

**JULY 2017: BACK TO EDEN + MEETING AT THE NET +  
MINISTRY ON THE EDGE + 30 DAYS OF SPIRITUAL  
FITNESS + THE CHRISTIAN OLYMPIAN**

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# TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 In Mexico, Tragic Bus Accident Leaves 17 Dead, More Injured
- 2 Church President Shares Message of Sympathy and Condolence
- 3 Five minutes later, it's over!
- 4 US Adventist University Opens Organic Farm to Benefit Students, Community
- 5 George Barna Tells Adventist Delegates, "We are in a Crisis"

## VIDEO RESOURCES FROM ARTV



### WE RUN

Twenty-eight thousand people run the Two-Oceans Marathon each year. Learn how Adventists run the distance a little differently than the rest, in this exposé about the thrill of the Sabbath day.



### YOU HAVE INFLUENCE

Student athlete Emily Piazza once lived by the phrase, "ball is life." Find out how love for basketball led her to new life in Christ, learning how to be a leader even beyond the court.



### BRAZIL'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR

An up-and-coming goalkeeper shocked Brazil's soccer world, announcing he'd no longer play matches from sundown Friday through Saturday. Hear why and how this athlete prioritizes faith.



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BILL KNOTT



*Our pledges to follow Jesus  
are also pledges to the  
others on the journey.*

## Greater Common Denomination

**I follow her** through empty, unwarm rooms, each doorway hung with heavy plastic to keep out January cold. Her rent-controlled apartment in the heart of the city had once been a bustling office building, but now barely vibrates with the slippered feet of senior citizens who call its empty vastness home.

Five rooms in, we come upon the two in which she dwells—each densely packed with food and magazines, medicines, and cherished symbols of long-ago vacations. An ancient radiator wheezes and groans on every quarter hour, spewing heat but little warmth into the 400 square feet where she lives out her years.

She is a regular at church, even though it takes 45 minutes and two bus changes every Sabbath morning to bring her to our suburban house of faith. Fifth row from the back, four empty places toward the center, always by herself. That she comes at all amazes and puzzles me. Is it for simple human company she comes? a word of faith? an extra roll from the over-ample potluck she can make into two meals?

Our church is a mere 1.4 percent of her week—a pop-up “community of faith” that gathers—sort of—at 9:30, and disappears by noon. Is this the vibrant fellowship she signed up for at baptism 40 years ago, or just a godly habit she is disinclined to break?

**I follow her** through well-lit, overheated rooms, careful to avoid the Legos and Transformers spread across each yard of tawny carpet. Her sprawling, young McMansion at the end of the winding, uphill drive is overfull of sports equipment, sets of china, and rooms not yet filled with all the things her lifestyle can afford.

In the family theater room her husband greets me from the genuine leather couch with a wave of the remote and a furtive glance at the NASCAR race my visit has interrupted.

“Come in; sit down,” he says without conviction, as his eyes drift out to where the lawn service is now grooming his tidy acreage. I can see from across the room that he has found a refuge in the thought that I will be on my way in 20 minutes or less—a less-than-fully-welcome intrusion of his faith community into the other world in which his family lives.

Our church is a mere 1.4 percent of their week—a pop-up “community of faith” that gathers—sort of—at 9:30, and disappears by noon. Is this the vibrant fellowship they signed up for at baptism four years ago, or just a godly habit they are disinclined to break?

When did we settle for simply holding “services,” for opening our doors at 9:00 and shuttering them—with deacon growls—no later than 12:30? How has our

vision of the faith for which the martyrs died become reduced to that in which so few find joy, and light, and life?

Is it enough to trace the outlines of the weekly Sabbath School lesson, greet the person nearest us in the pew, and sit through 37 minutes of a sermon? When more than 80 percent of “attending” members have no further connection with their church than 150 minutes on one day a week, dare we call this “community”?

Our pledges to follow Jesus are also pledges to the others on the journey, particularly those not central to the running of our congregations. It’s not the pastors, elders, and Sabbath School teachers who form the holy remnant, but all the body—struggling, lonely, overwhelmed, stuck in conflict cycles they feel powerless to break. They need a congregation—a faith community—that communicates on Day 3 and not just Day 7; a prayer chain that breaks shackles more than once a week; a conference call where six believers meet in virtual space to intercede for others and each other.

That prompting in your soul is what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Pick up the phone; dash off the text; compose the e-mail; make the visit.

Become the church that Jesus intended us to be. ♣

*Bill Knott*

After I read A. R. Flores' evaluation, a contrite heart has led me to love as Jesus did, both the "strongs" and the "weaks."

WILTON HELM, EVERGREEN, COLORADO

## RIGHT OR LEFT?

I am deeply indebted to Don W. McFarlane for capturing so well, in his article "Neither to the Right Nor to the Left" (June 2017), my thoughts on the current cultural divide. Where are we to go as a society if we can't even have a civil conversation with one another? The pull-quote in that article says it all: "The church needs to be where Jesus is: among the people."

Ruth Ellis

Albuquerque, New Mexico



A slight wording change would make it more accurate: "It will be so, because God said so, and we believe Him."

Wilton Helm

Evergreen, Colorado

## A HISTORY OF GOD

In "A History of God" (March 2017), Lael Caesar wrote about "a plan that the trinity had settled on before the foundations of the world were established," a plan put forth for our rescue. He gives three references for that fact (Rev. 13:8, 1 Peter 1:18-20, and *From Heaven With Love*, page 555).

None of these references mention the Holy Spirit as being involved. In fact, no place in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy is the word "trinity" ever mentioned in reference to the Godhead.

Philip A. Lewis

Seaman, Ohio

*The doctrine of the Holy Spirit does not depend on the Bible's use or nonuse of the word "trinity."*—Eds.

## GRATEFUL FOR GRACENOTES

I'm one of the individuals who originally began receiving Bill Knott's GraceNotes six years ago, and because of this, my understanding of God's grace has steadily grown.

Intellectually I've always known about grace. Now I experience it more each day in my own life. I'm grateful to have been on Knott's prayer list from the beginning, and for him sharing his understanding of God's grace with all of us.

John Loor, Jr.

La Center, Washington

## TO EAT OR FIGHT

Words are inadequate to express my appreciation for the excellent article "To Eat or Fight" (May 2017).

There is not one person who would not benefit from reading it. I confess as to the different sides I have taken throughout my many years as an Adventist (and it was always on the correct side).

After I read A. R. Flores' evaluation, a contrite heart has led me to love as Jesus did, both the "strongs" and the "weaks," so that I may win others by that kind of love.

Marlene Smith

Naples, Florida

## THE ANATOMY OF BELIEF

Jimmy Phillips' "The Anatomy of Belief" (March 2017) was right on, except the last sentence: "It will be so, because we believe it to be so."

People believe a lot of things. That doesn't make them happen.



## Where are we to go as a society if we can't even have a civil conversation with each other?

RUTH ELLIS, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Sabbath afternoon trips to the old colonial “asylum” in Old Rangoon (Myanmar) did not offer understanding to resolve “mental health” issues. Surely medical-nursing information can help. Perhaps a follow up special with a few articles would resolve the complexities. Perhaps a medical specialist could write about personal struggles and other learning ways.

**Keith Mundt**

*Riverside, California*

### GOSPEL TRUTH

In the article “This Too Is Gospel Truth” (February 2017) the author indicates that Jesus was raised by a “single-parent mother.” I disagree: Joseph was in the household.

**Bill Oakes**

*Anchorage, Alaska*

### YOUR TURN

**We welcome your letters**, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.

### IN A FEW WORDS...

#### CHINESE ADVENTISTS STRENGTHEN URBAN COMMUNITIES IN INDONESIA

I've been to Club Sehat, and have watched many local people stand outside wanting to get into the packed lecture hall for information about cancer. This outreach started small, but remained consistent, and grew eventually. It is a model for city evangelism in a city that hosts 30 million people in its metroplex.

**Eugene Prewitt, via Web**

#### U.S. ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OPENS ORGANIC FARM TO BENEFIT STUDENTS, COMMUNITY

This is a wonderful idea. Great job, Oakwood University!

**Erika Sloan, via Web**

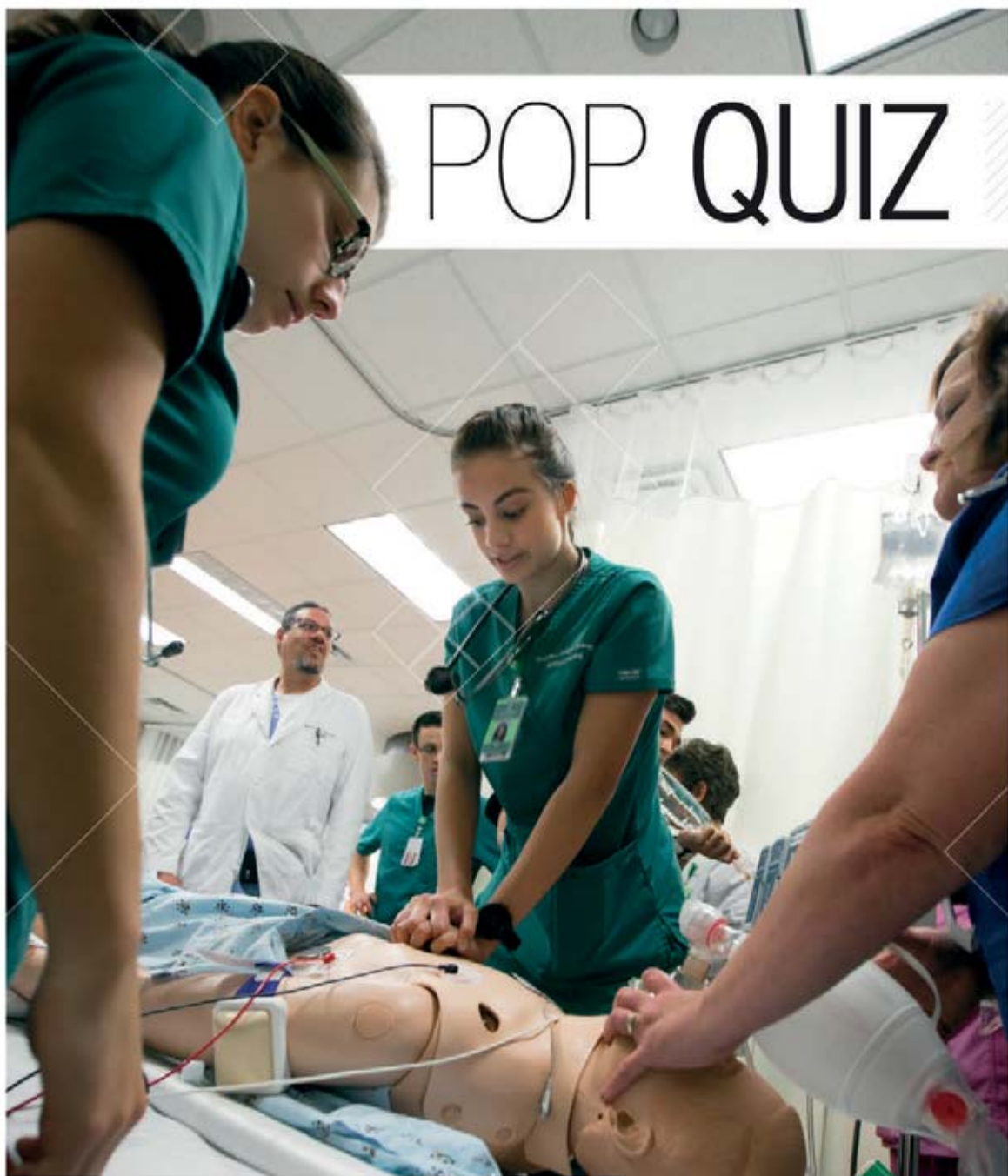
#### ADVENTIST CHURCH GOES BACK TO COURT TO DEFEND SABBATHKEEPERS

I am one of those Seventh-day Adventist Sundaykeeping Pacific Islanders. Like the vast majority of Adventists in Samoa, I had no trouble changing from keeping the Sabbath on Saturday to keeping it on Sunday when our government changed the name of the 24 hours of the weekly cycle that used to be called Saturday to Sunday. The change in name was to align the working week in Samoa to the working week in places to the west of the international date line, such as New Zealand, Australia, and Asia.

The movement of the earth in relation to the sun remained the same as always except Saturday got a name change to Sunday in our country. Other Pacific islands near the international date line have manipulated the names of days of the week in similar fashion for their own purposes. But the Sabbath as always is the seventh day of the weekly cycles regardless of the name of the day. Because of the circumstances, I see no need to look hypocritical with the judges, or anyone else, for that matter.

**Afamasaga Toleafoa, via Web**

# POP QUIZ



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Statistician George Barna presents his latest research about how faith is transmitted in the United States at the Reach the World conference. TIBOR FARAGO

## GEORGE BARNA TELLS ADVENTIST DELEGATES, “WE ARE IN A CRISIS”

STATISTICIAN UNPACKS LATEST RESEARCH AT BUDAPEST CONFERENCE

BY COSTIN JORDACHE, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION AND NEWS EDITOR, ADVENTIST REVIEW

*On May 10-14, 2017, the Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a milestone conference in Budapest, Hungary, focused on issues impacting families, women, and children. Three General Conference departments—Family, Women’s, and Children’s Ministries—came together to discuss and dialogue about some of the most pressing realities for these three distinct yet interconnected groups. Over 400 delegates from more than 60 countries attended the event.*

*The following excerpt is taken from a longer article published about the Reach the World global conference. To read the article in its entirety, go to: [AdventistReview.org](http://AdventistReview.org).*

**A** notable aspect to the Reach the World conference was the presence of George Barna, well-known author, researcher, and statistician, whose research has informed the Christian community around the world for decades. Barna, who delivered two plenary session lectures, informed the crowd that even though his ancestry is Hungarian it was his first time in the Eastern European country.

Barna spared no time unveiling new U.S.-based statistics gathered by the American Culture and Faith Institute. He encouraged those from other countries to understand the principles behind the numbers point-

ing to trends around the world. He spent most of his time unpacking the concept of worldview—a set of filters by which we perceive the world around us—and the impact that society is having on younger generations.

His 2017 survey revealed that while 58 to 70 percent of parents see value in their children being exposed to extended family gatherings, church services, art exhibits, and the Bible, children on average spend only two hours per week on these activities. In contrast, 33 to 43 percent of parents do not see value in their children being exposed to professional sports, television news, online content, and current movies, yet



### “EVANGELIST COP” BAPTIZES COLLEAGUE IN JAMAICA

corporal Wayne Bartley, an elder in the Ocho Ríos Adventist Church in St. Ann, Jamaica, had the privilege of baptizing a colleague, Detective Constable Claudine Johnson. Church elders in the North Jamaica and other conferences regions were

given the opportunity to baptize persons whom they have worked with and studied the Bible as part of the “Lord Transform Me Baptism Sabbath,” an initiative that seeks to involve active members in the mission of the church.

children on average spend seven hours per day on these and related activities.

Barna said that statistically a very small amount of younger people have what he called a “biblical worldview”—only 4 percent of 18- to 30-year-olds and 7 percent of 30- to 49-year-olds. “We are in a crisis,” Barna said. “If the church does not wake up and solve it, biblical Christianity in the United States is in jeopardy.”



**OUR CHILDREN USUALLY MAKE THEIR SPIRITUAL CHOICES BY DEFAULT, ACQUIESCING TO CULTURAL NORMS.**



The researcher then turned his attention to parents, offering a statistical call to parental responsibility. He pointed out that while children form their worldview by the age of 13, only 5 percent of parents with 5- to 13-year-old children in the United States have a biblical worldview. “Our children usually make their spiritual choices by default, acquiescing to cultural norms,” he concluded.

Barna ended on a positive note, emphasizing that though not easy, worldviews can be changed through proper asking of questions, and meaningful dialogue with children and teens in an effort to “dislodge what culture has placed in their minds.”

Barna sees tremendous value in the Seventh-day Adventist Church organizing a global summit to address family-related issues. “The world is changing so rapidly and so radically, that traditional approaches and strategies are not enough,” Barna told *Adventist Review*. “The church needs to understand the latest research available, and the meaning behind the data if we are to effectively grow disciples.”

Organizers, emphasizing the conference’s “Reach the World” motto, resonated with Barna’s conclusion. “Parents must be intentional about making sure sound biblical values are passed on to their children on a daily basis through family worship, and by modeling godly living,” said Willie Oliver, director of Family Ministries for the world church and one of several organizers.

“You can’t get more missional than this. Because when we have strong families, we will have a strong church that can share the gospel with power and joy and help hasten the coming of Jesus Christ.”

Attendees reacted positively to Barna’s research. “Dr. Barna has done practical research on practical issues,” said Samson Nganga, a member who traveled from South Africa for the conference. “As a church we can’t remain naive about the things happening around us. Sometimes we preach from the mountaintop and we’re totally disengaged with the people in the flock. We need good research to give us insights into leadership.”

## THE FUTURE OF YOUTH SABBATH SCHOOL

**SYMPOSIUM TACKLES DIFFICULT QUESTIONS**

BY TRACY WOOD,  
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Sabbath School practitioners, curricula developers, media producers, university professors, and youth and young adult ministries directors met May 9-11, 2017, to discuss what many see as a crisis in earliteen, youth, and young adult Sabbath School across the North American Division (NAD) church region. The group convened on the campus of Andrews University to pray, discuss, strategize, and commit to the revisioning, re-shaping, rebuilding, and relaunching of Sabbath School ministry for young people.

