November 11, 2011

This Week at *Adventist Today* Online

**Commentary**

**Precept Upon Precept**

General Conference president, Pastor Ted Wilson, has repeatedly encouraged Adventists to seek wisdom, knowledge, and inspiration only from recognized Adventist thinkers and writers promoted by the Church’s publishing institutions. Blogger Ron Corson disagrees and says we need a broader frame of reference, as we fortify our positions with insights that transcend the proof-text method of study.
Vinny, I Love Ya’ but I Gotta Kill Ya’

Columnist Don Watson believes some Christians define God as a strict “Mafia Don” who tells his erring child, “Vinny, I love ya’ but I gotta kill ya.” Belief in an exacting God of terribly tough love violates the spirit of the gospel and leads to terrible discouragement among those who see themselves as missing the mark…

Ordinary Good

The complexities of life seem to militate against the grandeur of faith. Blogger Nathan Brown says such a life can take flight in grandeur—by simply letting it go to the birds.

Previous

Love & War and the Sea in Between (Music Review)

Young AT music reviewer/composer Kevin Villarreal speaks highly of the music of Christian folk artist Josh Garrels, of Portland, Ore.,
whose most recent, and perhaps most creative album yet, is available free for downloading on the Web.

Cinderella Ate My Daughter (Book Review)

American media and marketing giants are selling little girls the message that they must become incredibly attractive—perfect in every detail—to snag the prince-protectors of their dreams. The Cinderella Complex now seems to be afflicting younger and younger girls. Recommended reading for savvy Christian parents and grandparents...

Breakaway Adventists Expected October 15 Second Coming – News

Where Are Adventist Youth Ministries Headed? – Cindy Tutsch

The Other Barack: The Bold and Reckless Life of President Obama's Father – Book Review
Precept Upon Precept

Submitted Nov 6, 2011
By Ron Corson

There is a common myth in Adventism which amazingly enough is used as a text for how to study the Bible; it is so contextually inaccurately that it would be funny if not so sad. The following is a section from the Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church website page entitled How to Study the Bible:

"3. We must compare scripture with scripture, letting the Bible explain itself. It is common to find individuals and groups of people who build a whole theology upon one single statement of the Bible. This can be very dangerous and misleading, depending upon the method of interpretation employed in their Biblical research. The only correct and safe way of securing an understanding of a particular truth is to study everything that the Bible has to say about that specific topic."

"Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little." Isaiah 28:9, 10.

"We must study broadly, permitting the Bible to define its own terms. This will preserve us from the practice of some, in taking an isolated passage and twisting it to fit or "prove" their own ideas. We should always approach the Bible with an open and honest attitude, willing to lay aside any established beliefs and practices, whenever we find them to be without scriptural foundation."

Most Adventists realize the Isaiah text above is also frequently used by Ellen G. White which probably explains why, even though the context in Isaiah has nothing to do with studying scriptures, it is still used by Adventists as if that is what the text is about. In the case of the Immanuel SDA church the text is used contrary to the statements before and after the text. This is actually just the process they seek to avoid: taking an isolated passage and twisting it to prove “their own ideas.”

Isaiah 28:8-13 (NIV) reads: "All the tables are covered with vomit and there is not a spot without filth." Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast? For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule and; a little here, a little there." Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen. So then, the word of the LORD to them will become: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there -- so they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured.

This verse in context is not a description of how to study the Bible or any of the component parts of the Bible. As the Expositor's Bible Commentary states:

Verses 9-10: “As the prophet declared the word of God in this drink-dominated setting, his hearers made their response.” The NIV is probably right in treating
both these verses as a quotation of the words of the drunkards. They felt insulted. Were they not themselves spiritual leaders, well able to teach others? What right had this man to place them in the classroom and teach them the spiritual ABC’s? There is some thing ironic about the reference to milk (v. 9) in such a context.”

“Many commentators have been puzzled by verse 10 and have wrestled to make sense of the Hebrew. The truth of the matter seems to be, as the NIV margin suggests, that it is not meant to make sense. Isaiah’s words had hardly penetrated the alcohol-impregnated atmosphere that surrounded his hearers. What they picked up were simply a few stray syllables, some of them repeated, like the baby-talk that delights the child but would insult the adult. They mouth this gibberish back at the prophet. The transmitter was as strong and clear as ever; it was the receivers that were at fault. Their judgment, meantime, lay in their failure to hear the word that could have led them back to God; but there was another judgment on its way, most appropriate in its form. Their sin had turned the word of God through Isaiah into a meaningless noise that might just as well have been a foreign language.”

We can grant that Ellen White held to a Christian tradition with her use of the “precept by precept” quote being common, however, this does not make it any more true or useful (see the article about the mis-translated text used as a catch phrase). Even if it were taken to be a description of proper Scriptural study, it is a very poor method. Simply take from here or there a precept or a line and add it to another precept or line. Context or meaning should not be mere obstacles we overcome with a bit of editing here and there.

The reality is that we have to do far more than comparing scripture verse with scripture verse. The Bible does not explain itself as in this article I have not explained to you what an article is. Language is like that. We use the terms of knowledge of our day and assume the listeners or readers will also understand those ideas from our common background. The Bible authors did this just like any other writers. The text does not spend much time defining itself. We determine the meaning from the context of the statements or stories. If we make wrong assumptions about certain forms of Biblical literature we can come to far different meanings then may have been the original intent -- the original intent may no longer even have application in the world we live in.

It is the nature of inspiration the original intent may have different applications, its use for ancient Israel may be different from it use for modern Americans. For example, the concept of tithe rendered to a storehouse does not work apart from the nation and the support of Levities. Yet in modern times it is used by many denominations with the application of a tithe to support the church. An apocalyptic text may be interpreted differently depending upon where in history one is. One answer may not be correct at any one time, but there may be an application that can be used in multiple circumstances by different people in history to comfort or edify their situation as Christians. That inspiration aspect makes the Bible of use throughout history and stand as something that is deserving of continual study and reassessment. There is a kind of timelessness to some Bible texts, the idea of divine inspiration would seem to cover the idea that God expects that history and time advances, progressing with increases in knowledge and understanding. God continues to inspire His followers to understand useful applications for their lives.

The Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist church is quite correct when they say the study of the Bible must include everything the Bible says on a subject. But the Bible requires even more than that to truly be interpreted. As the website states, “we must study broadly”. Adventism has had a hard time
with this idea, as we don't want to study broadly, we want to study in a restricted “Adventist only” perspective. This idea was emphasized by General Conference President Ted Wilson, in his opening sermon, Go Forward. He stated, “Look WITHIN the Seventh-day Adventist Church to humble pastors, evangelists, Biblical scholars, leaders, and departmental directors who can provide evangelistic methods and programs based on solid Biblical principles and The Great Controversy Theme." The Seventh-day Adventist church, even though barely 150 years old, is not the authority on all things Biblical and certainly not an authority on the context and language of the Bible. We have scholars, and those scholars learned from outside the Adventist church. There is no reason to stop this practice and we must resist those like Ted Wilson who want to direct Adventism back into themselves. It is those who have turned in upon themselves that have instilled the idea of “precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little” as if this is a valid technique of Bible study.

