I Was a Lost Cause

Pat Grant with wife, Grace, and daughter, Karisse
Experiencing God

I see God at work!

Two years ago Adventist World Aviation (AWA) staff and missionaries-in-training began studying and practicing the principles of relationship Blackaby and King have so eloquently packaged into a small group study format in their Experiencing God book and study guide, reviewed in the June 17 Review Book Mark.

God began to bring others into partnership with AWA who had discovered these principles. Through one of these relationships God impressed a retired couple to donate an airplane to His cause in answer to the prayers of AWA’s young recruits. Another resulted in what promises to be the biggest event ever in Pathfindering—Project AirPower. For the first time in history, the young people of the Adventist Church from all around the planet are helping to refurbish, fund, and staff a mission aviation program in support of Amerindian lay missionaries working to carry the gospel to 50 unentered villages in southern Guyana. These principles are also leading AWA into mission ministry with other Christian churches regardless of denominational affiliation.

Acceptance of the three angels’ messages is the result.

What a difference a living breathing relationship with the Divine makes! Thank you, Dan Bullock and Review editors, for including Experiencing God in Book Mark. The body of Christ needs what this material has to offer.

— Don Starlin
President, Adventist World Aviation

Correction

In the March 18 Adventist Review, there is just a correction on the Newbreak article on the Philippines. Instead of the city of Barbell, it is Koronadal, and it’s not a city but a provincial capital of South Cotabato. Alternatively, we also call it Marbel instead of Koronadal, for the older people’s choice.

— Gershon B. Batulayan
South Cotabato, Philippines

Letter postmarked August 4, 1999.—Editors.

God Is Right-brained

I liked the article “God Is Right-brained” (Chris Blake, Leaving the Comfort Zone) in the June 17 issue until I got to the last sentence. It sounds like New Age to me. “God is our passion and our prize—our banana split, our walking stick, our eyes.”

The Lord is my shepherd. God is my refuge and strength. However, passion cools, banana splits disappear, walking sticks get broken, and eyes go blind.

— Pat DeCamp
Shawnee Mission, Kansas

A Room of Their Own

The article “A Room of Their Own,” published in the June 17 Review makes me wonder: Where is their focus? Worship Christ or worship culture? Please remind these young people that there is only one heaven. Christian love creates unity, not separation!

Will we live only by our feelings and emotions? Or will we “walk the walk” by living according to God’s Word? All causes of separation are removed in Christ. See Ephesians 2:14. We are no longer foreigners and aliens, but rather fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household. How can the world believe if we are not united? See John 17:21.

— Karen L. Perrone
West Boylston, Massachusetts

Get to Know, Go Slow, Spiritually Grow

An observation on the response in The X-Change column, in the June 17 Review, by Allan and Deirdre Martin, “Get to Know, Go Slow, Spiritually Grow.” It appears that the time to reach young adults should have been before they became young adults. By this I mean that primary and junior is the age to get young people involved in the church program.

It has been my experience that 10-12 years of age is a good time to ground children in participation in the church program. I have found them willing to help when asked. However, there is a critical age when we can lose them if we don’t start early.

If we allow the youth to take up the
offering, read a missionary story, offer a prayer, prepare for the foot washing, act as deacons/deaconesses and helpers—on a regular, ongoing participation—then they will feel needed and a part of the church. Only when they feel needed will we keep them.

—Dennis Dixon
Via E-mail

Concerned About Cartoons

Ever since the year of my birth, more than 88 years ago, the Review has been a member of our home. When a small child, I remember my father in the kitchen on Sabbath reading the Review aloud to mother while she was getting dinner.

Thank you again for your help and for the inspiration with which you fill the paper. Many things change as the years whiz by, but the Review is always uplifting. One little thing, however, troubles me.

I have wondered for some time about the use of cartoons. The one used in the May 20 issue, page 7, has given me the courage to object. "One man dies because of love"—what a precious, holy thought with the outline of the cross on the hill of Calvary!

That reverent, holy feeling disappears with the cartoon connected with it, "One man dies because of hate." I understand the thought, but must object to the cartoon connected with the matchless love of Jesus. We want our youth to always feel the holiness of our Saviour, in no way connected and cheapened with the ugly cartoons of the day. Thank you for your understanding.

—Mabel R. Miller
National City, California

Falwell Takes on Lilith Fair

I am responding to the news commentary “Falwell Takes on Lilith Fair,” by Stephanie Swilley, in the July 15 issue of the Review. The author comes across strong when she denounces Jerry Falwell for telling the facts behind the story. If Lilith was, in fact, a satanic entity, then this is simply another tactic Satan is using in trying to deceive us into thinking something is "harmless enough" and should be ignored.

The same thing happens with many things in our culture. The Bible is quite clear when it says, "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24, N.KJV). This does not mean only a physical person, but includes any subtle way that Satan will use to turn us away from God. Therefore, we should be fully awake to Satan’s deceptions and not simply accept things because “that’s what everyone else is doing.”

—Andrew Eide
Redlands, California

Why promote Lilith Fair? According to the Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology (fourth edition), "Lilith was gradually transformed into a whole legion of beings who functioned as incubi and succubi, attacking men and women . . . to father more demonic offspring. They inflicted women with barrenness and miscarriages and sucked the blood of children."

Contrary to the news commentary in the Review, we submit that regardless of who it is, i.e., the world’s greatest philanthropist, the world’s most respected cleric, or even an admired rock group, anybody who voluntarily chooses to use this name should be avoided. See Matthew 7:22, 23.

Lilith Fair has targeted its program to women, and its name has a significance. It was purposefully selected and is anti-Christian.

—Kenneth D. Christman and Sally Christman
Dayton, Ohio

DEPARTMENTS
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NEXT WEEK
Net Evangelism Goes to New York
If we can take it there, we’ll take it anywhere.
Your Church Is Too Small

I was halfway down the third aisle of the crowded exhib-
it hall at the August ASI convention when the thought struck me: Your church is too small.

By its nature, it’s one of those sentiments that instantly demands qualification. No, my local congregation (650 members, so they say) is not small. Nor is there, in my opinion, any congregation too minuscule to do the Lord’s bidding. Seven is a righteous number; 12 can shake the world. This is not a call for shuttering small churches.

What was too small, and may still be, is my perception of my church, this many-hued and multifaceted movement now embraced by more than 10 million people worldwide. I have been humbled much of late to find what I have yet to learn about this church, how gloriously the gospel exceeds my lame attempts to describe its results. The statistical reports that regularly sweep across my desk are never fully true, but not because their compilers failed to give the proper numbers. God’s remnant, like an August river, can run for miles underground, never fully visible, still moving toward the kingdom.

I stopped somewhere among the exhibits in that third aisle to marvel at the Spirit’s gifting of the church. Here were men and women, sweet with the love of Jesus, telling me of 30-year-old mission posts of which I’d never heard. Beside the beautiful booths of the apparently prosperous Adventist colleges and universities were tabletop displays from tiny schools where 20 students fill the dorm and gardens flourish in the sun. Ministries and laymen’s movements, media outreaches and orphanages: these line the aisles at the annual ASI convention—each with a story started by three angels, each with a passion for the lost.

There is a special set of blinders worn by some who find employment in the church. Our world is neatly framed by governing committees and flowcharts. We can recite, without a prompt, all levels of church organization from local church to General Conference, which is, to say, in descending order of importance.

We are tempted to count only that portion of the harvest we have already gathered in the barn, and often miss the great, grand stuff the Spirit is doing among His faithful. We traffic only in the known, the quantifiable, while God delights in mystery and surprise, raising up believers where no minister could plant them and caring for His sheep long before there is a conference. We see the church in all its institutional dress—sanctuaries, hospitals, elementary schools—while Jesus sees the Bride in hearts and homes and sometimes-struggling ministries.

More striking still is the thought that the several hundred exhibitors at ASI are but a fraction of the ministries God has raised up from among His people, and then only those that have joined this lay organization and could afford both a plane ticket to Orlando and a modest fee for floor space. In a thousand places we may never hear of, members pour out their sweat and sometimes their blood to water seeds of faith. They bake bread, dig ditches, clean latrines, care for the dying, evangelize the living—not to reach a statistical goal or build another building, but because the love of Christ compels them to start a little paper, build a little ministry, spread a little love.

It is time we gave them honor, though they would surely blush to hear it from us. Far more than those of us who serve the church for a paycheck, these disciples of Jesus deserve the accolades of heaven and the gratitude of the church.

For all its wonderful successes, institutional Adventism will never be more than a partial and incomplete description of what God is doing for His people. The “organized work” will always be the smaller part, happily reaping where many other Spirit-driven ministries have sown.