The collaborative event, called “180 Symposium,” was hosted by the Center for Youth Evangelism, with sponsorship from the North American Division youth and young adult ministries, Andrews University, Lake Union Conference, and Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

### YOUTH SABBATH SCHOOL IN CRISIS

The challenge facing Sabbath School is multifaceted. Very few conferences and union conferences provide leader training for



## FIRST CONFERENCE FOR ADVENTIST FOODIES HELD

Bite Size Talks, a platform to explore the intersection between faith and food, held its first faith-based food conference at the West Covina Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in California, United States, on April 23, 2017. The one-day event highlighted

the intersections between food, faith, and fun. The Bite Size Talks team strives to “enable a network of people passionate about food to share their story of faith while serving and connecting with their community.”

youth Sabbath School ministry. Because of the many ministries that youth and young adult departments already lead (Adventures, Pathfinders, Master Guide, summer camp, youth, young adults, and public campus ministries), it has been difficult to add Sabbath School to their list of responsibilities. Sabbath School resources continue to decrease in subscriptions, creating a financial challenge for continued publication. The purpose and focus of Sabbath School seems to have become unclear in many churches across North America as attendance continues to drop.

For two days of the symposium, leaders made 15-minute presentations followed by discussions based on papers and articles that covered a wide range of issues relevant to the current situation. These articles and papers will soon be available online, and AdventSource will publish a book containing the articles.

### SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

On the third day, participants were divided into groups to strategize from what was presented and formulate recommendations.

One group focused on the administrative needs and shifts needed to make Sabbath School ministry the primary focus of youth ministries at all levels. The refocusing of youth ministry on Sabbath School requires youth leaders, administrators, and educators at all levels of the church, *collab-*



Tracy Wood (left) and Armando Miranda talk about the Sabbath School “crisis” in North America during the 180 Symposium on May 9-11, 2017.  
GERARDO OUDRI

*orating* to create the structural and financial answers.

The overall goal is to encourage directors and leaders to refocus Sabbath School ministry as the foundational component of youth ministry, and reposition all activities and events to grow out of Sabbath School ministry at the local church.

The involvement of youth and young adults is considered imperative in the process of revisioning, reshaping, rebuilding, and re-launching Sabbath School, because it is all about them.

Members of the symposium asked questions, such as Can we give them the keys? Can they open these doors? Will we involve them in the revisioning of Sabbath School? Will they rebrand Sabbath School in ways that are relevant to them?

“The key of the symposium was

the love and concern for our youth shown by our church at every level,” said Nestor Osman, who is pursuing an M.A. in youth and young adult ministries at Andrews University. “For me it was a watershed moment. I witnessed the NAD Youth Department stepping forward to officially take on youth Sabbath School as one of its programs.”

Gerardo Oudri, part of the organizing committee, agreed. “I was impressed by the collaborative spirit, the frank discussions, and the focused energy evidenced throughout the event,” he said. Noting that the NAD took the recommendations with a marked commitment to work for concrete action, he said: “I see a big step in the right direction. I feel a refreshing sense that our long discussions won’t be fruitless.”

*Marcos Paseggi contributed to this report.*



### "WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION"

The South American Theological Symposium in Libertador San Martín, Argentina, passed a consensus statement reaffirming its commitment to the biblical concepts that framed the Protestant Reformation, which celebrates its 500th anniversary this year.

Theologians reaffirmed "the great principles of God's gospel." They also expressed a renewed commitment to "the proclamation of the eternal gospel" within the framework provided by the symposium theme, "The Just Shall Live by Faith."

## NEW HOME FOR ORPHANS OPENS IN HAITI

### FACILITIES FUNDED BY ADRA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

BY DAVID SEBASTIAN, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

**A**fter seven years of planning, fund-raising, and logistics efforts, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Haiti inaugurated a home for children orphaned by the deadly earthquake that struck the island nation in 2010. The orphanage in Diquni, Port-au-Prince, was inaugurated on April 25, 2017.



José Alberto Rodríguez, president of the Adventist Church in Puerto Rico, is interviewed by WORA TV 5, which covered the inauguration of the new orphanage.

PUERTO RICO UNION CONFERENCE

"Today is a day of victory," said José Alberto Rodríguez, president of the Adventist Church in Puerto Rico and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Puerto Rico director. "Today concludes the dream of inaugurating this home for children we saw live in tents, starve, and go through so much," he said. Rodríguez was instrumen-

tal in raising funds and coordinating with church and community leaders in Haiti to make the orphanage possible.

"I am so happy and thankful to the Lord, my country, and the journalists for trusting in ADRA Puerto Rico," said Rodríguez, as he thanked other organizations, such as the Presbyterian Church, International Pentecostal Mission Church, and Disciples of Christ Church of Puerto Rico for contributing funds, and to ADRA volunteers who supported the project.

Construction of the new home for children, which is close to Haiti Adventist University, took less than a year, and is ready to shelter 15 children. The home has four rooms, two bathrooms, a living room, a dining room, a kitchen, and an office.

The home now shelters 12 children, said Rodríguez. "These are the remaining 12 children who have not been adopted from the 84 in the area who were orphaned," he explained.

The Haitian Union church region will oversee the management of the new home, run by Evanose Francois, a nurse and university professor. Rodríguez said that the home will receive a supply of food, and that its needs will be cared for indefinitely. "We want this to be a

model project for the people in Haiti," he said.

Children were given clothes, shoes, school uniforms, and school supplies.

Community leaders and children of the surrounding community were invited to take part in the inauguration ceremony. Pierre Caporal, president of the Adventist Church in Haiti, thanked church leaders in Puerto Rico, other Christian denominations, and citizens of Puerto Rico who have shown their love and generosity to the Haitian community since the earthquake.

"This orphanage is compelling proof of your care and love toward our people in Haiti," said Caporal.

The care and commitment from those in Puerto Rico was visible immediately following the earthquake in 2010, church leaders said. "Days after the earthquake we visited Haiti and purchased the land for this new orphanage," said Luis Rivera, treasurer of the Adventist Church in Puerto Rico.

The Adventist Church and ADRA Puerto Rico have donated and delivered 70 containers of food and supplies since the earthquake, as well as wooden homes for affected families, funds to help rebuild homes in coordination with ADRA Haiti, and a mobile unit in 2011 to assist the Adventist hospital. It has also supported the reconstruction of two Adventist churches, among other projects. ♣

—with additional information by WORA TV5

## NEWSBRIEFS

1



**RADIO PRODUCERS AND MEDIA EXPERTS** met in a Pan-European Radio Advisory held in Bucharest, Romania, in May. The advisory was organized by Adventist World Radio and the Inter-European Division, and hosted by the Romanian Union and the Speranta TV (Hope Channel) media center.

2



**A BUS ACCIDENT IN CHIAPAS, MEXICO**, left 17 dead and still more injured. A rented bus carrying 46 Seventh-day Adventists, mostly young people, fell into a 270-foot (90-meter) ravine, killing 17 and sending 26 to a nearby hospital. The group was returning from a youth retreat.

3



**NEWBOLD COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION** added three students to the roll of the international business honor society, Sigma Beta Delta. Melinda Yatzy, Mikki Mathias Risager, and Brandon Melic, final year students, were invited to join the society in recognition of the high academic and leadership standards demonstrated throughout their undergraduate studies at Newbold.

4



**DOZENS OF LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS** gathered recently for a memorial service for 165 people they never knew as living human beings. The service was created to honor those who donated their bodies for scientific study. Founded in the 1940s, the Bodies for Science program is the largest of its kind in the Seventh-day Adventist educational system.

5



**SAMOA IS IN THE PROCESS OF AMENDING ITS CONSTITUTION** to declare itself a Christian country. According to an Explanatory Memorandum, the object of the amendment is “to insert in the constitution that Samoa is a Christian nation to declare the dominance of Christianity in Samoa.”

6



**A PARTNERSHIP OF MIDDLE EAST UNIVERSITY (MEU)** and World Vision Lebanon has created five original books specifically for Syrian refugee children of kindergarten age. Sara Saunders saw how the lack of food, inadequate housing and health care, and interrupted schooling affected children. She wanted to help them deal with life under these conditions.



The United Kingdom's Prince Charles greets Jacqueline Joseph (third from left) and other Commonwealth Youth Awards finalists from the South Pacific. ADVENTIST RECORD

## ADVENTIST HONORED FOR FIGHTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

YOUNG WOMAN RECEIVES AWARD AT A CEREMONY IN LONDON

BY SONJA KAMA, ADVENTIST RECORD

For the second consecutive year, a Seventh-day Adventist was announced as a winner for the South Pacific region of the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Awards for Excellence in Development Work.

Jacqueline Joseph, CEO and co-founder of a youth-led organization in Papua New Guinea (PNG) that uses sports as a tool to end gender-based violence, was presented with the award at a ceremony in London in March 2017.

The annual award acknowledges young leaders under the age of 30 who have demonstrated initiative in spearheading projects that contribute to Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 global targets that governments have committed to achieve by 2030. Selected from more than 200 nominations, Joseph was one of 17 finalists chosen from the 52 Commonwealth nations for the annual award.

"Receiving this award is a great honor, as it recognizes the hard work and dedication of all the people

who have been involved in Equal Playing Field (EPF), and more importantly, God's faithfulness and leading," said Joseph, a member of Vai Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church in Port Moresby, capital city of PNG. "I feel privileged to represent the Pacific region, and I recognize the many other young people around the world who are leading initiatives that are bringing about positive change. Social change never happens in isolation."

On March 15, Commonwealth secretary-general Patricia Scotland presented the four regional finalists with their awards and praised them for their efforts to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

"With our Commonwealth Youth Awards we honor exceptional individuals whose practical sense of purpose is uplifting, and whose passion inspires us," Scotland said. "I encourage anyone who thinks they can't make a difference to follow the example of these youth leaders who are working in imag-

inative ways to make our world safer and our societies fairer and more inclusive."

Joseph's dedication and leadership in EPF have seen the organization grow as a movement for change for young people and by young people themselves. The organization is inspiring many in PNG to address the issue of gender-based violence, and is giving staff and volunteers a renewed sense of hope that, together, change is possible.

Since EPF's establishment in 2011, Joseph has helped design school programs to teach thousands of young people in Port Moresby and Bougainville about respectful and healthy relationships.

"These eight-week programs for 13- to 15-year-olds have fostered frank and open discussions and have proved to be an effective model of working with young people to prevent violence against women and children," Joseph said. "More importantly, we have seen how the attitudes and behaviors that allow violence against women and girls to occur have been changing and contributing to the building of stronger, safer, happier communities in PNG. For the first time, I am seeing children at an early age begin to question and challenge social norms on the value of women. For the first time I see an emphasis on respect in relationships.

"We want conversations about preventing gender-based violence and creating respectful and healthy





Part of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division headquarters staff visits the J and L settlements not far from the church's regional offices, assisting with food, clothes, and Bible studies. SID NEWS

relationships to continue. And as Christians I believe that we have an important role to play in doing more to change attitudes about gender-based inequalities. We are well positioned through our education and health systems. I hope we can lead even more discussions about healthy relationships and preventing and addressing gender inequalities in our communities.”

Whether it be through EPF, her church, or the local community, Joseph has the vision to achieve

“  
FOR THE FIRST TIME I SEE  
AN EMPHASIS ON RESPECT  
IN RELATIONSHIPS.  
”

lasting change in PNG and beyond. In 2016 she was recognized by the International Youth Foundation in Costa Rica and later awarded in the Young Achievers category of the Westpac Outstanding Women (WOW) Awards in PNG for her work in leadership and contribution to her community.

Joseph is quick to praise God for His continuous guidance. “I have found how critical it is to live in His presence every single day, because He really is the strength and victory that the world is searching for.”

## HEADQUARTERS STAFF REACHES OUT TO ITS COMMUNITY

INITIATIVE IS PART OF TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

BY SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION NEWS

About three miles (five kilometers) from the headquarters of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID) church region, located in an affluent suburb of Pretoria, South Africa, thousands of poverty-stricken people struggle to survive.

The settlements are known by letters of the alphabet. The J and L communities have about 3,000 inhabitants, people of various ethnic backgrounds, including a number of foreign nationals.

“These communities have no organized sewage or electricity systems, no running water, and no waste disposal system,” explained an individual working with one of the outreach initiatives. The city council provides water twice a week, into 1,320-gallon (5,000-liter) tanks that have been placed in strategic places. Residents claim, however, that this water supply does not meet their needs.

Staff from the regional church offices started visiting these settlements on a regular basis. “Among other basic needs, we saw that they lacked food and warm clothes,” said a staff member who is taking part in the initiative. “We took soup and bread, and provided [the people] with warm blankets, now that colder winters have become the trend in recent years.”

A major health expo was organized with the help of two local churches where most of the SID staff members worship. This combined team dipped into their own pockets to fund the event. Many also gave individual services in kind.

Nearly 200 residents from the settlements received free health care. Hundreds enjoyed health talks, music, and sermons, as children’s needs were catered to in a tent provided just for them. The community also received a full meal cooked by SID staff, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) provided hundreds of water containers for collecting and storing water.

Visits to the settlements did not end with the health expo. The home of one of the community leaders is now being used on Sabbath afternoons for health and Bible study activities

Said the organizers, “We are excited about these precious people so eager to learn and know more about Jesus.”



## ADVENTISTS AND MUSLIMS MEET FOR LEARNING AND FELLOWSHIP

**EVENT AT LOCAL CHURCH IN CALIFORNIA HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

BY SARAH MCDUGAL, PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE

**A**dventists and Muslims from San Diego, California, United States, recently gathered at El Cajon Seventh-day Adventist Church for “One San Diego,” a day of mutual learning and fellowship.

The day was the brainchild of Richard Smith, pastor of El Cajon church, as well as of Peter Thomas and Tawfik Abdalla, Muslim ministry coordinators; and Gerald Babanezhad, volunteer coordinator of Muslim outreach for the Pacific Union Conference. They recognized that if people wish to become better neighbors to those around them, they should first attempt to understand each other better.

Posters advertising the event were placed in local mosques and Adventist churches, and e-mails were sent to Muslim imams (spiritual leaders). Adventists and Muslims from Sunni, Shia, and Baha’i backgrounds came to the event, as did a Jewish woman who heard about it and asked if she could join.

### GOOD NEIGHBORS

Creating a mutually welcoming and comfortable environment was a top priority for the organizers. Before the event an imam visited

the El Cajon church sanctuary so leaders could discuss how to best accommodate Muslim prayer times throughout the day. They also discussed ways that Muslims and Adventists can be good neighbors.

The program included prayers from leaders of Adventist and Muslim faiths, music from the San Diego Academy (an Adventist-operated primary and secondary school), choir and bell choir, a question-and-answer time, and a panel discussion about shared Muslim and Adventist history, values, goals, and needs.

“I loved this experience and would enjoy having another panel discussion,” said Amir Imam from the Al-Salam Mosque.

Leman Hamid, a Muslim, described the event as “a wonderful meeting between Muslims and Christians.” He said he would like to hear more about Christianity and what Christians think and believe about Muslims.

### SHARED BELIEFS

Organizers were pleased by the positive response of those who attended. “The day began with a measure of apprehension on both

sides of the cultural divide, which eased as attendees discovered how many beliefs Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims hold in common,” Smith said.

Some of these shared beliefs include a strong emphasis on showing compassion, a deep desire to treat others as good neighbors, a refusal to eat pork, and the desire to live a healthful lifestyle.

The mutual interest in health led to a follow-up health expo at a mosque a few weeks later. Also, Muslim women invited Adventist women who attended the One San Diego event to visit their mosques for worship time to experience their tradition and culture. Adventist women responded positively, feeling that it would be helpful to the community for both groups to meet more and work together.

Plans include organizing athletic activities for Adventist and Muslim schoolchildren, starting a home fellowship where Muslims and Adventists can learn from each other by sharing stories from the Bible and Quran, and planning future panel discussion events. 🍀

*This story originally appeared in the Pacific Union Recorder.*

# CYBERATTACKS AND THINGS TO COME

## ARE YOU READY FOR THE COMING TSUNAMI?

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

This is almost like the atom bomb of ransomware,” noted Rohyt Belani, chief executive of PhishMe, an e-mail security company, in an interview about the May 12, 2017, “WannaCry” cyberattack that affected thousands of computers in more than 70 countries. “[It] may be a sign of things to come.”

For Seventh-day Adventists, a people born and thriving under the shadow of things to come, Belani’s choice of words sounds astonishingly familiar.

“We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world and stand in a more solemn relation to time and to eternity than ever before,” wrote Ellen White, before any of us or our parents had been born. “To us who are standing on the very verge of their fulfillment, of what deep moment, what living interest, are these delineations of the things to come—events for which . . . God’s children have watched and waited, longed and prayed!”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, nothing strengthens our belief in prophecy more than witnessing its fulfillment before our very eyes. Confirmation engenders confidence. And events such as this—or the most recent natural disaster, or the last round of ecumenical pronouncements, or the newest encyclical letter—are often temptations too difficult to resist.

As in other things in life, however, it is not *what* happens, but *our reaction* to what happens, that in the end makes a world of a difference. Allow me to illustrate with an easy-to-follow analogy.

### THE TSUNAMI ANALOGY

Imagine you find out that a massive tsunami is coming your way. Since you want to be ready to deal

with it, you instantly decide there is no time to lose. You start watching the Weather Channel 24/7. You visit every weather forecast Web site and jot down every emergency hotline number available. Seeing you still have some time left, you run to buy and read some books on the history and science of tsunamis.

The truth is, you hate tsunamis. You always have. And it’s your lifelong passion and firm intention to spend your life denouncing tsunamis to anyone who cares to listen.

As the tsunami approaches your town, you keep ravenously searching and researching, trying to find the latest discoveries and expert insights about the phenomenon. Soon you become an expert. Wishing to know more about tsunamis, interested neighbors, relatives, and colleagues start calling you. You answer their inquiries and doubts confidently; after all, by now you are positive you know what you’re talking about.