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**Potter**

5 days ago

So am I right in interpreting that Mr Carlson knows more then E G White who communicated directly with Jesus about what Isaiah 8:10 means?

"We can grant that Ellen White held to a Christian tradition with her use of the “precept by precept” quote being common, however, this does not make it any more true or useful (see the article about the mis-translated text used as a catch phrase)" Mr Carlson

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**Steve Billiter**

1 day ago

Dear Potter,

Evidently Mr Corson knows more than the Spirit of God Himself. 1Co 2:14 "But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

2Pe 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

We make comparison between those who are drunk with alcohol and cannot understand much, to those who are drunk with the false doctrines of Babylon as they arrive and adhere to falsehood as we build our theological evidence to prove doctrines. My Corson’s article is not only a slam against the Bible and the Most High Himself—but also tears down the Spirit of Prophecy and God’s end-time church. The Bible is its own interpreter as well as stacking “line upon line” to build doctrine with overwhelming evidence. For example:

Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying to me, Come here; I will show to you the judgment of the great whore that sits on many waters (AKJV).

“Sits’ means rules as a king does, so what does waters mean? We go to other verses to find out—especially ones that are topically sound.

Rev 17:15 And he said to me, The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
So here, the evidence builds to identify the whore, could it be a ruling power? What time period are we dealing with? Obviously, peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues must mean Europe where seven of ten nations still rule coming from divided Rome. The prophet Daniel saw;

Dan 7:3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

The “sea” of course also means “waters” but used here more in terms of becoming more populated in later years—certainly as Babylon, Greece, and Medo-Persia, with Rome arose out of relatively unpopulated countries as America did in Revelation 13:11. Thus the use of “earth” in vs. 17. In addition, the Chaldee and the Greek words are different and vs. 17—earth-can take on a more literal meaning.

Dan 7:17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. Here the “beasts” are explained to be kings who rule nations.

"Those who are in responsible positions are not to become converted to the self-indulgent, extravagant principles of the world, for they cannot afford it; and if they could, Christlike principles would not allow it. Manifold teaching needs to be given. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Thus the word of the Lord is patiently to be brought before the children and kept before them, by parents who believe the word of God. "For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." Why?--because they did not heed the word of the Lord that came unto them.” {TM 418.2}

“This means those who have not received instruction, but have cherished their own wisdom, and have chosen to work themselves according to their own ideas. The Lord gives these the test, that they shall either take their position to follow His counsel, or refuse and do according to their own ideas, and then the Lord will leave them to the sure result. In all our ways, in all our service to God, He speaks to us, "Give Me thine heart." It is the submissive, teachable spirit that God wants. That which gives to prayer its excellence is the fact that it is breathed from a loving, obedient heart.” {TM 419.1}

“God requires certain things of His people; if they say, I will not give up my heart to do this thing, the Lord lets them go on in their supposed wise judgment without heavenly wisdom, until this scripture [Isaiah 28:13] is fulfilled. You are not to say, I will follow the Lord's guidance up to a certain point that is in harmony with my judgment, and then hold fast to your own ideas, refusing to be molded after the Lord's similitude. Let the question be asked, Is this the will of the Lord? not, Is this the opinion or judgment of-----? {TM 419.2}

Additionally, as a loyal Adventist that stands on all the pillars of faith, and loves God’s truth--I don’t use Babylonish Commentaries that hold the wine of Babylon—false doctrines. Using Sunday-oriented commentaries for certain topics can be an exercise in futility.

THE 7TH DAY ADVENTIST BIBLE COMMENTARY
8. **No place clean.** The most revolting features of drunkenness are pictured (see v. 8). Priests and people were defiled, both literally and spiritually.

9. **Whom shall he teach?** The priests and prophets whose business it was to teach the people were themselves misled, and therefore in no position to carry out their responsibilities (see on Matt. 23:16). They were so befogged that God could not teach them. It was necessary, therefore, that they be put aside and new leaders chosen—men who were both meek and willing, alert and spiritual-minded. The old leaders whose minds were spiritually befogged must be replaced by men to whom God could speak His messages of truth and wisdom. These might be regarded as babes by the learned priests, but they were humble and teachable and able to learn the ways of God.

10. **Precept upon precept.** Truth must be presented clearly and logically, one point leading naturally on to another. Only thus can men become thoroughly acquainted with truth. Instruction must be given as if to children, by repeating the same point again and again, and going on from one point to another by easy and gentle degrees as men whose minds have been darkened by sin are able to follow. Such instruction may appear simple, but it is effective.

11. **Another tongue.** That is, “a foreign language.” God had spoken to His people in their own tongue through His messengers the prophets, but they did not listen. Now He would speak to them by other means, first the Assyrians and later the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Romans. In 1 Cor. 14:21 Paul applies this scripture to men whose speech was unintelligible to the hearers.

12. **This is the rest.** Only by hearing and obeying the revealed will of God may true rest be found. Jesus invited the weary to come to Him, and promised to give them rest (Matt. 11:28). But Israel and Judah refused to listen (see on Isa. 6:9, 10), and thus did not find the rest that might have been theirs. See also on Heb. 3:18, 19; 4:1–11.

13. **Fall backward.** God had spoken to His people clearly and simply, and they were without excuse. But His counsels, which were intended to bring blessing, now stood to witness against them. The “chief corner stone” of truth had become to them “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (1 Peter 2:6–8; cf. Isa. 28:16). What had been given to help men became the occasion of their fall (see on Rom. 7:10).


cf. confer, “compare”

[1] Nichol, Francis D.: *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 4*. Review and...
Wow if that is really what the SDA Bible Commentary says, it must be one of the poorest commentaries in existence. I mean it may be even worse than Falwell's Liberty Bible Commentary. Just look at that:

"13. Fall backward. God had spoken to His people clearly and simply, and they were without excuse. But His counsels, which were intended to bring blessing, now stood to witness against them. The “chief corner stone” of truth had become to them “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (1 Peter 2:6–8; cf. Isa. 28:16). What had been given to help men became the occasion of their fall (see on Rom. 7:10)."

How can we say there was not a clearer message of God then Jesus Christ and yet say that God spoke to them clearly and simply (by the way the Bible makes no such claim about the gospel being clearly and simply taught to people in the Old Testament). But what does even bringing in the New Testament have to do with the Old Testament verse? They had not rejected the chief cornerstone (Jesus Christ) then. This commentary is not even dealing with the text. What a surprise.

Precept building on another precept is fine, Here a little there a little is not fine, line upon line is not fine, I can easily take a line out of context and place it next to another line and make something seem to say something that was never close to the intention of the original author. Yet amazingly enough it is those who think themselves the most spiritually discerning who have the most unreasonable positions. But of course who needs reason, they are spiritually discerning...at least in their own eyes and they have an excuse to use against anyone who uses reason or who has a different idea.