So pray for the many ministries the church will never own and for the men and women who labor just for love. On that day when all that has been built will melt to nothingness, their works will praise them in the gates of God’s eternal kingdom.

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* Aventist Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) has fostered cooperative ties between Adventists engaged in ministry and business and the denomination for more than 50 years.
It was the German existentialist Friedrich Nietzsche who said, “Almost two thousand years, and no new god!” The nineteenth-century philosopher wrote extensively against Christianity, calling it “the one great curse... the one mortal blemish of mankind.”

We are months away from the two thousandth year after the birth of Christ, and much of modern society seems to be as cynical as Nietzsche about the existence of “God” as we know Him. Just the other day I was on the subway and overheard a group of youth my age loudly belittling people they derogatorily labeled “Jesus Freaks.”

“Did you see those ‘Jesus Freaks’ in the city today, spouting out Bible verses and praying?” one of them said, laughing. “What kind of garbage was that?” (I was one of those “freaks,” sitting on the grass enjoying a program put on by a local Christian music group.)

I admit it. My generation is becoming spiritually numb. Not all of us, but the painful majority of us. Some turn to gurus and Buddhas for the self-actualization that will supposedly enlighten their lives. Instead of praying, they chant mantras. Instead of memorizing the Bible, many turn to New Age books and non-Christian philosophies. In the August 1999 edition of the Atlantic Monthly an article by Ted Halstead entitled “The Politics of Generation X” compares GenXers to spiritual consumers, “shopping around among a wide range of religious traditions.”

With the new millennium on our heels, the mood among youth borders on frenzy, flaunting an invincibility that is backed up by the media and fueled by the endless pursuit of high tech. Young people are riding on the latest virtual wave, often surfing the World Wide Web all day long. They give off a vibe that says, “We are young; we have no limits; we will live forever.”

Those words are true, but only if we have Jesus Christ on our side.

If you are an older Seventh-day Adventist and feel alienated from the youth of the church, or if you are a parent who doesn’t understand why your kid doesn’t want to go to church any longer, here’s an infobyte for you to chew on—we all want to be saved. But first something has to happen in our hearts.

Two centuries before Christ, the Bhagavad Gita said, “Knowledge is indeed better than blind practice.” We can no longer afford to be blind.

If we are cynical, it is because we have seen so much more than our ancestors ever dreamed of. Our parents grew up in the hippie generation, irrepressible and impulsive, but we’re not as happy-go-lucky. The media documents a world ravaged by seemingly soul-dead teenage murderers, date rapists, spiritual apathy, and suicide. Certain types of birth control and abortion were illegal a generation ago. Now in some states parental consent is needed to administer aspirin, but not to get an abortion. In this day and age when sexually transmitted diseases run rampant, not having sex before marriage isn’t just about saving one’s purity; it’s about saving lives. Today’s world is far more dangerous and diverse than anything our parents ever knew.

If we seem doubtful, it’s probably because we are. We don’t want moral ambivalence—we’re looking for answers.

If we seem tired of religion, it’s probably because we are tired of being called the “church of tomorrow.” We want to be the church of today.

If we seem rebellious, it’s because we don’t just want to “behave.” We want to understand.

If we seem apathetic, it’s because when we look into the future, we see a bleak world. A world that needs more than religion that is steered by habit or heritage; a world that settles too often for mediocrity; a world that is overloading on information, but that is hard up on love.

We need this love. We need it because Nietzsche was right—there is “no new God.” Our God is the same God who wept over Auschwitz, My Lai, and Vimy Ridge. This generation’s God is the same God our grandparents had. Despite this changing world, one thing remains constant—our Saviour and His love. And even if a generation may separate the youth of this church from its leaders, we all want the same thing.

We want to go home.

Jennifer Mae Barizo is pursuing a graduate degree in music performance in New York City. She wrote this article as an editorial intern for the Adventist Review.
HATS OFF TO ADVENTIST YOUNG PEOPLE

Max J. Fay is the kind of young person every church should have. According to Teri Klahr, from Broken Bow, Nebraska, “Max J. is willing to fill in wherever he is needed.” Max enjoys helping out as a Sabbath school superintendent and a deacon and spends plenty of time working with Pathfinders, Ingathering campaigns, and dramatic presentations for church. In fact, writes Teri, Max’s is always “the first hand to go up” when volunteers are needed for virtually any kind of project. Thanks for your enthusiasm, Max! Your Review cap is in the mail.

ADVENTIST LIFE

While staying with my 2½-year-old twin grandchildren, Erin and Ryan, I was awakened in the night by very congested coughing coming from Erin’s crib. As I rushed into the room to help her, I heard the reprimanding voice of her twin brother, Ryan. “Erin—you supposed to cover you mouth when you choking!”
— Sue Garman, Warsaw, Virginia

The memory verse was “. . . I will make you ruler over many things.” I heard my 3-year-old saying “ruler over many things, ruler over many things.” I peeked into the room and saw her placing a 12-inch ruler on first one piece of furniture and then another, each time saying “ruler over many things.”
— Edna Canaday, College Place, Washington

ADVENTIST QUOTES

“In order to be a good Seventh-day Adventist, you should have a tender heart . . . and a tough skin.”
— sent in by Frieda Honiball, George, South Africa; remark made by an elder while comforting a member who had been unduly criticized

“You can’t build a platform on 27 ideas. People can only remember three or four ideas.”
— John Sackett, health-care administrator, speaking to chaplains about leadership and reflecting on his own experience in political campaigns. The room broke up with laughter, acknowledging a long-felt oxymoron in the idea of “27 fundamentals.”
— John Sackett, health-care administrator, speaking to chaplains about leadership and reflecting on his own experience in political campaigns. The room broke up with laughter, acknowledging a long-felt oxymoron in the idea of “27 fundamentals.”
(Submitted by Glenn Sackett, via e-mail)

HELP! HELP!

We need your great ideas! We’re running low in some Give & Take categories. We can especially use brief submissions to:

- Adventist Quotes (profound or spontaneous)
- Adventist Life (anecdotes—especially from the world of adults)
- Dream Center (church-related dreams)
- Jots & Tittles (church-related tips)
- Readers’ Exchange (requests for correspondence on a specific topic)

Send submissions (which won’t be returned) to Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: 74617.15@compuserve.com.
"I Was a Lost Cause"

For eternity I will applaud a God who forgot that I was lost.

BY PAT GRANT

THE CIRCULATION OF blood to the cranium of my brother's brain had obviously stopped. He had lost all comprehension of the word "no."

A.J. had been persistent in his invitations, as had my father, but the idea of church and a belief in God wasn't for me. I had been to church as a kid, at least whenever my mother, a nurse, could find the strength to take us after working the night shift; now I was on my own. I made my own decisions. God was obsolete.

My Brother's Challenge

"Why not?" he asked.

"All right, O stubborn one, let me explain." I pointed at him. "We come from a divorced home. There was a lot of pain during those times. God was never there. I don't remember Him ever being there. If you want to believe in God, hey, that's wonderful. If you want to look to the sky, hold your hands high, and sing 'In the sweet by and by'—great. I'll stay a little more grounded, you 'ninny'" (the Review won't print what I really called him).

"Look, Pat, I'll make a deal with you," A.J. replied. "You come with me to church once, and I'll never bother you again about God, salvation, or religion."

My kid brother's words hinted of sweet release. "Let me make sure I understand you: I go to church with you once, uno, 3 - 2 = 1, and in return I never hear you ask, beg, request, invite, or so much as look at me holy again—right?"

"Right."

"You got a deal," I chortled with my arms in the air in mock praise. "One condition, though; if I'm going to church with you, I'm going exactly the way I am."

"Deal," he replied.

"A man, brother; looks like we're going to church."

Sabbath morning came. My brother was garbed in crisply pressed slacks, shoes that glinted of preciseness, and a tie that screamed full throttle. He wafted a whisper of cologne that riveted my olfactory senses. I also was properly dressed—according to my attitude. I had put in my best gold earrings, two in one ear, one in the other. I wore my favorite frayed jeans, black boots, and a black leather biking jacket. I too had a whisper of something on, but it smelled more like bad breath. I crafted my hair into a dome till I resembled a mushroom cloud after Chernobyl. I was ready for this day—very ready. I knew one thing about church people: if you didn't look like them or smell like them, they left you alone. We got into the car and drove to my brother's church.

In Foreign Territory

I was defensive, circumspect, and eager to fulfill my part of the agreement. We walked into the building, and immedi-
WITH JESUS IN THE FAMILY:
Taking the gospel to people of all ages is Pat Grant’s passion. Providing loving support is Pat’s wife, Grace, and their daughter, Karisse.
ately people came up to me and shook my hand. Yeah, I thought, I’m not stupid. My brother prepped you for my arrival. I shook hands, stared icily, and projected quite well nonverbal signals that I wasn’t interested. There would be no conversion here.