The time finally comes when the tsunami is around the corner. There are just a few minutes left. Even then, you find out there is always something new to learn, something novel to hypothesize on, a new estimation, a new projection, a new speculation to linger over.

You never stop. You are incessantly active. Untiringly you keep doing an impressive lot of things to let every person know how despicable and evil tsunamis are. You do many, many things—except one.

You never head for higher ground. When the big wave finally gets to you, you barely have time to realize that it is too late to run. Full of “wisdom” but desperately hopeless, you are swept away. You and your knowledge, you and your expertise, gone forever.

### HIGHER GROUND

Ignoring a coming disaster won’t save you. Doubting the reports about the reality of it won’t do it either. Enduring sleepless nights, however, to come up with possible scenarios and guesswork about the impending doom—well, you know how it ends, don’t you?

The only effective path to tsunami salvation is to start running to higher ground. Right away; as soon as possible.

Easy to say, but often not easily done. Writing about the history of tsunamis sells books. Lecturing on the science of tsunamis gets you thousands of likes and pageviews. It pays—literally—to show off how much you know about tsunamis. Becoming a “tsunami prophet” can make you respected, valued, and needed. But unless you start trudging up the hill, your speculations won’t help you.

How to reach, then, that *spiritual* higher ground?

First, not by enlarging your network of tsunami haters but by befriending the One with the power to unravel the storm, He who knows the path that leads up the hill, well beyond the tsunami’s reach. Second, by giving Him your full commitment, your unflinching support. For “it is by serving God that . . . higher ground will be gained.”<sup>2</sup>

Putting the tsunami analogy to rest, there is one point every cybersecurity expert seems to agree on: The ongoing attack won’t be the last. It may not be the biggest or the worst, either. The key question, then, is not to determine if another attack will come, or when, or how. The key question is *what* our end-of-times-minded Adventist reaction will be when it does.

For me, I’d like to be on higher ground. ▀

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 549, 550. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1913), p. 397.

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# DISCOVER

## SPORTS AND THE SABBATH

*Five different but similar stories*

*"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (1 Cor. 9:25, NASB).<sup>1</sup>*

### THE PROFITS OF WINNING

**A**thletes need to have numbers. It's one way they are identified. That said, here are some important numbers: Cam Newton (53), Novak Djokovic (55), Kevin Durant (56), Roger Federer (67), LeBron James (77), Lionel Messi (81), and Cristiano Ronaldo (88).

Except that these numbers are not emblazoned on their owners' chests, backs, or shirts.

They stand for millions of dollars in earnings during the year 2016, for flinging around an egg-shaped thing much larger than even an ostrich egg, and variously referred to as a pig-skin or a ball; or battering about a fluorescent yellow, felt-covered orb a bit more than 2.5 inches in diameter; or alternately stooping



LAEL CAESAR



and leaping with a hugely different ball 29.5 inches all around, and weighing between 20 and 22 ounces; or taunting another ball 28 inches in circumference and weighing 14 to 16 ounces, by both kicking it ahead and running after it only to get close enough to kick it again.<sup>2</sup>

These behaviors are conducted before audiences of many thousands, who attach to them sufficient significance to pay for the privilege of observing them, and even of dressing like the performers they come to observe.

The list of names, you may have noted, is all male, because the top earning woman, a felt batterer, earned more than \$20 million less than the lowest number in the lines above. This still allows her to come in at \$29 million. She and the men listed above, and many others not listed, earn what they do because they win at battering, leaping, or taunting. Sports is apparently a very important thing, and winning in sports can be highly profitable.

## THE HEADINESS OF WINNING:

### Theron's Story

Even without earnings, winning can be heady stuff. I asked an athlete about his experience, and he's permitted me to share with you some of his story, and some of his name. His name is Theron, and this is a portion of his story:

My interest in athletics was a secondary matter. What came first was my realization that I could easily excel at different sport disciplines. Sometimes, at a church picnic, playing with other groups and clubs who were using the same venue, I heard a great deal, from strangers, about what I did and thought nothing of. Professional coaches who saw me play at the age of 10 or 11 were hard pressed to believe that I had never been coached in anything. Their awe at my skills led me to think of athletics as something I could pay attention to. My performances for my elementary school cricket team brought me such applause that I fell in love with the adulation itself. I loved the praise so much that I was willing to endure any negative consequences in order to continue to generate more of it.

Except my parents' priorities. Indeed, I knew I would never attain to optimum development of my athletic gifts if I endured those priorities. They wanted me to serve God and keep the Bible Sabbath. But for me, developing my skills took first place. If it led me to compromise principles I had

learned at home, it also led to success: I did excel, playing both football (soccer) and basketball internationally, and cricket, volleyball and ping pong at a very creditable national level. There were no sponsorships to turn my teammates and me into millionaire athletes like the guys in your first paragraph, but it made me famous in the land.

## THE PAIN OF WINNING:

### Raymona's Story

Raymona first started running, at the age of 8, at track and field meets sponsored by the Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in New York. Consistently, Raymona was a record-breaking first, both in sprint races and in the long jump competitions.

Raymona joined track clubs that participated in local, regional, and national sports meets and continued to excel, taking gold at most of her races in the 55 meters, 100 meters, 200 meters, 400 meters, and long jump.

At the USA Track and Field [USATF] Long Island Association Indoor Championships in 2004, Raymona set a new record, running 200 meters in 28.84 seconds. Then on July 1, 2005, at 10 years old, she broke a 33-year-old record at the USATF Youth Outdoor Track and Field National Championships in Knoxville, Tennessee, by jumping 15 feet 8.25 inches to better the standing record of 14 feet 1.50 inches. Her record still stands today.

In competitions all over the United States, Raymona left behind a trail of excellence and new records in the 200-meter, 400-meter, and long jump competitions. She has been considered the greatest young athlete ever to compete for the Long Island Sachem North High School, possessing and demonstrating a competitive talent that gave her better records than some of those who represented the United States in the past two Olympic Games.

Why would they be selected before her, then? Many track coaches followed her rankings as a bar for their runners to reach and beat. Many inquired about her absence from some sports meets. With time they understood that it was a matter of her faith. Raymona became known in the track community as the runner who did not compete on Saturdays.

It was Raymona's own painful challenge: to resist running on Saturdays. Sometimes she ran unbeaten for the entire season, until the finals.

Finals would be scheduled on Saturday, and Raymona could not attend.

It was more than painful. It was confusing: why would God endow her with such talent, enable her to achieve so many victories, and yet deny her the opportunity to use her ability to the full?

At first, more than anything else, it was her respect for her mom and dad. But eventually Raymona herself decided that her faith came first; that pleasing the Lord and preparing for eternity mattered more to her than compromise for temporary gain.

### WINNING AND CHOOSING:

#### ED AND SUSAN, MICHAEL AND PAM

**W**inning can be profitable, and heady, and painful, all at once, or each in its own course. But more than anything else, winning is a choice. Ed played football for the Detroit Lions until he had a career-ending injury. He wasn't Adventist then, but he is now. He and Susan want their kids to be free to make their own choices in sports, including sports in relation to the Sabbath. Their son is going to college next year. He's going to play football there. Ed, ex pro footballer, won't watch sports on Sabbath, whether in a stadium or on a TV screen at home. Ed, the father, wants to be supportive of his kids—at home, on the field in little leagues, all the way through. He won't watch sports on Sabbath, but he's been there for his kids for whatever time their game is scheduled.

Michael and Pam are brother and sister. Their sons were rated players: Pam's son played football; Michael's son played basketball. Michael's son went to college on a scholarship, and now, as Michael puts it, "he takes good care of us." He continues, "You ["you" is his older sister] could have had somebody to take good care of you too, if you hadn't prevented your son from making full use of his talents. God told me to let my son play on Sabbath."

#### ERIC, FLYING SCOTSMAN

**N**umber 451 at the Paris Olympics of 1924 may have strongly disputed Michael's claim. Eric, the Flying Scotsman, could not conceive of his God offering such a dispensation. One of the world's fastest sprinters, Eric would not run in heats on the day he believed was the Sabbath.

It was outrageous enough on the face of it that an athlete would keep the Sabbath rather than





run. But it was all the more absurd because it was no mere high school intramural competition: it was the Olympics, where you were one of 73 handpicked competitors running for the glory of king and country, for the nation whose very name includes superlative epithet: Great Britain!

Liddell's was a quite inconceivable posture. His religious faith came to be seen "as a sign of innate weakness,"<sup>3</sup> slurred by Lord Cadogan, chair of the British Olympic Committee, as well as by Cadogan's assistant, A. B. George.<sup>4</sup> The race that was his to win was the 100 meters, but he eliminated himself by his commitment to not race on Sabbath. Instead, he took what was available, and raced in the 400 meters.

Liddell biographer Duncan Hamilton warns against the "romantic hype" of sensationalizing sports—broadcasting and writing to generate as much passion as possible. His criticism applies to more than sports writing and broadcasting. Hamilton says, "The thrill of sports can lead us into a giddy loss of perspective."<sup>5</sup> The parents and children, athletes and guardians, Adventists and other Christians whose stories I have narrated

live, rear, compete, and focus a century after Eric Liddell. Their perspectives vary significantly: Theron's note to me laments the disappointment "to individuals who develop [athletic] talents not to be able to benefit, like their contemporaries do, from the development of these talents."

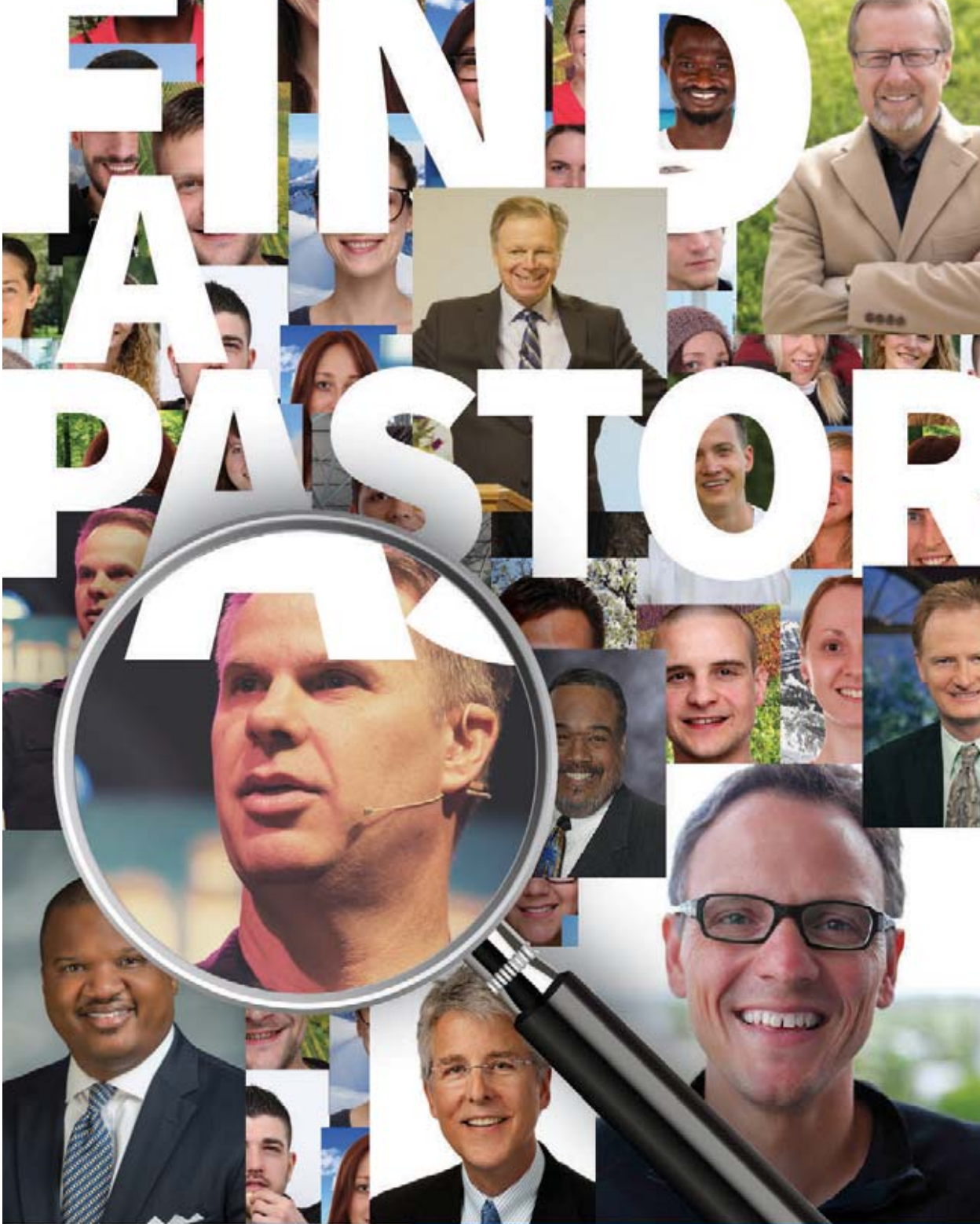
Michael and Ed do what they can to avoid that lament. Raymona and her parents, Sonia and Rolston, share pain while standing, like Liddell did, for what they believe is nonnegotiable spiritual principle. Whatever the range of these perspectives, Liddell's story shows that the issue engaging all this article's participants is hardly new.

And the issue is neither remuneration (the profit of sports), nor fame (the headiness of sports), nor masochism (the pain athletic discipline involves or the distress Raymona and Pam's son experience because, despite how good they are and how well they do, they never get to win the big money or hold up the grand prize). The issue is more fundamental than any or all of these combined. The real question is one of definition: who is a winner and who a loser? Michael thinks Pam is the loser. But the proper answer must be that it depends . . . it depends on what one means by "loser."

The world of sport thrives on rhetoric that emphasizes categories of winner and loser. So does the much less gaudy world of county fairs: highest prize money, the gold medal or blue ribbon goes to the highest scores or their equivalent. In Formula 1 grand prix stock car racing and track and field the equivalent of highest score is lowest time. So the number that counts for success varies from competition to competition: sometimes it's the biggest number, and sometimes the smallest.

Among the losers—those who do not emerge as champion—there is further categorization: runners-up still collect silver medals. In places of great courtesy and sensitivity, nice tokens of affirmation may even be handed out to individuals who did not "place." Also-rans they are called, defined by Google and Merriam-Webster, respectively, as "a loser in a race or contest, especially by a large margin"; or "an undistinguished or unsuccessful person or thing;"<sup>6</sup> "a contestant that does not win."<sup>7</sup> For those who hold that missing the big money is losing, an athletic scholarship may prove to be a highly satisfying reward that brings both a good college education and a fine job thereafter. But everyone is not competing for handsome trophies, fine college educa-





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tion, and good jobs thereafter. Some, Paul reminds, are in it for a crown that will last for eternity. “There are trials and tribulations at every practice and game,” Ed told me. “So every game and practice is going to be difficult. And life is just like that.”

Ultimate definitions of success and failure must go beyond the experience of some challenge or difficulty. Tough times are no proof that someone is a loser. Nor does smooth sailing establish divine approval. Some live, strive, rear, and run to receive a perishable wreath. Paul, and those who stand with him stand against the baubles, stand for the imperishable (see 1 Cor. 9:25).

In the end Theron and Raymona, Ed and Susan, Michael and Pam, and all the rest of us, named and unnamed, must decide for ourselves whether the perishable or the imperishable will hold our focus; whether our ultimate satisfaction will be found in

hurling, battering, leaping, and taunting balls, or in the blessedness of doing God’s commandments and savoring things delectable from the tree of life “in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7, NKJV).<sup>8</sup>

**Lael Caesar** has decided to focus on the incorruptible crown. He is an associate editor of *Adventist Review*

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickdesantis/2016/06/20/the-top-25-highest-paid-athletes-of-2016-visualized/#1a5069d51add>, accessed May 16, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan Hamilton, *For the Glory: The Untold and Inspiring Story of Eric Liddell, Hero of Chariots of Fire* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> Google search, May 16, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/also-ran>

<sup>8</sup> Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## TALKING POINTS

1. Comment on the significance of sports in today’s world based on the numbers in the first paragraph of this story.
2. How do you relate to those numbers?
3. Have you ever received an offer that involved making a deal with Sabbath-keeping principles? What did you do?
4. What most interests you about the five similar yet different stories narrated in the article “Sports and the Sabbath”? Here is some more of one of them, in which Ed Lee, a former pro football player, now a physical therapist, tells of how he became a Seventh-day Adventist:



One of my patients kept telling me about her doctor. She said, “My doctor is the nicest doctor; you’ve got to meet him. He’s going to help you [by sending patients].”

“Really?” His name was Dr. Samuel Deshay. So I called Dr. Deshay, and he was at Washington Adventist Hospital, because that’s where his office was. He invited me over to come talk with him. That was unusual. Most doctors are too busy, they’re not trying to sit there and talk with me. But he did talk with me.

He said, “OK, I’m going to give you a try, and I’ll see what the patients say.” So he sent me patients. A lot of his patients were Adventists. So I had different patients talking to me about the Adventist religion. And the time that I really decided I probably needed to change [was the time] I went to my church on Easter. . . . The pastor said that Christ was crucified on Friday, He rested on the Sabbath, and He rose early the first day of the week. He said, “That’s why we’re here Sunday morning.” I knew then

that Sunday and the Sabbath were not the same day.

[Later in a Bible class] one of the assistant pastors was teaching the class. We got to the Exodus, and he was going through the Ten Commandments. A girl asked: “OK, Pastor Tim. Which day is the Sabbath?”