In short don't believe anyone that accuses others of not having spiritual discernment. It is a passive aggressive ploy, where they pretend to have the spiritual discernment, it is much like the con man that says "trust me"

Ron,

Once again you are off the mark considerably. I really thought I was too easy on you previously-I was simply disturbed and appalled at your article which attacked the very foundation of Bible understanding. I've known for some time that AT is very liberal and much of the time opposed to what is Bible truth, and here I cannot tell if you are Adventist or not--I certainly hope not!

There has never been another gospel save that of Jesus Christ on the cross in which its doctrine has existed before the creation of the earth;

Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written
in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

While it is true that the gospel was not taught as it is now or in Paul’s day—there was sufficient Old Testament light on its prophecies so that the entire nation of Israel should have known when the time would be fulfilled, and the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Mic 5:2). All Israel should have been waiting to receive Him—instead of 3 foreign wise men!

Every time a lamb was slain in the sanctuary—whether the tent in the wilderness, or the magnificent temples of Solomon and the one destroyed in 70 AD—it served to teach the people that the wages of sin is death, and soon would come the One these lambs pointed to, “The next day John sees Jesus coming to him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Had the teachers in Israel been true to their calling and had not perverted the prophecies concerning Christ, once again the people would have been ready for Him down to the exact year and town He was born in.

The 70 Weeks of Years (490 literal years. See on Numbers 14:34, and Eze. 4:6).

Dan 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined on your people and on your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

Dan 9:26 And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined.

Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured on the desolate.

The starting date (2300 years, Daniel 8:14) has been determined at 457 BC, from the 7th year of Anaterxes reign. Christ was “cut off” in AD 31—Stephen was stoned in AD 34 which ended the Jewish dispensation. However, AD 27 marks the beginning of the 70th week of 7 years and the beginning of Christ’s ministry, because that time was fulfilled.

Mar 1:15 “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament and it was He with whom Israel had to do. He also gave the OT. That is what the 7th Day Adventist Commentary speaks of.
John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. It was Jesus Christ at the burning bush.

Ron Corson 22 hours ago

Every time a sacrifice was made it pointed toward something that they had never been told of or about. If so why would not the descriptions of the sacrifices include statements about the coming sacrifice of the messiah? It does appear the you don't know what the Bible actually says. You are well aware of certain traditions however but the two are not the same.

Elaine Nelson 22 hours ago

Where, in all of Jewish history, was there a recognition that the sacrifices represented a Messiah who was coming? They had no belief in a Messiah until much later in their history, nor was there a hope that their sacrifices were anything but an offering to atone for sins.

Horace Butler 11 hours ago

Have you read your Bible recently? Abraham looked forward to the Messiah. Jesus said that Abraham looked forward to His time, and was glad. Admittedly most of the Jews lost sight of the purpose of the sanctuary system, but if nothing else, the Passover was clearly symbolic of the Messiah. Job understood that a Redeemer was coming. The fact that it wasn't spelled out specifically, as in the NT, doesn't mean that the faithful didn't understand it. The argument from silence proves nothing.

Ron Corson 1 hour ago

Jesus' statement is restricted to Abraham, it is not a statement about Israel and it had nothing at all to do with the sacrificial system. The Jews could not have lost sight of something they never knew. It is not an argument from silence to point to the records in the Bible about the sacrificial system and see that it is not connected to the coming Messiah. They could have written it at the time, they did not. To say they lost sight of it is to say they had sight of it at one time. But you can't point to that in the Bible so you are using an argument from silence. Isn't it funny how you accuse others of what you do yourself?

From the Expositor's Bible Commentary on John 8:56:
"56 Jesus claimed that Abraham had a preview of his ministry and had rejoiced in it. This may refer to the promise God gave Abraham that his seed should become the channel of divine blessing to all the nations (Gen 12:3). By "my day" Jesus may have been referring to his redemptive work, which would summarize his career. Perhaps Isaac represented to Abraham the "seed" through which God would fulfill his promise: the miraculous birth of the son, his unquestioning trust in
his father, his willingness to become a sacrifice to fulfill the command of God, and his deliverance from certain death. These may have spoken of the later Seed who cooperated in obedience to his Father, surrendered himself to the Father's will, and emerged victorious from death. Although this interpretation is not founded on any specific statement of Scripture, it would mean that Abraham's personal experience at the sacrifice of Isaac could have been an object lesson to him of the coming incarnation, death, and resurrection of the promised Seed (see Gen 22:1-18; Heb 11:17-19)."

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**Horace Butler**  
1 hour ago

So you're saying that the Jews performed all the rituals connected with the Sanctuary for over 1400 years, and didn't have a clue what it all meant? That's wild. I've never heard that one before. That calls into question the character of God, in my opinion. Do you also believe that no one before NT times understood why they were sacrificing animals? Or had they forgotten by the time of Moses, and God neglected to remind them?

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**Ron Corson**  
48 minutes ago

So really that is something new to you? Have you never read the Jewish writings about their own history and religion?

Actually it calls nothing into question about the character of God...well your view might because you think that the sacrifices meant something pointing to a future that no one knew about. But it is the very nature of progressive knowledge that God meets us where we are and works within our contemporary understandings. A step by step process in growing knowledge. But granted it is far different then traditional Adventisms unwarranted assumptions that they began with all kinds of knowledge but were not sufficiently inspired to write such knowledge down and then just continued to drift away from the vast understanding of God that they began with. Talk about an argument from silence.

It is one of the tragedy's of Christianity and Adventism that they neglect to actually pay attention to history. Well I guess that is not limited to Christains and Adventists just look at the political world, most people pay little notice to history.

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**Elaine Nelson**  
20 minutes ago

Apparently, Adventists got most, or all of their history of both Judaism and Christianity from EGW or official SDA publications. It would be most helpful for those who are so certain that the Jews when making sacrifices were fully aware that those acts were pointing to a Messiah who would also be sacrificed some day. What are the sources for these statements?
Timo Onjukka  20 hours ago

Steve, your responses are far too long, and the tone in them grossly untoward.

You may express your opinion, but to state

cannot tell if you are Adventist or not--I certainly hope not!
is far beyond any sort of christian ethic or decorum of general social sensibility.

You may certainly express your opinion that you believe Atoday is very liberal
(and given the tone of your replies, possibly a compliment)
but consider this a friendly shot across your bow.
I will exercise moderator prerogative and edit too voluminous posts
as well delete clearly unchristian ones.

Please curtail your posts to reasonable length, and keep the tone Christian, friendly, and open minded. A good discussion displays and enhances understanding, especially on topics that may be challenging or controversial.

Elaine Nelson  5 days ago

Nobody knows more than EGW. She is the one interpreter of Scripture for all Adventists. Whether they know Hebrew or Greek, and whether they use the KJV or another translation, she had the benefit of being shown in vision as a prophet of God. To challenge her is to challenge Adventism, they are so closely conflated that one cannot tell whether she or the Bible is being quoted.

