Doug Batchelor casts the gospel net in New York

Mothers, Take Heart

Ten Reasons for My Passion

The Late-Night Telephone Call
A Fine Balance
What an excellent article by Gordon Bietz! I love to read the Review while working out on my treadmill. When I saw the cover of the July 22 edition, I wondered, "Who cares about the balance between Adventist colleges and the church?" When I got to the article page, I started to skip it. Too boring, I thought, especially when I'm working out. But I went ahead and read the first paragraph. I was hooked! I couldn't stop reading and wound up staying on the treadmill five minutes overtime!

What an article. Powerful and informative—all I can say is "Amen!"—Adrienne McClain
Lancaster, Texas

“Amen” and “Thank you” for printing the speech by Gordon Bietz in the July 22 Review. We the church and Christian academia do indeed need each other, or we have nothing to offer the world. With eyes fixed on Christ, the balance beam will stay level and straight.

—Natalie Dodd
Centerville, Ohio

The Leading Edge: Living the Vision for 150 Years
In August we received the special issue of the Adventist Review (150th anniversary issue). Wonderful history, great current stuff, and just good encouraging reading from cover to cover. All in all, I saw and heard, and yes, read that this church is alive with good things to encourage our souls. Sometimes it is right under our noses and, I might add, often with opportunities for personal involvement. If you are not sure which way to go, put yourself in neutral, ask God to guide you, and you may be very happily surprised where He will take you.

—Relious L. Walden
Apopka, Florida

I was so surprised when I opened the Review this past month and saw that it was about history. But as I read on, the articles were so perfect, leading us to Ellen White’s dreams and all that went on in the church during her time.

Each copy of the Review shows its development through the years to the present day. Congratulations on such a marvelous and wonderful magazine. Keep it up!

—Eleanor Reagin
Greeley, Colorado

My heart is overflowing with joy as I write this letter. Your mailbox will be overflowing with mail as a result of the special anniversary issue of the Adventist Review. How wonderful it would be if dear Sister White, Elder White, and successive editors of the Review could know the progress the original Present Truth edition has made up to now.

—Mrs. Jack Warren Schelles
Jemison, Alabama

Kudos to the entire staff for the Review’s Leading Edge 150th anniversary issue. It was packed from cover to cover with good reading material. Though I may not have agreed with every article and story printed in preceding issues, the Review has never failed me, but it has enlightened me with spiritual food that my soul hungers for. It gives me a spiritual boost from week to week. You can count on my yearly subscription.

—Martha V. Kinsey
Sanford, Florida

Thank you for publishing such a beautiful 150th anniversary edition of the Adventist Review. Heartwarming, faith-strengthening, encouraging in times like these, a Advent-message affirming and...
confirming. Does good to me in this year of my 60th baptism anniversary.

Sorry to say, however, that one item spoiled it. Why did the controversy and divisive subject of women's ordination have to be brought in—particularly what happened in the Sligo church against the action of the General Conference session in Utrecht? Something good was said about women's ministry, but the ordination of women should have been left out. We should put that behind us and get on with the job, men and women alike, putting effort in ministering to souls.

—J. T. Knopper
AUSTRALIA

If the Truth Be Told
I was saddened to read the article entitled “If the Truth Be Told” (special anniversary issue) by René Alexenko Evans. Surely we should not be squabbling among ourselves! There is only one way to lead souls to Christ, and that is to look to Him. The Bible says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1, 2, NIV). It is to Him alone we should look.

—M. M. Timms
WALSALL, ENGLAND

Thanks for printing René Alexenko Evans’ article “If the Truth Be Told” in the special anniversary issue. Wow! What a blessing to observe the Review encouraging Adventists to test their doctrine by a valid standard of truth.

I am in the medical profession in a small very traditional church body where it is almost blasphemy to question the “party line.” My pastor went pale when I inquired if Spectrum magazine was still being published.

God bless you for printing Evans’ poignant article for the end of the 1990s that encourages individual thought! After all, we are not a cult! Are we . . . ? The overcoming is here and now and cannot be put aside to “wait to be made right.” We must live every day as if it were our last in Christ and His teachings and live every day as if we will live forever in Christ and His teachings.

—Robin Terrace
SALMON, IDAHO

Letters Policy
The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Aventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617.15.

NEXT WEEK
Picking Up After Mitch
Parts of Nicaragua and Honduras are still recovering from last year’s devastating storms. And Adventists in North America are helping with the effort.
Openness of Identity

Jan Paulsen is president of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church. His article, with slight changes, is also being published in Ministry.

W ho or what am I? How candid do I have to be about my identity? Is it important that my identity is clear—to me and to others?

Knowledge of one’s identity is essential to survival. Disclosure of one’s identity is essential to relationships. A life spent denying one’s identity, or pretending to be disinterested in it, or searching but never finding it is probably unsustainable. At best it is an unfulfilled life spent in the shadows, always short of reality and longing to find the elusive truth.

Identity is more than where I come from and who my parents are. It is more than qualification and profession, more than likes and dislikes, smells and tastes. All of the above are part of it, but its essence is in the inner reality of my selfhood. My identity is my soul. It is what makes me me, and it provides me with compelling reasons to be clear about myself and to be honest with myself. It also compels me to look for and acknowledge characteristics outside of my person that confirm my links to others. We are all part of something that is larger than ourselves. In that sense we find a community of shared identity.

As believers our primary identity is in Christ. By the faith He has given birth to in us, He has laid claim to us. We belong to Him. My identity cannot fairly or accurately be stated without a comprehensive affirmation of what Jesus Christ is to me, and what His presence in my life does to me. Herein lies the difference that conversion makes: it radically changes one’s personal identity. Herein also lies the difference between a believer and a nonbeliever: their identities are worlds apart.

But identity is even more specific. Some believers choose one community in preference to another. When as an Adventist preacher I enter the pulpit to deliver and interpret the Word, it is most important that I remember that before me sit individuals who have come to recognize their identity as belonging to this particular community of faith rather than to some other.

How are we at disclosing and expressing our identity? I am not thinking primarily of the evangelists who in planning their strategies choose initially to focus less on who they are than on what they have to say. Nor am I thinking of those who choose not to use the opening fleeting moments of a first contact on an airplane to focus on who they are. No, I am thinking more of our relationships and contacts over the longer haul—the long-term nurture of our identity, and the designed, deliberate way in which we choose to express, or possibly choose not to express, our identity. I am thinking of the ministries that come from our pulpits, classrooms, institutions, and services.

Why should not the identity of the deliverer of those ministries, services, and messages be clear? Why should a worshiper in the pew, listening to the sermon, wonder whether this is an Adventist, Baptist, or Lutheran church? Or whether the material for today’s sermon came from yesterday’s newspaper or a textbook on psychology? This is a Seventh-day Adventist church. Let the message reflect that identity. It is the Word of God that is being proclaimed. Let the biblical identity show. It is the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is being developed. Let that community’s identity be reflected in what I as a theologian, historian, or counselor teach. This goes without saying. It is reasonable; it is also honest.

Identity ignored becomes, by default, denied, because with the passing of time it no longer accurately reflects who we are. It may say who we used to be, but somehow we have moved beyond that, and we do not comfortably wish to continue to be identified quite the way we used to be. And something happens to the journey that lies ahead: it becomes marked by disaffection and distance, and we become strangers to what we used to be.

It is traumatic when that happens to us individually. It is destructive when it happens to our church community or to the various services or ministries we provide. At the end of the day we all need to know who we are and where we belong. A halfway house may be a point in transit; it cannot be a permanent home.
“Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (1 Cor. 16:19).

There are a lot of obvious reasons that the Washington, D.C., area is a special place to live and work. For example, the population is uniquely cosmopolitan, and there are always plenty of interesting people to meet. The area also offers world-class cultural events and unlimited educational and vocational opportunities.

Aside from these obvious perks, Washington also offers numerous little-known intangibles that enhance the quality of life for local residents. For me, one of the most exciting features of the area is the way local residents, businesses, and governmental agencies find new and creative expressions of community and hospitality.

For example, long before the national bookstore chains picked up the trend, some Washington area bookstores began installing gourmet coffee shops on their premises. This allows browsers to discuss the works of Albert Camus while sipping cappuccino, catch up on local news with a cup of café latte, or strike up a conversation over a mug of mocha.*

Perhaps the most fascinating trend I’ve discovered in the past few years is the emergence of “house concerts,” often advertised through the Internet. Many families in the area open up their home to perfect strangers once a month so they can hear local musicians perform.

These home-based concerts provide one of the most intimate performance venues I’ve ever encountered. A side from giving you an excellent vantage point to watch the artist and listen to the music, the setting also affords guests the opportunity to dialogue with the artists and become acquainted with one another.

You can imagine the networking that goes on at these events. The artists not only sell their CDs, but get an up-close look at their audience. On the other hand, the audience becomes acquainted with the artist as a person. I have often been surprised to discover how many musicians and hosts of other house concerts you’ll find right in the audience. It’s primarily through such venues that various forms of folk, alternative, and other music are finding new life.

Sometimes I wonder if booksellers and music makers have not discovered something that Christians have known all along—that the need for hospitality touches all of us. It’s a need so basic that Christians are commanded to offer hospitality to friends and strangers alike.