The service was vibrant: the songs were gripping, the atmosphere was a euphony of praise and worship; I felt stifled. There’s nothing in the world worth being this happy about, I thought. I’m in a room full of maniacs.

The preacher, Roscoe Howard, got up to speak, animated in his style, passionate in his delivery. I was drawn—partially. “Turn in your Bibles,” he thundered. The crinkle of pages suffused the room. I sat quietly and glanced at my watch. Fifteen more minutes and this would be over.

“Hey, mister.” At first I didn’t look. I thought he was talking to someone else. “Mister, you don’t have a Bible?” He couldn’t have been more than 10. Ceddaric Collins was his name.

“No, kid, I don’t have a Bible,” I replied.

“Hey, mister, what’s your name?”

“Kid, if I tell you my name, will you leave me alone?”

“Maybe.”

“My name is Pat, Pat Grant. Now listen to the preacher; you might learn something.”

Ceddaric then took out a blue Bic pen with a clear plastic barrel, opened the cover of his white bound King James Version of the Bible, and wrote my name in it. “Here,” he said as he handed it to me.

The Next Chapter

By Jennifer Mae Barizo

Nearly a year ago a core group of about 25 members worshiped at the North Creek Christian Fellowship church in Bothell, Washington. Now the membership has more than doubled.

“It was my goal to solidify a group of people, with whom we could make the church a ‘house of love and laughter,’ a place that draws people instead of pushing things to happen,” says Pat Grant, now a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. Converted in 1990, Grant told the Lord that if He would give him a chance, he would create a church environment in which people wanted to be.

Grant attended the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Prior to that, and after his conversion, he worked as a counselor at various children’s homes, as well as at a juvenile center, where he helped children from at-risk homes gain a more positive perspective on life. Grant observes that his work history has prepared him to serve the Lord as a pastor. He has made a conscious effort with the help of his church fellowship to make North Creek Christian Fellowship a “fun place to be, a place that will help bring many people to heaven.”

“The church has one of the most priceless things to offer the world,” he enthuses. “It can offer intimate contact with God and other people. It can offer a warm, loving atmosphere; a culture that is the exact opposite of what the earth has.”

According to Grant, the future of the church belongs to its young people. They’ll stay, he says, only if they feel that they are making a difference. “We need to get youth to participate in the church and in community fellowship,” Grant says. “Because of my background, I am so grateful to God. That’s why I serve; that’s why I stay. I want the church to be a place where people can laugh at trivial things that happen during the week, where people can strip off their glitz and glitter and find the Lord.”

Grant lives in Renton, Washington, with his wife, Grace, and their daughter Karisse, whom he describes as “the greatest piece of art God has ever bestowed on me—a Picasso and Rembrandt on little legs.”
I looked over to see this little kid holding out his Bible. “Here, this is for you. You look like you need a Bible.”
“Don’t want this, kid; you keep it.”
“Aw, I want you to have it; so take it.” He thrust it into my hand.
I remained quiet and listened to the rest of the sermon.

The Power of the Book

After the service was over I blazed toward the car, got in, and waited for my brother.
“So whaddya think?” he asked me.
“I hated it,” I replied. “Look, if you want this God thing, fine. It’s not for me. A deal’s a deal. I kept my end; now get off my back.”
The remainder of the ride home was silent.

I got home and was preparing to go to the library. I had to finish an assignment that was due Monday morning. There was one problem: I didn’t know what to do with the Bible the kid had given me. My name was written in it with 10-year-old chicken scratch, and I couldn’t bring myself to throw it away. I placed it on the refrigerator and left the house.

Later that evening, after I arrived home, I went to get something to eat, and the Bible was sitting there—right where I left it. It bothered me seeing it there, so I moved it to the living room. The next day I went to watch TV and there it was, so I moved it back to the kitchen. During the week I moved that Bible from room to room to room. I just wanted it anywhere I wasn’t.

Late Thursday evening I was sitting in my bedroom after getting back from the University of Washington. As I pulled out my books and began to read, I saw that Bible sitting on my dresser. The rain had formed droplets on my window, and light from the streetlights filtered through. The refracted rays on that Bible sprayed a shadow of light and darkness that seemed to be vying for my attention.

I focused on that white King James Version. I remembered the little hands that had given it to me. A thick slab of silence hung in my room. A din of discomfort screamed in my soul, asking me questions I couldn’t answer.
“Whaat possesses a kid to give me his Bible?”
“Pat, what is the meaning of life?”
“Is this all there is?”
“Is all you have to look forward to, only more of the same degradation you’ve already been through?”
“If Jesus Christ doesn’t exist, if He is an ethereal myth—why do you hate Him?”
The questions persisted, and I had no answers. I was running from something I didn’t know anything about. I walked over to my brother’s bedroom.
“Yeah?” he replied, when he saw me standing at the door.
“I, uh . . . listen, don’t flip out on me. Don’t preach—or even smile.”
“Whaat?”
“I’ve got a few questions. I’m not interested in being religious or anything, but I do have a few things I need explained. If you can find me someone, I’d like to know more about God.”
My brother smiled.

A year and a half later I was baptized. Since then a lot has happened in my life. I’m a pastor. What was once hate is now love. What was once disbelief is now faith. That is the power of God.

I stand in awe unable to speak that a Man who has power would be gentle and meek and condescend to me so that I might see that the life I was living was never meant to be. For the rest of my days I will take up His cause, and even now I must stop daily just to pause, for eternity I will offer applause to a God who forgot that I was a lost cause.

Pat Grant is pastor of the North Creek Christian Fellowship church in Bothell, Washington.
One way to deal with the present is to hope for a change in the future. Maybe it will be just a brief transition period. But you recall other teens who have gone to a far country for a long time, and some still haven’t returned. What if your child’s rejection of not only you but also God turns out to be permanent? You begin to bargain with God: “I’ll give up my child for the rest of this life as long as we can be together in heaven.” But you have no sense that a deal has been struck. Desperate for anything positive, your heart is primed for the ointment of a familiar scripture: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Perhaps it’s a pastor or another friend...
who gently quotes these words that
revive hope. After all, you did train up
your child in the way he should go. It’s
just a matter of time, and your child
will return. Praise God that we can
trust His Word!

Indeed! And praise God that many
who left have returned! Returning sets
off celebrations in heaven and on
earth. But most can recall the names of
more than a few who have left and
haven’t returned. And though they’re
going older, they show no inclination
to return. What difference would it
make if the return rate were even 99
percent if your child was not one who
came home?

The hope you have clung to—
“when he is old, he will not depart
from it”—has become a millstone
around your neck. It haunts you in the
quietness of the night, when you ride
alone in the car, amid the bustle of a
church reunion Sabbath on which

many others return, but not your child.

The conclusion seems obvious: You
didn’t train up your child in the way
he should go!

Hold it right there! Before you
become even more suicidal, step back
and consider the text through two dif-
fferent lenses. Is this familiar text a
promise or a proverb?

A Promise?

A promise is as good as the one

He Is Old

return of prodigals?
who makes it. In this case, God is the one who makes the promise. Long experience has taught us that we can certainly count on Him. But the promise “when he is old, he will not depart from it” has at least one major condition: the child must be trained in the way he should go.

If this text is a promise, no parent should expect any child to return. In spite of the arrogance of some, I haven’t met even one parent who claims to have done everything right. In fact, most parents can quickly recount numerous mistakes and foibles, and especially those with wayward children.

And parents who seem to have “model kids” typically don’t take any credit (as they hold their breath and wonder if they had anything to do with the outcome thus far). One overwhelmed father confided in me, “As a father I’m striving just to achieve mediocrity.” Without question the most confident “parents” are those who haven’t raised any children yet.

A Proverb?

A proverb is a wise saying that is generally true, at least most of the time. In contrast to a promise, a proverb isn’t always true, even if the conditions are met. For example, “A stitch in time saves nine”—most of the time. But there are times when a stitch in time just takes longer. Or how about “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise”? It might be generally true, but plenty of early-to-bed-and-early-to-rise people aren’t healthy, wealthy, or wise!

What about “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”? If this is actually a proverb, then it’s generally true, but certainly not guaranteed.

Which Is It?


For those who insist that this text is a promise, the obvious conclusion is that we are completely destined by the training our parents give us. Individuals no longer have either the power to choose for themselves or responsibility for their adult decisions. Instead, it is completely up to the parents to determine a child’s destiny. But Ezekiel made abundantly clear more than 2,500 years ago that each of us is responsible for our own destiny. It’s not up to our parents.