William Noel  5 days ago

Elaine,

On a number of occasions Ellen White firmly admonished pastors, church leaders and the editors of publications that her writings should NEVER be used as the foundation for any belief or practice or as an authority by which to interpret scripture. So your statement is both incorrect and contrary to her specific instruction.

Elaine Nelson  5 days ago

It was written tongue in cheek, but it cannot be denied that EGW has been both used and useful for Adventists.

Trevor Hammond  5 days ago

Bible language scholars and theologians may have a rightful and valid place in Christendom; but they do NOT supersede the inspiration, authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit who fully represents the Master ‘Rabbi’ Himself: Jesus Christ. Is not the Holy Spirit the only true interpreter and revealer of what is truth? For example, do Bible scholars start their lessons at college or university with a prayer of convocation, where one HUMBLY pleads for the Holy Spirit to...
illuminate their minds and 'teach' them what is been read as they search and study the scriptures? The view that scholars are to be the sole or exclusive custodians of interpreting scripture is very much in line with the sentiments of Catholicism which eventually gave rise to the horrendous Dark Ages brought on largely by this type of reasoning and thinking.

The Immanuel SDA Church is quite correct in using the Isaiah verses to illustrate ways to study the Bible by using a systematic comparison of scripture with scripture by subject, topic or theme. They, (and Ellen White), have been falsely accused of using the scriptures incorrectly and out of context. The blog itself misinterprets the very same verses!

Here is an excerpt from the JFB Bible Commentary regarding these verses which is a far cry from what Mr. Corson purports on this blog:

- **Isa 28:9, 10.** Here the drunkards are introduced as scoffingly commenting on Isaiah's warnings: "Whom will he (does Isaiah presume to) teach knowledge? And whom will He make to understand instruction? Is it those (that is, does he take us to be) just weaned, c.? For (he is constantly repeating, as if to little children) precept upon precept," &c.

- **line**—a rule or law. [MAURER]. The repetition of sounds in Hebrew tzav latzav, tzav latzav, qav laqav, qav laquav, expresses the scorn of the imitators of Isaiah's speaking he spoke stammering (Isa 28:11). God's mode of teaching offends by its simplicity the pride of sinners (2Kgs 5:11; 2Kgs 5:12; 1Cor 1:23). Stammerers as they were by drunkenness, and children in knowledge of God, they needed to be spoken to in the language of children, and "with stammering lips" (compare Mt 13:13). A just and merciful retribution.

♥T

Trevor Hammond 5 days ago

I challenge (yet again) Mrs. Nelson or any other Traditional SDA detractors to show an official SDA church statement OR Ellen White statement which unambiguously states that her writings are EQUAL or SUPERSEDE the authority of the Holy Bible - OR, that 'nobody knows more than Ellen White'. No ducking please, come on ... speak up!

♥T

Kevin Riley 4 days ago

Trevor

Do you know any traditional adventists who are prepared to say Ellen White is less inspired, less infallible or less inerrant, or less authoritative than the Bible? It does not take an official pronouncement to make something true. If the majority of SDAs equate Ellen White's inspiration, infallibility and authority with that of the Bible, is it not true to say that most SDAs believe Ellen White's writings are equal to the Bible? If Ellen White is an infallible commentator on what the Bible 'really' means, does that not actually place her above the Bible?

As the GC inquired very early on in our history, if Ellen White does indeed speak for God, how can she be less inerrant or infallible, or her her authority be less than the Bible's in practical terms? I don't believe we have ever answered that question to anyone's satisfaction. Rather, in recent
years, we have asserted (and the GC has approved) that Ellen White is a lesser authority, and is not infallible or inerrant, but in practice we refuse to believe she has ever erred, or that she is mistaken in anything she asserts or denies. Somehow, our practice does not line up with our assertions.

Elaine Nelson

In the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe, the statement that EGW is an "authoritative source of truth." She is the most liberally quoted commentator in the SS quarterly, and in most SDA articles in the official publications. That is sufficient to demonstrate her very authority in Adventism.

Elaine Nelson

4 days ago

In the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe, the statement that EGW is an "authoritative source of truth." She is the most liberally quoted commentator in the SS quarterly, and in most SDA articles in the official publications. That is sufficient to demonstrate her very authority in Adventism.

William Noel

Elaine,

That such a statement is in a book published by the church does not make it factual or correct. Her exhortation on many occasions was "The Bible and the Bible only."

Kevin Riley

Getting beyond the issue of Ellen White, there is a new book out by Christian Smith that many here may find interesting. It is called "The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture". You may not agree with his recommendations on how to read the Bible, but his criticism of biblicism will have to be aswered if biblicism is to remain viable. And before anyone jumps in without having read his book, he is not denying that the Bible is inspired, nor that it is the final authority for Christians. He is simply arguing - and doing so very well - that the most popular way of reading the Bible among conservative Protestants simply does not work.

I am not sure what our official position is on biblicism, but in practice, as an organisation, we work on the assumption it does not work. And I won't pursue that here as it will get us off-track somewhat. However, it is obvious that most of our members operate as if it does work. I am not sure anything will change that, short of a concerted effort by the organisation, which I can't see happening.

Ron Corson

Actually Trevor the JFB commentary is consistent with the context and the explanation of the Expositors Commentary. What neither one does is say that the verses are to be used as the standard for studying scripture.

9, 10. Here the drunkards are introduced as scoffingly commenting on Isaiah's warnings: "Whom will he (does Isaiah presume to) teach knowledge? And whom will He make to understand instruction? Is it those (that is, does he take us to be) just weaned, &c.? For (he is constantly repeating, as if to little children) precept upon precept," &c.

line--a rule or law. [MAURER]. The repetition of sounds in Hebrew: tzav latzav, tzav latzav, gav laqav, gav laquav, expresses the scorn of the imitators of Isaiah's speaking; he spoke stammering (
Isaiah 28:11. God's mode of teaching offends by its simplicity the pride of sinners (2 Kings 5:11 2 Kings 5:12, 1 Corinthians 1:23). Stammerers as they were by drunkenness, and children in knowledge of God, they needed to be spoken to in the language of children, and "with stammering lips" (compare Matthew 13:13). A just and merciful retribution.

11. For—rather, "Truly." This is Isaiah's reply to the scoffers: Your drunken questions shall be answered by the severe lessons from God conveyed through the Assyrians and Babylonians; the dialect of these, though Semitic, like the Hebrew, was so far different as to sound to the Jews like the speech of stammerers (compare Isaiah 33:19, 36:11). To them who will not understand God will speak still more unintelligibly. http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-faussett-brown/isaiah/isaiah-28.html?p=2

It seems you are drawing an inference from one line in their commentary about God's mode of teaching which in this case is by foreign nations conquering them. But either way the context as well as the many commentaries make it plan that there is nothing here to be used as if it is to be the method for the study of scriptures.