Jesus described hospitality as the distinguishing characteristic of those who will enter the kingdom of heaven. He declared, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in” (Matt. 25:35, NIV).

The ministry of hospitality is such a powerful manifestation of the gospel that it played a central role in the growth of the New Testament church. Priscilla and Aquila, two of the first non-Jews to accept the gospel, started at least three churches—in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus—by opening up their home to new believers.

From the early New Testament church down to our day this basic model has been used millions of times as a powerful entering wedge for the gospel. Today in China Christianity is flourishing through multiplied thousands of house churches.

In Cuba 2,000 Adventist families have been opening up their humble homes to neighbors. As a result of their hospitality the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba has experienced unprecedented growth. Church leaders there set a five-year goal of 9,000 new members—and surpassed that goal two years early.

Establishing a house church may not be right for you, but most of us can pursue some expression of hospitality, whether it’s the simple act of inviting someone we don’t know for Sabbath dinner or helping a newcomer to get established in the neighborhood. Heaven has a special blessing for those who bless others through hospitality.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2).

* Of course, no advocacy of these beverages is intended here.
JOTS AND TITTLES

Recipe for Happiness

1 whole person
1 lb. goals
½ tsp. ambition
2 cups support from friends and family
dash of fun activities
a few mustard seeds of faith

Mix all ingredients together. Bake in the fire of God's love. Serve to everyone you meet.
— Emily Ruth Dalton, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California

A Lesson in Faith

My daughter, Claudia, has a cockatoo named Eden. Eden has a "play area" on my coffee table. When perched, she reaches out her foot for Claudia to take her (in faith that she will). If Claudia doesn’t take her right away, she climbs down and gets closer to Claudia, then reaches out her foot again.

What a lesson in faith — to move closer to God, trusting that He will carry us when we reach out.
— Norma J. Smith, Irving, Texas

Laugh often, live long, love much!

These words were inscribed in my yearbook in 1933 (the year of the earthquake that completely destroyed every school in Long Beach, including my high school). The writer was a dear friend and faculty adviser, H. Violet Hess.

On these six words can be based a philosophy of life.

Laugh often! God wants us to be happy. He sent His beloved Son to teach us how.

Live long! We have the promise of eternal life with Him.

Love much! Love God with all your heart and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.

— Gladys Merrick, Ridgecrest, California

WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to... Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74617.15@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.
Doug Batchelor, television evangelist and president/speaker of Amazing Facts Ministries, will host “Millennium of Prophecy,” a month-long satellite evangelism initiative from New York City beginning on October 15, and carried by ACN, AGCN, and 3ABN. Adventist Review associate editor Bill Knott recently spoke with him about the personal and public sides of urban evangelism.

Knott: Most Adventists think of you and your story as rooted in California. What would make you choose to launch an evangelistic effort in New York City?

Batchelor: Well, I didn't exactly choose New York. It's almost surreal how it happened. I was attending the funeral of Elder Bill May, who was one of the founders of Amazing Facts, when Cyril Miller (North American Division vice president for evangelism) found me and said, “Doug, I need to talk to you about something. We have to do something for your city. The North American Division has allocated some funds for New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and we want you to go to New York.”

I naturally asked, “Why me?”

“Well,” he said, “New York is predominantly Catholic and Jewish. You went to Catholic schools; you’re half Jewish; you used to live in New York, and we think that you’d be the best suited to do that.”

I said, “Well, let me pray about that. I left New York, and I’ve not missed it at all.”

I felt something like Moses being called back to Egypt. I don’t speak the language anymore, and it’s been 25 years since I left. So I prayed about it. Adventists also have a lot of counsel in the Spirit of Prophecy about ministering to New York City. Matter of fact, Ellen White says more about reaching New York City than any other city. That made a big impression on me.

New York City is certainly a high-profile assignment. I can only guess that makes it a high-risk environment for an evangelist.

You have an excellent opportunity to flunk! But I was challenged by the Spirit of Prophecy statements, and by the fact that no one seemed to know what worked there: a lot of evangelists had stayed away. Cyril Miller told me, “Nobody wants to go there anymore. It’s so expensive.” And he told me all the reasons people said it couldn’t be done. Then I started thinking, Maybe we’d better try it. I like a challenge.

How did this project expand from a primary focus on New York City to an international satellite event?

It started as a North American Division project to focus on metro New York. But the only way to reach New Yorkers—you can’t knock on doors in New York City, they’re all guarded—is to get into their homes through the media. Once we decided on a satellite uplink, we realized that it would cost the same to reach all of North America as to reach only New York City. I thought, If I have to choose between preaching my heart out to a million people in New York City or 250 million people across North America, I’d pick the 250 million. It’s just as hard.

The North American Division agreed that we could call
This a "NET" event—NET NEW YORK '99—and the General Conference told us that we could “go global” if we could raise the money for the additional satellite expense. We landed on a strategy of working closely with Mark Finley and It Is Written’s ACTS 2000 series as a natural sequence for evangelism.

It sounds as though you’ve put together a broader network of cooperation for this series than I’ve ever heard about before. A meeting Facts is working with It Is Written, with the North American Division, with the General Conference, with 3ABN—

—And the Voice of Prophecy Bible school is doing the Amazing Facts lessons with the Discover Bible school! Alejandro Bullon, the evangelist for the LA RED '99 series, will be downlinked into dozens of Hispanic homes and churches in the weeks before we start on October 15. Bullon is going to say at the end of his series, “By the way, if you’ve been blessed by this and you have satellite equipment, turn on NET NEW YORK '99.”

The church has never worked together quite like this.

If I’m not mistaken, you’ve got about five conferences cooperating with this project—Southern New England, Greater New York, Northeastern, New Jersey, Allegheny East. Has this kind of thing happened before?

I’ve been delighted to discover the various language and racial groups in these conferences cooperating on an outreach of this magnitude. I’ve been in almost all the conferences in recent weeks, and though there may be a little friendly rivalry, they’re working together. They’re all meeting at the same table, and they’re all promoting it among their constituents, which is what we want.

I’ve seen something about 70 pre-evangelism series going on in September. What are those?

A dozen Amazing Facts evangelists will be holding evangelistic meetings in metro New York in September. Almost 60 smaller meetings will also be conducted by pastors and leaders.

What’s the goal of those other meetings?

Well, every meeting is a little bit of pulling weeds and sowing seeds. Some might say, “That’s sowing and this is harvesting,” but you can’t divide things that neatly. We’re certainly hoping that they can segue participants from those meetings into the satellite program that we’re going to do.

You’ll be preaching to a studio audience?

Well, to 1,800 people, if you want to call that a studio audience. We’re actually meeting in the old “Donahue” studios in New York City, and the room we’re meeting in seats 1800. We obviously can’t reach all of New York City in a little building like that, and we obviously can’t afford Madison Square Garden. So we’re taping this in New York and uplinking it on satellite throughout New York state to the small satellite dish network. 3ABN sold record numbers of small dish units for this program, and the North American Division subsidized the 3ABN price for anyone who pledged to host a site in their home or church. The signal will be relayed from North America to Europe and to hundreds of sites around the world. We’re also buying TV time just after the first of the year, because you can’t reach the people of New York City in just one series. We’ll rebroadcast the series in January to see what God wants to do then.

A few moments ago you mentioned that you had grown up in New York City and had some anxiety about going back. Tell me about that.

I was born in downtown Burbank, California. My dad was in the airline business at the Burbank airport, but my mom was in show business. When they divorced, Mom moved to New York City. She was a songwriter, film critic, and playwright, and I spent most of my school years in New York. I attended about 10 schools there—Jewish, Catholic, military schools. I lived on the East Side—51st Street—and the West Side—81st.
My friends were from every place in the world, right out of the city public schools. I ran away from home at 16, and then moved in and out of jail. Even ended up in a cave in California with a Bible. Truthfully, I always wanted to get out of New York. I longed for the hills. Everything in New York seemed so artificial and kind of plastic.

You don’t seem like the kind to get intimidated.

Contrary to what people might think, I’m a loner. Ask my wife.

Most people who see you preaching don’t get that impression.

To most people I look like a sanguine. But as soon as I’m done talking about the Lord, I want to get off and be by myself. So the hard thing for me is going to be finding a quiet place in New York City where I can keep my spiritual center. My family’s coming with me. I want to make sure to have enough time for Karen and the youngest kids who are still at home.

What is it about the public role that’s stressful? Is it just the energy of sharing as much as you do? Or are you basically a shy person?

(Laughing) I’m probably schizophrenic! There’s a contradiction of sorts in my personality. When I’m talking about the Lord, I just feel like someone pressed a button, and I come alive. I get very excited. Other than that, when I’m in a crowd I’m looking for a place to hide. I’m sort of a hermit, you know. I lived in a cave for a year.

Describe for me the kind of people whose attention will be attracted by this series.

While we were in Times Square and were doing some pre-work, Gary Gibbs and I walked by the Times Square church where David Wilkerson [a well-known Pentecostal evangelist] spoke, and 3,000 people came pouring out. They had finished the service. And I thought to myself, Praise the Lord! T here are people here who believe in Jesus, who read their Bibles. So I want to reach those people! If they call me a sheep stealer, it’s O K. T he historic Adventist mission is to call people out of Babylon. So we want not only to get people who are secular New Yorkers, but to give the complete message to folks who may have some Christian leanings but don’t know the full truth.