“The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own” (Eze. 18:20, NRSV).

In our contemporary Adventist subculture we have a noticeable paranoia about our children leaving the faith. It has happened often enough to make most of us wary. With that bias, we read into the text a belief that the godliness with which we train a child will be part of him or her forever.1

A more insightful (and accurate) rendering of training a child in the way he should go (literally “according to the mouth of his ways” or “according to his way”) refers to the talents and capabilities the child has. Discovering one’s vocation or calling based on the abilities God has given to develop is a journey that parents and children can and should pursue together. Even when there is a “bent” or giftedness in a given direction, training is still necessary. The parent who pushes a child to become a physician to fulfill the parent’s dream when the child’s bent is toward music isn’t training the child in the way he should go.

Of course this doesn’t release parents from the solemn responsibility for the spiritual formation of their children. But a better passage for that task might be this one: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deut. 6:5-9, NIV).

But there aren’t guarantees. God’s gift of salvation—offered to both you and your wandering child—is a promise you can count on. But God won’t override the free will of your child to guarantee a return to you—or to Him.

God has provided us with wonderful promises and proverbs in His Word. Understanding the differences between them is essential to fully grasping the word of truth.

When you feel overwhelmed by the pain or guilt of a prodigal child, ask God what has happened to His many children. (Did God fail to provide the right training?) And like God, continue to seek and to save each one who is lost and to rejoice each time one is found.

A proverb isn’t always true, even if the conditions are met.


2 For example, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), vol. 5, p. 1061, emphasizes that the second clause provides the consequence of the first. The imperative is to “train” because there is a standard of life.


Steve Case has been a youth pastor and a professor of youth ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. He is currently president of Piece of the Pie Ministries in Sacramento, California.
Oh, Grandma, I love you so much,” murmured Holly as she snuggled close against her grandmother.

“And I love you too, Holly girl,” whispered Grandma. Grandma lived in a mobile home just across the yard from Holly’s house. The little girl loved to go visit Grandma. Grandma’s house smelled of yummy cookies and fresh bread. And Grandma always had time to read a story and give Holly warm “snuggly” hugs.

Even when things didn’t go as planned, Grandma never lost her patience. Just that morning Grandma had given Holly a cookie and a tall glass of milk. Somehow Holly spilled her milk—all over the table and floor. What a mess! Grandma helped clean it up and just smiled a big warm smile at Holly. “Everyone has accidents, child,” Grandma said softly. Grandma understood.

As Holly leaned close to Grandma, she remembered the times Grandma read to her, let her help make cookies, or iron cloth squares for the quilt the two were making together. There was no one with whom Holly shared so much. Holly knew she would really miss Grandma if she were ever gone.

When Holly grew up and went away to school, she and Grandma still talked often on the phone, and Holly came home to visit Grandma whenever she could. One visit Grandma took Holly to her china cupboard and showed her a special dish with pink flowers on it. “Holly,” she said softly, “this is for you. Every time you use this dish I want you to think of me.”

“Oh, Grandma, how could I ever forget you? You are the best grandma in the world,” Holly exclaimed as she hugged her white-haired grandma.

One day Holly received an urgent phone call from her mother saying that Grandma was very sick and in the hospital. According to the doctor, Grandma probably wouldn’t come home from the hospital, and might live only a few days.

Holly hurried home and was in time to give Grandma a long snuggly hug in her hospital bed. Grandma opened her eyes and smiled that warm smile and whispered, “Holly girl.”

Holly will always remember her grandma. Every time she looks at the lovely bowl her grandma gave her, she knows that even though Grandma is sleeping in Jesus now, someday she will meet Grandma again. It will be in heaven—right by the sparkling river of life. Together they will eat some of the delicious fruit from the marvelous tree of life, and talk about the good times they had shared. They will never grow old there, and they won’t ever have to say goodbye again.

Forever and Ever

On Tuesday (or whatever day you like), invite your family to worship God with you.

☛ Choose at least two different Bible translations and have those who like to read take turns reading from Revelation 22:1-5, 12, 13.

☛ Ask an adult in your group to tell about having to say goodbye to someone they believe they won’t see again on this earth. How does it make them feel to know that they may see that person in heaven someday?

☛ Ask everyone at your worship to close their eyes and try to think about what the tree of life and the river of life will be like. Then ask them to think of one person, besides those in the room, they want to meet there. What do they remember best about that person that makes them special?

☛ Sing your favorite song about heaven. Need some ideas? Look in the The SDA Hymnal, No. 432 (“Shall We Gather at the River?”) and No. 633 (“When We All Get to Heaven”).

☛ Be sure to thank Jesus for preparing a home for us where we will live together forever.
Experiencing the Power of the Word


Some might think it unnecessary to detail once again the background, authenticity, and reliability of the Bible in a popular paperback. But David Marshall takes on such critics in Experiencing the Power of the Word. Billed as “the most comprehensive all-about-the-Bible book published so far,” this book marshals together the important stories about the Book of books—the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, Tischendorf’s epic journeys of discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus, the Masoretic text, and other ventures.

But more significant than these stories is the conviction that the Bible is authentic, reliable, and relevant today. The book begins with Latimer, burned at the stake in Oxford, England, for his commitment to the truths of biblical salvation. The Word “made the difference,” according to Marshall, for Latimer, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Bunyan, Wesley, Spurgeon, and many more.

This is Marshall’s thesis: “There is power in the Word”—a transforming, saving, divine power that invites attention. The book balances emotions and reason in its encounter with the God of the Bible. This is God speaking to humanity, and such a message deserves thoughtful reflection. He identifies the essential aspects of the biblical message (one could wish for simpler words for Bible study novices—“justification,” “atonement,” and “glorification” are not everyday terms).

The author tells his readers: “The content of the Bible is such that men and women, by exposing themselves to it, can discover it is inspired by God. The challenge, then, is TASTE! See! Read! Discover! Adventure! And it will not be long before you find you are adventuring with God.”

This book challenges you to pick up the Bible again and see its relevance in your life. Marshall has given us a book for sharing in the hope that others will go to the Bible and find the God of their salvation.

Be My Angel


"Would it kill an angel to appear for just ten seconds? It would require so little effort on his part, and that tiny effort would change my life. It would give such comfort in the middle of such pain." If that cry seems familiar, you will enjoy Be My Angel.

Be My Angel is part of Pacific Press’s Sycamore Tree line, and it’s good writing. It’s a real-life experience with the occult. Even the author remains a mystery—Harriet Canne is a pseudonym. But the story is not just another I-used-to-be-spooky narrative. The lead character, Meredith, is not a teenager attracted to Ouija boards, but a middle-aged woman who has lost her husband and sense of direction. A successful real-estate saleswoman, she finds an abandoned schoolhouse on a bluff overlooking the sea—a perfect place for a house, or is it? Interesting what one finds cleaning out old buildings.

The story behind the story gives the plot its excellent character development. Meredith gets spiritual counseling from her less-than-perfect family: a neurotic sister, an arrogant nephew, and a rebellious niece. Along with her niece, Meredith grows up. She learns, for example, that her aggressiveness may work in selling real estate but not in male-female relationships.

Canne’s writing brings out the essence of her characters. As she describes her niece: “I looked up, and there was my niece, Brenda Ann, standing there with her mustache and her nose ring. . . . Here is a girl who could be pretty with a little bleach on that upper lip and a quality salon perm. . . . She clodded around in scary black Nazi-type boots and torn Levi’s and Salvation Army-type tops. . . . You want the forests to be beautiful, I had told her, but you can’t spend ten minutes with a bar of lotion-based facial cleanser?”

The author writes an intriguing story that speaks to our struggles and shows how we can gain insights about ourselves from the most unlikely people—our angels in disguise.
Our young adult program is trying to attract young adults from outside the church. How quickly should spiritual themes be introduced?

Allan’s reply: It is a misconception that young adults need to be attracted by some “hip” program and slowly introduced to spiritual themes. In my work with young adults I am convinced that today’s young adults are aware that they are spiritual beings. Many of them are caught up in a world in which the Spirit of “life and peace” (Rom. 8:6) is missing.

One of my concerns is how we Adventists sometimes compartmentalize our “spirituality.” For example, if we are spiritual only when we are involved with “church activities,” we lose the richness of having our spirituality lived out every day. An everyday spirituality is one of the most powerful experiences a devoted Christian can share with young adults. Practical ways to experience the fullness of life and a genuine depth of peace are themes that young adults (as well as those younger and older) are searching for.