And he said, “Well, they don’t let me say this upstairs, but . . . y’all going to church on the wrong day.” [After that] I started going to Community Praise church. I just knew in my mind: *I’m going to join this church.*

# Are you mad about marriage? We **STILL** Are!



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# BACK TO EDEN

In Nehemiah 9:25 the Hebrews—recounting the Lord’s leading in their history—talked about how, after reaching the Promised Land, their ancestors “delighted themselves” (NKJV) in God’s great goodness. In Hebrew the verbal form imports nothing extraordinary. But what it is, I think, is another matter. The verbal root is the same as the name Eden, as in the “Garden of Eden” (Gen. 2:15).

Though in biblical Hebrew one has to be careful about semantic links between nouns and verbs with identical roots, especially in a case like this, where the verb form in Nehemiah 9:25 appears only here, the use is still fascinating.

Various translations of the verb are: they “abounded with delight” (Douay),<sup>1</sup> they “reveled in” (NASB),<sup>2</sup> and they “enjoyed to the full” (NET).<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the best translation would be that they “*edenized* themselves,” if *edenized* were an English verb.

The gospel is, after all, about restoration. And what better symbolizes that to which we are ultimately restored than does Eden? God raised up the Hebrew people and brought them to Canaan, the crossroads of the ancient world, in order to create the closest reflection of Eden that could exist on a fallen earth. Even after their captivity and return, the potential was still there. “The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden” (Isa. 51:3).

The reason was not just to show Israel the blessing that came from obeying the Lord, but to show pagan nations what humanity could become by following the true God, as opposed to their worthless idols. And these other nations, marveling at the moral, spiritual, and physical prosperity of the Hebrews, would declare,

“Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deut. 4:6). And among the blessings that the Hebrews would have enjoyed would be material prosperity and wealth (Deut. 8:17, 18; 28:11-13), which would have caused other nations to come to Israel “from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Our ancestors possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good’” (Jer. 16:19).

Yes, people enjoyed the material blessings that the Lord had promised them, blessings that were, to whatever degree possible in a fallen world, reminiscent of the abundance of Eden. And that was fine. They were supposed to enjoy them. Greek philosophy, not biblical theology, argued that the physical was bad and the spiritual good. God created the physical world precisely in a way that humans could enjoy, and ancient Israel—blessed of God—enjoyed it also.

Their sin was not in “*edenizing* themselves” in God’s great goodness, but in forgetting the Lord, whose goodness they were enjoying (Eze. 23:35). The blessings became an end in and of themselves, instead of a means to an end, which was to reveal God to those around them.

H’mmm . . . Any lessons for our church today? 🍌

<sup>1</sup> From Douay-Rheims, 1899 American Edition.

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**Clifford Goldstein** is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. His next book, *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*, will be released by Pacific Press this fall.

CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



GOD CREATED THE  
PHYSICAL WORLD  
PRECISELY IN A WAY  
THAT HUMANS  
COULD ENJOY.

BY WILONA KARIMABADI WITH JERED LYONS

**C**an a team of highly driven young female basketball players and their equally dedicated coach find a heightened sense of spirituality from their sport? For Washington Adventist University's basketball team, that seems to be exactly what happened. I sat down with Coach Jered Lyons to talk about it.

**Coach Lyons, you coached basketball outside of the Adventist system before coming to Washington Adventist University a few years ago, and you say that your work passion meets your faith here. Tell me about that.**

I've been fortunate enough, in the places where I've worked, to be able to share about my faith, particularly the Sabbath. So I've been blessed to have had bosses who have been very understanding and allowed me not to have had to participate in certain areas. But now, to be at a place where you can pray freely, you can talk about Jesus and having a relationship with Him—well, that's invaluable. It is really hard to describe, because I've been places where we have been told not to pray with the team, so to be able to speak freely and openly about my life experiences and share Christ [with my players] is amazing.

**I've heard you have a unique approach to coaching, bringing your work passion and your passion for Christ together. You also bring a very spiritual sense of guidance to these young women. Talk about that.**

Up until this point, I've coached on the men's side. So this was definitely a leap of faith. On the outside looking in, it seems like it's different. But I think there are a lot of similarities in the fact that a lot of players have come from broken homes and maybe do not have a positive male figure around. There are a lot of things that happen in society that happen, and oftentimes we don't talk about it. So we try, as those issues come up, to talk about it. There are many issues of racial tension, religious liberty, etc. And for me, at WAU, which is

# SPIRITUAL BASKETBALL

A coach, his team, and God







To watch the inspiring story of Emily Piazza, one of Coach Lyons' team members, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vh5S4rAZ0cE>.

a mission field inside of a mission field, most of my team are not Adventists. So when they come to the school, not only are they learning about what it means to have a relationship with Christ, but they are learning about the Adventist faith as well.

### **How are these athletes who are not from Adventist backgrounds finding their way to WAU?**

We recruit; we recruit year-round. Basically, my philosophy is about being upfront with our recruits and saying, "Hey, this is a Christian environment. [Washington Adventist University] is a Christian university, welcoming all faiths. I'm a Christian coach, so we're going to share Christian values with you. We're not going to force you, because at the end of the day Christ wants us to choose to have a relationship with Him." So I think by being upfront and honest about that during the recruitment process kind of opens their eyes, because it is not something everybody is talking about. It's unique and different in that sense, and I know some are looking for that. They might not say it, they might not know it, but they're looking for it.

### **You're a Christian coach. What is your coaching style like?**

I'm very passionate. I believe Colossians 3:23, which says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." I'm also very relational, so I want to give them freedom. But I'm passionate, so I do raise my voice. I wouldn't say I'm any different from any other coach, except in that I'm a little more laid-back. But when the time calls for energy or passion, I do provide that.

### **How do you encourage your players to come talk with you about issues on and off the court? What are some of the issues they face?**

My door is always open. My team members are always hanging around the office, and that's encouraging, because [it means] they are comfortable. I do feel that God is using me to allow certain conversations, so they come in freely and talk about whatever. One of the themes I've been seeing for the past few years is the issues of forgiveness and mending families. We talk about that and God's desires for families. Because of sin and how it touches everything, including families, we know that God wants to restore families and that that can't happen without forgiveness. We've certainly seen some answered prayers there in regard to that, and I can see some of the young women internalizing that and really thinking about it and taking steps.

### **How does prayer fit into your practices, before games, with pep talks, etc.?**

It's huge, actually, especially after games, no matter what the result is. This past year, as far as wins and losses, we had a disappointing year, because we set the goals and standards high for ourselves. But I tell the women, "At the end of the day it's just a game, and you have to leave it at that. You can't have your identity wrapped up in what you do, because once it's over, your identity will still be in that, and that's when depression, and questions about your self-value, can enter in. So a big thing for us is just praying for God's will, and for Him to help us to understand that it's just a game, and to utilize it as a tool to build camaraderie and character. 🍀"





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**Hazel Rippey (right) helps her daughter, Nancy, conduct a cooking class while visiting her daughter and family in Argentina in 1971.**

## YOU CALL THIS MINISTRY?

*I learned it from my mother.*

**S**eminary taught me many things, but what I learned about ministry I learned from my mother. A 1928 Loma Linda Sanitarium and Hospital dietetics graduate, my mother—Hazel (Ausherman) Weber, later Rippey—practiced ministry for decades in the United States, Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, and Pakistan. No matter where she lived and worked, she ministered in many ways. Let me illustrate.

### **SHE COOPERATED**

When the Second World War affected everyday life in the United States, the Adventist Church designed and imple-

mented a women's corps. The pastor at the Sunnyside church in Portland, Oregon, called Mother to his office and asked her to cooperate with the effort to start the Adventist Women's Cadette Corps.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" she asked.

"The cadettes need preparation in first aid and emergency preparedness," he pointed out. "Besides, we need to have a marching corps. I think you can handle both."

"But, but . . ." she stammered. "This is all new to me."

"Our church is grateful for your cooperation, Hazel," the pastor said, standing to shake her hand over a done deal.

I remember the marching practice—all the women wearing brown-and-white plaid pleated skirts. Those skirts swished back and forth to the rhythm of marching music and my mother's whistle.

My mother got the Red Cross books, studied them carefully, and taught the women how to prepare for emergencies. On the West Coast of the U.S. the fear of an enemy invasion was strong.

### **SHE TOOK CARE OF THE SICK**

When someone became ill, that person sent for my mother. She would drop everything and hurry to face the emergency—usually carrying her fomentation cloths. Her ubiquitous appearance in sickrooms all over the

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

campus of Uruguay Adventist Academy led the doctor—who was called for more serious infirmities from the nearby town of Canelones—to quip: “So, *La Señora Weber* again got to the sickroom before I did!”

This was before the days of antibiotics, so Mother used water treatments. In the late 1940s Lloyd, an academy senior, came down with an infection. The doctor said there was little that could be done to help him, but Mother was undaunted. She got the hot fomentations going. Meanwhile, she had my father call together the students to pray for Lloyd while the hot and cold treatments continued. Soon the fever broke, and Mother crept home for a much-needed night’s sleep.

### **SHE FED THE HUNGRY**

Efin Gaisan lived in a windowless mud hut with a straw roof. The chickens roosted every night on the rafters. Efin was one of the first persons to arrive at Sabbath School each week. Uruguay Academy students left ample space between themselves and the smelly dear brother, but my mother invited him home to have Sabbath dinner with us—more than once!

Another time I looked down the road toward the bus stop and saw people coming toward our house. I called Mother.

Whoever they were, these people were coming toward our house, and since it was nearly lunchtime, Mother decided they should be fed.

Instructions followed quickly as she lit the kerosene stove. By the time the people—whom we hardly knew—knocked on our front door, lunch was well under way.

### **SHE INNOVATED**

One day Mother got word that unexpected guests would be coming to our house for lunch. *What to feed them?* she asked herself. She had started a large batch of cottage cheese, but it would take hours to finish preparation. Her solution? Put the unfinished cottage cheese in a bag in the washing machine, swish it around for a few minutes, then put it through the washing machine spinner. In a few minutes the cottage cheese was ready for our guests.

Once she was asked to teach a cooking class at the Adventist church in Guichón, a country church

**My mother got the Red Cross books, studied them carefully, and taught the women how to prepare for emergencies.**

hours by train from where we lived. She could not take much equipment, and hoped she’d find some of the needed items there. One of the things she required was an eggbeater. No one had one. Two forks in her right hand beat the eggs—not as fast as her eggbeater, but they worked.

“I should have known,” she mused as she told us the story. “If I had used a beater, they would not have been able to replicate my recipe.”

### **SHE DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE**

Roberto, an academy student, was sick. Whatever was wrong, the doctor ordered intravenous injections. Roberto came directly to our home for help. Mother looked at the doctor’s orders and the vials of medicine. She had given many shots, but never an intravenous one. She had syringes and needles on hand because my father’s asthma frequently required injections.

As she boiled a syringe and needle, she prayed: “Lord, help me to find the vein and do this right.” When she was ready, she took Roberto out on the front porch where the sunlight was bright so she could see, she told us later.

Within a few minutes it was all over. God had helped her, she affirmed!

Another episode of doing what had to be done happened when the neighbor across the street went into labor with her second child.

“Please go over and stay with Celestina while I get the midwife,” husband Ricardo insisted. The baby, however, was coming more quickly than expected. Fortunately, Mother had recently taught a first-aid/emergency-medicine class about how to deliver a baby. Mother lit the kerosene burner

## Kids loved Mother's Sabbath School classes. Adults did too.

and put scissors and string on to boil. The baby, a healthy boy, was born, and mother tied the cord. Today this baby has retired after a fruitful career as a pastor.

### **SHE LED A SERIOUS DEVOTIONAL LIFE**

Once we left each day for school and work, my mother regularly spent an hour in personal devotions, usually from 9:00 to 10:00. Her reading included the Bible and Ellen White's books.

The prayer part was amazing to me as a young girl. I remember sliding through the pass-through closet between my room and hers to listen to her prayers, said out loud, often with tears. *So that is the way one should pray*, I thought.

One day my father came home with a story of a near disaster: after some serious rainfall the well and pump house had caved in just seconds before he was to step into it.

"At what time did this happen?" Mother asked.

"About 10:00," my father replied.

We couldn't believe the look on her face. She said, "Just before 10:00 a.m. I was finishing my devotions and was leaving the bedroom when I felt a voice telling me, 'Go pray for Chuck.' So I did. I knelt down and prayed for your safety."

Then they were in each other's arms, and we all praised God for His protection of my father. Mother was open to the urging of the Spirit, who came so close to her in her devotions.

### **SHE TAUGHT**

My first memories of Mother teaching are her nutrition classes, taught to nursing students at Portland Adventist Sanitarium. As I listened I would do drawings of the foods she talked about.

Some of her teaching was not in a classroom. Early in her stay at Uruguay Academy, when my father had a bumper crop of tomatoes, she taught

the kitchen girls how to bottle tomato juice.

Although she also taught girls' physical education, English, and first aid during the seven years in Uruguay, nutrition was her favorite class. At first there was no lab, so the students met in our home. In time, Mother raised enough funds to set up a lab, complete with all the equipment needed to cook healthful meals.

In Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, and Pakistan she taught the techniques and virtues of healthful cooking. For many students these were the first lessons in plant-based eating. Her teaching was based on up-to-date science (much of it from Loma Linda, as well as common sense). It was supported by counsels from Ellen White. After she retired, she continued teaching cooking classes in local churches.

Kids loved Mother's Sabbath School classes. Adults did too. She spent hours reading, making notes, and preparing questions. She didn't quit teaching her adult Sabbath School class until she was nearly 90 years old.


### **SHE PREACHED**

I was about 5 years old the first time I heard my mother preach. It was in the small church in Gresham, Oregon. Her topic was healthful living. She used a flannel board to illustrate her sermon. We all watched and listened and learned. Since this was the early 1940s, she used the lower Sabbath School platform—"because of the brethren's funny ideas," she told me when I asked why.

Her speaking went beyond health topics to the practical matters of Christian life. I don't think she ever studied homiletics, but everyone seemed to enjoy her preaching.

The notes in Mother's files show different approaches to preaching. All of them are full of Bible texts and stories, among which her personal stories are prominent. Her topics reflected her deep knowledge of Scripture and Ellen White's writings.

If you had asked her if she was a preacher, she would have said "no." "But I am sharing God's Word," she would have added.

Mother never attended seminary, but she ministered for God, sharing His love in everything she did. 

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**ALSO IN THIS SECTION:**

- » THE CHRISTIAN OLYMPIAN
- » JUST START PEDALING
- » THE GREAT RACE
- » HEAT-OF-THE-MOMENT FAITH, REDUX

# CONNECT

## MEETING AT THE NET

*What's a handshake, anyway?*

She has whipped up a storm on the court; played her heart out; but in life, as in tennis, somebody always wins and somebody always loses. This time she is the loser—wronged, injured, harmed, hurt, unfairly treated. Yes, there were set points and break points, advantages and even “love” a time or two. But the game is over now, and she is the loser, a big loser.

She wants to drag herself to the net, but her soul screams, *He wronged me!* Her head burns. She feels the taunt of his burning eyes: *I did, and there is nothing you can ever do about it. They think I won fair and square.* Wisps of the aroma of reconciliation, distant strains from songs about forgiveness jeer and mock at the parody of



**RUTH S. WILLIAMS**

her life. Why would she go to that net, anyway? She struggles to recall all that she had learned about this crucial life lesson.

### **WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT**

There are many half-truths, whole lies, and plain myths about forgiveness. Knowing what it is not is a first step to avoiding otherwise-inevitable pitfalls that can accompany the pain of being wronged.

### **NOT FORGIVE AND FORGET**

That is impossible. As human beings we are hard- and soft-wired to remember wrongs done to us; to remember the negative; to readily recall the adverse situations of our lives.

Forgiveness does not mean that our memory traces are wiped clean and we go on living as if nothing ever happened. To admonish someone to forget the wrong that was perpetrated against them often adds insult to injury, revictimizing the injured and reinforcing the wrong.

The beauty and power of forgiveness is its consciousness of trauma. True forgiveness does not need to forget the injury or eliminate the perpetrator. Empowering forgiveness teaches us to choose to take back the power from the villain, to decide how the incident will be remembered, and give back control to the wronged. Not forgive and forget, but forgive while remembering—effectively, efficiently, and well.

### **NOT MINIMIZING OR TRIVIALIZING THE EXPERIENCE**

Forgiveness is no happy excursion into the gray twilight of denial, a Pollyanna that both dismisses and disrespects the enormity of the wrong or the impact to the wronged. Forgiveness is not agreeing with miserable comforters that it really wasn't that bad; that bad things happen to good people all the time; that you just need to suck it up, turn the other cheek, count to 100 and see the pain vanish because, after all, time heals all wounds. No, forgiveness allows the victim to see injustice for the evil that it is; and still choose to forgive.

### **NOT WEAKNESS, NAÏVETÉ, OR POWERLESSNESS**

Forgiveness is the quintessential sign or evidence of strength. The weak cannot forgive; the naive cannot grasp the enormity of the experience; the powerless lack the strength that forgiveness

requires. Forgiveness is both explicit and implicit goal-directed behavior. Embracing the decision to forgive takes courage, grit, and gumption that go against every natural, healthy emotion that screams for justice, decries injustice, and sues for vengeance. Forgivers draw on sources of strength beyond themselves (Phil. 4:13); of strength that is perfected by our weakness as victims (2 Cor. 12:9).<sup>1</sup>

### **NOT ABOUT CHANGING THE PERPETRATOR**

It is a dangerous myth that true forgiveness changes the person who did the wrong; that a sign of forgiveness is the fact that the perpetrator will recognize and admit their wrong, and properly appreciate the pain they caused. The focus of true forgiveness is the change that it engenders in the victim. It is the stewardship of my personal healing, not the stewardship of another's perverse cruelty. That other may never know they were forgiven. They may be long dead, far distant, or invested in stubbornness. Offenders may choose to reject proffered pardon. Forgiveness is independent of their response. Forgiveness still prevails, because it is primarily for the forgiver, not necessarily for the forgiven.