Some Adventists are urging the church to share our message in a “relevant” way. W hat does that term mean for you? Is that a goal you have for this series? R elevance in New York must mean something quite different than it does in California.

\textbf{T}h at intrigues me—why would someone who values tranquility say “yes” to preaching in one of the highest-profile, highest-risk, busiest, most-stressed environments?

M any times I’ve thought, Lord, what have I done? I’m not up to the challenge. I feel like Moses when I say, “Lord, I’m slow of tongue. I’ve not been there in so long.” New York has a feel to it. It’s so intimidating and so big! If you stand still, you can almost feel an energy buzzing from underground. T here’s an intensity there that can be felt. I’ve been there a few times recently, and I’m starting to get that feeling again, where you know you’re not intimidated. I’m praying that, as Moses did, when I go back to New York I’ll have the right words to say.

New Yorkers are also very demanding. T here’s no more demanding audience in North America. T hey don’t put up with any filmflam. T hey’re exposed to so much hype and there’s so much advertising that gaining their attention is almost impossible! Stand in Times Square some night and ask yourself, H ow do I compete with this? H ow do I get their attention? T he Holy Spirit has to do it!

Some have been concerned that because this is now a national and international satellite program we’ll forget about New York in an attempt to accommodate everyone else. But I have a tendency to forget that I’m on TV, and I talk to the audience in front of me. I’ll be talking with New Yorkers and then trusting that because New York is a microcosm of the world, it will be relevant. I’m not going to worry about trying to accommodate the world.
Believe me, my heart goes out to anyone who does a global broadcast, because you get calls from everybody, and they say, “Remember the people that are watching in Timbuktu. Don’t forget not to stand this way! Don’t show the bottom of your foot! Don’t use your left hand!” You’ll go crazy if you try to remember all those little idiosyncrasies. These people around the world watch American movies and TV all the time. New York City is constantly seen. If anything’s going to be relevant, this is going to be relevant.

Are you going to take any unusual steps to try to appeal to the New York audience?

I think the best way to appeal to New Yorkers is to be genuine. There are so many bamboozlers in New York that if New Yorkers think you’re trying to be slick, you’re out of there. They’ll confront you in a live audience and say “Get out of here!” and they’ll shout you down. We’re taking a very conservative message to the most liberal city in the world. Kind of like Mark Finley going to preach in the Kremlin.

Will you emphasize certain topics more with a New York audience than you would with one in California?

New York City is Catholic and Jewish, both of those powerful religions of tradition. We don’t know how many Jewish people will come. Obviously we’re not going to hide that we’re Christians. But the first presentation is on Daniel 2. That’s not an accident: Daniel is an Old Testament book. We’re hoping that will help to ease our transition for some Jewish people into the rest of the program. Just the magnitude of that opening presentation of the image of Daniel 2, the idols of the world, the kingdoms of the world crumbling—right there in New York City—may cause many people of whatever faith to look at God’s Word.

We hear some Adventists telling us that the church needs to “lose the beasts,” and emphasize a more relational Christianity, emphasize our commonality with other Christian denominations. How do you respond?

You can quote me on this. I was drawn to the truth by the forthright, brave, bold presentation that our church embraces. And I don’t intend to compromise the truth. I want to be as graceful and considerate and compassionate in presenting the truth as I know how to be. But I’m not going to say, “Well, we’ve outgrown the idea that we are a peculiar people.” I still believe we are a people of prophecy. I still believe the salvational truths that we find in our old books. And I’ll be preaching ‘em. Like I said, with compassion, but they’re going to get the whole meal.

There’s a tug-of-war in the church right now in which some people, I think in a misguided, loving effort to attract the secular world, are wanting to modify our message a little bit and make it more attractive. It’s a loving attempt to try to reach a secular world. But I think it’s a misguided effort.

I really yearn to see Adventists not ashamed of what we believe. I think the Lord wants us to stand up and be counted for what we believe. We have a message—well, it’s not a message—I

**FYI: NET NEW YORK ’99**

**TITLE:** Millennium of Prophecy Seminar  
**DATES:** Friday, October 15, through Sabbath, November 13 (nightly except Monday and Thursday)  
**SPEAKER:** Doug Batchelor, evangelist and president/speaker, Amazing Facts Ministries, an international evangelistic organization.  
**ITS MESSAGE:** Exploring Daniel and Revelation through biblical stories and direct gospel preaching to help demystify prophecy and bring it into the everyday experience of those who attend or watch.  
**SPONSORSHIP:** Amazing Facts, working in conjunction with the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.  
**COVERAGE AREA:** Open to the world field, with emphasis on metropolitan New York and North America. Organizers expect 1,000 church and home link sites in the New York City commuter area alone. To prepare for this event, Amazing Facts and other evangelists will hold simultaneous live series in nearly 70 locations in September.  
**UPLINK SITE:** Manhattan Center Studios, 311 West 34th Street, Midtown Manhattan.  
**NIGHTLY TIME:** 7:00-8:30 p.m., Eastern time.  
**TECHNICAL:** Feeds provided by ACN and 3ABN in North America, including both analog and digital, small-dish and large-dish technology. AGCN will service satellite feeds outside North America.  
**LANGUAGES:** Simultaneous broadcasting for translators from participating countries.  
**MATERIALS:** Essential materials: less than $10 per person. Contact Seminars Unlimited, 1-800-892-3344 or 817-641-3643.  
**PRAYER TEAM:** To join the international prayer fellowship for NET NEW YORK ’99, visit the Prayer and Praise pages of the website listed below.  
**REGISTRATION:** Call Amazing Facts, 916-434-3880 (8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Pacific time, Monday-Thursday). E-mail: netny99@amazingfacts.org.  
**WEBSITE:** HYPERLINK http://www.netny99.org
think we have the truth! And the world is looking for it. We shouldn’t put our light under a bushel. We’re going to be compassionate, but direct and complete.

How can believers across North America support you as you get ready to go to New York City?

You know, we say it so much that it sounds patronizing and pat, but “Pray!” I really believe in and feel the prayers of people. Pray for us, and participate.

Bring your friends. Tell your friends, “There’s a program I’m going to this week.” Don’t say, “There’s a series of 95 lectures we’d like you to enjoy.” That scares ’em! Just say, “There’s a program happening. I’ve been to one like it, and it was tremendous. Come with me! Come the opening week and come to one of the programs.” Just get your friends to come to one of them, and Jesus said His Word will not return void. God will get them to come back. So pray and participate.

If I could find a gentle way of chastising members who aren’t doing anything this fall, I’d do it. I think God has called us to farm. The seed is the gospel. Jesus said, “You can look at the sky and tell the signs of the times.” Any farmer knows that it’s a seasonal business.

Well, it’s prime-time farming this fall. The economy is in flux. People are apprehensive. There’s going to be an atmosphere, an environment for soul winning that is unprecedented. And for Adventists, the people of prophecy, to just sit back—especially when churches have the equipment—and say, “We’re going to let it gather dust.” Use it this fall! There’s going to be a window of opportunity this fall that may be gone by January.

You believe in taking advantage of the urgency in the mood of the city and the nation?

Absolutely. As Paul walked down the streets of Athens, he found an idol to the unnamed god, and he said, “Hey, I need to use this.” I think God would have us take advantage of the times we live in to spread the gospel. Paul used shipwrecks as opportunities to preach; he used a riot in Jerusalem as an opportunity to preach. And Paul taught us how to win souls when he said, “I’m all things to all men, that I might win some to Christ.”

That’s why my appeal to Adventists this fall is simple: “Use this window of opportunity.”

Bill Knott is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.
A great work is before us—the closing work of this world’s history. Solemn indeed is the time in which we are living, and heavy are the responsibilities resting upon us as a people. The third angel’s message is now to be proclaimed, not only in far-off lands, but in neglected places close by, where multitudes dwell unwarned and unsaved. Our cities everywhere are calling for earnest, whole-hearted labor from the servants of God. The message for this time is now to be proclaimed earnestly in the great business world. Day after day the centers of commerce and trade are thronged with men and women who need the truth for this time, but who gain no saving knowledge of its precious principles, because earnest, persevering efforts are not put forth to reach them where they are.

The spiritual darkness that covers the whole world is intensified in the crowded centers of population. It is in the cities of the nations that the gospel worker finds the greatest impenitence and the greatest need. And in these same cities are presented to soul winners some of the greatest opportunities. Mingled with the multitudes who have no thought of God and heaven are many who long for light and for purity of heart. Even among the careless and indifferent there are not a few whose attention may be arrested by a revelation of God’s love for the human soul.

The conditions that face Christian workers in the great cities constitute a solemn appeal for untiring effort in behalf of the millions living within the shadow of impending doom. Men will soon be forced to great decisions, and they must have opportunity to hear and to understand Bible truth, in order that they may take their stand intelligently on the right side. God is now calling upon His messengers, in no uncertain terms, to warn the cities while mercy still lingers, and while multitudes are yet susceptible to the converting influence of Bible truth. Often the needs of the cities have appealed to those who understand by the prophecies what is coming upon the earth, and yet comparatively little has been done to enter these cities with the warning message of present truth. The Spirit of the Lord is still urging men to undertake this work with new courage and zeal, and never cease the effort until a thorough work is done.

