seeds don’t work that way.

That being said, it’s also important to say that under no circumstances should we neglect opportunities to share our faith with non-Adventists as well as Adventist students. Christ has called not only our schools, but all of us, to express our love for Him by feeding and tending His lambs (John 21:15-17). Even for students who come from Adventist homes, accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour (conversion) may be a decision they have yet to make. Our schools should be places where seeds can be germinated in rich soil, warm sunlight, and fresh water. Seeds work that way.

Finally, our Adventist schools are called to challenge students not only academically but also spiritually. Students in our schools need to explore their faith, test their faith, and infuse their faith into how they live. Our schools can be the ideal setting in which this occurs. Adventists have a unique understanding of the balance between discipline and obedience that challenges us not only to grow but also to bear fruit. Our schools should be places where growing plants are groomed, pruned, and trained. Plants bear fruit that way.

What’s wrong with experimenting sexually? I don’t mean intercourse; I mean experimenting with touching and things.

Deirdre and Allan’s reply: Sex is far more than an act of copulation. It involves a whole array of experiences and communication that precede it and follow it. The “touching and things” you speak of are often part of foreplay, an aspect of sexual intimacy that is just as much a part of sex as is the act itself.

You need to ask yourself some deeper questions, such as: How much do you respect yourself and the person you are attracted to? Do you consider that person an “experiment”? Do you want to be treated as an “experiment”? How best can you honor yourself and your friend?

God created us sexual beings. That is an undeniable, wonderful fact. But contrary to messages—explicit and implied—in the popular secular media, we are not solely sexual beings; we are also relational, spiritual, emotional, and thoughtful beings created to love God and each other (Matt. 22:36-40). To treat each other as objects on which to “experiment” is to disrespect yourself and the other person, and most important, the God who created you both.

Sexual intimacy is a wonderful part of the marriage relationship that God intended to bind spouses together spiritually, emotionally, and physically; it’s a level of communication and cohesion that a wife and husband share exclusively with each other. Yes, it’s physical; yes, it’s emotional; and yes it absolutely is spiritual. To take sexual intimacy out of that context really subverts its purpose and disrespects its potential.

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

A. Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dre.am/VISION ministries dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership. Visit their website at http://www.tagnet.org/dvm.
Do you know how to start a car? You just put in the key and turn it, right? It's simple.

But if you want to find out more about what it takes to start a car, there is lots more you can learn.

For instance, the place where you put the key is called the ignition. “Ignite” means “start on fire.” Does that seem like something you want to do when you’re starting a car? No?

But actually, it is. Sort of. Turning the key sends electricity to the car’s spark plugs. The electricity makes each of the plugs make an electric spark. That spark makes the gasoline that is inside the engine explode. “Explode” doesn’t seem like something you want to happen either.

But actually, it is. That explosion is just the right size. It happens in just the right place. The explosion creates the power for the machinery that makes the car’s wheels turn.

All that machinery involves cylinders and pistons and crankshafts, to name just a few important engine parts.

There is lots you can learn about how a car works.

Do you know how to become a child of God? You just have to ask, right? It’s simple.

But if you want to find out more about it, there is lots more you can learn.

You can learn about how God’s power can ignite your soul. You can learn how God’s spark in you can explode at just the right time in just the right place. You can discover how you and God can work together to move the wheels of His plan for the world.

You can find out about how God created a perfect world and how sin made everything go wrong. You can learn how God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to save us from sin. You can find out about belief and forgiveness and faith.

There is lots you can learn about God’s plan. That’s why God gave us the Bible. That’s why people have been studying it and talking about it and writing about it for thousands of years. That’s why John, at the end of his book about Jesus, wrote, “There are many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I think the whole world would not be big enough for all the books that would be written” (John 21:25, ICB).
was minding my own business when a man with a heavy hand poked me in the back of the shoulder. In a gruff, raspy voice he said, “Hey! I wanna talk to you.” I turned to face a rough, unshaven biker who looked as though he hadn’t seen the inside of a shower for a week. The intense look on his face relayed a sense of urgency that more than set my nerves on edge. His eyes were bloodshot; there was beer on his breath.

I was prepared for the worst. Of all the people I’ve met and talked with out on the road, there has only been one scenario in which an individual didn’t like me “flaunting” that Christian banner in front of his face. I ride with the Christian Motorcycle Association and have a patch on the back of my vest to signify my loyalties. I thought that I was about to experience another negative encounter.

“Hey call me Luckie. How you doin’?” I said as I held out my hand.

“Not so good,” he mumbled.

“What’s up?” I asked, realizing that my assumptions were totally wrong, as usual.

“I need God in my life,” he confessed. He seemed dispirited and didn’t seem to have normal color in his face. There was a purple tint to his cheeks, however, signifying years of alcohol abuse. Tom (not his real name) had surprised me with his nonaggressive behavior. Now, nothing short of “shocked” would describe the thoughts in my head.

Noting my hesitation to respond, he continued to express his fear that he had gone too far from God and that his situation was hopeless. In my mind I began to pray God. I’ve been through some real junk in my life, most of it caused by me. I often wondered if I would ever have the chance to glorify the name of Jesus. The way I saw it, if God never gave up on me, there is hope for anybody. That’s exactly what I told Tom.

“You don’t understand—I’m an ex-con,” he explained as humility and despair literally overwhelmed his face.

“Well, it’s not like you’re the first ex-con I’ve ever met,” I assured him.

“That’s not all. I was in for murder,” he continued. He went on to confess that if he wasn’t drunk or high on dope, when he tried to sleep he still saw the face of the man whose life he took. I then began to realize the burden of guilt that Tom was trying to carry—alone.

By this point I was fervent with my prayers. I needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit and I knew it. Please give me something to say, Lord, I prayed inside my head.

“Let me ask you something,” I said. “Who do you think is telling you that you need God in your life? It’s certainly not the devil. That’s God talking to you. And if He’s talking to you, it’s proof that you haven’t gone too far.”

“I still haven’t told you everything,” he admitted. His gaze drifted downward as he began to pour his very heart onto the floor, where he obviously thought it belonged.

“The man I killed was a Christian. I killed him over an argument that we got into about the existence of God.”

Often in my travels I have the privilege of asking people if I can have prayer with them. This situation was the only time that I ever told someone, “We are going to pray. Now!”

We held each other as I prayed for forgiveness, for strength, for guidance, for power to overcome, and for relief from guilt. I have no idea if Tom knew that prayer was for me as much as it was for him. As I talked to Jesus, Tom began to hold on tighter, trying with all his might to grasp the peace he knew could fill the void in his heart.

As my prayer concluded, both our faces were bathed with tears. Tom’s face, however, looked radically different. There was actually color in his skin—not to mention a peaceful look in his eyes.

Praying with Tom reminded me of the truth: no matter how far we run from God, His love is always just one step away.