### **NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH RECONCILIATION**

Forgiveness has been too easily equated with reconciliation. The myth is that if I forgive someone for a wrong, we automatically become friends. In the myth the handshake at the net repairs breaches; reestablishes broken relationships. This has been known to occur. But it is no given. Forgiveness is about recognizing and accepting that injury was done, and choosing to break the toxic, negative bond that ties up victim and offender in a self-defeating choke hold.

Reconciliation, on the other hand, works to build a new bond. The term comes from two words meaning "again" and "bringing together." Those reconciled with one another do become friends again, build something together again, and restore something once lost between them. Yet in some instances victim-perpetrator friendship is impossible, even undesirable. But there is never a case in which forgiveness is not critical to the victim's own well-being.

Thus forgiveness is both its own necessity and a condition for possible reconciliation. It may be a major first step to reconciliation, but sometimes can be the only step that a victim takes.



**WE, AND PETER,  
NEED TO  
UNDERSTAND  
THAT  
FORGIVENESS  
KEEPS FORGIVING  
FOR AS LONG AS  
LIFE KEEPS  
LIVING.**



# WE ARE LOSERS NO LONGER.

Our player still lingers on the court, now reviewing her new question: *What is forgiveness, anyway?*

## **WHAT FORGIVENESS IS**

Psychologists have defined forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.

## **FORGIVENESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR QUALITY OF TEMPORAL LIFE**

Within the past two decades, the scientific literature has reported results from a plethora of studies that confirm that anger is toxic to health and that forgiveness, by removing the power of that anger, improves cardiovascular health, mental health, and unhealthy stress levels. It is now well documented that forgiveness is essential for healthy marriages, parent-child relationships, and all other human relationships. Forgiveness increases kindness and happiness, and accounts for a grand portion of the variation in quality-of-life indicators.

## **FORGIVENESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL QUALITY OF LIFE**

As followers of the greatest Forgiver of all time and eternity (Luke 23:34), Christians have been commanded, admonished, and encouraged to forgive. Peter understood this from the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).<sup>\*</sup> He must have wondered how much time should be spent in this practice when he queried, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (Matt. 18:21). Jesus responded, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times" (verse 22).

Other biblical passages caution that forgiving others is imperative if we desire God's forgiveness for ourselves (Matt. 6:15). And again, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). In His own earthly life, one of Jesus' last magnanimous acts was to forgive: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If you are a true follower of Christ, you are a forgiver. The words "Christian" and "forgiver" are synonymous.



## **FORGIVENESS IS A PROCESS**

Forgiveness is no one-time, single event during which we get it over with, make the handshake, endure the hug, and shed copious tears at the nets of our lives. Static images from our childhood, of being ordered (“Go tell your brother you are sorry”), now frame our understandings.

Peter’s question may in fact have been: *Can you really ever completely forgive a person? What does Jesus think about it?* We, and Peter, need to understand that forgiveness keeps forgiving for as long as life keeps living. We need the recognition that we may never get to the place where it is all done, complete, and finished. Every time we set eyes or mind on the one who has wronged us, we extend pardon to them again, and again, and again. The focus is not on *Have I forgiven?* but on *How forgiving am I? Am I nurturing a forgiving personality? Do I have a forgiving heart?*

## **HOW DOES FORGIVENESS LIVE?**

She is still out there, all alone in her half of the court. She has reviewed what forgiveness is not and is. Now she wonders, *What next, from now and forward?*

There are core components that are critical to all forgiveness—whether on the individual, group, or global level. Empirical study of forgiveness shows that all varieties of forgiveness share three attributes in common:

**Gaining a new perspective** of the offender and of the event. My offender shares with me the brokenness of all fallen humanity, and has a heart “deceitful above all things, and desperately sick” (Jer. 17:9). This perspective is important in that forgivers accept what happened, acknowledge the hurt and betrayal, but see the offender as a fellow person like themselves, broken, bruised, flawed, even evil, and still say, *I choose to forgive you.*

**The process of letting go:** related to this process of releasing anger and reducing negative feelings toward the offender is finding that as the anger and negative emotions subside, we discover an increased possibility for compassion toward the offender.

**The power and control contained in forgiveness:** these reside, in part, with the decision to give up the deserved right of the victim for punishment, vengeance, and appropriate restitution. The power of forgiveness resides in the notion that even if the offender appears to get away with the

crimes or wrongs done, the forgiver still forgives.

All true forgiveness seems to have this core goal: to break the negative bond (fueled and fed by anger, bitterness, and resentment) between victim and offender, and choose to replace the negative with the positive. True forgiveness results in victims gaining insight and perspective on their own lives and experiences that benefit their whole being.

## **AT THE NET**

As she reflects on all that she has heard about it, she sees that meeting at the net can be the most beautiful thing, if only she could traverse the long walk there . . . I am she, and she is I. And you. And like all of us who travel this vale of tears, she must come to grips with the enormity of the challenge to which forgivers have been called.

We must pardon, not because we are better, but because we have been given what we need: free pardon. Our God has forgiven and is constantly forgiving us. Our experience of His forgiveness makes us His agents in the extension of the miracle of forgiveness to others who have wronged us or been wronged themselves. Forgiveness, we learn, is more about us, about God’s gift to us, a boon to our being, a beginning point to our plumbing of His unfathomably amazing grace.

Before we forgave, we were unforgiving victims, losers. But now, as we receive and share forgiveness, we are losers no longer, but friends of the forgiver God who is also judge of all the earth, the one who will fix everything just right in the end (Gen. 18:25; Rom. 12:19). And she, like us, must know now who is waiting for her at the net of her life, waiting for her to show up, yes, drawing her forward to receive, not cruel taunts, but sweet pardon for her own faults, and the awesome power that transforms us all into winners, “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

The net is no longer too far away. She is there, for much more than a perfunctory handshake and fleeting hug. As they cling to each other and refuse to let go, His voice is in her ear: “When you meet at the net, forgive.”

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Ruth S. Williams teaches at Southern Adventist University, in Collegedale, Tennessee.

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## COSTIN JORDACHE

Imagine a runner rounding the bend into the final lap of the race of his life. His arms and legs move faster and faster, with every muscle in the body engaged. Adrenaline is flowing, sweat is pouring, and his eyes see only one thing in the distance: a thin banner stretched across the track. Countdown to destiny is under way, and every meter seems shorter than the one before. Finally, with only steps to go, the runner lunges forward, every tendon and ligament stretching toward the finish line.

Keep that image in mind.

Metaphors are powerful tools for learning that have the potential to grip the imagination and bring complex concepts to life. Scripture is replete with this sort of conceptual imagery. Old and New Testament authors describe God as a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29), while the wilderness tabernacle served as a life-sized metaphor for the divine plan of salvation. Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10); champions of the kingdom are salt and light (Matt. 5:13, 14); its detractors' yeast is dangerous (Matt. 16:6)—though yeast may also signify the growth of the kingdom (Matt. 13:33). Metaphors are that flexible.

Metaphors allow us to relate to what is being described. They create a familiarity that quickly constructs meaning. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words.

The apostle Paul is well known for his useful metaphors. Throughout his letters members of the church become organs of the body, and human bodies become temples housing the Holy Spirit.

Metaphors are powerful tools for learning.

**A MEMORABLE METAPHOR**

Consider this well-known image employed by Paul on several occasions: the intensity of athletic determination. On multiple occasions the prolific writer describes disciples' journeys in athletic terms. According to Paul, the Christian journey requires more than just passive participation. "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training," he writes. "They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1 Cor. 9:25, 26).

The metaphor was well understood by Corinthian believers. Corinth, a city in southern Greece with ancient roots, was home to the Isthmian Games. By the time Paul started the Corinthian congregation, the games had been in existence for more than 400 years. Rivalled only by the Olympic Games (held a little more than 100 miles to the west), the Isthmian Games featured a standard diet of athletic contests, including running and boxing.

So why did Paul choose this particular metaphor to describe the life of believers, other than its familiarity to those he was addressing? And what meaning does this ancient imagery have for our lives?

Perhaps a letter written by Paul to another early church congregation can help us understand the meaning of the metaphor and Paul's reason for using it. Writing to the congregation in Philippi, a city located in modern-day northern Greece, Paul begins chapter 3 of his letter by encouraging these Philippian Christians not to put any confidence in the flesh.

We could interpret this to mean that they were not to put trust in themselves, their accomplishments, their theological knowledge, their abilities, or in having perfectly participated in external faith traditions.



# CHRISTIAN OLYMPIANS

*Paul and athletic imagery*



Paul then makes the case that if anyone has reasons for such confidence, he could certainly claim bragging rights. After all, he was circumcised on the eighth day, a Hebrew of Hebrews, an outstanding Pharisee, and in legalistic righteousness, faultless.

If anyone had the credentials, it was Paul, the superstar “religious athlete.”

However, those accomplishments, those notable things were not the essence of his life. In fact, Paul comments about his accomplishments: “Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” (verse 7).

### PAUL’S STRATEGIC PLAN

So what do the lives of successful, confident believers look like? Paul unpacks the idea a bit more. In contrast to his religious résumé, he begins to share with the Philippian Christians the philosophy by which he lives his life.

He confesses that his greatest desire is to know Christ and to experience fully the life that Jesus made possible for him through His death and resurrection, both now and in His eternal kingdom.

Nothing else motivates Paul. Nothing.

Then, to illustrate his commitment to this goal, Paul employs the athletic imagery, as familiar to the Philippians as to the Corinthians. “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (verses 3:12-14).

His words are rich with vivid meaning as he reduces his attempt to attain his goal to one approach. “One thing I do,” Paul writes as he explains it in two parts.

First, “I forget what is behind.” This is a powerful concept on the surface, even more powerful beneath the surface. The word used by Paul in the original language is a compound word that lends itself to the idea of being intentionally forgetful; to neglect or to put out of mind. Not many times is this sort of thing encouraged, but in this case it is.

While Paul doesn’t elaborate, context allows us to imagine that when it comes to living his life and prioritizing the factors that govern his life,

Paul chose intentionally to forget his accomplishments, accolades, impressive training, model living, and triumphs. He may also have meant that he forgets the sins of his past; the failures that haunted him; the insults hurled at him, or the inadequacies that lived in his past.

Nevertheless, Paul reminds his readers of what they no doubt observed in the ancient games. Top-tier athletes have only one goal in mind, and that goal is ahead of them.

However, this is not where Paul ends the metaphor. “Forgetting what is behind,” he writes, “and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal.” In the second half of Paul’s one approach to spiritual life, another interesting word picture develops. “Straining” is more fully understood as stretching or reaching toward, even over, something.

The picture can now be imagined with that same runner, straining toward the goal with body bent forward, hand and foot outstretched, doing everything possible to reach the goal. We’ve all seen it with the help of slow-motion technology: the race won by the runner stretching his neck over the finish line, or the swimmer who takes gold with one final stretch of her fingers.

Applying it to his spiritual life—and by extension to ours—Paul is stretching out, reaching out over his accomplishments, achievements, doubts, fears, inadequacies, and circumstances. With every ounce of energy he stretches over the impossibilities of the past into the possibilities of the future; over the mundane into the exciting; over exhaustion into unexplained energy; over failure and into the future.

*“One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal.”*

### A MEANINGFUL CHOICE

Paul chose and refers to this same athletic metaphor multiple times in his letters, perhaps because it most clearly describes the intensity and determination with which he sought to fully experience the life and purpose to which Jesus had called him.

Of course, it may be safe to assume that he also chose the metaphor hoping that the imagery and the meaning behind it would inspire his readers—both then and now—to pursue the purposes of God with equal grit, determination, and intensity, knowing that the results are eternally rewarding. 🌱

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**Costin Jordache** is news editor and communication director of *Adventist Review* Ministries.

# HEAT-OF-THE-MOMENT FAITH, REDUX

**A**lmost exactly 10 years ago I started on a journey that would take me farther than I'd ever imagine. I set off from Omaha, Nebraska, with all my life's possessions jammed into the covered bed of my 1994 Dodge Dakota. Three days later I arrived in Silver Spring, Maryland, ready for my internship at the *Adventist Review*.

My first article was entitled "Heat-of-the-Moment Faith." The piece chronicled some of the humorous (I say that now) car problems I had in my first few days on the East Coast.

Like when my driver's seat broke. As I was driving down Highway 29 the back of my seat gave out, leaving me with no back support. A few days later I had to drive 20 miles at midnight with no headlights. Then, while I was sick with a nasty cold, the alternator in my truck gave out in a Target parking lot.

I tried to apply a spiritual lesson in the midst of the madness. I wrote about how easy it is to have 20/20 faith in hindsight, but that it's much harder to have faith in the heat of the moment, as things are spiraling out of control.

As I've been recently reminded, the lesson is just as applicable in 2017 as it was in 2007.

## MOVING, OR MOVING ON?

The past six months have been a whirlwind. In January we decided to put our house on the market. With two kids under the age of 2, our current house isn't exactly kid-friendly, with its off-white carpet, broken-up floor plan, and restricted backyard. New construction had started in our area on a house that would be perfect for our family. But for

everything to work out, we'd have to sell for the right price at exactly the right time.

I wish I could say that I followed the advice of my 21-year-old self. But there were times that the uncertainty really got to me. I never really doubted that God would work things out in the end, but my heat-of-the-moment faith didn't even amount to that of a mustard seed.

In early April we got the call that our house had sold and that the transaction would be complete on the exact day that our new house was ready. I was elated. But I also had an overwhelming sense of unworthiness.

I saw in myself the grumbling Israelites complaining about food after crossing the Red Sea. I saw doubting Thomas, steadfast in his unbelief until he could touch the holes in Jesus' hands. I saw a 21-year-old college student, unsure why God would bring him so far, only to have his vehicle practically disintegrate in a matter of weeks.

Yet that old truck got me through that summer and the rest of college.

God allows us to face uncertainties. But if we return His faithfulness, the path will lead us closer to His purpose. The apostle Paul reminds us, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom. 8:28).

This isn't exactly some stunning new spiritual revelation. But maybe you're stubborn like me and need a reminder in the heat of the moment. 🍀

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Jimmy Phillips is executive director of marketing for Adventist Health Bakersfield.

INTRODUCING  
THE WHY  
JIMMY  
PHILLIPS



GOD ALLOWS US TO  
FACE UNCERTAINTIES.  
IF WE RETURN HIS  
FAITHFULNESS, THE  
PATH WILL LEAD US  
CLOSER TO HIS  
PURPOSE.

# JUST START PEDALING

*Reflections on  
witnessing while  
cycling across the  
United States*

## SCOTT CHRISTIANSEN

In April 2015 I decided to ride my bicycle across the United States. I knew that attempting such a thing would require a tremendous amount of training, as well as a significant reallocation of my time. I was 54 years old when I decided to fulfill this long-held ambition, but at 227 pounds I was far from a picture of athletic health; I would have to do some serious training.

My first hurdle was getting my wife, Dee, to agree to the idea. I knew it would be difficult. First was the cost, which I figured to be about \$6,000. Then was the fact she would become a “ride widow” for the next year as I trained whenever possible. Also, we’d have to forgo vacations for me to save up vacation time, simultaneously putting aside money needed for the trip. On top of that, in my absence she’d be alone in managing the house, our animals, and attending to the care and complex schedule of our son Nathan, who has Down syndrome. Finally, she’d have to do all this while continuing her work as a night-shift nurse.

I did my best to craft a compelling pitch, emphasizing the health benefits that would come from making what I had begun to call The Ride. I sat down with Dee and began to explain what I wanted to do. By the fourth or fifth sentence of my pitch I knew it wasn’t going well. She listened silently, then made a cool (not to say cold) exploration of the details and many implications of The Ride. Finally, she said she’d think about it, but it didn’t look good. For that reason, I was all the more

surprised when, a few days later, she agreed: I could go on the The Ride.

Not until after The Ride did I find out that she gave me permission only because she was pretty sure I’d never do it. Giving me permission meant she wouldn’t be in the position of denying me my dream.

After getting Dee’s permission, I told my son Beniah, a sophomore at Andrews University, about my plans. I expected him to cheer me on. Instead he surprised me by saying he wanted to come along. He said it had to be in May since he had plans for the rest of the summer. I was elated. Not only had The Ride become a father-and-son event, but the date had also been set in stone. I could build my training schedule around it.

I launched into a flurry of research and planning. What route? What bike? What clothing? What





equipment? We'd be going "unsupported," which is to say there would be no chase vehicle or camper following us. I could save up a month of vacation time, which meant the ride would have to be a fast one. We couldn't camp (the weight of all the extra equipment would really slow us down), so we'd have to stay in hotels at night. What about the Midwest, where hotels can be spaced quite far apart? Then there was food. We'd burn somewhere in the range of 8,000 to 10,000 calories a day. How would we eat? More to the point, how would we eat on a budget?

As I became immersed in details I couldn't help comparing the thought and energy I was putting into The Ride with the thought and energy I put into my

**We begin by beginning, and that leads to knowledge, experience, and wisdom.**

personal ministry. The more I thought about it, the more obvious it became that it was not a flattering comparison.

#### **A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE**

I firmly believe that the Adventist Church has been entrusted with a critical message. I believe each member has a responsibility to spread this message. So why wasn't I approaching my personal ministry with the energy and thought I was putting into The Ride? It's an important question, a question that goes well beyond me. In fact, it's a question that can be put to almost every Adventist: Why do we allow so many other things in our lives to be more important than the ministry entrusted to us by God?



The more I thought about this question, the more I saw it as a twofold problem. After years of thought and observation, I'm beginning to see that we are afraid—embarrassed, if you will—to be different. While we have a distinct message, we may shrink from delivering it, because we hesitate to be different. More precisely, we want the approval of the world, and we understand we can't get that while delivering a message of radical reformation. It seems we are, to some degree, embarrassed or ashamed of the gospel (see Rom. 1:16).