For years the pioneers in our work struggled against poverty and manifold hardships in order to place the cause of present truth on vantage-ground. With meager facilities they labored untiringly, and the Lord blessed their humble efforts. The laborers of today may not have to endure all the hardships of those early days. The change of conditions, however, should not lead to any slackening of effort; and now, when the Lord bids us proclaim the message with power in the crowded centers of population, shall we not respond as one man, and do His bidding? Shall we not plan to send messengers all through these fields, and support them liberally? Shall not the ministers of God go to these crowded centers, and there lift up their voices in warning to the multitudes?

In the cities are people of all nationalities, many of whom, if earnest effort is put forth, will accept the truth. These will be specially qualified to carry the message to their own countrymen. How long shall these teeming centers of population be neglected? If our brethren will use their God-given ability in this work, angels of heaven will go before them, to make an impression on the hearts of the people for whom they labor. The Lord has many who have not yet bowed the knee to Baal.

I appeal to those who for many years have known the truth. It is time to wake up the watchmen. I have expended my strength in giving the message that the Lord has given me. The burden of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time, and is now to be taken hold of in faith. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement, such as we have not yet witnessed. May the Lord give wisdom to our brethren, that they may know how to carry forward the work in harmony with His will. With mighty power the cry is to be sounded in our large centers of population, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him.”

This article originally appeared in the November 17, 1910, issue of the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (now the Adventist Review). Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.
Ten Reasons for My Passion

Let me tell you why I remain committed to teaching Daniel and Revelation every chance I get.

BY WILMA ZALABAK

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Rev. 1:3, NIV).

“Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book” (Rev. 22:7, NIV).

I have to draw a flower. Will you show me how?” asked 4-year-old Nicole expectantly, with paper and pencil in hand.

“Why do you want to draw a flower?” her mother asked.

The brown eyes, wide and serious, lifted to meet her mother’s. After a pause, Nicole repeated the same words: “I have to draw a flower. Will you show me how?”

“Oh, you have to draw a flower. Why do you have to draw a flower?”

Another pause. Another puzzled look out of big brown eyes. Another patient statement: “I have to draw a flower. Will you show me how?”

I never heard why she had to draw a flower. Perhaps she never found the words that day to answer that question to her satisfaction.

Sometimes I feel like Nicole when people ask me why I teach Daniel and Revelation. There is usually a pause during which I puzzle about how to explain all I feel and know. Then often I simply say, “I just have to. I’ve known I had to since I was 12 years old.”

Recently I did direct some effort toward summarizing the reasons. Perhaps they will inspire you, too.

I promote and teach Daniel and Revelation because...

1. They tie up and point to the rest of Scripture. In these two books I have in my hands a digest, a condensed version, of the Bible. I promote and teach Daniel and Revelation in order to create another forum for God to be at work through His Word.

2. They show the character of God. I am told that “the last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.” I promote and teach Daniel and Revelation in order to expand on earth a knowledge of the character of God.

3. They uncover the true character of evil. I find the evil powers of Daniel 7 and Revelation 18 working to control people through fear, shame, or force, neither allowing others nor even manifesting among themselves any room for individuality. This stands opposite to the character of God. I promote and teach Daniel and Revelation in order to grow on earth the awareness of the character of evil.

4. They are like a healing spring in which to bathe my mind in beauty, in God. Sevens, parallels, threes, symmetry, and balance wash over me the beauty of God as I come in contact with Daniel and Revelation. Someone has said beauty is akin to love; I believe it because God’s love is made real to me through the beauty of His Word. So I promote His Word, especially Daniel and Revelation, in order to bring God’s beauty and love to other lives.

5. They offer hope of one day really understanding what life was all about. For me the judgment has something to do with understanding—understanding why mistakes and evil happen to real Christians; who takes responsibility now; and who will finally bear the blame. I gained this view of the judgment from reading Daniel and Revelation side by side,
and I promote a similar reading as the best way to come to understanding.

6. They bring to the reader a sense of closure and reversal. I think the very structure of these books immerses the reader in the experience, while reading, that once God opens an issue, He will close it in its time—like nesting dolls opened in order and then closed in reverse order. I think God conceived a way to let the reader feel the closure while reading about it. Further, I notice that this kind of structure is often used for a story in which the plot is that of reversal, such as "hangman hanged" or "victorious victim" stories. Esther is a story of reversal, and indeed, it uses this structure. I think God wants readers to feel the reversal while reading about it. So when I promote and teach Daniel and Revelation, I watch my hearers experience an increased assurance of reversal and closure under God. I think this assurance is important for survival.

7. They encapsulate the entire gospel of salvation and healing. In the first chapters both Babylon and Rome discovered the nation wasn't God, and both Daniel and John, as prophets in exile, confirmed their belief in the only true God. The story teaches me and my hearers that I am not God and no one else is, besides the God of heaven. For me, this portrays in story the first of the Ten Commandments and the first truths of the gospel, as well as the first of the twelve steps of the recovery movement. By Christ's commission to teach and preach the gospel, not only do I have an internal drive, I also have an external command to promote and teach Daniel and Revelation.

8. They are part of the heritage by which Christ ensures that He will be with me to the very end. I believe humans have an appointment with the risen Christ in these books. Like the disciples after the Resurrection, humans forget the appointment and need to be reminded. I promote and teach Daniel and
As We See Events Unfolding
The urgency of the messages of Daniel and Revelation

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

There is need of a much closer study of the Word of God; especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work. We may have less to say in some lines, in regard to the Roman power and the papacy; but we should call attention to what the prophets and apostles have written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit has so shaped matters, both in the giving of the prophecy and in the events portrayed, as to teach that the human agent is to be kept out of sight, hid in Christ, and that the Lord God of heaven and His law are to be exalted. Read the book of Daniel. Call up, point by point, the history of the kingdoms there represented. Behold statesmen, councils, powerful armies, and see how God wrought to abase the pride of men, and lay human glory in the dust... The light that Daniel received from God was given especially for these last days. The visions he saw by the banks of the Ulai and the Hiddekel, the great rivers of Shinar, are now in process of fulfillment, and all the events foretold will soon come to pass...

When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart.

The Lord will bless all who will seek humbly and meekly to understand that which is revealed in the Revelation. This book contains so much that is large with immortality and full of glory that all who read and search it earnestly receive the blessing to those "that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein."

—Excerpts from Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 112-114. Title and subtitle ours.—Editors.

Ellen G. White was one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her work continues to be a prophetic voice among Adventists.

Revelation in order to draw people into the presence of Christ in these books.

9. They do indeed deliver the promised blessing (Rev. 1:3 and 22:7, quoted at top of the article). I think the blessing is a daily burning in my soul as I walk with Christ, a daily joy in communion with Him, that will indeed keep me wise and safe in Him today and all my tomorrows. The blessing promised to those who read and hear the "words of the prophecy" is what first sparked my passion for Daniel and Revelation when I was about 8 or 9 years old.

10. In their shared plot, they reveal the sequence of, and keys to, end-time events. My promotion and teaching of Daniel and Revelation allow me to prepare my hearers and myself to be in touch with God’s plan, and thus have an advantage through the awesome events that I believe will come on earth.

I also believe it is possible that Ellen White saw, or at least intuited, the plot in Daniel and Revelation. (See Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 112-119. Excerpts accompany this article.) Although she did not have the skills and tools that today’s scholars have to expound on such things, it seems she did draw her scenario along the same lines. My promotion of Daniel and Revelation in parallel allows me to prepare my hearers and myself for coming events, depending on the Bible and the Bible only, as I believe Ellen White would have wished me to do. I love the Word, and I uphold it at every point; I love Ellen White and let her point me always to the Word.

Some say the book of Revelation provides merely a crutch of “pie in the sky” hope for the oppressed. I say, “Then give me two—both Daniel and Revelation!” Yes, I am oppressed—by sin, by fear, by stress, and I know a lot of other people who are too. I have a passion to promote and teach Daniel and Revelation because I have found that they provide peace and power for the oppressed in today’s world.

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W ilma Zalabak is a professional speaker, trainer, and personal coach with emphasis on active interpersonal listening for understanding and tolerance. Her ministry is based in Atlanta, Georgia.
I should've known better. These things have a way of getting out of hand. But a torrential thunderstorm that had kept us up chasing leaks half the night had left me with a bad case of fatigue-induced sillies. At lunch I felt compelled to speak in a ridiculous falsetto that had my daughters giggling into their soup. Then from some slaphappy rogue brain cell came this assertion, “If Barbie could talk, this is what she’d sound like.”

My children looked at me wide-eyed. “Really, Mom?”

Somberly, I replied, “Oh, yes; definitely.”

As I gazed into their unusually attentive faces, my mother’s brain detected a Manners Moment. Seizing the opportunity, I continued in my most authoritative, best Barbiesque manner, “Barbie would always speak very politely, of course, and she would never slurp her soup or chew with her mouth open. Barbie is the queen of manners.”

Sensing there was now a moral to the story, the girls balked and exchanged sly, conspiratorial smirks. Their hearts instantly beat as one in a single anarchical resolve—“Let’s see how far we can take this.”