Elaine Nelson 4 days ago

We all tend to bestow our own interpretation of the Bible as correct; "we" meaning individually and as a church. This is a form of Bibliolatry:

1. The worship of the Bible, making of it an object of veneration and ascribing to it the glory due to God.
2. The worship of the text, in which the letter is given an inappropriate superiority over the spirit.
3. The worship of the culture, in which the Bible is forced to conform to the norms of the prevailing culture.

Scripture is invariably used to support the status quo, no matter what the status quo, and despite the revolutionary origins and implications of scripture itself. An early twentieth-century African proverb puts it well: "When the missionaries came, they had the Bible and we had the land. Now we have the Bible and they have the land."

Appeal to scripture has supported slavery and segregation, as well as the subjugation of women. To assume that the structures and the systems the Bible describes are as sacred and authoritative as the principle it affirms is idolatrous, even blasphemous when it is used to affirm and maintain human privilege.

Nathan Schilt 3 days ago

Good points Elaine. Let's see...what immoral, wrongheaded opinions have been supported by appeals to science and reason? Umm...slavery, eugenics, euthanasia, segregation, communism, fascism, abortion, denial of gender differences, the Holocaust? That's a small beginning. Certainly science and reason would never presume to claim a privileged position in the realm of...
moral reasoning... would they?

I'm afraid, Elaine, that virtually every criticism you level at those who advance agendas in the name of scripture apply with double force to agendas advanced in the name of science and reason.

Elaine Nelson
3 days ago

Perhaps the medical advances the Bible advocated would be preferred to that today? Perhaps the scientific advances that have been made since the Canon closed should be dismissed and return to the level known in the Bible?
Would you be willing to consult the priests for diagnosis of any skin problems in your family? If the Bible is sufficient, that would be the choice, wouldn't it? Or is only SOME science dismissed?

Elaine Nelson
3 days ago

Did the Bible ever condemn slavery? Did it ever condemn polygamy? Euthansia? What was the elimination of tribes ordered by God is no euthanasia?

The science of Bible times would prevent most of all the advances that have been made in society today: non-acceptance of slavery, subjugation of women, murder of those who were not in the favored tribes, and worst of all, God killing all his creation in the flood. Not exactly based on science, but on the Bible.

Not using reason is to remove all the benefits of our God-given powers he gave us.

Horace Butler
3 days ago

You really don't understand the big picture, do you? The Bible improved the lot of the slave, as well as women. It dealt with the existing conditions and improved them. Why God didn't move sooner to eliminate some of these things, I don't know. You'll have to ask Him someday. The principles laid out in the NT would naturally eliminate slavery and polygamy, if implemented. It just took longer than one might have expected. As for the elimination of the various pagan tribes, either you're woefully ignorant of their cultures, or you've chosen to ignore it. They were about as degraded as mankind can get, and their probation had closed. It's no different from what will happen after the end of the millennium, when the wicked are destroyed in the lake of fire. God is the Creator. He can do what He wishes with His creation; and since His nature is love, we can know that, even though we may not understand it, His actions are always for the best.

Timo Onjukka
3 days ago

Suggest to all posters, if you address a specific reply by another poster, PLEASE use the REPLY button IN THAT THREAD.
Otherwise, subsequent readers have no hint who is referenced in a "general" reply not threaded. Referencing above reply by Horace to Elaine...
...might also suggest a more tactful fashion of disagreeing is possible. A "You just don't get it..." implies so many untoward conclusions. This is not a place to be specifically slamming either the writer, or the others who are freely posting here.

*In all things, be loving, and patient, humble.*

---

**Horace Butler**  
3 days ago

My intention was not to slam anyone. I could have phrased it differently: "It appears that you don't understand . . ." My apologies to Elaine if she was offended.

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**Elaine Nelson**  
3 days ago

The claim that someone does not see the "big picture" is little different than "it appears that you don't understand," both are indicating that not seeing or understanding is to claim superiority in that the writer does understand and sees the big picture, whatever it is claimed to be. If something is far too difficult to understand, such as quantum physics for the average individual, this could be a true evaluation; but unless the "big picture" is far too difficult to explain to a reasonable person, how important could it be?

---

**laffal**  
3 days ago

Elaine,

There is really only one Bible reason for not being able to see the "big picture"... SIN. But as you've written in other blogs, we focus to much upon that. Nonetheless, that is the problem... according to the Bible. To paraphrase Jesus, unless your born again, you can't see / perceive the "big picture" (the kingdom of God). It's not about reason when it comes to big picture, it's about revelation... seeing what God sees.

- Jeremiah: Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:5-9 ESV)
- Peter: For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:9 ESV)
- Paul: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:3.4.18 ESV)
- Paul again: And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to**
understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.  (1 Corinthians 2:13-16 ESV)

- But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.  (Hebrews 3:13 ESV)

Sin has distorted our perceptions from its entrance into the human family / our world. So if we, like Eve, want to look at the "forbidden fruit" thinking that our wisdom is greater than God's word / revelation... we have to live with the results. As to your catagorical list of issues with the Bible, they are only the result of sin's presence in the human family... there is no other reasonable explanation.

Elaine Nelson

3 days ago

Of course, sin is emphasized in the Bible. The overriding theme is that regardless of sin, God is love and does not want anyone to perish, making sin impotent. One chooses what is seen: many things are mentioned in the Bible, but the only motive for defeating sin is God's love. So regardless of the overriding theme of sin, without God's love, it would be, as it has been for millions, a very discouraging doctrine. The inability to reach perfection when sin is overcome has driven many from a church that emphasizes this doctrine.

Timo Onjukka

8 hours ago

Laffal, then how would Eve's tunnel vision be present prior to her deception? Perhaps we ascribe power and attributes to "sin" incorrectly. Leads a second query; was Eve "born again"? I agree with Elaine here; the sanctimoniously veiled assertion (I see the big picture) is a damning prideful stand.

Like two partially sensory-deprived observers, a communion between them can increase both of their perspectives. Need it be said if we spend our time poking each others eyes out will further our myopia?

Perhaps sin in its raw and naked essence is self claiming primacy over another... or failing given dominion. Adam and Eve lost relationship...with self, other, God, and created order.

Third, to deny "reason" needs to answer "why were we given querious minds?"
To end with "no other reasonable explanation" without "that my reason can conclude" implies much the same; your certitude of this is also "result of sin" (3rd-party, corporate blame that absolves you of personal responsibility, while simultaneously implying YOU DO see big picture)

This, to my reasoning, filtered through my scripture reading and study, experience and observation, does not properly explain anymore than that. To explain my own myopia, I prefer not to apply a blanket pass. I do, however, value, seek and welcome perspective from all my neighbors.
William Noel 

Ron,

I had to read your piece a second and third time for the real emphasis to sink in and to fully appreciate your admonition for us to resist looking inward to more fully understand the meanings of scripture. My particular appreciation for that message comes from a transformation God worked in my life where He led me to view the Bible not as the be-all and end-all source for inspiration and direction, but as the primer to train me so I could become a mature Christian who is connected with the Holy Spirit and thus continually receiving guidance from God. There really is very little specific direction in the Bible about how we are to live our lives. What we have most of is the stories of how people lived, connected with God and followed (or didn't follow) Him in their time and place. They came to know God intimately by walking with Him, not by seeking the inferior "wisdom" of men to interpret what has been written about God.