The other part of this twofold problem is that we allow ourselves to see witnessing as a complex challenge, something that needs extensive preparation, planning, training, and equipment. We don't witness because we have not completed our preparation; and we don't prepare because it seems too big, too time-consuming. We perceive that vigorous witnessing requires a change in lifestyle.

### GOOD ADVICE

While thinking about the challenges faced by our church, I continued to plan for The Ride. Planning didn't go well. There were so many variables, so many questions to answer: How best to start training? What should my training targets and time line be? What medical supplies are essential to have along? What saddle (seat) is the best, considering I will be in it 10 to 12 hours a day?

I decided to talk things over with my friend Peter Wannemacher. Peter lives one of the most interesting lives imaginable. For instance, when he took his son, Josiah, to a Pathfinder retreat, he decided to walk the 75 miles to the retreat, camping in the woods at the side of the road (in Maine, where we live, there are endless woods at the side

of almost every road). From that trek Peter and Josiah have a multitude of stories, including a run-in with a firm yet sympathetic police officer. Peter is a cyclist too. He has ridden across the United States, from California to Florida.

My head was swimming from trying to engage in planning a complex endeavor, and, without trying to, Peter gave me an answer that fit both my questions about the ride and my questions about personal ministry in our church.

"Just start pedaling," he said. I waited expectantly for more. After a few moments Peter leaned forward and said, "Just . . . start . . . pedaling." He went on to explain that it's easy to get so involved in the uncertainties of planning that the actual ride never starts. Beyond that, he explained, all the abundant advice on bikes, routes, equipment, and food strategies starts being understandable only when you actually begin to do it. Only by beginning to do it can you sort out which advice about which equipment and strategies fit best.

My mind immediately made the connection between his advice and personal ministries in our church. The best way to become an effective witness is just to start witnessing. If we do that, we will begin to see tremendous value in the many tools, training materials, and equipment that are available. Further, we will be able to hone in on which materials and tools are best suited to our needs. And using them will lead to another round of learning and refinement of practice. In short, we begin by beginning, and that leads to knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

Some may say, "But wait, what about depending on the Holy Spirit? Your model sounds like it promotes self-reliance."

This is a reasonable criticism, and I answer it two ways: First, I take it as a given that every one of us is seeking God's guidance and asking the Spirit to go ahead of us. To that I will add that God cannot steer us if we are not moving. We have to start. We begin by beginning. After that beginning, we progress until, eventually, we have achieved through Christ a change so great it can be described only as a lifestyle change.

### ON THE ROAD

I took Peter's advice and began to train by just taking my bike out and riding it. Progress came slowly. The more experienced I became at long



bike rides, the better I was able to navigate the dizzying array of equipment, routes, and advice.

Beniah and I began our father-and-son ride across the United States at Bay Center, Washington, on May 1, 2016, by dipping our rear tires in the Pacific Ocean. That first day we rode 128 miles to Randle, Washington, climbing into the Cascades and glimpsing Mount St. Helens along the way. It was a brutal first day, but I had trained for it (Beniah, young and athletic, hardly needed training and outrode me the entire trip).

We crossed Washington, then we crossed Idaho on the Coeur d'Alene bicycle trail (an amazing trail I highly recommend to any cyclist). We endured Montana with its shoulderless roads, extreme speed limits, endless hills, and relentless headwinds. We gleefully rode the shoulder of Interstate 94 in North Dakota, making excellent time on that well-engineered road (yes, it is legal there, as it also is in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and several other Western states). We got to Milwaukee and crossed Lake Michigan on a ferry (in order to avoid the Greater Chicago area), then crossed Michigan, followed the edge of Lake Erie through Ohio and Pennsylvania, and crossed New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire before entering Maine. We rode hard six days a week, averag-

ing 125 miles a day. A great deal happened on the trip, including several direct answers to prayer.

By the time we got to Maine, we had seen a great deal of the United States. But no landscape was as beautiful as the Androscoggin River valley between Bethel and Hanover, Maine. At this point we were less than an hour from home, and I was delighted—no, *overwhelmed* and overcome with emotion—when I first spotted Dee, who had driven out and was eagerly waiting by the side of the road to greet us. What an enthusiastic and joyous reunion we had after a month apart!

### WHAT'S IN STORE

That reunion was a hint of what is waiting for us when Christ returns and claims us. When Dee and I embraced at the side of the road, she told me how proud she was of me for sticking it out and actually doing the ride. I glowed at hearing her words.

Reflecting on that later, I made the connection between our personal ministry efforts now and hearing “Well done, good and faithful servant” when we are united with Christ (Matt. 25:21).

Here's the thing: Had I not “just started pedaling,” it is likely that I never would have ridden across the U.S., making Dee proud of me. Likewise, if we don't “just start pedaling” with our witnessing, will we hear the words “Well done, good and faithful servant”?

While Beniah and I made it home, we had one more day of riding to reach the Atlantic and complete our coast-to-coast ride. On June 1, 2016, Beniah and I completed that last leg, ending at Camden, Maine, and dipping our front tires in the Atlantic Ocean. Our ride totaled some 3,500 miles, and through all that pedaling I lost 35 pounds. For the last 60 miles of the ride we were accompanied by my friends Norman Medina of Camden, and Bob Cundiff, Northern New England Conference president. It was an amazing journey, and we celebrated it with a banquet at Dr. Medina's home.

But it's the end of my journey on earth that I'm really looking forward to. I'll celebrate it at a banquet table in heaven. There I want to look around me at the people I introduced to Christ and know that the journey was a fruitful one. Is that what you want?

If so, just start pedaling. 🍃

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**Scott Christiansen** is communication director and evangelism coordinator of the Northern New England Conference.





## THE GREAT RACE

*Christians are called to a higher standard.*

In the hope of impressing vividly upon the minds of the Corinthian believers the importance of firm self-control, strict temperance, and unflagging zeal in the service of Christ, Paul in his letter to them made a striking comparison between the Christian warfare and the celebrated foot races held at stated intervals near Corinth. Of all the games instituted among the Greeks and the Romans, the foot races were the most ancient and the most highly esteemed. They were witnessed by kings, nobles, and statesmen. Young men of rank and wealth took part in them and shrank from no effort or discipline necessary to obtain the prize.

### INTENSE PREPARATION

The contests were governed by strict regulations, from which there was no appeal. Those who desired their names entered as competitors for the prize had first to undergo a severe preparatory training. Harmful indulgence of appetite, or any other gratification that would lower mental or physical vigor, was strictly forbidden. For one to have any hope of success in these trials of strength and speed, the muscles must be strong and supple, and the nerves well under control. Every movement must be certain, every step swift and unswerving; the physical powers must reach the highest mark.

### THE RACE

As the contestants in the race made their appearance before the waiting multitude, their names were heralded, and the rules of the race were distinctly stated. Then they all started together, the fixed attention of the spectators inspiring them with a determination to win. The judges were seated near the goal, that they might watch the race from its beginning to its close and give the prize to the true victor. If a man reached the goal first by taking an unlawful advantage, he was not awarded the prize.

In these contests great risks were run. Some never recovered from the terrible physical strain. It was not unusual for men to fall on the course, bleeding at the mouth and nose, and sometimes a contestant would drop dead when about to seize the prize. But the possibility of lifelong injury or of death was not

looked upon as too great a risk to run for the sake of the honor awarded the successful contestant.

### TO THE VICTOR THE SPOILS

As the winner reached the goal, the applause of the vast multitude of onlookers rent the air and awoke the echoes of the surrounding hills and mountains. In full view of the spectators, the judge presented him with the emblems of victory—a laurel crown and a palm branch to carry in his right hand. His praise was sung throughout the land; his parents received their share of honor; and even the city in which he lived was held in high esteem for having produced so great an athlete.

### PARALLELS OF THE CHRISTIAN RACE

In referring to these races as a figure of the Christian warfare, Paul emphasized the preparation necessary to the success of the contestants in the race—the preliminary discipline, the abstemious diet, the necessity for temperance. “Every man that striveth for the mastery,” he declared, “is temperate in all things.”

The runners put aside every indulgence that would tend to weaken the physical powers, and by severe and continuous discipline trained their muscles to strength and endurance, that when the day of the contest should arrive, they might put the heaviest tax upon their powers. How much more important that the Christian, whose eternal interests are at stake, bring appetite and passion under subjection to reason and the will of God! Never must he allow his attention to be diverted by amusements, luxuries, or ease. All his habits and passions must be brought under the strictest discipline. Reason, enlightened by the teachings of God’s Word and guided by His Spirit, must hold the reins of control.

And after this has been done, the Christian must put forth the utmost exertion in order to gain the victory. In the Corinthian games the last few strides of the contestants in the race were made with agonizing effort to keep up undiminished speed. So the Christian, as he nears the goal, will press onward with even more zeal and determination than at the first of his course. . . .

### BECOMING SPIRITUAL ATHLETES

In the epistle to the Hebrews is pointed out the single-hearted purpose that should characterize the Christian’s race for eternal life: “Let us lay aside

**The Christian must put forth the utmost exertion in order to gain the victory.**

every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Hebrews 12:1, 2. Envy, malice, evil thinking, evilspeaking, covetousness—these are weights that the Christian must lay aside if he would run successfully the race for immortality. Every habit or practice that leads into sin and brings dishonor upon Christ must be put away, whatever the sacrifice.

The blessing of heaven cannot attend any [man or woman] in violating the eternal principles of right. One sin cherished is sufficient to work degradation of character and to mislead others. . . .

### CROWNS FOR ALL WHO ENDURE

The competitors in the ancient games, after they had submitted to self-denial and rigid discipline, were not even then sure of the victory. . . .

Such is not the case in the Christian warfare. Not one who complies with the conditions will be disappointed at the end of the race. Not one who is earnest and persevering will fail of success. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The weakest saint, as well as the strongest, may wear the crown of immortal glory. All may win who, through the power of divine grace, bring their lives into conformity to the will of Christ. The practice, in the details of life, of the principles laid down in God’s Word, is too often looked upon as unimportant—a matter too trivial to demand attention. But in view of the issue at stake, nothing is small that will help or hinder. Every act casts its weight into the scale that determines life’s victory or defeat. And the reward given to those who win will be in proportion to the energy and earnestness with which they have striven. ♣

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This excerpt is taken from *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pages 309–314. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827–1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



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- » WHEN GOD SAYS, "GIVE!"
- » THE SCIENCE OF SPIRITUAL GAINS
- » INADEQUATE FOR THE TASK

*Taking the name is easier than living the life.*

**STEPHEN CHAVEZ**

It should come as no surprise that Christianity seems to be experiencing the same polarization that much of society is going through. Pick up a newspaper, watch the evening news, or notice what is trending online, and you'll often see items about Christians taking principled stands that are almost polar opposites.

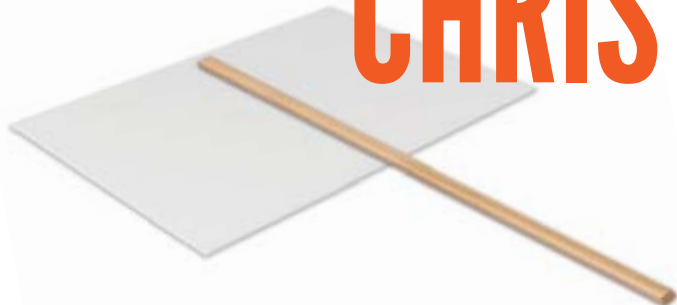
In the current debate about immigration, some Christians emphasize the rule of law, and point out that citizenship is a privilege reserved for those who have jumped through the proper hoops. Other Christians, citing the deplorable levels of violence in some countries, favor using their church buildings as sanctuaries for illegal immigrants to avoid deportation.

These are all Christians, mind you. They all claim allegiance to Christ, and use the Bible as their sourcebook for all things ethical and moral. Yet you might see them on opposite sides of a public place, holding posters and placards demeaning the positions taken by those on the other side.

At moments like this it is essential to remember that being a Christian is not so much about what side of the political spectrum we're on, as much as it is about how well we reflect Christ's character to the people around us.

Ideally Christians should be known for their devotion, for their faithfulness, for their generosity, for their sacrificial service. How is it, then, that so many Christians are known for hypocrisy, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness?

PUTTING  
"CHRIST"  
INTO  
"CHRISTIANITY"



## THE NEXT LEVEL

Jesus began His earthly ministry in a climate of religious and political intolerance. His manifesto is recorded in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Let's highlight just a few things from Matthew 5.

First, Jesus placed a blessing on those we usually think of as marginalized: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted. Clearly Jesus saw things from a different perspective than those who usually establish societal norms.

He went on to point out that keeping the letter of the law is not enough for those who want to live kingdom values. According to Jesus, we don't have to commit murder to kill someone. We can wound people just by what we say. We don't have to go to bed with someone to commit adultery; what happens in the head is as bad as what happens in bed.

Jesus took an Old Testament concept, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" (Matt. 5:38), and said that it no longer applied in the kingdom He came to set up. Indeed, anyone who takes Jesus seriously can expect to be slapped, walk around coatless (and shirtless), and carry someone's pack twice as far as anyone else (verses 39-41).

For Jesus, obedience is not just observing the letter of the law—it's taking obedience to a whole new level.

In fact, Matthew 5 ends with Jesus observing, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (verses 43-45).

Loving our enemies: it's a radical concept, and it's the surest sign that we know Jesus: that we love those with whom we disagree, whether they be liberal or conservative, gay or straight, Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Atheist.

## FREEDOM FROM THE PAST

Perhaps one of the best-known stories about Jesus, and how He balanced justice and mercy, is found in John 8: the woman taken in adultery.

After Jesus confronted the teachers of the law and the Pharisees about the claims of Moses' law, and issued His classic statement "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her"

(verse 7), Jesus said to the woman: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" (verse 10).

"'No one, sir,' she said."

"'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin'" (verse 11).

Jesus knew that the only thing more important than Moses' law is forgiveness, grace. The woman could hardly leave her life of sin if she was dead. So Jesus gave her the opportunity to begin again.

The spirit of Christianity is the spirit of generous grace. Sadly, in the minds of many Christians, once a sinner, always a sinner. Many Christians can't forgive others; they can't even forgive themselves. But Jesus promised new life, for ourselves, and for everyone who comes into our orbit. That's real Christianity, because it's how Christ lived.

## CHRIST'S TRANSFORMING TOUCH

One of my favorite stories about Jesus is His encounter with Zacchaeus, the height-challenged tax collector (Luke 19:1-10). We know the story. The crowd following Jesus stopped when Jesus stopped. As they followed Jesus' gaze, they saw Zacchaeus staring down from the branches of a sycamore-fig tree.

Then, in the words of the classic children's song, Jesus said (all together now), "Zacchaeus, you come down. For I'm coming to your house today. I'm coming to your house today."

That, of course, raised the ire of the crowd following Jesus: "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner" (verse 7). Zacchaeus' reputation was well-deserved. He cheated his own people as much as he could. Going to Zacchaeus' house made Jesus look as if he was being "soft on sin." Being like Jesus isn't easy. Jesus was often misunderstood and His motives impugned. Those who follow Him should expect nothing less.

I wish I could have been a fly on the wall in the room where Zacchaeus entertained Jesus. What did they talk about? Who steered the conversation? Did Jesus twist Zacchaeus' arm?

All we know is that by the end of the conversation "Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount'" (verse 8).

When we experience salvation, we can't be content to merely undo the bad we've done; we



# What matters most is how well we reflect Christ's character.

strive to pay back “four times the amount”; or, as Jesus told Peter, “not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Matt. 18:22).

We might call it Christianity to the max. We might even say it’s putting “Christ” back into “Christianity.”

## THE MEASURE OF A MOVEMENT

What matters most is not whether we call ourselves “Christian Fundamentalists,” “Social Christians,” “Evangelical Christians,” or “Red-letter Christians.” What matters most is how well we reflect Christ’s character.

Living like Jesus is not easy; it’s contrary to our natural inclination. We would rather live for ourselves, for our own selfish interests, than live for Christ and others.

We’d like to think that living like Jesus is easy: you just read the Gospels and live accordingly. But living the principles of the kingdom cost Jesus His life. And in the two millennia since Jesus lived on earth, countless martyrs have risked their lives to live like Jesus. These martyrs were often persecuted by other Christians, people who thought they were being faithful to God.

These persecutors may have been faithful to their convictions, but they forgot to put “Christ” into their “Christianity.”

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**Stephen Chavez** is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



## WRESTLE IN PRAYER?

*What it's all about*

### RUTHIE JACOBSEN

**Y**ears ago I heard H.M.S. Richards, Sr., longtime speaker for the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry, say, “The Christian journey is not a parade; it’s a battle and a march.” That imagery has never left me, although it feels strangely out of context in today’s shallow “name it and claim it” Christian atmosphere.

In fact, stride with the apostle Paul (keep up if you can) around the Middle East and you get the distinct sense that he’s uncomfortable with what someone has called the socially conditioned small talk that today insinuates itself as prayer.

Listen: “In your struggle against sin, you have not yet *resisted* to the point of shedding your blood” (Heb 12:4).

Describing the intercession of Epaphras, Paul

wrote, “He is always *wrestling* in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12).

What’s that all about? The struggle, I mean.

### A NATIONAL PLATFORM

Recently my husband and I were in Washington, D.C., for the observance of the National Day of Prayer, an interdenominational service. It was hosted by recently appointed chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, Anne Graham Lotz, one of the daughters of Billy and Ruth Graham.

Music was provided by Wintley Phipps. United States Senate chaplain Barry Black led the packed hall in a prayer that gave us the sense we were in the very presence of God.