Five-year-old Jenny started the fun. Sticking out her tongue, on which perched an unsavory beige mass, she lisped, “You mean Barbie wouldn’t do this?”

“No, Jenny,” I assured. “Barbie wouldn’t stick out her tongue at the table.”

Emitting a strangling sound that resembled an ailing garbage disposal, Becky asked coyly, “And Barbie wouldn’t do this?”

“No, Becky,” I groaned. “Barbie would definitely not gargle her grape juice.”

Before I could finish, Jenny broke in with “And Barbie would never throw her soup all over the floor and make stains on the rug?”

“Jenny,” I blurted urgently, “don’t even think about throwing your soup on the floor!”

She didn’t, thankfully. Even so, as I watched my girls gargle and slurp and cram their food into their mouths like rank Neanderthals, I reflected once again on the breathtaking speed with which a child’s attentiveness can dissolve. And I was reminded again of the absurdity of trying to inject into living, breathing human beings the sort of plastic perfectionism that Barbie so neatly personifies.

Though my proportions have never remotely resembled Barbie’s impossibly idealized ones, and my conservative wardrobe could never compare with hers for style (or skimpiness), I too have dreamed the impossible dream of perfection. Consciously and unconsciously I’ve poured my life into the pursuit of the perfect marriage, the production of perfect children, and the portrayal of perfect Christianity.

Only God knows why. Only He fully understands the complex gridwork of genetic and environmental factors that determines who will scrutinize life through the lens of this grand obsession. I do know from experience that, absent a thorough conversion, perfectionism with its attendant criticism and intolerance will define the Christian experience just as fully as it defined the carnal experience—in fact, much more, since it now has a moral imperative in which to wrap itself.

As good as it looks, this is what the Lord has shown me: “Christian” perfectionism is very much like a beautiful butterfly preserved in amber—apparently exquisite in every detail, and also very dead. It’s the antithesis of life in the Spirit.

Real life, lived in the Spirit, is unpredictable, inconvenient, even messy. It never feels the way you thought it would. It never looks the way you think it should. When it is captured and neatly kept, its great magnanimous heart grows still and cold. But when we permit it to capture and keep us, it becomes the way of freedom and joy:

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” For God “has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:17, 6, NIV).

Every morning I have to ask myself—what’ll it be? The lonely life of the “letter,” which no one, including me, can ever measure up to—or the warm vibrant life of the Spirit, apparently flawed in the details, but effective and successful overall?

What would Barbie choose? Only Mattel knows for sure. But I have a feeling she and I won’t be doing lunch together anytime soon.

Leslie Kay models good manners and raises her family in Chloride, Arizona.
“Very, Very Happy Women”

BY MICHELLE ABEL, WHO WITH HER HUSBAND, CHRIS, CODIRECTS THE ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY’S RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN BOUGAINVILLE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Asitavi Catholic Mission on the Pacific island of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, is built on a breezy point at the end of a large graceful curve of black sand fringed with coconut palms.

Bougainville’s highest point, the “sleeping” volcano Mount Bagana, rises up sharply from the coast. The Asitavi women were waiting underneath a house when we arrived with the sewing center and workshop materials.

As we unloaded the truck, someone discovered the sewing machine maintenance manuals written in Tok Pisin, the Papua New Guinea (PNG) language. The women crowded around the diagrams of sewing machine parts and tables of instructions for solving common machine problems. The manuals were eagerly passed from hand to hand.

Margaret Kiapranges, a Catholic nun with an interest in manual sewing machine maintenance, turned and smiled at me. “Back at the convent,” she said, “I find that my maintenance manual disappears often because one of the other sisters wants to copy it!” She continued to help the women carry the sewing materials into one of the houses as I left to make my way back to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) office, a five-hour drive to the northern part of Bougainville.

The sewing centers are part of ADRA’s ongoing work to help rebuild the island following an air and sea blockade by PNG in 1990. After the blockade the village women located high in the mountains found that they had only used scraps of leftover material to patch the holes in their families’ clothing. But as the embargo stretched from months into years, the women began cutting up old towels, sheets, and whatever other cloth they could find.

Clothing Shortage

When the embargo finally ended in 1998, many women and children in Bougainville’s highlands had no clothing left. As the mountain people began venturing out of the hills, they told stories of villages where the women walk in the open only at night because their clothing has fallen completely to pieces. In other villages mothers keep their children home from school because they have no clothes to wear.

My husband, Chris, and I have implemented ADRA’s three-year Bougainville project. The operation addresses the island’s need for clothing in two ways: first, through the relief distribution of 3,300 pounds (1,500 kilograms) of donated clothing through community representatives; and second, through the establishment of 30 sewing centers for women’s groups in the provinces of Tinputz and Wakunai.

The sewing centers are comprised of four hand-powered sewing machines, 660 feet (200 meters) of fabric, and sewing accessories such as

Water, Water—Anywhere?

Finding clean water has always been a problem for people in the Irue community on the island of Bougainville. Before the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) built this ferro-cement tank, women of the village collected rainwater in old 44-gallon drums or cooking pots. When there was no more water, they paddled for an hour across the bay to collect drinking water.

After nearly 10 years of civil war, ADRA is helping people rebuild in the Tinputz and Wakunai districts. ADRA’s Bougainville reconstruction project includes five components: water supply restoration, adult literacy training, cocoa bean rehabilitation, sewing machine distribution, sewing workshops, and clothing distribution. The people of Irue are very pleased with their new water tank. According to them, the water is kol gut tru, or very cool to drink.
American Lutherans Approve “Full Communion” With Episcopalians

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America voted August 19 to approve a document that makes possible full communion with the Episcopal Church. The vote at the Lutheran’s Churchwide Assembly in Denver, Colorado, marks a major step in ecumenical efforts to bring about the “visible union” of denominations.

A proposal will now be prepared that, if approved, would mean that the two denominations would adopt common strategies for evangelism and share clergy. In addition, Lutherans would accept the Episcopal position of the historic episcopate and the apostolic succession of bishops.

At the same time the assembly voted to approve full communion with the Moravian Church. The vote also comes just one month after the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada voted full Communion with the Anglican Church of Canada.

Commenting on the decision, Gerhard Pfandl, an associate director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, said that this was a significant development in ecumenism.

“We are very interested in these developments, which reflect a desire by many denominations to unite. As Seventh-day Adventists, we hold in high esteem Christ’s followers in other Christian churches,” said Pfandl.

“We also applaud any move which leads to a better understanding among Christian churches. However, we are concerned over some statements that tend to suggest a dismantling of what the Protestant Reformation has achieved. While we cooperate with other churches and the ecumenical movement in the alleviation of human suffering, we do not aim for membership in the ecumenical movement, nor do we support any entangling merger or relationship that might endanger our distinctive witness.” — Adventist News Network.

AAW Conference to Recognize Adventist Women

Seven Adventist women who are making significant contributions to their families, churches, professions, and communities will be honored during the seventeenth annual Association of Adventist Women’s conference in Orlando, October 7-10.

Elisabeth Ann Wear, an educator from Takoma Park, Maryland, will be given the Family Life Award. Jocelyn Fay, of Hagerstown, Maryland, is accepting the Church Life Award. She has served the Adventist Church at

So far eight of the 30 sewing centers have been distributed. Four days after dropping off the sewing machines and manuals, Chris and Sister Margaret arrived at the A DRA office. With a big smile, Chris handed over another sheaf of positive evaluation forms as Sister Margaret said, “All the women are very, very happy.” One woman wrote: “This workshop gave me plenty of good things to think about. It helped me understand how to look out for money.” A mother eagerly declared: “I laik save long laim bigpela bisnis (I would like to understand and learn about big business).”

Later that day a woman named Judith arrived at the A DRA office from Kekesu, the site of the first sewing workshop two months earlier. She stood in the office door, her small son hiding shyly behind her skirt. “Can I help you?” I asked. Judith nodded: “The women want to know if they need to do anything else for A DRA.” I didn’t understand the question and asked her to explain.

Judith gave me a handwritten letter that was a report on the Kekesu United Church Women’s Fellowship sewing project. Women from their area meet and sew clothing for sale or distribution to needy families. They elected a management committee and wrote operating guidelines. Judith was elected the project coordinator.

Judith again asked, “Is there something else we need to do for A DRA?” Her eyes shone when I told her all we wanted the women to do was make their project what they wanted it to be. Before she left the office, Judith invited A DRA to the sewing project opening event that the women are planning to hold this month. “We want the community to know about our project so maybe they can find other projects for our district.”

Money Management

Simple bookkeeping teaches the women’s groups to manage the funds produced by the centers as well as providing help in other small business projects. The first workshop was conducted in March this year with the United Church Women’s Fellowship at Kekesu in the Bougainville province of Tinputz.
Moon Race

BY GLORIA DEPALMA, TRUST SERVICES SECRETARY, NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

Fly me to the moon and let me play among the stars” are the words to a pop song that typified the quest of Frank Borman and several other Apollo astronauts. In a recent Associated Press article published in the Portland Press Herald, Portland, Maine, these men reviewed the history of NASA’s space exploration program.