Christian demographer George Barna states it well: “If religion is to bring hope into people’s lives, Busters [young adults] would describe that hope as it relates to the explanation of ethical insight, purpose for living, and the development of greater emotional balance. Their interest in spiritual matters wanes as soon as the discussion rolls around to matters of a higher level; religion, for their purposes, must be tangible, useful, and intelligent.”*

Spirituality shared by real, 24/7 spiritual people naturally attracts young adults. Why wait until later? Share the source of life and peace ASAP.

How do we make Christ appealing to young adults, both those in the church who are bored by religion and those who are unchurched?

Allan’s reply: Your questions are familiar and often perplexing for passionate Adventists who want Adventist-raised young adults to be “unbored,” or to draw prebelieving Xers into the church scene. But let’s face it: those who don’t want to follow Christ have a God-given option. Creating holy appeal, religion makeovers, and spiritual lures for slackers will have little impact on a young adult who decidedly wants to go his or her own way.

Further, we don’t have any power to “make” Christ appealing. We do a disservice to the church by manufacturing flashy programs. Why? Because a facade instantaneously turns young adults off. We aren’t even in the same universe as MTV and Hollywood, and Xers know it. Trying to match what society offers is a lost cause; and further, it comes across as tacky.

The response to your question is most aptly addressed in understanding our identity in Christ. Check out Paul’s counsel to the believers in Corinth: “Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:17, 18, RSV).

We are ministers of reconciliation. We act as a bridge from people to Christ in the same way Christ is a bridge from us to God. We are a conduit of Christ for those who don’t know Him.

There’s nothing more appealing to a searching young adult than to be in a genuine relationship with someone who has found the priceless Prize. There’s nothing more engaging to the apathetic third- or fourth-generation Adventist than the charismatic enthusiasm of a new creature who acts as Christ’s minister of reconciliation.

I guess we just need to keep on genuinely relating to young adults, and leave it to God to do the appealing, reaching, and drawing . . . through us.

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.

* The Invisible Generation: Baby Busters (Barna Research Group, Ltd.).

Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dre•am VISION ministries, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.
August marks the two-year anniversary of a leap of faith. In 1997, WGTS (91.9 FM), the radio station affiliated with Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland, started delivering a new sound to the airwaves of Washington, D.C. The voices of Rich Mullins, Larnelle Harris, Steve Green, Point of Grace, Sandi Patty, and many other inspirational artists are now heard in places they never were before.

WGTS-FM, the oldest noncommercial radio station in the Washington, D.C., area, had broadcast a classical music format for nearly 40 years before the change. Research conducted by station management and the board of directors showed that while the potential audience for classical music was steadily declining, especially in a market served by three similar stations, there was no station serving the area with Christian music programming, even though there was a growing number of potential listeners for that format.

After much prayer, discussion, and more research, the decision was made to make the change, and the scramble was on to put all the pieces in place by the August 6, 1997, unveiling of the new format. While the station was off the air for two weeks, equipment was upgraded or replaced, new music was collected and organized, new logos were selected, and the staff practiced and polished new techniques.

The response to the new format was immediate and encouraging. Listenership has jumped and consists of people from all denominations and walks of life, all attracted by the station’s goal to engage, edify, evangelize, educate, and entertain listeners. The positive message shared through the mix of inspirational music, interspersed with Bible texts and devotional programs, touches a chord in people.

The station has heard from listeners as diverse as homeless people on the streets of Washington, D.C., to members of the United States Congress and the White House, as well as members of the local media. Sharon Kuykendall, formerly music director and now program director, says, “We have been overwhelmed by the positive response. It seems that listeners came out of the woodwork. The amount of letters, e-mails, faxes, and calls continues to be astonishing!”

Typical responses include:

“I cannot put into words the impact your station has had on my life and on strengthening my Christian walk. I was at the point of giving up, and I had again given in to the temptations of drugs and alcohol. One day while riding in my car, and in desperate need of encouragement and inspiration, and not finding it in the hip-hop, fast-paced Christian music the other stations play, I hit my search button and stopped at your station. I have not changed my dial again since. I listen to it at work, at home, when I’m online, in my car, and every chance and place I can. Your ministry has given me a renewed hope, and the message in the songs you play has led me to rededicate my life to Christ.”

“I am so grateful to the Lord for speaking through you. I listen to the station every day and every night before going to bed. The songs are very uplifting and motivating. I was so happy when I discovered a Christian station that reaches so many people spiritually, emotionally, and practically!”

“When I discovered your radio station, it was quite by accident, but one that I have never regretted since. Your station is beautiful; it refreshes me every day.”

When a current project to increase the signal strength of WGTS is completed, the station expects to reach even more listeners, as well as to improve service to the existing audience. Listener support is making the power increase possible; donations totaling $82,000 were pledged during a one-day “Friendraiser” specifically funding the project. Through partnership with several local Christian Internet providers, the station also broadcasts online, making its programming available around the world (www.wgts.org). The station has heard from listeners in India, Alabama, Florida, California,
ADRA Responds to Turkey Earthquake

As search teams uncovered bodies from the rubble of Turkey's 7.8 earthquake August 17, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) initiated its disaster relief response to assist thousands of devastated survivors.

Immediately following the earthquake, ADRA volunteers in Turkey distributed food and clothing to survivors in Istanbul. The supplies were stored at a warehouse in Istanbul for ADRA's six-year relief program for 250 Iraqi refugees living in Turkey.

Thomas Petracek of ADRA/Germany arrived in Turkey and began coordinating relief efforts with participating humanitarian organizations. Together, they assessed the most immediate needs of the survivors and their families in the area surrounding Izmit, the earthquake's epicenter.

“Izmit and Istanbul are getting a lot of relief attention from various organizations,” says Erich Lischek, ADRA/Germany director. “ADRA is going to make sure that the smaller towns surrounding Izmit receive assistance. It is usually the smaller towns that get overlooked.”

ADRA officials first purchased food, clothing, and hygiene items for those whose homes were destroyed. The international organization will be working through its Turkish liaison, naval captain Tanju Akbay, to obtain governmental assistance for its efforts.

ADRA has provided relief assistance for several other disasters in Turkey. In 1991-1992, ADRA/Germany assisted the Kurdish refugees with relief supplies, a US$1 million project funded in part by the German government. In 1992, following an avalanche, ADRA/Germany sent new winter clothes, parkas, and blankets to those affected—aid valued at US$100,000.

Concerns Remain for Adventists Freed by Court

Despite the freeing on July 26 of three Seventh-day Adventists in Cape Verde, concerns remain regarding a probable police appeal of the verdict.

The three Adventists, José Maria Monteiro Rodrigues, Jorge A dalberto Ramos Tavares, and Benvindo da Cruz Ramos, were declared innocent of all charges brought against them. Judge Helena Barreto stated that “the only
WORLD NEWS & PERSPECTIVES

Lawrence’s New Game Face

BY ANDY NASH, ENGLISH TEACHER, UNION COLLEGE, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

W hen I first heard that Lawrence Phillips, the talented but troubled football star, had been attending Adventist churches, I felt nervous: not because of what Phillips might do to church members, but because of what church members might do to him.

Phillips, like one or two other people, has been on a journey. The undisciplined athlete, reports ESPN Magazine, had nearly given up on football—and on life—after being released by the St. Louis Rams the fall of 1997 and then the Miami Dolphins the fall of 1998. He fled to Atlanta and moved in with mom.

Then one day Phillips got to talking religion with a childhood friend, an Adventist named Shyaam Butler. Butler gave Phillips a copy of the book (gulp) National Sunday Law and, a month later, took him to his local church. “There was a good speaker that day,” remembers Butler, “and I looked over at LP, and LP had broken down in tears. The preacher had said not to worry about what people think of you, not to let people judge you. He said that the Lord knows your insides and that the Lord will take care of it if you turn it over to Him. A nd that hit LP, because he’s been judged all the time. All the time.”

The grace message proved a turning point for Phillips, who has since started keeping the Sabbath, stopped consuming alcohol and meat, started being responsible, stopped punching people, notched a record-breaking (spring) season with NFL Europe, and, in July, joined the San Francisco 49ers—with whom he’ll probably star.

It’s simply refreshing to see a true seeker find warmth and shelter inside an Adventist church. Thanks, Shyaam Butler and “good speaker that day.” May more fragile souls find arms like yours.

NEWS COMMENTARY

Mabel Richards Celebrates 100th Birthday

Mabel Richards, widow of Voice of Prophecy founder H.M.S. Richards, celebrated her 100th birthday on August 15 in California. A native of Battle Creek, Michigan, she met the pioneer radio evangelist in 1919 when she was teaching school and he was pastoring at the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. They were married in 1920.

Nine years later they moved to southern California to conduct evangelistic meetings. While radio was still in its infancy, Richards took the gospel to the airwaves in 1919 when she was teaching school and he was pastoring at the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. They were married in 1920.