The transformational moment was a message delivered by Anne Graham Lotz. She led us carefully through Daniel’s prayer (Dan. 9). One of the highlights was a call to focus on some specific personal and national sins, with an earnest call to repentance, personally and for our nation.

Lotz told about a document she had been given by a pastor friend. It was a list of personal sins, and he urged her to read it through prayerfully three times. As she read it through the first time she found herself thinking, *Well, Lord, these are serious sins. But thankfully, not much of it applies to me.* Then she remembered that her friend had asked her to read it carefully three times.

Later she read it again. By the time she had finished it the second time, she discovered several sins that, in fact, spoke to her personally about her own spiritual needs. She told us, “By the time I had finished reading it again, God had showed me that I was guilty of all of them.

“I took the list very seriously and spoke to God with daily tears of repentance for seven days. Finally He broke my heart and said, ‘OK, Anne, now I can trust you with greater blessings.’ And He has.”

As I’ve shared this experience with others, many have asked for the list. Below is the list Lotz gave us that night.

### TWELVE SINS

*Ingratitude:* Failure to thank God for His blessings or answers to prayer. *I repent.*

*Neglect of Bible Reading:* Going for a day—or



days—without reading my Bible; or reading it without remembering what I read. *I repent.*

*Unbelief:* I don't believe God will give me what He has promised because He hasn't given it to me yet. *I repent.*

*Prayerlessness:* I offer God spiritual chatter, fantasy, wishful thinking, or daydreaming as prayer. I often pray without fervent, focused faith. *I repent.*

*Pride:* I secretly believe I'm better than someone else. I am offended when people say I'm wrong. *I repent.*

*Envy:* I am jealous of those who seem more recognizable than me. I struggle when I hear someone else praised. *I repent.*

*Critical Spirit:* I find fault with others because they don't measure up to my standards. *I repent.*

*Disparagement:* I tell the truth about a person with the intention of causing people to think less of him or her. *I repent.*

*Lying:* I have sought to impress someone with something that wasn't the whole truth, or was an exaggeration of the truth. *I repent.*

*Hypocrisy:* I pretend to be something I am not. *I repent.*

*Temper:* I have lost patience with a child, coworker, friend, spouse, staff member, or another person so that I have spoken cross words. *I repent.*

*Arrogance:* I have accepted God's forgiveness while refusing to forgive myself or someone else. *I repent.*

Many with whom I've shared the list have told me, "Thanks so much. I needed that. God spoke to me as I offered Him my heartfelt repentance."

Think for a moment of just one of the issues to see why they are so significant. Take the sin of a critical spirit. Someone has said that criticism is so easy and yet so pathetic. It's so injurious, so destructive. You and I have seen lives destroyed by criticism: families injured, churches divided. But we can repent of that sin, and plead for God to make us healers instead of dividers.

### CARING FOR NEW BELIEVERS

Recently a pastor told us, "I realized that we were in great need in our church for members who would be willing to mentor, to disciple, new church family members."

God laid on his heart the story of Mary, the mother of Christ. He observed to the congregation: "She didn't leave Jesus in the manger to fend for

## We can repent of having a critical spirit, and plead for God to make us healers instead of dividers.

Himself; she lovingly taught Him and cared for Him."


He asked all those who had been baptized in the past three years to come to the front (it was a large number). Then he asked those who would like to mentor and be a caring friend to someone at the front to come forward and find someone they would be willing to disciple. The next 10 minutes was a time of warmth and significant ministry as people found each other and agreed to be friends on the journey.

After a time of prayer, the pastor concluded the service, and the worshippers prepared to head home. Just then a 10-year-old girl walked to the front of the worship center. "I'd like to be baptized," she said out loud.

Someone in the congregation, sensing what God was doing at that moment, immediately asked, "Who's going to take care of Emily?"

About halfway back in the center section a young woman raised her hand. Most of the people in the room knew this young woman had herself recently struggled in her walk with God. But in the past few months she had experienced a new chapter in her own trek. Now she would use that new commitment to mentor and disciple this new young convert.

That's the way church is supposed to work. God has a special plan and purpose for building relationships with new members, and each of the others as well.

Take Lotz's list seriously. Ask God for wisdom, for direction, for forgiveness, and for His special touch as you move to a new level in your walk with God. 

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Now retired, **Ruthie Jacobsen** served as prayer ministries coordinator for the North American Division.

# MINISTRY ON THE EDGE

*A unique ministry led by a unique individual*

**STEPHEN CHAVEZ**

**N**icholas “Nico” Hill does not look like an evangelist.

Come to think of it, his story doesn’t resemble the story of someone who early on heard God’s call to ministry and spent the next several years responding to God’s voice and honing his evangelistic skills. Nico’s autobiography, *Called From the Abyss*, is a story of someone fortunate to be alive, let alone a gospel preacher.

And now, with his sleeve tattoos, often-dark clothing, and facial hair more suited to a motorcycle gang than church, Nico takes his message to those who most need to hear it: “the last, the least, and the lost.”

## TAKE THAT

Nico grew up in a nominally Christian home. When his father became physically and emotionally abusive, his parents divorced.

Nico parlayed his interest in martial arts into a quasi-professional career as a stuntman, bit player in Hollywood television and movie productions, and cage fighter. He surrounded himself with women, cash, cars, and eventually drugs. He chose as his public persona “Nico the Dragon.” He had the words “TAKE” “THAT” tattooed on the fingers of his right and left hand, respectively.

But in his battle against evil he was the one getting beaten up. Nico’s downward spiral led him to consider taking his own life. He writes at one

point about seeing his reflection in a mirror: “I was looking at a dead man, and the dead man was all there was left of who I used to be.”

Alone, living as a recluse, malnourished and despondent, Nico heard a voice he now recognizes as the Holy Spirit’s. Faced with a stark choice—life or death—he wanted life, but he wondered whether he had passed the point of no return.

A series of providential encounters with friends (some of whom were former addicts) eventually led Nico through recovery from drug and alcohol addiction to the Thousand Oaks Seventh-day Adventist Church and Larry Meager, its pastor. Meager met Nico in the church lobby one Sabbath, struck up a conversation with him, and ended up asking Nico to share his testimony with the congregation the next Sabbath.

Before Nico even went to the church, he remembered stories from the Bible about how Jesus had calmed the seas and cast out demons. He had promised God, “If You’ll let me save others in order to save myself, I’ll walk away from all these demons, drugs, and evil.” Now he had that opportunity.

## FROM DRAGON TO SOLDIER

Nico’s transformation from addict to evangelist was fairly rapid. Members of the Adventist church in Thousand Oaks, seeing the power with which he shared his testimony, put up the money for him to attend a four-month training session. That led to a



conversation with the late Larry Caviness, then president of the Southern California Conference. Caviness and other conference leaders invited Nico to form his own evangelistic organization. A friend, Holly Anderson, joined Nico as his partner in ministry, and the two of them cofounded God's Soldier Ministries (Gods-SoldierMinistries.com).

Since then Nico has spoken to groups large and small. He particularly enjoys taking God's Word to high-security prisons. "I go there representing Jesus," he says. "You have to sign a form saying that if anything happens in the chapel and you're held hostage, they will not negotiate for your safe release."

Nico also enjoys speaking to at-risk youth. He goes to schools, halfway houses, juvenile detention centers. "Other denominations bring me in, believe it or not," he says. "They let me have their pulpits because they know people are going to surrender, and they're going to have salvation that will lead to baptisms."

Early in 2017 Nico spoke at a revival at the Laurel Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church in San Antonio, Texas. While in San Antonio he made himself available at Church Under the Bridge, a church founded to serve San Antonio's homeless population. He also spoke at a shelter for abused youth. "These kids [have been] beaten, molested, raped, and they've been in and out of the system, foster homes, and juvenile homes," he says. "Once the Holy Spirit has taught them that they're children of God, . . . it starts to change the way they look at themselves. I'm a mirror of conviction; that's what I am."

### A DISRUPTIVE MINISTRY

"We've been labeled a 'disruptive ministry,' says Nico. "When you're disruptive, having revivals, going to all denominations—from sanctuaries to penitentiaries—yeah, we're disruptive."

Debra Brill, a vice president of the North American Division, admits that Nico's ministry is "disruptive." "Nico's ministry uniquely targets those most unlikely to come to church or watch religious media: those marginalized by the larger society, who typically feel the most alone and hopeless. . . . Nico's



message is simply all about Christ's saving grace for all of us, sinners in desperate need of a Savior."

Brill points to a growing number of pastors who open their churches at times other than for worship services or Bible studies. She cites Roger Hernandez, ministerial director of the Southern Union Conference, who says that evangelism in today's culture has to integrate

good deeds (compassion), good will (connection), and good news (conversion), all qualities Nico's "disruptive ministry" has mastered.

Nico, whose given name is David, long ago gave up the title Nico the Dragon, and often refers to himself as David the Dragon Slayer. Through a series of divine appointments, he not only travels around the country speaking to groups, but has conducted radio and television interviews with both Adventist and other Christian media outlets. "That's only because I've made myself available. I truly put everyone and everything in my life behind my love and devotion to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

When he's not on the road, Nico is active in the Eagle Rock Seventh-day Adventist Church. "They've opened their church to me," he says. "They've given me the keys to have Bible studies or celebrate recovery."

Poetry pervades Nico's autobiography. When we spoke on the phone for this article, he left me with this:

*I cannot in good conscience turn a blind eye  
To all the darkness, the brokenness, the hopelessness,  
the addictions, and the homelessness I'm surrounded by.  
For this building is on fire, and there are victims inside.  
We must be willing to face the flames, pull them out, and point them to our Savior, Jesus Christ.  
For I am an evangelist.  
Everywhere I go is my church.  
Everyone I meet is my congregation.  
The reason I'm breathing is to bring souls into God's kingdom. 🏹*

**Stephen Chavez** is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



ADRA

## WHEN GOD SAYS, “GIVE!”

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*The needs are great,  
but so are our options.*

Lee and Sarah White\* are small business owners in a bustling Southern community. Upon first venturing into the intimidating world of enterprise, their frequent prayers were for enough business to support their family.

### LEARNING TO LISTEN

A year into their young business, a second venture of faith occurred when they hired their first employee, a young man named Chris, freshly dismissed from a factory job that conflicted with his Sabbathkeeping. His impending marriage may have been a factor in taking him on; they trusted God to bless their decision.

They were encouraged as business began to trickle in. The two

men worked long hours in response to requests submitted from their community, as well as locations in other states. Several years later the small business had gained a reputation for honesty and an excellent work ethic. The growing demand for services grew exponentially.

While considering future expansion, Lee White explored options for purchasing real estate to accommodate an office for his growing business. Stumbling upon just the right place in a prime location, he set aside time to pray about the decision. When he stepped forward with savings in hand, he discovered that the property he wanted had suddenly been placed under contract. This development led Lee to understand that his heavenly Father had something else in mind.

### LEARNING TO FOLLOW

Meanwhile, as Lee and Sarah watched their only employee, a young married man, a fellow Seventh-day Adventist, they felt a peculiar conviction surface above the demands of their daily lives. With God's blessing, their business had blossomed, and their hearts were stirred to think of those with limited access to precious Adventist truths often taken for granted.

With this in mind, Lee reached out to his employee with an offer. Chris had never considered that a break in his future could lead him to faraway places. He contentedly lived each day, never dreaming that God might have something altogether different in mind. His wife, Abby, on the other hand, felt called as a child. As school, work, and married life filled her life, she intermittently

wondered if her once-experienced yearning was only a child's fanciful dream.

Something prompted Abby to launch foreign mission work into an evening conversation with Chris one weekend in August. Her husband's response was one of practicality: "We have responsibilities and bills to pay," he reminded her, reiterating the unlikelihood, if not the impossibility, of even receiving an opportunity for foreign mission labor. "However," he said, "if God opens a door and directs us, then yes, I would go."

During the next week Lee and Sarah White felt a growing conviction. One week after Chris said yes to God, Lee sent a message to a stunned employee. "Chris," it began, "would you and Abby consider taking up mission work if someone paid your bills in your absence?"

"Various issues keep me from being able to go myself," his employer explained, "But you are young and well, and my wife and I would like to see if we could make it possible for you to go in our place."

#### **SO MUCH TO SHARE**

The months that followed marked a journey of faith. Both families knew that God had called them, even though they could not tell where the path might lead. Doors opened and closed remarkably, and four months later Chris and Abby embarked on a journey into the heart of Africa.

They were led to Congo's jungles. Traveling by land cruiser over unmarked roads; on motorcycle in dusty, crowded towns; and dugout canoe to locations better reached by water, they knew moments of weariness and renewal as they sought to bring hope to the people they met. They pressed on and prayed through sickness and marveled at miracles along the way.

They gazed into shallow, mucky pools where women retrieved drinking water; noted the mismatched clothes of laborers who earned no more than \$2 a day; and locked eyes with children who wouldn't live to see their sixth birthday because they drank dirty water, could not obtain proper nutrition, and had no medicine so their little bodies could fight malaria.

As the young couple beheld the woes of a world so distant from their own, they knew they could experience life to the fullest only as they gave fully of themselves.

A dusty peddler, bent under the load of his

**A dusty peddler, bent under  
the load of his burden,  
stared at the missionaries.  
"Are you here to help us?"**


burden, abruptly stopped to stare at the missionaries. "Are you here to help us?"

"Yes," they responded. They dreamed of seeing wells drilled in every village, and greater health and longevity for people because of them. They wanted to see thousands of dollars' worth of Bibles distributed in a week, making it possible for everyone either to read or to hear the Word.

Because a small business owner was blessed by God and prompted to give, an open door was set before a young couple. Relationships were created with people whom the business owners had never met, precious souls who never knew the taste of fresh water or held a Bible in their hands, much less read it for themselves.

"When Jesus comes, I don't want Him to find me sitting over a pile of money waiting to buy myself a bigger house," Lee White explains simply. For him, providing the means to send a willing couple to Africa for three months was no sacrifice; instead it was an honor to have a part in reaching people for the kingdom.

One can imagine, in the brightness of the courts above, one believer approaching another with a heartfelt grip. "Thank you for esteeming the riches of the gospel over paper mansions and plastic toys of the world. What you gave became the means that heaven used to reach me."

How much good could be done if, blessed with means, we gave; if, blessed with the opportunity, we went; and if, blessed with concern, we acted? Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). When the Lord comes in brilliant glory, will He find us sitting on our possessions, or sharing with others the priceless gift of salvation? 

\*Not their real names.

**Abigail Duman** lives in Alabama and works as a certified medical assistant.

# 30 DAYS OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS

*Think of it as boot camp for your soul.*

## WILONA KARIMABADI

**F**itness is often thought of in the physical sense. We work for lean, conditioned muscles, better cardiorespiratory endurance and stamina, and flexibility, which makes our bodies less likely to become injured. But true fitness encompasses much more than the physical, especially for Christians. Looking at it from a whole-person standpoint, a healthy person is one who is on point in the physical, mental, and spiritual arenas.

To be physically fit, move more, lift heavy things, and stretch. To be mentally healthy, manage your stress, address your emotional needs, and pursue things that encourage happiness. But for spiritual health, exercise that most mighty of organs—your brain—to tune in to a deeper relationship with your Creator that, in turn, will easily enhance your mental and physical pursuits. So if you are up for 30-day challenge of the sort, read on.

## THE RULES

- » Do not neglect the things that enhance physical fitness. Sleep enough, eat to nourish your body, move, and drink lots of water. Every day.
- » Commit to the entire 30 days. Studies have shown that good habits can be set for the long haul if you can successfully change a behavior for 21 days. We're giving you 30 here, so make the most of them!
- » Remember the P's: progress—not perfection—and positivity.
- » Divide up these activities throughout the course of your day as you see fit.
- » Follow this plan and post your feedback on Facebook. We'd love to hear from you, and encourage you too!



## THE PLAN:

### WARM-UP

Start your morning with prayer, then set three spiritual goals of your choosing for the day, (i.e., encouraging someone, sharing a favorite text on social media, praying at specific times of day, etc.).

### CHALLENGE 1 PRAYER WALK

Take a short walk or walks throughout the day during which you specifically pray about something. While walking is a great form of exercise that can be meditative in nature (especially if done outside), pay special attention to making these walks focused on prayers about specific things.

### CHALLENGE 2 MENTALLY WRESTLE

If there are books of the Bible, or even spiritual topic books that you've found challenging in the past, commit to going through them in the next 30 days. Set aside 15-20 minutes (or more if you wish) of reading and reflection. Journal your thoughts and questions, and if anything really perplexes you, think on them in your prayer walk times.

### STRETCH AND SOOTHE PSALMS

The book of Psalms is a particularly emotional one with which many people may resonate. Choose 30 passages from the book to read and maybe commit to memory on a daily basis (it's entirely up to you which ones and how to master them).

If it helps, create a checklist of these activities and mark your progress daily. At the end of the 30 days, where will you be?

Best wishes! 🍌

# Caring Hearts. Skilled Hands.



*Sadhana Jaladhi RN,  
Member, Remnant Adventist Church*

Show your compassion and join the Adventist HealthCare community in the heart of the Columbia Union Conference and near Washington, D.C. and the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference. Our team of nurses is dedicated to caring for each patient's physical, mental and spiritual health.

Learn about our nursing openings at [AdventistHealthCare.com/Careers](https://www.adventisthealthcare.com/careers).

 Adventist  
HealthCare

Care.  
Compassion.  
Community.

# THE SCIENCE OF SPIRITUAL GAINS

*Conditioning is not just physical.*







“Be still, and know that I am God”

**ANDREW UYEYAMA**

**F**or athletes to progress in their discipline, they must endure stress. That’s one of the primary reasons they undergo intense training. While most people are averse to stress, athletes embrace stress, inducing activity to break the body down so that it can recover and become stronger. Athletes refer to their progress as gains, whether they’re speaking of an increase in muscle size, endurance threshold, or overall ability to perform. To be worthwhile, training sessions must result in gains, and training sessions cannot result in gains without inducing stress.