The article, in a nostalgic look back, noted that at the inception of the space program the United States was spurred on to reach the moon by the sheer thrill of exploration. But because of the Cold War that sense of scientific wonder soon deteriorated into little more than a race to beat the Soviets. Ironically, recent research indicates that the Russians were never serious about beating us at all.

Fearing the Russians would get one up on us, the first astronauts took unimaginable risks. The news report noted their uncertainty. They wondered if the machines would work or if the human body would endure space or what they would find out there. Some astronauts even lost their lives, but the program continued, and ultimately the United States triumphed in the moon race. Today’s space program owes its success to those intrepid pioneers.

As I read this stirring account, I reflected admiringly on the dedication and commitment indicative of all pioneers. These risk-taking, self-sacrificing individuals are driven by an overpowering sense of mission. Our church has also depended on this pioneering spirit throughout its history. A compelling urgency of the message and an irrepressible longing for souls have moved it resolutely forward.

To follow the example of those who have gone before is undeniably our mandate—both individually and corporately.

NEWS BREAK

Elisabeth Ann Wear  Arlene McFarland  Carolina Castillo Rose

Beulah Stevens  Jocelyn Fay  Thesba Johnson  Phyllis Ware

Bomb in Yemen Damages ADRA Office

Staff and visitors at the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) building in Yemen were rudely awakened on August 28 when a bomb exploded at a supermarket one block from the ADRA building, according to Bill Dysinger, ADRA/Yemen director. The ADRA building sustained minor damage, but no one was seriously injured.

“Our day started at 2:00 a.m. with a roar,” explains Dysinger, who is staying at the ADRA building along with his wife, Yvonne. Also in the building were Jim Neergaard, former ADRA/Middle East director who is in Yemen for the final evaluation of ADRA Yemen’s child survival project, and Ken and Challis Fry, new program directors of ADRA Yemen’s initiatives in Hais.

“Jim was the only one injured,” Dysinger continues. “He was awakened prior to the blast by the garage doors rattling below his window. He was preparing to go to the window when the explosion took place and the window frame sailed past him, grazing his chest slightly. We’re grateful he wasn’t more seriously hurt.”

The ADRA building, which includes an apartment for the director and his wife, guest rooms, and the ADRA office, is located only 250 yards (228 meters) from the City Center Supermarket, the first American-style supermarket in Yemen. Damage to the ADRA...
Religious, political, entertainment leaders appeal to Hollywood

Religious leaders, politicians, and entertainers are among those who issued a public appeal July 21, urging Hollywood executives to reduce sexual and violent content in entertainment media.

“We are asking the entertainment industry to assume a decent minimum of responsibility for its own actions and to take some modest steps of self-restraint,” reads “An Appeal to Hollywood.” “And we are asking parents to help in this task, not just by taking responsibility for shielding their own children, but also by making their concerns known to media executives and advertisers.”

The appeal acknowledges the need for limiting children’s access to entertainment, but asks industry executives to enter “a new social compact” to help children and society.

“A allowing children unsupervised access to today’s media is the moral equivalent of letting them go play on the freeway,” the appeal reads. “But today even the most conscientious parent cries out for help from an industry that too often abdicates its responsibility for its powerful impact on the young.” —Religion News Service.

Historical Note

98 Years Ago . . . President McKinley Assassinated

Review editors responded with abhorrence to the assassination of U.S. president William McKinley in September, 1901.

McKinley, a popular Republican who had won reelection in 1900, was shot by Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist, in a receiving line at the Buffalo, New York, Pan American Exposition. A back-page news item detailing the attack on the president appeared in the September 10 issue of the Review under the title “A Dastardly Attempt.” The unsigned note concluded that “to strike at the president is to strike at the people themselves.”

One week later the Review reported McKinley’s death, and devoted its regular Sermon department to a reprint of a lengthy sermon by an Episcopalian minister denouncing the anarchist movement and implying that it should be suppressed.

In the same September 17 edition, however, Review assistant editor L. A. Smith noted that any government clampdown could rebound: “To make it [the United States] less free than it is, in the endeavor to root out this evil, would only be to approximate those Old World conditions which have bred the anarchy that plagues us here.”

World News & Perspectives

Religion in the News

Building includes a front office door that was blown from its hinges, basement metal garage doors that are buckled and bent, broken windows in the front of the building, and breakage on at least half of the remaining windows. No computers or other office equipment appear to be damaged. Authorities arrived August 29 to assess the damage.

The explosion was reportedly caused by a car bomb containing a half ton of TNT. It completely destroyed the supermarket and damaged buildings up to a kilometer (.62 miles) away, blowing out windows and doors, according to Dysinger. “Also, flying debris from the metal roof and walls of the supermarket was scattered over several blocks, landing on other buildings, in trees, on the roads, etc.,” he adds.

Dysinger’s son, Edwin, who was staying a few miles down the road from the ADRA building, adds, “I also heard secondary explosions and a fair bit of small arms fire coming from the same direction as the blast, apparently a result of excited people shooting into the air. The city center was just a mass of twisted metal.”

“We have been impressed with the way the Yemeni authorities have handled the disaster,” says Dysinger. “By yesterday evening the main street was open again, and most of the debris was cleared away. We still don’t know the reason for the blast, although there are many rumors. Two other bombs exploded in Aden and Zinjibar, but we do not know if they were connected to this one,” adds Dysinger.

Special Annual Council Uplink

General Conference president Jan Paulsen will preach during a special worship service to be uplinked by satellite to church members around the world during the General Conference Committee’s Annual Council.

The program will be available on the Adventist Communication Network in North America at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time) on Friday, October 1, and 11:00 a.m. on Sabbath, October 2. G. Ralph Thompson, GC secretary, will present a 10-minute report on exciting advances in the mission of the church from India, China, Israel, Inter-America, and other locations. Music will be provided by the Mountain View College Choir, Philippines, and soloist Lori Bryan.

What’s Upcoming

- Sept. 25 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Africa-Indian Ocean Division
- Sept. 25 World Pathfinder Day
- Oct. 3 Health Emphasis Week begins
Commitment, Yes; But for How Long?

Most things don’t last very long.
A flame less than a second.
Low tide at Naples Beach only a wave or two.
Money doesn’t last long. Dollar bills circulating in the United States last about 18 months, or about 4,000 folds.* Then the Treasury Department replaces them with new crisp bills. And, of course, money burns holes in some pockets.
Flowers are short-lived. Hibiscus and daylily blossoms last but a day. Other cut flowers can last as long as two weeks if they are well cared for, depending on the variety.

Most food is good for only a brief time. An avocado one to three days at room temperature, two to four weeks in a refrigerator. A grapefruit two to seven days at room temperature, one to five months in a refrigerator. Up to seven months left on the tree.

The practical life of a postage stamp from the time we drop the letter in a mailbox to the moment it arrives at its destination is usually three days. Except from Naples. It usually takes our letters five to six days to get to our friends north of the Florida-Georgia line. Once it took 13 days to get a birthday card to our son in Massachusetts. That wasn’t as long, however, as the 32 years it took a postcard mailed in Manhattan to reach someone in Brooklyn.

Some toys last a long time—century-old lead soldiers and cast-iron fire engines, dolls from the early 1800s. But most toys rarely survive a year with all their parts unbroken. Nearly one in 10 toys sold in the United States is damaged or destroyed in less than a week of use.

A computer is almost out-of-date by the time we get it home and set it up.

A mayfly lives only seven or eight hours, a luna moth one night, crickets nine to 14 weeks, mosquitoes up to two months (that’s two months too long), possums two years (if they don’t get run over), the anole lizards we see all over south Florida four years, and alligators 50 years.

French law says that houses in Paris must be built to last three generations of inhabitants. No such law exists in the United States. Here architects design houses to serve for only 50 to 60 years. The idea is that after six decades, there will be enough wrong with heating systems, plumbing, and electrical wiring to render the house uninhabitable even if the structure is sound.

The people who live in the houses usually live a bit longer. The life expectancy of someone born in the United States today is in the mid-70s. Although there have been centenarians throughout the ages, life expectancy has been low ever since a few generations after the Flood because of infant mortality, unhealthful practices, war, and disease. In Roman times it was 36 years. In fifth-century England it was 30. A s late as the beginning of the twentieth century it was only 47 in the United States.

Commitments people make are often very short-lived. The person who agreed to lead out in the responsive reading doesn’t show up. Husbands and wives break their marriage vows. Christians quit being Christians. Some leave the church only after a short time. A friend of one of the Naples church members went with her to Florida camp meeting last summer, heard about the Sabbath, made a commitment to keep it and study to become a Seventh-day Adventist, but changed her mind within three days after returning home.

“Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? . . . He who swears to his own hurt and does not change” (Ps. 15:1-4, NKJV). Such a person was Moses, who by faith chose to suffer affliction with God’s people, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. . . . He endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:26, 27, NKJV).

We should focus our attention on the Eternal One, not build our lives around that which will not last. Having put our hand to the plow, let us not turn back (Luke 9:62). The things we see are temporary, but our commitment to God can last forever, it seems to me.

*Some facts for this article were taken from Frank Kendig and Richard Hutton, Life Spans or How Long Things Last (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980).