Gregory Matthews 

Elaine said:

[quote]The science of Bible times would prevent most of all the advances that have been made in society today: non-acceptance of slavery, subjugation of women, murder of those who were not in the favored tribes, and worst of all, God killing all his creation in the flood. Not exactly based on science, but on the Bible.[/quote]


I have just begun to read the above book. I would not agree with everything that the author states. The thesis of his book is stated in the following quotation:

[quote] The success of the West, including the rise of science, rested entirely on religious foundations, and the people who brought it about were devout Christians. page xi[/quote]

I find it interesting and challenging.

Elaine Nelson 

Gregory, I have read four of Rodney Stark's books and found them very informative. In his *Rise of Christianity* he cites many great developments introduced by Christianity.

Yes, Christianity brought great advances to western civilization, including scientific studies.

My previous statement about relying on the Bible for scientific information was based not on Christian religion but the primitive beliefs even before the Israelites, and afterward as found in the Torah. This is premised on many Christians who fervently believe in the literality of the Creation story and others told in the Bible. Since Christianity came into existence at least a millennium later, they cannot be compared.
You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
Vinny, I Love Ya' But I Gotta Kill Ya'

Most of you, I'm sure, understand the principle behind Hebrew poetry, particularly in the Psalms. The writers relied heavily on metaphors and parallelism. They would make a metaphorical declaration about God or some other aspect of the gospel, and then repeat it with a different metaphor. This technique was not merely poetic but the parallel used often gave the writer an opportunity to teach his readers (or singers) something quite valuable about God.

I especially observed this in Psalms 103:11-12. Verse 11 says, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him." Then verse 12 repeats the thought but uses a bit different metaphor: "...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Did you catch it? The writer equates “love” and “removed our transgressions.” Both are infinite – God’s love is "as high as the heavens are above the earth," and He’s removed our transgressions “as far as the east is from the west.” But because we all tend to think God has limits on His love, we think verse 12 is simply a similar statement about a different aspect of God - His forgiveness. Not so - the Psalmist IS speaking about God's love. Forgiveness is simply one of the ways, God's love is limitless.

God's not some Mafia Boss, who pulls his cousin, Vinny, aside and says, "Vinny, I love ya', so don't take this personal, but ya' messed up and I gotta kill ya." In other words, we know God loves everybody, but hey, if they don't do what He says (obey His commandments, repent of their sins, believe in Jesus, accept Him as their savior) He's gonna kill ‘em, right?. And, in fact, the verse itself seems to qualify God's love with the statement:... for those who fear Him. But really, does God only love those who love Him? Is God's love conditional? Does He only love and forgive those good enough to come to Him? Absolutely not! (See Romans 5:6-10) But those who do not fear Him, love Him, or know Him may not recognize in the events of life, that God's love and forgiveness toward them is indeed "great!" They don’t experience or recognize His love, even though it is there!

Now there is a sense in which God “removed the transgressions” of every man 2000 years ago at the cross. The condemnation of being a fallen sinner, a child of Adam, unable to do anything good (Romans 3:10-18), separated us from God, but when Jesus died that was all removed (Romans 5:10). From God’s perspective, there was no condemnation. (Romans 8:1)

Remember what happened to the veil in the temple when Jesus died? No one, but the High Priest, could go on the other side of that veil into the very presence of God or they would die, indicating God’s wrath against sin is so great because of its destructive nature. But when Jesus died, that veil was torn from top to bottom - indicating that no human act destroyed sin and accomplished the reconciliation between us and God. God by the gift of Jesus removed that veil that separated us from Himself. We are forgiven and welcome into the very presence of God - all of us. When Jesus died, He legally removed the transgressions of the whole world "as far as the east is from the west." This does not mean that all men WILL be saved, but all men have been saved. What they do with that salvation is a matter of individual choice.

The facts are, however, only a few of us know that our sins have been forgiven, and there are millions out there in the world who don't have a clue that the veil has been torn and they are loved,
accepted, and forgiven by God. Even those of us who have accepted Jesus and have been baptized have times that we doubt our forgiveness. You may be struggling with some addiction, some secret sin, some weakness that is tearing you apart and has virtually destroyed any hope of your salvation, but I want to remind you that God \textit{HAS} removed your transgressions as far as the heavens are above the earth. How far is that? We’re talking about infinity here, aren't we? But this is not merely a metaphor. This is God reminding us that we cannot commit a sin so big or violate His law so many times or stoop so low that God will not forgive us. In fact, the Psalmist declares that this infinite forgiveness has already been accomplished. "He \textit{HAS} removed our transgressions from us." It is not dependent on any human act. It was from the TOP to the bottom that the veil was torn. You and I and every other person we meet on the street \textbf{HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN} by an act of God. And it is my belief that act of God, through the Holy Spirit, draws us into relationship with the resurrected Christ, the victorious Christ!

2 Corinthians 2:14 says God "always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of Him everywhere." Christ has captured us and we are with Him in a constant victory procession. Whatever sins you are struggling with, know that you are walking in victory even if you do not see it. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says you are a "New Creation, the old has gone, the new has come" It may not be visible, but He \textit{HAS} removed your transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" whether you see it or not, it is so! 2 Corinthians 5:7 says that if we're following Jesus, "we walk by faith and not by sight." In other words, we are forgiven even if we don't \textit{FEEL} forgiven. We are cleansed even if we don't see the cleansing yet. Regardless of our circumstances, or what we are experiencing, we \textbf{ARE} the captives of Christ and walking in constant triumphal procession.

While we are in this procession, there will be times that we will actually experience some real cleansing. Sins that we have struggled with for years will miraculously disappear. 2 Corinthians 5:5 says that when this happens, God is giving us a taste, "a deposit" of what He will eventually do for us when Jesus returns and gives us a complete new nature. Paul talks about this as the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22), and in Col. 1:27 he refers to this "taste" as "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (God’s perfect character). There will be times that we hear words coming from our mouth that we know are not our words; kindness or compassion in our heart that we know is not us. It is Jesus. Peter says, by claiming the promises of God we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). But let us never forget that whether these miracles happen or not, we, as Christians do not walk by sight, but by faith. We are a "New Creation" whether we see it or not.