Stress is a crucial part of an investment in gains, but it’s only part of the process. While gains are induced by stress, they don’t occur during stressful training, but afterward during the rest-and-recovery phase. I used to train with an athlete who had the physique of an Olympian. When I asked about

## A surprisingly powerful way to break away to find rest is to intentionally serve others.

his secrets to training, he simply said, “I rest; that’s part of the workout. Training breaks down the body, but during the recovery phase it makes progress.”

Athletes know that rest is essential to optimize training. Recent research has taken it a step further. Researchers from Finland, the United Kingdom, and the United States all agree that even if one’s recovery phase includes sedentary relaxation, a stressed mind still impedes physical gains. So if we want to maximize recovery, we have to do more than rest the body; we must find ways to rest our minds.

### SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Knowing Jesus on a deeper level and becoming more like Him requires a similar cycle of stressful exertion and recovery. “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work” (Ex. 23:12) is how the Bible describes it.

Not only is stress induced by labor, but the Bible also catalogs trials as a facilitator of growth: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

After Jesus endured periods of sustained trial, He often retreated to be in prayer, sometimes all night.

Christians benefit greatly by tapping into the full potential of their spiritual rest-and-recovery phases by finding ways to rest their minds. God wants to restore peace in our minds and hearts. Here are some ways we can prime our minds and hearts for spiritual gains during recovery.

*Do happy things.* Hang out with friends and family. Set up a beach bonfire with lots of people and good food. No beach? Open your home or backyard. That might not sound relaxing, but I assure you that your mind and heart will find rest.

You may have other ideas for activities that will lift your spirits and make your heart happy. Do them.

*Serve others.* A surprisingly powerful way to break away to find rest is to intentionally serve others. This takes your mind off your daily stressors.

When Jesus and His disciples were crushed by news that their companion John the Baptist was dead, Jesus encouraged His disciples to rest awhile. However, as soon as they sat down to rest, crowds of people flocked to them. Jesus, along with His disciples, got up to serve. In that moment it was probably the best thing for them, and people’s lives were changed as well.

*Embrace the Sabbath.* God, who created us and knows our needs, set aside a whole day for spiritual recovery and growth. If you’re a churchgoing Christian, worship with all your heart! When someone gets up to say “Good morning” or “Happy Sabbath,” say it back as cheerfully as you can. Sing with all your heart. Even if you can’t hold a note, go for it! God will love it, and you will too. When the offering plate comes around, give generously.

Give the preacher some loud “amens,” even if the sermon is boring. Sometimes a bad preacher becomes a good one with a little encouragement from the congregation. Ultimately you’ll come out of a church service much more blessed and refreshed when you worship with all your heart.

When it comes to resting on the Sabbath, take a break from such avoidable stressors as television, business transactions, etc. These things suck the life out of us more than we realize. Instead, engage in activities that allow mind and heart to rest. Be in nature or have deep, meaningful conversations with others. Anything that draws us nearer to our Creator ultimately refreshes our minds.

*Savor some solitude.* Along with the seventh-day Sabbath, this one is nonnegotiable. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). Even if you’re not an introvert by nature, you’ll be blown away at how life-changing a little bit of alone time with Jesus can be. Jesus did this in the morning, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

The Bible highlights moments of solitude experienced by many of the characters Christians look



## IT'S ALL ABOUT A RELATIONSHIP

Teen Bible Academy is a three-week program, and each week is dedicated to a fundamental aspect of being friends with God.

The first week is dedicated to solitude, perhaps the most important part of the program. For teenagers it's easy to think of a relationship with God as something intangible and impersonal. Because friendships at this age are so central to our lives and incredibly intimate, the idea of having that kind of relationship with someone we can't see or hear seems far-fetched.

But the way to pursue a relationship with God is the same way to pursue any earthly relationship. We talk to our new friends, first in a group setting; then, if we like them, we hang out with them one on one. That's what solitude week is.

Solitude week is dedicated to shaking God's hand, asking God what His favorite food is, and simply being in His presence. Just like making a new human friend, making friends with God is about time alone together, and Teen Bible Academy facilitates that.—*Levi*.

## BEING ALONE WITHOUT BEING ALONE

Solitude is spending intentional time with God. My solitude time changes almost every time. Sometimes it's by the ocean, in the car, or just being in a quiet room having a "tea talk" with Him. Inviting God, and having that quality time, makes my connection with God feel even stronger.—*Gabby*.

up to. Moses at the burning bush, along with his many moments in the "tent of meeting," Elijah despairing at Mount Horeb, where God encouraged him. Jesus in Gethsemane where He acquired the strength to press on to Calvary. These were some of the moments where they experienced their greatest spiritual gains.

### A TOTAL PACKAGE

My colleagues and I believe in this so strongly that we take teens on weeklong backpacking trips so they can experience solitude as part of a three-week program called Teen Bible Academy. We take them backpacking so they can escape the artificial stimulation that constantly seeks to overwhelm their daily lives. Each day teens spend one to three hours alone in nature with a Bible. On these trips God becomes real, and the Bible comes to life for

these young people, as well as the staff who participate. We've witnessed excitable teenagers develop a stable dignity about them. Each day their conversations grow deeper and more meaningful. Many teens take ownership of their spiritual journeys from that week forward.

In the world of athletics, stress-free rest and recovery can mean tenths of a second gains in performance, or a few more ounces of lean muscle mass, all of which can be the difference between winning and losing. Along the spiritual journey, however, the spiritual gains from a full rest and recovery in the presence of God can be life-changing, and can make all the difference in the world.

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**Andrew Uyeyama** serves as associate pastor of Grass Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grass Valley, California. He's an avid rock climber and is involved in multiple athletic pursuits.



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# INADEQUATE FOR THE TASK

Fellowship lunch was over. Just as I stood up, a woman reached out and touched my jacket. "Jill, do you have a moment?"

I smiled. "Absolutely!"

"It's my daughter. She's been sick. I don't have insurance—or any money." Worry lines creased her forehead. "So I did the only thing I knew to do. I pleaded with God to bring healing to her. There was nowhere else to turn."

I caught my breath. "What happened?"

"God heard me. He healed her completely." Her face dropped, and she stared at the floor.

"And then?" I prompted her.

"She got worse again." Tears filled her eyes. "Why would God take away her sickness, only to have it return? If He has the power to heal, why was it temporary? I don't understand. Why did this happen to me?"

My mind spun. A million words came to my mind, but I pushed them aside. *Who was I to talk about persistence in prayer or surrender to God's will when I had not walked in her shoes? After all, I had always been able to get medical assistance when I needed it.*

I reached out and gave her a hug, praying for wisdom. As I spoke, every word felt like lead, falling to the ground at our feet. *God, I'm not doing this very well, am I?*

A few weeks later another hurting woman called me at work. She shared about the pain and abuse she had endured in her childhood. Twenty minutes passed, then 30. I glanced at my

inbox, at the voicemails rolling through. *God, I'm spending time with her, and I know she's hurting. But is this doing any good?*

She talked another 15 minutes until I finally broke in. I felt very inadequate as I thanked her for calling and tried to assure her of God's love. She let me pray, but it still felt like nothing compared with her great need.

Later that week I was surprised to hear from her again. She picked right up where she had left off, and my heart sank. *Father, I'm not really helping. Besides, You know I don't have time for this.*

When she paused for breath, I plunged ahead. "It's always a blessing speaking with you. I need to go now, but feel free to call me again next week and finish your story if you'd like."

She said she would, and we closed with prayer. Suddenly I realized she was crying. After a pause, she spoke. "I've been in the church for years, yet I've never spoken to a Seventh-day Adventist who showed me God's love. I just wanted to thank you."

Somehow I said goodbye, then bowed my head and cried. *You can still use me, God? Even when I don't have all the right answers? When I don't react as You would?*

And I heard His voice as the gentlest of whispers: *That's when I work the best. When you realize your inability and allow Me to work.* 🍀

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**Jill Morikone** is administrative assistant to the president of 3ABN, a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS  
WITH JESUS  
JILL  
MORIKONE



YOU CAN STILL  
USE ME, GOD?  
EVEN WHEN I  
DON'T HAVE ALL  
THE RIGHT  
ANSWERS?



PETER N. LANDLESS



ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## Can We Get Too Much Exercise?



**Q:** I am 35 years old. Encouraged by the regular emphasis on exercise in the health columns, I have developed a daily exercise routine. I walk 10,000 steps daily and feel good. I recently read that athletes can die suddenly while exercising. Am I at risk?

**A:** We advise people to consult with their health-care provider before embarking on an exercise program. This is especially important when there has been any history of heart disease, undiagnosed chest pain, or shortness of breath. A family history of sudden cardiac death raises further suspicion.

It seems to make sense that the greatest worry would be for older people. Most sudden cardiac arrests (SCA) during physical exertion, however, occur in people under the age of 40, and most of those under the age of 20. Most victims are male. If not treated immediately, SCA becomes sudden cardiac death (SCD).

This is of great importance to you, because you are 35 years old. The leading cardiac cause of SCA in athletes is a condition known as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), in which the heart muscle becomes very thick and, as it were, muscle-bound. Normal function is impaired.

For the heart to function efficiently, it must be able to eject adequate volumes of blood and to relax well in order to accept an adequate inflow

of blood. The thickening of the muscle not only impairs the function of the heart (one would expect muscular hearts to be superefficient) but makes the heart more susceptible to electrical conduction abnormalities, or arrhythmias. Such rhythm disturbances prevent the heart from doing its normal work of providing normal blood pressure and propelling blood throughout the body system. Consequently, there is decreased blood flow to the brain and all body tissues. If this is not urgently treated, death ensues. More than half of the sudden deaths from HCM occur in Black athletes. More than two thirds of young athletes who die suddenly are basketball and football players.

These statistics are drawn from studies on highly trained athletes who do regular vigorous and intensive exercise. Generally, exercise is extremely healthful and is associated with a much lower risk of death in all age groups. It is crucial to avoid and prevent SCA and SCD in all population groups.

Certain risk factors help to identify those who would benefit from screening:

- a family history of unexplained or unexpected sudden death, especially in younger persons
- an episode of fainting or convulsion/seizure during exercise
- unusual or unexplained chest pain accompanied by unusual shortness of breath during exercise

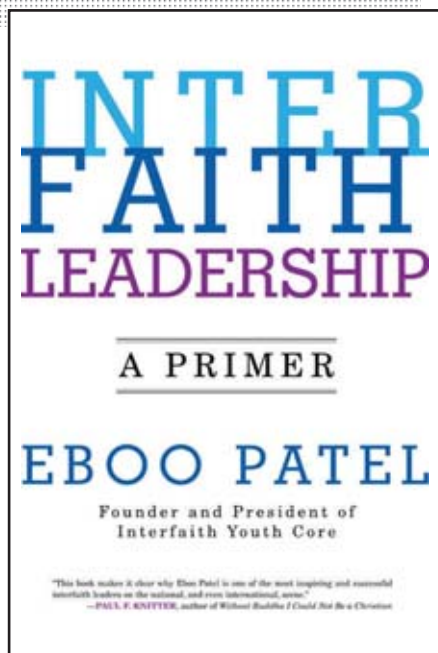
Basic screening tests include careful examination, resting and exercise EKG studies, and an echocardiogram.

If you are still in doubt about your risk, see your physician. Remember, your body has been “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14), and you have been designed to move. So if tests are needed and all is well—*be strong, and just do it!* 🏃

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**Peter N. Landless**, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

# CLOSER LOOK



## INTERFAITH LEADERSHIP: A PRIMER

*Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 2016, 197 pages, softcover, US\$18.00. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, Adventist Review.

I grew up in southern California not long after God invented dirt. Back in those days my world revolved around all things Seventh-day Adventist: home, school, church, Pathfinders, etc. I knew there were people called Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Catholics; we even had a Jewish family living in our neighborhood.

Now I live in the metropolitan area of Washington, D.C. I typically drive to church past Jewish synagogues, Muslim mosques, and temples for Sikhs, Hindus, and Buddhists. Anyone who believes that society can be divided into neat categories, such as believers or nonbelievers, Catholics or

Protestants, Christians or Jews, is living in a world that no longer exists. We live in a culture that requires an understanding and appreciation of the religious beliefs embraced by those with whom we share space in our communities.

Eboo Patel, founder and president of Interfaith Youth Core, is uniquely equipped to speak to the need for people of faith to engage in constructive activities and conversations. A sociologist of Indian ancestry, Patel, a Muslim, has been influenced by Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and others to bring young people of different faiths together for service and dialogue.

*Interfaith Leadership* is part sociology text, part case study, part road map. In it Patel maintains that when we understand the faith practices of others, our own faith is established and confirmed. He rejects bigotry in all its forms, and resists stereotypes that paint all groups with the same broad brush, whether they are Catholic, Muslim, Republican, or Seventh-day Adventist; and he encourages his readers to do the same.

Underlying the urgency with which the author approaches this subject is the bigotry that manifested itself in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015, when nine parishioners were killed at a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. On the Sunday after the shooting, Jermaine Watkins stepped into the pulpit and said, "To hatred, we say no way, not today. To racism, we say no way, not today. . . . To racial fear, we say no way, not today."

In a society often characterized by fear of "the other," Patel challenges readers to imagine and live in a world in which people of different faiths not only coexist, but come together to serve others for the greater good. 🔥

## LET FREEDOM RING

Here in North America, as we celebrate Canada Day (July 1) and Independence Day (July 4), we share words/voices about freedom and peace from a handful of the great thinkers of recent history.—Editors.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”  
THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, JULY 4, 1776

“In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved.”  
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

“This, then, is the state of the union: free and restless, growing and full of hope. So it was in the beginning. So it shall always be, while God is willing, and we are strong enough to keep the faith.”  
LYNDON B. JOHNSON

“Those who won our independence” “believed liberty to be the secret of happiness and courage to be the secret of liberty.”  
LOUIS D. BRANDEIS

“I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.”  
JOHN G. DIEFENBAKER

“Where liberty dwells, there is my country.”  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

“Freedom is the oxygen of the soul.”  
MOSHE DAYAN

“It is easy to take liberty for granted, when you have never had it taken from you.”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN,  
SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTED TO M. GRUNDLER

“This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave.”

ELMER DAVIS

“Freedom has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men and so it must be daily earned and refreshed—else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die.”

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

“The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know peace.”

MAHATMA GANDHI

**“If our country is worth dying for in time of war let us resolve that it is truly worth living for in time of peace.”**

HAMILTON FISH





“Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all! By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall.”

JOHN DICKINSON

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“In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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“There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.”

BILL CLINTON

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“So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that. Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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“Peace cannot be achieved through violence, it can only be attained through understanding.”

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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**“May we think of freedom, not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right.”**

PETER MARSHALL

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“Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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“The American flag is the most recognized symbol of freedom and democracy in the world.”

VIRGINIA FOXX

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“At all times, day by day, we have to continue fighting for freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom from want; for these are things that must be gained in peace as well as in war.”

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

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“Until economic freedom is attained for everybody, there can be no real freedom for anybody.”

SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE

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## “I Wish I Would Have . . .”

**W**hat did you insert at the end? What came spontaneously to mind as you began to finish a familiar expression? “I wish I would have . . .” reminds us of missed opportunities and squandered potential. It also reflects our age. Teenagers or young adults use it sparingly. Once we have hit the big “50” we seem to gravitate more toward it.

Imagine Moses climbing Mount Nebo and wistfully squinting across the Jordan toward Canaan—the Promised Land. I am sure he felt like saying “I wish I would have . . .” What about Peter, following the night of Jesus’ capture, after the cock had crowed three times?

**“I WISH I WOULD HAVE” DOES NOT MEAN FAILURE.**

At times we all wish for different outcomes, new opportunities, second chances, and fading memories.

As I write these lines I whisper the phrase in my own heart. Within six weeks my wife and I will face an empty home; we will join the band of empty nesters. Of course, we are grateful that our three girls will not work in Antarctica or feel the calling (at least “not yet”) to minister to an isolated tribe living deep in the Amazon jungle. They will go to Adventist boarding academy and university. They will continue to grow and mature. They will (we hope) thrive and be a blessing to the people surrounding them. They will call us (now and again!); they will write e-mails (please keep them coming), and we will see them on Skype.

We will continue to cheer their successes and cry with them when they are hurting. We will listen to them when life becomes complicated, and when they mess up and

need forgiveness. We will surround them with our prayers every morning and every evening, knowing that they are in the best of hands—the Father’s hands.

Yet there is this nagging expression, hidden deeply in the back of my mind. “I wish I would have” comes naturally when we recognize our own flaws. My wife and I recognized this right away when we held our first tiny, helpless, noisy bundle of potential in our arms. Hannah is now 20 years old—a gracious, poised, energetic young woman who loves Jesus (thank You, Lord!) and has an ambivalent relationship with mathematics (too much humanities in both of our families). Sometimes I wish I would have spent more time with her instead of writing for an urgent deadline. I wish I would have listened more carefully when I answered one of her questions distractedly, while continuing my work on the computer.

“I wish I would have” does not mean failure. Rather, it reminds us of our own limitations and points us to the Father’s boundless possibilities. We recognize that we need to let the Spirit create the right moment for a much-needed conversation—over the phone, on Skype or FaceTime, or sitting next to a bed when the house becomes quiet and the shadows of the streetlight dance on the wall.

“I wish I would have” helps me entrust my most precious relationships to the One who never has regrets, who knows the end from the beginning, and loves our children into His kingdom.

After all, He has been watching over them long before I did. 🍀

**Gerald A. Klingbeil** is an associate editor of *Adventist Review*.



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