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Mom, can we go now?” begged Anna.
“You promised,” chimed in Alexander as the two children tugged at their mother’s hands.
“O K, O K,” laughed their mother. “W e’ll go right now.”
It was a beautiful sun-washed day in Union Bay, Vancouver Island, Canada. Seagulls rode the updrafts high into the bright blue sky. June wildflowers pushed up purple and orange and blue blossoms in all the fields. It seemed like a perfect day for the promised walk.
Locking the door of the white two-storied house, Mother led the two past the big flat rock by the front walk.
A cross the highway, a provincial park looked very inviting.
The three followed the moist path that led through meadows and lightly wooded areas of the park toward the ocean. A soft breeze brushed their arms and legs and teased their hair. The sweet odor of timothy grass tickled their noses.
“I’ll race you!” shouted Alexander. The three dropped hands and raced down the wide pathway.
Then they saw them—right beside the path. Tiny red drops of sweetness, half-hidden under leaves and in the moss. Wild strawberries! Anna pounced on the nearest one with a cry of “Yummy!”
The warm sun shone down and a songbird called from the edge of the meadow as the three moved from patch to patch. God must have smiled. They had discovered His surprise. Anna and Alexander squealed with delight as they found berry after berry and popped them into their mouths. Mother laughed and knelt to pick her own.
Red sticky juice stained their fingers, and they laughed through large red smiles. In His goodness, God had prepared this surprise of sweet wild strawberries for the three of them—and for anyone else who came down the path! The strawberries were free—no charge, no cost, no payment needed. All Alexander, Anna, and Mother had to do was to gather them and enjoy them.
Isn’t that just like God’s love and grace? It’s free—just like those delicious strawberries. We just have to accept it as a gift from God—something we can’t earn or work for or deserve.
When we really understand the surprise of God’s grace and love, it’s not hard to share it with others!

**Family Time**

On Tuesday (or whatever day you choose), ask your family to come and worship God with you.

☛ Choose several praise songs to begin your worship this week. You might want to try a song such as “Amazing Grace” (The SDA Hymnal, No. 108) or “God Is So Good.”

☛ Ask the adults at your worship if they can remember when God gave them something that they had never dreamed of receiving. How did they praise God for His gift? What are some gifts that you can’t see but are sent from God?

☛ Make up your own song of praise to God. Choose a tune you all know and then put your own words to it. You could choose a common tune, such as “Mulberry Bush” or “London Bridge Is Falling Down,” but make it a song of praise to God.

☛ In five minutes have everyone cut out pictures from magazines of things you can praise God for. Take all the pictures and make one large collage or poster with them by gluing them onto a large piece of poster board or cardboard. Cover all the space with overlapping pictures if you can. Put a title you like on the poster that says something about praising God.
Mothers, Take Heart

He said he was leaving. All I could do was pray and assure him of my love.

BY CAROL L. WHITE

T WAS CHRISTMAS WHEN HE BROKE THE news to me, his mother. He was leaving. He had decided to live with his father in another state. I was horrified to think of his dropping out of academy in the middle of his senior year, going to public school for the first time in his life, and living with a father who had no Christian values.

I had tried to “do the right thing” by sending him to boarding academy, but he was not mature enough to cope with crises between faculty and students. As friends were expelled and faculty whom he had trusted were fired, he had become frustrated and bitter. We listened to his many stories of injustice and non-Christian handling of student issues on campus. We sympathized, but had no answers or solutions except to say that “Seventh-day Adventist schools are not perfect but are still the best there is for our youth.”

Now he had made up his mind to leave. He was 18, so I could not stop him. Satan took every advantage and led him down a path of confusion and self-destruction. He seemed to want nothing to do with family and contacted me only when he was in desperate need. After he graduated from public high school he followed friends from place to place, never establishing himself anywhere for any length of time. Then came smoking, alcohol, drugs, trouble with the law, financial problems, and broken relationships. His life was downhill to the point he decided there was no God and even attempted suicide.

He refused my help and insisted on remaining independent. But there were two things I could do: I could pray, and I could keep reassuring him of my love and confidence in him. I heard discouraging remarks from some, including: “hopeless,” “a liar,” “a failure who will never amount to anything,” “irresponsible.” But God has given most mothers a special heart that will not give up. Every day I gave him to God because I was helpless. He had held on to me from my youth (in spite of my rebel-
lion at times), and I believed He would hold on to my children.

god placed before me articles, books, and sermons telling me that extra power seems to be available only as a direct result of prayer. My faith increased, even though I could see no real evidence of it. I asked friends and family to pray. I asked God to specifically bring my son into the minds of other people everywhere who knew him. (I am thrilled now to learn that even some whom I had not contacted were impressed to pray for him.)

Five years later, unexpectedly, the call came. It was my son saying that he had to make a change—get a life, as he put it. He asked if he could come to live with us. A flood of emotions and fears arose. Could he change overnight? Was he serious or just desperate? Could he live where there would be structure and standards? Could I convince my husband that paying airfare to bring my son here and supporting him until he could get established would be worth the investment of money and emotion? His track record was one of irresponsibility, and it was hard to believe that he could be happy away from his friends and worldly lifestyle.

But how could we refuse? This might be exactly what we had waited and prayed for. We had to take the chance, and it wasn't long before we knew he was sincerely seeking a new life. He immediately found a job, repaid his debts to us, and has now spent a year working and attending a Seventh-day Adventist college. God miraculously opened all kinds of doors and turned him completely around.

My son tells me that I allowed him "space." It was not my choice to do so. I would rather have been able to help him all along. Who of us can say that we trained our children in the way they should go? None of us is perfect. I have heard parents say, "We did the best we could." I wonder—do any parents really do the best they can? Even our heavenly Father's son, Adam, strayed. One thing's for sure: when our children err, we are kept from becoming self-righteous about our parenting abilities. We learn to give God the credit for positive results.

My son recently expressed his realization that God miraculously preserved his life on many occasions and is calling him to a lifework that involves helping troubled youth find purpose in life through God's love. What thrilling words for a mother to hear. He wishes he had not wasted five years of his life but wonders if God, in His mysterious ways, might use those experiences to give him special insights into how to relate better to youth who struggle spiritually.

My children were dedicated to God when they were young, and each made a decision early in life to be baptized. I must continually pray for them and then trust that "no one will be able to pluck them out of His hand." ■

Carol L. White is a pseudonym.
THE RING OF THE TELEPHONE SHATTERS the quietness of my sleeping house. I snatch the receiver from its cradle, fearing the words I know I will hear. The voice of the stranger on the other end states simply, “Mrs. Wills, your daughter has been in an automobile accident.”

It is 11:25 p.m. on the Fourth of July.

Back in Time

My mind races back to the events of the previous 24 hours. It is midnight, July 3. I crawl into bed, but I cannot sleep. My mind is flitting in a million directions. “Dear God,” I pray, “please take care of my family and calm my mind so I can sleep.”

I drift in and out of a fitful slumber.

1:00 a.m. I have awakened. I glance at the clock. An uneasy feeling is heavy on my chest. I pray again: “Father, please take care of my family.”

3:00 a.m., still awake. My thoughts are drawn to my 16-year-old daughter. Maria has had such a traumatic short life. For two years she watched her father's health deteriorate, experiencing the horrors that only a terminal illness can bring. Then as she was just starting through the turbulent years of adolescence, she had to deal with the loss of her dad. And now she's trying to cope with a new stepfather in the house and a no longer stay-at-home mom. I'm proud of the way Maria has handled all this; still, I worry that the stress of it all may have left hidden scars that might affect the rest of her life. My prayers become focused on her. “Father, please keep Maria safe from harm today and help her make wise choices.”

I doze off. At 5:00 a.m. the alarm buzzes. “Oh, no,” I groan. I drag myself from bed and head for the shower. Uneasiness permeates my being. I pass it off as lack of sleep.

I grab my lunch and head for the front door. Maria calls from her room. “Don’t forget, you promised to take me to Roanoke to see the fireworks tonight.”

“If I'm home in plenty of time,” I promise.

Roanoke is about 20 miles from the rural community of Bedford, in which we live. Our town hosts its own display of fireworks, but it's nothing compared to the Independence Day celebrations held in Roanoke. There are usually live bands, stage shows, popcorn, and cotton candy. A magnificent display of fireworks constitutes the grand finale.

Dawn is breaking as I drive to the first home on my schedule. I work as a home health aide for the local hospital. The uneasiness persists. I try to brush it off. I chalk it up to my new client. New clients are always more difficult for me. The routine of the patient is unfamiliar, and I haven't had time to assess the client's physical condition or capabilities.

An Unexpected Wrinkle

8:30 a.m. My day has hardly begun. My supervisor phones: “I'm sending someone to relieve you. Go home and get some rest. I need you to work from 3 to 11 tonight.”

I start to protest, but I'm new to this job, so I get most of the assignments no one else will do.

9:00 a.m. I return home. “I'm sorry, Maria; I can't take you to Roanoke tonight. I have to work. Perhaps your stepdad can take you.”

“No!” she shouts, disappointment showing in her eyes. “I'll drive myself. Maybe Nanna will go with me. We can go shopping first, then go see the fireworks.”

Maria is hurt, but there's nothing I can do. I need my job. I crawl back into bed for a nap.