I know that some of you are struggling with sins and habits and addictions and you have either given up or feel like giving up, but take heart. Regardless of what you \textit{SEE}; your sins have been removed from you, "as far as the east is from the west." Walk by faith, not by sight. And one day, Jesus will come and complete the work He began on Calvary (Philippians 1:6).

\begin{quote}
William Noel 6 days ago

Don,

You are so on-point! I particularly appreciate your conclusion. Seeing someone receiving a miraculous deliverance from something is great for them, but also a potential source of great disappointment and frustration for the rest of us who continue to struggle in the absence of such dramatic deliverance. God's promise to complete that work in us would be seem a cruel mockery if it were not for the experience of watching God work day-by-day to sustain and transform me.
\end{quote}
Indeed, I have come to accept that God has a purpose in not giving me instant relief: teaching me daily dependance on Him. Like Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12), God uses my challenges to keep me at the foot of the cross. Should He choose to give me total victory today, great. If not, I rest in the promise that He will complete that work one day and be with me until then.

Ella M. 2 days ago

William Noel
This is a thoughtful post, and I have come to the same conclusion. Our challenges keep us humble and dependent on Christ. Living and learning is sanctifying.

Preston Foster 6 days ago

Don,

Some believe that, even after confession and repentance, feeling guilty and burdened by our sins is evidence of religiousness. We feel comfortable in our guilt, aware that we "are trying" to get it right, through our flesh (works). Guilt, perversely, appeals to our vanity. I believe it is a trick of the devil.

It takes faith and confidence, not only in God's intent, but also in His word and in His nature, to accept forgiveness. This is what is meant by "freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1)." Our righteousness in Christ is both undeserved and counter-intuitive. Accepting His forgiveness allows us to let go of the past (Philippians 3:13-14). It should motivate us to operate in love and gratitude, allowing the Holy Spirit to become our will, yielding good fruit that cannot be resisted. That is the root of changed (improved) behavior.

Thanks for reminding us of the gift that has been extended to us. It is finished. Our acceptance of the blood of Christ is all that matters.

Horace Butler 5 days ago

While I agree that God's love is unconditional (He even loved Hitler and Bin Laden), because His nature is love, I don't buy into the idea that the sins of everyone were forgiven at the cross. To be forgiven you must ask. Neither do I agree that everyone was "saved" at the cross. Provision for salvation was made at the cross, but unless someone accepts Jesus as their personal Saviour, they cannot take advantage of that salvation, or be forgiven. It may sound like I'm playing with semantics, but I don't think so. To go down the road you seem to be taking us can easily lead to a false sense of security. 1 Cor. 10:12 is a check against such presumption.

I don't see how one can be "walking in victory" if they have not overcome the sins over which you say they have victory. To use Psalm 103 to prove that our transgressions have been removed is quite a stretch, if we haven't yet asked for forgiveness. I don't know the correct terminology, but the ideas David expresses in Psalm 103 are conditional, based upon repentance and confession of sin. They aren't a blank check.
Horace,

Quite the contrary... It is a blank check. If you have to ask God to forgive you before He will forgive you of your sin, then you are diminishing what actually happened at the cross. What did Christ mean when He asked His Father to "forgive them for they know not what they do"? Salvation is a free gift to all, which includes pardon / forgiveness.

Now that does not mean that there is no need of asking for forgiveness. In / by / thru Christ, God has reconciled Himself to the human family (2 Corinthians 5:14-19), therefore whenever I sin / fall, asking forgiveness is appropriate in terms of the relationship. Why? Because I've hurt the One who loved me so that He went to the cross to suffer the punishment / death that I alone deserved. Therefore I learn to hate sin, not because it would cause me to be lost, but what did to Christ when it bore it for me that I may live His life.

Elaine Nelson

Here we go again: no one can ever be assured of forgiveness because there may be a sin of which he is not aware and have a "false sense of security." If someone is still doubting and unsure, then God is insufficient and not powerful enough to forgive as he has promised. Is John 3:16-17 a conditional promise?

Preston Foster

Horace,

I agree, we must ask forgiveness to be forgiven. However, the sacrifice for all sins was made at the cross (which I believe you don't dispute), Hebrews 10:12. Very likely, because we are so sinful and our sins are so plentiful (i.e., evil thoughts), there are specific sins for which we might never seek specific forgiveness (not in presumption, but because of incomplete "accounting"). We are justified by grace of Christ. The key is for us to be completely given over to Him.

Where we may differ is the on "walking in victory" issue. I believe that sins are overcome by walking in the victory that Christ has done the work of salvation for us. Victory over sin comes from Christ's work on the cross. Victory over our own sinfulness is accomplished by Christ working in us and the by power of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 13:20-21). The issue is sequence. I don't trust myself to overcome sin. I only trust the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin in me.

My uncle was baptized into Adventism in the early 1940's. He forsook most of his old ways (drinking, womanizing, etc.), but could not overcome cigarettes. He tried and tried, but couldn't shake it. Finally, he "gave up" and told the Lord, "If you want me to stop, you'll have to take it from me." Soon after, he lit up a cigarette, and simply didn't like it anymore. He stopped cold turkey. My uncle told me (in tears), "I didn't do it -- the Lord took that thing from me."

That story always stuck with me. Uncle Roy began walking in victory when he gave his life to the Lord -- although he was still smoking cigarettes. He "won" when he quit trying to do it himself and asked the Lord to do it for him. Quitting smoking was the fruit of his conversion, not the starting point (Philippians 3:9).
Preston,

For clarification, in the light of the New Deal, are you saying that we need to ask God to forgive us in terms of our salvation? IOW, if we don't ask God to forgive us we would be lost? If so, how is it then a free gift of God?

Preston Foster

laffal, 

Thanks for the opportunity to clarify. 

I know that if we ask for forgiveness, God will forgive us. I also believe that, if we are in Christ, His blood blots out our sins. That is, we may/do have sins for which we have not accounted (i.e., thoughts and deeds), that, through the grace of God, He "remembers no more (Hebrews 10:14, 17)." We are, indeed, saved by grace, not from any works of the law -- including (requested) forgiveness of our sins.

To Horace's point about seeking forgiveness, doing so engages God's help. The verse says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. The work of righteousness is His, not ours.

laffal

Preston, 

Your more then welcome.

To be more specific, does God forgive us because we ask Him to do so? Or, in asking for forgiveness, do we recognize the need for forgiveness and ask based on that need, believing God will freely extend what are the benefits of what Christ accomplished on the cross?

I'm not trying to split hairs here. This is an area that many of us are really not clear on... at all. For example: is confessing our sin the same as asking for the forgiveness of our sin? If / when the Holy Spirit convicts us of that sin, is not the confession of it a matter of acknowledging the fact... iow... God you are right about me? It's at this juncture that I'm seeking to hone in on.

To my understanding, forgiveness is a built in component of the conviction (John 16:8-13)... the schoolmaster leading us to Christ. Yes God is faithful to forgive us our sin if we confess it... the penalty for the sin has already been paid... once for all... If it's not so, how do we understand 1 John 2:12? Does Christ have to plead with the Father on our behalf if we sin? (2 Corinthians 5:18.19) Or is Christ standing before the Father as our Advocate rebuffing Satan, when we confess our sin, who accuses us because of that sin? (Zechariah 3:1-6 In this picture, is Joshua's standing before God a matter of confession? There is no
record of his pleading.) Is it the goodness of God or our pleadings that leads us to repentance?

laffal

Is it the goodness of God or our pleading / needing that leads us to repentance?