Six years later they moved to southern California to conduct evangelistic meetings. While radio was still in its infancy, Richards took the gospel to the airwaves in 1919 when she was teaching school and he was pastoring at the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. They were married in 1920.

It’s simply refreshing to see a true seeker find warmth and shelter inside an Adventist church. Thanks, Shyaam Butler and “good speaker that day.” May more fragile souls find arms like yours.
Did You Know

Gospel Music Sees 21 Percent Growth in 1999

The gospel music industry experienced a 21 percent increase in national album sales for the first six months of 1999 compared to the same period in 1998. Total units sold of contemporary Christian and gospel music from January 1 to June 30 were 20,562,000, compared to 16,950,000 for the same period in 1998.

The increase of more than 3.6 million units was reported by SoundScan, a computerized network that collects sales data from retailers.

The increase in sales came during a time when 6 percent fewer new titles were released, the Gospel Music Association announced. In the first half of 1999, 871 titles were released, compared to 924 during the same time frame last year.

The top-selling albums during the first six months of the year included Kirk Franklin's *Nu Nation* Project in the number 1 spot, followed by the Wow 1999 compilation project, the Prince of Egypt and Touched by an Angel soundtracks, and Sixpence None the Richer.

Christian retailers sold 56 percent of the albums and singles; mainstream retailers sold 44 percent.—Religion News Service.

For Your Good Health

Pointers About Lasers

Personal laser pointers may be the latest must-have gadget among teenagers, but they are definitely not toys. The light energy some of these pointers can deliver to the eye may be more damaging than staring directly into the sun. Even momentary exposure to the beam can cause temporary visual impairment similar to being blinded by a flash or oncoming car headlights. Never look directly into a laser pointer beam, don’t allow children or irresponsible teens or adults to use a pointer, and never point a laser at another person.—American Optometric Association.

Tastes Great! Less Salty!

More than three quarters of dietary salt comes from processed foods, and bread is the single largest source. And while you may want to cut down on salt to help keep blood pressure in check, what about low-salt bread’s taste? Well, a group of 60 people found no difference in taste when rating standard whole-grain bread and two reduced-salt versions. So compare labels and try breads with lower sodium contents. Your palate shouldn’t be disappointed!—Lancet.

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

NEWS BREAK

from the ‘straight and narrow’ way.”

Mabel’s lifelong hope remains firm. “We’re another year closer to the coming of Jesus. I’ve looked forward to that event all my life. Surely it won’t be much longer.”

USA Today Ad Not From Official Adventist Church

A newspaper advertisement appeared in USA Today on August 10 entitled “EARTH’S FINAL WARNING.” The advertisement asks people to respond to the “ETERNAL GOSPEL CHURCH OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS” in West Palm Beach, Florida, for more information.

The Eternal Gospel Church is not affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church and has no connection with either the Florida Conference or the Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Rafael Perez of the Eternal Gospel Church has never been employed by, or served as a pastor of, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

For more than two years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been asking the Eternal Gospel Church to cease its inappropriate identification with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to no avail.

This past December the Seventh-day Adventist Church, through the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists, requested the federal district court in Miami to enjoin the Eternal Gospel Church and Rafael Perez from misusing the name Seventh-day Adventist. Trial is scheduled for mid-October 1999.—Adventist News Network.

News Notes

✔ A new radio station in Santiago, Chile, started broadcasting on July 1. The 24-hour-a-day AM station uses Adventist World Radio programming and broadcasts at 250 kilowatts of power, reports Eleodoro Castillo of the Chile Union.

What’s Upcoming

Sept. 18 Family Togetherness Day
Sept. 25 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Africa-Indian Ocean Division
Sept. 25 World Pathfinder Day
Oct. 3 Health Emphasis Week begins
Oct. 9 Community Relations Day
Oct. 16 Spirit of Prophecy Day

ADVENTIST REVIEW, SEPTEMBER 16, 1999 (1277)
“Reserved for the Hearing-impaired”

W ell, the church is full,” I murmured to
Yolanda. “Where can we sit?”

The pews were stuffed like Subway
sandwiches. “I don’t know,” my wife
whispered. “What do you think?”

We had lingered after our Sabbath
school class to talk briefly with friends,
and then had bumped into George
Gibson and Andy Nash in the foyer.
After a courtly bow to George and an
extremely courteous attempt to direct
Andy to the sanctuary (obviously he was
lost, which is understandable, his having
recently arrived from back East some-
where), I pulled open a large wooden door
to find that the church service had begun.

From past painful experience I knew
that an apparent pew space doesn’t necessarily mean that
seating is available. I have sauntered confidently down 15
rows of the College View church, only to discover my desired
space “saved” under a canopy of bulletins, purses, or hymnals,
or else occupied by small children on their knees playing with
Old Testament action figures. And I’m too self-conscious to
have a deacon find us “perfectly good” seats, then beckon us
grandly to a spot where I could shake hands with the speaker.

One scarcely populated pew emerged to the right, how-
ever, so we entered and walked down the aisle. It wasn’t
until I shuffled into that pew that I saw a sign on the pew
that stated “Reserved for Hearing-impaired.”

The service has already started, I rationalized. Surely no one
else will show up now.

Feeling as though we were parking in a
blue space, we scooted as far as possible down the line of
headsets. As it turned out, no one else did arrive. And as the
service progressed, I began thinking about where I was sitting.

Paul Tournier notes, “It is impossible to overemphasize
the immense need humans have to be really listened to.
Listen to all the conversations of our world, between
countries as well as those between couples. They are, for the
most part, dialogues of the deaf.”

Of all communication skills, listening is the one learned
first, used most, and taught least. Few college graduates have
a clue what the seven types of listening are.¹

In a startling assertion, Jesus says, “Everyone who is of the
truth hears My voice” (John 18:37, NKJV). Our conversa-
tions and prayers may move to three deepening levels: talk-
ing about God, talking to God, and the deepest, most prized
level: talking with God. Finding our own style of prayer is as
individual a matter as finding a style of breathing. We cannot
live for long by having others breathe for us; we must
breathe, and we must pray, for ourselves.

Everyone engages in the same two
breathing patterns—inhaling and exhaling. In the case of prayer, most of us are
expert exhalers, spending at least 95 per-
cent of our time letting God know
exactly how things are “down here” and
what we expect Him to do about it.

Inhaling is listening to God. We are
often impatient in this, as restless as a
10-year-old in a tie. Yet which of us in
breathing would dare to give inhaling
only 5 percent of our time? Listening requires taking the
time to wait on God, to clear away distractions, to remain
focused and patient. It also requires practice.

In his superb book Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home,
Richard Foster poses the principle of progression in prayer:
“We do not take occasional joggers and put them in a
marathon race, and we must not do that with prayer either.”
Foster also suggests that “in the beginning it is wise to strive
for uneventful prayer experiences. Divine revelations and
eccstacies can overwhelm us and distract us from the real
work of prayer . . . ‘to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a
child in its mother’s arms’ (Ps. 131:2, Jerusalem).”²

Does God have an immense need to be really listened to?
The longer I sat looking at the “hearing-impaired” sign, the
more I thought, Every pew in every church could rightfully
carry this sign. And I felt that, just for this Sabbath, I was
parked precisely where God wanted me to be.

¹ Supporting, analyzing, paraphrasing, judging, prompting, questioning,
and advising. What would happen if we applied all these seven types of lis-
tening to our praying?

Chris Blake listens at Union College in Lincoln,
Nebraska.
In this feature Adventists share what’s on their hearts. We welcome your brief but spiritual stories, insights, struggles, even drawings and photos. Send to Cutting Edge Meditations, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. (We don’t pay for or return submissions to this feature.) — Editors.

O Ye of Great Faith

I was watching a video on the life of Jesus, and one scene depicted the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were shown bailing out their boat with a small basket, and huge waves were crashing around them. It showed Jesus asleep, then seemingly getting upset with the disciples for their lack of faith.

It struck me as I watched this scene that Jesus might have been “playing possum” — waiting for the disciples to call on Him. They waited until they were almost drowning before they called on Him. Like us moderns, they tried to do things themselves, pitiful efforts such as bailing out the gallons of water with a tiny basket. Here they had the Master of the universe waiting for them to call on Him, yet they continued to bail fruitlessly. It became clear why Jesus rebuked them as men of little faith.

This gave me the reminder to seek the Master of the universe first and not use tiny baskets to bail me out of serious situations. I would like to hear Jesus say to me, “O ye of great faith.”

— Marlene Tucker, Trabuco Canyon, California

God Is Good

“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us” (Ellen G. White, Life Sketches, p. 196).