12:30 p.m. I awake with a start. The house is too quiet. Something feels wrong. I hasten to my daughter's room, but she isn't there. I can't shake my growing apprehension, so I dial my mother's number in Roanoke. There's no
answer. Perhaps she and Maria have already left for the mall.

2:30. I dial my mom’s number again. Still no answer, so I leave for work. It’s clouding up, and an occasional raindrop strikes the windshield.

At work my anxiety momentarily passes with a flurry of activity. At 6:00 p.m. my patient and I settle down to watch the evening news. With nothing to occupy my mind, the butterflies return. Rain pounds against the windowpanes; the summer skies are laden with gray.

10:00 p.m. The rain is coming in sheets. Probably won’t be any fireworks tonight. Perhaps Maria will come home early. My stomach churns. “Dear God, please be with Maria as she drives home.” Maria has had her driver’s permit for only a few short months. The car she’s driving is old, and the tires are getting worn.

By 10:30 my nervousness is intense. I am a caged lion. I pace the floor. I sense danger. I begin to pray—this time without ceasing. “Please, God, take care of Maria.” I’m reminded that He loves Maria even more than I do—He gave His Son for her, so I place her in His capable hands.

At 11:00 I leave for home. “Please, God, let Maria already be home,” I pray. But when I round the last curve of our country lane, I see that her car is not in the driveway. My first instinct is to keep going—to find her. But I have no way of knowing which route she is traveling. I pull into the driveway and rush into the house. I phone my mother’s number.

“Don’t worry,” my mom assures me. “She left here only a few minutes ago. She was hoping to beat you home.” I shudder. I hope she’s not driving fast on that rain—slickened road.

11:25 p.m. The phone rings. It is the stranger. I awaken my sleeping husband. We drive the 15 miles to the scene of the accident. It takes an eternity. I pray all the way.

God, Why?

The night air is pierced with the sound of a siren. The police car forces me to pull to the right as he passes in a gust of speed. He’ll see her before I do, I think enviously. “Dear God, help my child!”

11:45 p.m. The foggy night sky glows red. I tremble. Is the car on fire? No—just the reflections from the beacons on the fire trucks. I open the car door. My legs are rubber. I feel nauseated and faint. I must find my daughter! A firefighter points to a pickup truck parked nearby. I stumble toward the vehicle, passing Maria’s car lying belly-up in a ditch.

Suddenly Maria is running toward me; we embrace. I check her over for injuries. Miraculously, she has not a single bruise, cut, or scrape. “Thank You, God!” I breathe.

Midnight. “How did it happen?” the officer asks. Maria’s answers are a collage of sound: “...right wheel ran off the pavement...yanked it back onto the road...lost control...rolled into the ditch.”

1:00 a.m. Once safe at home, Maria cries, “I’m sorry I’ve ruined the car, Mom.”

“Cars are replaceable; daughters aren’t,” I say as I squeeze her waist. “Let’s just thank God that you weren’t hurt.”

“You know, Mom, the emergency crew couldn’t understand why I wasn’t killed in the accident, or at least badly injured. But I know why. You prayed.”

I don’t understand why God answers some of my prayers but not others. Nor do I understand the restlessness that kept me alert to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of my family. But James 5:16 says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” My own personal understanding of that verse has since come to mean: the valid, earnest prayer of a God-fearing mother profits much as well.

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In researching a book I plan to write on the Catholic and Evangelical quest for theological unity (see the 1996 document “Evangelicals and Catholics Together”), I’ve been reading widely in both Roman Catholic and Protestant views of salvation. Writers on both sides have appropriately pointed out that the concepts involved are complex and important, and not usually reducible to the small space I’m allotted here.

But here’s a simple test to give yourself to check your understanding of how human beings are saved.

1. Our right standing with God is based solely on what Christ has done for us. True or false?
2. Our right standing with God is based on what Christ has done for us and in us. True or false?
3. Even by the grace of God and our own diligent effort, our obedience to the law can never make us righteous before God. True or false?
4. Our obedience to the law, though not enough to save us, can give us merit before God. True or false?
5. We are justified through the merits of Jesus Christ alone. True or false?
6. We are justified through the merits of Christ, and through the work of His Holy Spirit in our lives. True or false?
7. God gives us right standing with Him by accounting us righteous in His sight. True or false?
8. God gives us right standing with Him by actually making us righteous in His sight. True or false?
9. Justification leads to good works done through faith and love. True or false?
10. Good works done through faith and love lead to justification. True or false?
11. After accepting Christ’s righteousness, a believer experiences the new birth, which results in a transformed life and character. True or false?
12. After having a new birth experience, in which a person’s life and character is transformed, that person is then justified before God. True or false?

If you answered “true” to all the odd-numbered questions and “false” to all the even-numbered ones, then you line up with the teaching that Roman Catholicism has embraced since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

But apart from which group believes which point of view, the more important question is “Which one represents inspired biblical teaching about how human beings are saved?”

The crucial difference between the two sets of statements is about how we are justified. All the odd-numbered statements reflected the biblical teaching that our right standing with God is based not just on Christ’s merits imputed or credited to us, but also on what God does in our lives.

This latter position has been attractive to several Christian groups, Roman Catholics (and some Adventists) included, who want to underline the importance of God’s transforming work in the life of believers.

Now, those justified by faith will, inevitably, manifest good works and obedience. Biblical justification without biblical sanctification is impossible. Those whom God declares holy He seeks to make holy. But the holiness that makes anyone right before God is never the personal holiness that is manifested in good works and obedience to the law. It can’t be—because that holiness is never good enough for salvation. The only holiness that saves us, the only holiness upon which our faith and hope and assurance rests, is the holiness that existed in Christ Jesus in the flesh, a holiness that He by His grace credits to those who will accept it by faith, a faith that will be revealed in good works (James 2:18-26).

These are matters for study and, even more important, for prayer. In a desire to accentuate the holiness of God and His high expectations of His people, many sincere believers are attracted to ideas not supported in Scripture. This may be the time and the place to invite the Lord of all truth to bring you into a deeper and deepening understanding of the glory of the gospel.

Clifford Goldstein is the editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.

Pray for a deeper understanding of the gospel.
As August began drawing to a close, flyers and TV ads started proclaiming the annual back-to-school buying frenzy. But this year was different. For the first time in 28 years I didn't go back to school.

In September of 1970 I set off for the first time, clad in black tunic and white blouse, to kindergarten. I don't remember much about that first day, except for the sight of my classmate Kim being carried in by her mother, red-faced and screaming, legs kicking in the air. I didn't cry at all; my mother did, outside in the car, but she didn't tell me that till long after. My parents report that when quizzed about school that afternoon, I said, "At least the teacher could have had a pointer."

But though Mrs. Schafer's accessories may not have lived up to my storybook-fed expectations, I was impressed enough with school to go back again . . . and again . . . and again. Even after high school graduation I continued to be in my appointed place each September—in university, behind the teacher's desk in high school, in graduate school.

I have always counted time by the school year; and though I enjoy being both student and teacher, I cling to the free months of summer passionately and resent every dwindling August day, every hint of chill in the air. But once I've accepted the loss of summer, the first day of school itself is a day of hope and possibility. I have never really accepted January 1 as New Year's Day. The day after Labor Day is when I take stock, make my resolutions, set my goals.

But this year it was just another day. A nother day of dressing, changing and feeding, of playing, singing, reading Dr. Seuss, and rocking my little boy. From our front step Christopher and I watched children and teachers heading to school, and I reveled in my freedom.

I don't know if I'll ever find a new rhythm for my year, one not dependent on the academic calendar. I do know that my "teacher" persona has been easier to shed than I thought. Before Christopher was born, I thought I would be his teacher, preparing lesson plans in Life 101 for my classroom of one.

But now that he's here with me, classroom metaphors are not the ones that come to mind. Although I can see the wheels in his tiny bald head turning constantly as he learns, I don't think I'm the teacher here. So many things he has learned—how to sit up, how to say "Mamamama" and "Dadada"—seem to have been his own accomplishments, independent of my attempts to guide him. And it's hard to tell whether my curriculum ("See the kitty cat? That's the cat. Yes, nice kitty cat.") is making an impact or not.

The image that comes most frequently to my mind when I think of my days with Christopher is quite different. I feel we're on a voyage of discovery. And I'm not even the captain, though I feel privileged to be on board. Christopher is steering this ship, and neither of us knows what land lies ahead.

Perhaps I need to move away from my classroom mindset in my spiritual life as well: away from my images of tests and assignments, right and wrong answers. My life, just like Christopher's, is a voyage that God and I are taking. Rather than a fresh start once a year and a passing or failing report card at year's end, I am on a journey on which each day leads into the next, with past experience flowing into future possibilities.

And maybe the God who lets me make so many of my own, often foolish, choices on this journey is less like a teacher and more like a parent. More like the parent I will be five Septembers from now when I bring my little boy into kindergarten (by the hand, I hope, and not screaming in my arms). Like my own mother, I too will probably wave goodbye cheerfully and slip outside to the car to do my crying, as my small sailor sets out from shore to explore an ever-broadening horizon.

Trudy J. Morgan-Cole wrote this article in September of 1998. She is a mother and freelance writer living in St. John's, Newfoundland.