“How are things going with you, Laurie?” Mr. Bakewell was asking me at a mutual friend’s 50th wedding anniversary. We chatted throughout the party, but as I drove home, I reflected on how good it is to still have him in my life.

When I was in my teens I first heard the news at church. “Bud Bakewell has been diagnosed with cancer.” “They say he can have treatments done on him, but that isn’t any guarantee.” “We hope that helps.” “I hear his dad is devastated. He wishes there were some way he could switch the illness from Bud to himself.”

“He is such a gem of a guy to have to suffer cancer.” And I remember a pastor saying: “He is the best first elder I’ve ever worked with in any church district.”

It is easy to remember the shocked reactions of the church members. Mr. Bakewell was also an excellent Sabbath school teacher. He worked as a house painter, and people got to know him better in this profession because he made “home visits” when he worked for them. He was loved, respected, and appreciated by all those who knew him.

Mr. Bakewell went through treatments, and the years have passed. Now I sat with him, 30 years later, at a party. A man in his 70s, he appears to be in excellent health. Again he was asking about my life. We discussed his grandchildren, what I was doing lately, and my family. He listened to my newest jokes about seniors.

Attending fiftieth anniversary parties and catching up on news is not a privilege most former cancer patients get many years after diagnosis. I learned many lessons about life from this experience. God can heal. Parents can’t switch places with their sick children even if they wish. Life goes on for some and for others it ends. I am thankful that God saw fit to spare his life and let him continue to be a blessing to his wife, his children and grandchildren, friends, church members, and me.

— Laurie Snyman, Lansing, Michigan
Deep-fried Blues and Love-starved Pews

Outreach opportunities come in all shapes and sizes.

BY RANDY FISHELL

Colonel Sanders was outta there! The boarded-up establishment stood in stark contrast to the urban legend I'd heard—that no Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet had ever folded. This place was as dead as the fare for which it had elsewhere become famous.

The business term for what happened to that Michigan restaurant is “disenfranchisement.” No longer could it claim the rights or privileges that had previously accompanied its affiliation with the KFC organization.

People can also become disenfranchised. Denied the fulfillment of basic physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, these individuals long for those things to which they are entitled as children of God. But with sin’s economy came a skewed distribution system, leaving many unable to avail themselves of ingredients essential for human survival and dignity.

As citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we are called to embrace the disenfranchised in the name of Jesus Christ, fully aware of the risk involved in reaching out to those whose appearance and demeanor often fall outside our comfort zone.

Scary Visitor

As a member of a Seattle Seventh-day Adventist church’s pastoral staff, I answered the facility’s rear-door buzzer one weekday. Until then I’d thought Charles Manson remained behind bars. Frankly, I was a little bit relieved when, upon closer study, I realized this was not the notorious killer dropping by for a visit. But what an uncanny resemblance!

After some disconnected ramblings, my visitor got to the point. “I was wondering if you have any food in there.” I made a quick trip down to the fellowship hall’s freezer, returning with some dinner rolls. But it was soon clear that satisfying my “needy” customer’s culinary hopes wouldn’t be as easy as I’d thought. Looking over my nutritious offering, he asked, “Don’t you have any of those Loma Linda Linkets?”

“Well, no; sorry,” I said. Overcome with disappointment at not getting what he wanted, the man shuffled down the sidewalk, empty-handed.

Whenever we reach out to the disenfranchised—or anyone, for that matter—we risk rejection. But the potential reward of touching someone’s life in a physically,
emotionally, or spiritually needy moment can be great.

Home Delivery Service

“So I was wondering if you’d mind digging the grave?”

My next-door neighbor went on to explain that our mutual elderly neighbor’s cat had died the previous night. “I’d dig the hole myself,” Burt indicated, “but with this and all—” he gave his implanted pacemaker a couple taps—“I didn’t think it would be a good idea.”

I nodded my understanding. “I’ll be right over,” I said.

At neighbor Betty’s house, it was clear that she was truly grieving at the loss of her beloved pet. I placed my arm around the woman’s shoulder, offered some words of comfort, then headed over to the spot next to the utility shed she’d chosen for Scraggy’s grave site.

When I’d finished digging the hole, Burt lowered the homemade casket down into the opening. As he stood back up, I said, “If you don’t mind, I’d like to offer a little prayer.” Everyone seemed to think that was a good idea.

So right there I did my best to smooth the bumps of a rough emotional Sunday morning ride in our neighborhood.

To my surprise, a few weeks later someone who’d talked to Betty told me something a bit astonishing. Betty had told this person that she considered my “intercession” on Scraggy’s behalf that day the most beautiful prayer she’d ever heard.

Simple gestures can make a world of difference to someone who’s hurting. I was glad the Holy Spirit had prompted me earlier to risk building relational bridges that allowed me to
Preaching Will Not Do It

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

There is earnest work for every pair of hands to do. Let every stroke tell for the uplifting of humanity. There are so many that need to be helped. The heart of him who lives, not to please himself, but to be a blessing to those who have so few blessings, will thrill with satisfaction.

The Lord has a place for everyone in His great plan. Talents that are not needed are not bestowed. Supposing that the talent is small, God has a place for it, and that one talent, if faithfully used, will do the very work God designs that it should do.

Visit your neighbors and show an interest in the salvation of their souls. Arouse every spiritual energy to action. Tell those whom you visit that the end of all things is at hand. The Lord Jesus Christ will open the door of their hearts and will make upon their minds lasting impressions. Strive to arouse men and women from their spiritual insensibility. Tell them how you found Jesus and how blessed you have been since you gained an experience in His service. Tell them what blessing comes to you as you sit at the feet of Jesus and learn precious lessons from His Word. Tell them of the gladness and joy that there is in the Christian life. Your warm, fervent words will convince them that you have found the pearl of great price. Let your cheerful, encouraging words show that you have certainly found the higher way. This is genuine missionary work, and as it is done, many will awake as from a dream.

Even while engaged in their daily employment, God’s people can lead others to Christ. And while doing this they will have the precious assurance that the Saviour is close beside them.

By personal labor reach those around you. Become acquainted with them. Preaching will not do the work that needs to be done. Angels of God attend you to the dwellings of those you visit. This work cannot be done by proxy. Money lent or given will not accomplish it. Sermons will not do it. By visiting the people, talking, praying, sympathizing with them, you will win hearts. This is the highest missionary work that you can do. To do it, you will need resolute, persevering faith, unwearying patience, and a deep love for souls.

Work disinterestedly, lovingly, patiently, for all with whom you are brought into contact. Show no impatience. Utter not one unkind word. Let the love of Christ be in your hearts, the law of kindness on your lips.

Excerpted from Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, pp. 37-41. The title is ours.—Editors.

reach out effectively during a time of genuine need.

In the Same Pew
Touching others’ lives with the love of Jesus doesn’t always demand seeking out homeless people or grieving neighbors. Each week seated in your own church sanctuary are individuals and families—fellow church members—who long to be drawn more fully into the circle of Christian friendship. We may exchange gratuitous pleasanties, and even harbor genuine appreciation for them as individuals. But what do we really know about them? Has someone just experienced a monumental career accomplishment? Is another’s heart breaking? Reaching out through simple gestures such as a dinner invitation or a walk in the woods together can be the catalyst for deepening biblical fellowship in the body of Christ.

A fellow church member confided in me that he considers our locale to be “the loneliest place I’ve ever lived.” I must ask myself what I’ve done to change this person’s perception.

Here are three simple keys to help us embrace the disenfranchised, reach out to others in need, and strengthen the ties that bind us as a church family.

1. Pray for courage. Reaching out is easier for some than for others. If your reservoir of fortitude in this area is low, ask God to fill your cup of courage to overflowing.

2. Scan your horizons for outreach opportunities. When you learn of a positive event or difficult time in someone’s life, consider how you might seize the moment to celebrate together or provide relief. Ask God for increasing sensitivity in this area.

3. If at first you don’t succeed, meet a need again. Rejection is temporary; courageous acts of hospitality, caring, and compassion resonate throughout eternity. It’s worth the risk.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal. 6:10, NIV).

This week, look around your neighborhood—and your church sanctuary—and consider how you can extend the privileges of the all-inclusive Christian franchise to a love-starved world.

Randy Fishell is the editor of Guide magazine, Hagerstown, Maryland.
When Less Is More

A report of one church’s soul-winning roller-coaster ride

BY CARL OKIMI AND SUSAN SZABO

When is less more with God’s help? When you are a member of the Niagara Falls, Ontario, Seventh-day Adventist Church, that’s when.

Picturesque in its gothic style, it has members who years ago devoted their dollars, their labor, their love and care, to build this house of God on a quiet residential street in the “honeymoon capital” of the world. An attractive house of worship was important to them, for they planned to invite the community to fellowship with them. The sanctuary, small group/seminar rooms, and children’s Sabbath school rooms are fully equipped and tastefully and professionally decorated. The members feel that God’s house should be as beautiful as their own homes. Many who visit the beauty and majesty of Niagara Falls have spent their Sabbaths worshipping within these walls and in fellowship with the church family.

Let’s look in and get a glimpse of the makeup of this church. A warm and caring church is very evident; the young and old mingle and converse easily. Young children sit with “adopted” grandparents to give the young moms a much-needed break. The youth sit in “their” pew, ready to lend a hand when needed. Two young men are at their newly installed audiovisual station waiting to flip a switch or push a button.

As you take a closer look, however, time has taken its toll on the dedicated members, and many in the congregation are aging. Attendance is smaller than when the church began.

Why do some churches flourish? Why do others struggle for years to stay alive financially and struggle to achieve sufficient membership to maintain a vibrant program?

Here’s how the members of the Niagara Falls church reacted when they realized they had 10 years to make their church vibrant and growing or turn the keys over to the conference and lock the doors. Theirs was a soul-winning roller-coaster ride—how they concluded that their present evangelistic methodology was not working and their discovery of a simple way of reaching their community at minimal cost and with maximum prayer. The result has been more Discover Bible School enrollees than ever before.

NET ‘95 and NET ‘96

With only a few months to go before opening night of NET ‘95 the decision was made to run the program. But could a handful of members, most over the age of 65 and the rest overextended in their daily lives, undertake such a monumental task as this? With the Lord’s promises and the pastor’s encouragement, momentum began to build, the newspaper advertisements went out, and the letter carrier delivered the thousands of handbills.

Opening night brought a small group of 15 nonmembers. The members in attendance saw a glimmer of hope in a rich harvest. When the series ended, two couples were baptized and became a part of the church family. The entire congregation praised God for the increase. The members supported and nurtured the best they could, but within a short period of time the couples left, first one and then the other.

NET ‘96 followed with scarcely a breath. The interim pastor, a retired valiant bearer of the standard, caught the vision and enthusiastically rallied the few discouraged troops. A Discover Bible School was launched; supplies were ordered, lessons were organized, and they were ready to go. The first lesson was sent to all 200 It Is Written viewers whose response cards had accumulated in the church office over the years. Twelve responded; five eventually graduated. Prayer bands, door-to-door visits, expensive newspaper advertisements, and mass mailings did not bring the anticipated response from the community. The attendance at NET ’96 was even less than NET ’95. What went wrong? What more could they have done? It seemed that all their efforts were to no avail.

Were they not spending enough money? Were they not...
praying enough? Were they not working hard enough? They tried promoting the Bible school through telemarketing; a few responded, but no one completed the course.

Before the arrival of a new pastor, the church board went through a process of self-evaluation. They asked themselves such questions as Who are we? What are our needs, strengths, weaknesses? What type of pastor could help us become a vibrant, soul-winning church? The Lord answered their prayers and with a newly graduated pastor in place, they once again realized they needed to find a way to reach the community or their beautiful church would very quickly close. They needed younger members with small children to give life and the feeling of well-being to their church. In September 1996 the new pastor arrived and made a commitment to stay for a minimum of three years, and the church board again put their hand to the plow.

In the summer of 1997 it was decided to hold a youth rally in Niagara Falls for the churches of southern Ontario. The intention was to cover the entire city with invitations to enroll in the Bible course. On the appointed Sabbath, because of miscommunication, scheduling conflicts, and lack of interest, only six groups of an anticipated 100 went door-to-door. Though few in number, these willing youth returned with 13 Bible school enrollments and the Discover Bible School was back in business.

With only a few students and half-hearted interest, the Bible school was languishing. Previously large ads for the Discover Bible School had been run in the daily newspapers. Because of the tremendous costs, it was impossible to maintain this on a consistent basis. One board member, involved with regular advertising campaigns in his business, reminded the board members that in the commercial advertising field, in order for an ad to be effective it must run six or seven times before people will begin to notice and respond. Seed money was provided to place a small ad in the want ad section of the paper concentrating on the local community. The ad was run each week, at a fraction of the cost of a traditional larger ad in the daily newspaper. Compare $3.50 to $350.

No sooner had the type been set than the Lord blessed their efforts. One, two, three enrollment requests arrived at Postal Box No. 325. The members were ecstatic when their tenth response arrived and praised God as the count surpassed 20. Every day our personal ministry leader would call the pastor and say “One more” or “Two more.” Seventy had enrolled at the time of this writing, and the count is still rising.

The number of enrollees was enhanced by students from the magazine Canada Youth Challenge 2000 program who spent one day in the Niagara Falls area offering the Bible course as well as selling books. Our task is to “sow the seed.” The Lord will bring in the harvest.

Are there any side benefits? Definitely. Prayer meeting attendance has doubled; the pastor held a Discover Bible Seminar twice weekly for nine weeks; a financial seminar and a vegetarian cooking school for the community were well attended. A parenting seminar was offered. The church service has been updated and has become more youth- and visitor-friendly. The weekly attendance in church has increased. With the seminars, cooking classes, and Discover Bible School, the interest list is in excess of 400 who now know about the loving God we serve, and the Niagara Falls Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Should your church have Discover Bible School material sitting on a shelf, we suggest that you blow the dust off, get a postal box, and insert a little ad in the want ad section of your weekly newspaper each week for a year. Give it a try. Claim His promises, and watch your church family grow.

New blood is coursing through those old and tired veins; there truly is “power in the blood.” The bread has been cast upon the waters; the Lord promises He will do the reaping. Members in Niagara Falls can attest that “less is more, with God’s help.”

Carl Okimi is president of Okimi’s Office Furniture. Susan Szabo is service coordinator for Family and Children’s Services of Niagara. Susan is first elder and Carl is an elder of the Niagara Falls Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Ontario, Canada.
Reflecting His Image

BY MADELINE STEELE JOHNSTON

Flying to Florida to attend a convention of the North American Nature Photography Association with students and teachers from Andrews University, I pondered what it takes to create a good image of a subject being photographed.

Once there, I realized that words could not adequately describe the magnificent views of creation that were projected for us in a variety of plenary sessions and seminars. Photographers from National Geographic, wildlife magazines, and freelance enterprises with the world’s best artists presented their most creative and inspirational shots.

On the way home I mentally reviewed these images of God’s handiwork. If we as Christians are to reflect the image of the Creator, what might it take?

The focus must be sharp. A blurred image, except for an occasional deliberate softening effect, will not work.

Exposure should be right on—not dark, not burned out. Colors must match the original as closely as possible. Whether the light hits from the front, the side, the back, above, or below, it should show off the subject to the best advantage. A nd always there must be light.

The composition is important. The eye of the viewer must be drawn to the intended subject. This can be accomplished by placing the subject in an area where the eye naturally tends to look, or by using leading lines (for example, fence posts, paths) to pull the eye into the picture until it comes to the subject. Some images disappoint because too much is going on; extraneous objects detract.

The perfect image requires time, and sometimes risk. One National Geographic photographer demonstrated this by showing slides an assistant had taken of him in a blind in Africa. Perspiration was dripping, and huge flies covered his hands and arms, yet he dared not wipe, swat, or make any other movement lest he lose the chance to photograph gorillas. Wildlife photographers who capture the best pictures of their subjects may take months, and they may suffer pain, risk, loss, mosquito bites, beestings, or worse. A few have lost their lives in the attempt, as has the Master Photographer.

Why do photographers take pictures? Sometimes we want to document a scene or event. I probably could never prove to anyone that my friend and I saw the green violet-ear hummingbird of Mexico in Edwardsburg, Michigan, last year except I took pictures of it. Christ in my life will impress people more than talking about Him.

Sometimes we wish to share a particular moment, a vision, or a personal perspective. A unique point of view compels the viewer to look at the subject again. Each of us offers a different perspective of our Creator, a new facet for the viewer to consider.

Shutterbugs may simply wish to engage in creativity, self-expression, or experimentation with light and color and movement. Our pathologist friend, Art, shares his photos taken through his microscope showing us the beauty of color and design in a blood cell, a butterfly wing, or a snowflake. The Master Photographer delights in the varied forms that emerge as we are developed.

Sometimes to fully portray a subject a group of images may be required. A panorama may be pieced together from a series of pictures laid side by side. Or several shots of one person will provide different facets of the personality. No individual can ever perfectly reflect the character of Christ, but His body, the church, becomes a portfolio of images that, taken together, reflect to the world a perfect picture of God.

And “this will continue until we are united by our faith and by our understanding of the Son of God. Then we will be mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him” (Eph. 4:13, CEV).

Madeline Steele Johnston writes from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.