Preston Foster

My instinct (for whatever that is worth) is that anything past our faith in and acceptance of Christ is flawed. For me, God's goodness is the only goodness existent. I believe the only thing we contribute to repentance is submission and gratitude.

Timo Onjukka

Well put, Preston. Perhaps, even though my faith IS the greatest of my very few virtues, it, too, I have utterly mewed up. 
Does the "greatest faith"(and unchurched) centurion have a deeper message? "I believe; help my unbelief..."

Thankfully, God sees the crumb, the widows mite, the lilliputian drop of faith i have, and He leases a new bolus on me every time.

Preston Foster

Horace and laffal (and Don),

1 John 2:12 says, "I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name."

This verse seems to imply that forgiveness has occurred and is not dependent on our requests, but on the name of Jesus.

Is this new light -- or old light that we have overlooked?

laffal

Preston,

This text causes fits for those who are insistent upon one having to ask God to forgive them before He will... for whatever the reason. The most fitting illustration I like to use is the parent and child. Do you as a parent wait for your child to ask you to forgive them before you do when they disobey you? What would love do in this type of scenario?

This is not new light, we tend to reason it away. John wrote this letter how long ago?
See if this quote fits:

- The question will come up, How is it? Is it by conditions that we receive salvation? Never by conditions do we come to Christ. And if we come to Christ, then what is the condition? The condition is that by living faith we lay hold wholly and entirely upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. When we do that, then we work the works of righteousness. But when God is calling the sinner in our world, and inviting him, there is no condition there; he is drawn by the invitation of Christ and it is not, "Now you have got to respond in order to come to God." The sinner comes, and as he comes and views Christ elevated upon that cross of Calvary, which God impresses upon his mind, there is a love beyond anything that is imagined that he has taken hold of. And what then? As he beholds that love, why he says that he is a sinner. Well, then, what is sin? Why at once he has to come here to find out. There is no definition given in our world but that transgression is the transgression of the law; and therefore he finds out what sin is. And there is repentance toward God; and what then?--why, faith toward our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that can speak pardon to the transgressor.  {1888 537.2}
- Christ is drawing everyone that is not past the boundary. He is drawing him to Himself today. No matter how great that sinner is, He is drawing him. If the sinner can get his arm fixed upon the cross of Calvary, then there is no conviction of sin. What is he there for? Because the law has been transgressed, and he begins to see that he is a sinner; and Christ died because the law was transgressed. And then he begins to look to the righteousness of Christ as the only thing that can cleanse the sinner from his sins and from his transgressions.  {1888 537.3}

And we sing this hymn... and seem to miss it all the while...

My sin, oh, The bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! Thanks for this peace Don, it is a blessing.

"This verse seems to imply that **forgiveness has occurred** and is not dependent on our requests, but **on the name of Jesus.**"

If that is taken at face value it would imply that we never have to ask forgiveness. We could just assume it. It would be like buying indulgences (accepting Jesus) to cover any future sins. Ellen White (not a popular person here, I know) says that we do need to ask forgiveness and we need to be specific.

The issue of sins "of which we are not aware," is a red herring because the Holy
Spirit will bring to remembrance any sin that hasn't been dealt with.

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<th>Preston Foster</th>
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<tr>
<td>Horace,</td>
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<td>What would inhibit us from taking the Bible at face value?</td>
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<td>I am not anti-confession. However, it seems we could also err on the side of believing that our works determine our salvation.</td>
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<td>What does 1 John 2:12 mean to you?</td>
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<td>Horace,</td>
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<td>How many of our sins did Jesus pay for on His cross? If and when He paid the penalty for our sins, does not that MEAN God has forgiven us of all of those sins as a result?</td>
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<td>The asking for forgiveness is now in terms of the relationship founded upon the reconciling love of God demonstrated / ratified at the cross of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossians 1:12-14 Forgiveness is a matter of hurting the One who loved us so.</td>
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<td>In the parable of the debtor in Matthew 18:21-35, the man in debt did not ask the king to forgive him, but to give him time to pay everything back. The king without petition freely forgave the debtor everything without condition. Why did the debtor ultimately get thrown into debtor's prison? He demonstrated that he did not appreciate the unmerited act that was given him without petition, when he chose not to forgive someone who owed him a 100 x's less then he owned the king. This parable teaches us much about, not only how God forgives, but how we ought to forgive one another as a result of God's forgiving us of ALL OUR SINS.</td>
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<th>Horace Butler</th>
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<td>The fact that Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sins does not mean that God has forgiven us for them. Does God force forgiveness on us? I fear this line of thinking leads to a form of universal salvation, which we know is unbiblical. 1 John 1:9, says, &quot;If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins . . . .&quot; If...then. The implication is that if we do not confess our sins, God will not forgive them. Context, context. And it is in the context of 1 John 1:9, and other Scriptures that I understand 1 John 2:12.</td>
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Horace,

The fact that Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sins does not mean that God has forgiven us for them.

This conclusion is a problem. Why would God pay the penalty in punishing His Son for our sin, and yet wait for our petition for peace and pardon? The cross of Christ is God's means of appealing to sinful humanity to come to Him is thru the forgiveness given. No, this is not Universalism... quite the contrary... if you don't accept the forgiveness (which in the NT includes taking the sin away) then you have to ultimately pay the penalty for your own sin.

Confessing one's sin is not equivalent to asking God to forgive one's sin... it's acknowledging with agreement of the conviction of said sin. If you choose not to confess your sin, you do not agree with God's judgment upon your life / actions, and therefore you have no sense of the need of forgiveness. 1 John 1:8.10

You can't honestly use the context component to change what 1 John 2:2 is saying. The same thing goes for 1 John 4:10. The problem is that God does that which is contrary to human logic and understanding. God has forgiven and uses this fact to appeal to the greatest need of humanity, peace / pardon. While humanity, for some reason, wants to paint the picture that what God did for humanity at the cross has no benefit until they ask for it. Sounds like we're making God all together to much like ourselves.

Haven't you ever forgiven somebody that did not want it? Love forces nobody to do anything... at anytime. God has freely forgiven us all... but many of us throw the gift away... It's our choice, not His... He's already done what needs to be done.

Mrs. Nelson asks: "Is John 3:16-17 a conditional promise?"

The very fact that John 3:16's words state that whoever believes, clearly stipulates a condition of sorts on the promise of eternal life in this context. Well, even the verses that follow to the end of this Chapter seem to indicate so too... [John 3:18, 19, 20, 21].
Bill Garber
5 days ago

Trevor,

"Whosoever believes" may be (mis)interpreted as "Only those who believe" ... or it may be interpreted as "Any one who believes" ... John quotes Jesus in writing to believers to reassure them ... were John writing an evangelistic tract to those who fear death and know not Jesus he might have remembered the quote along these lines ... For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, that the whole world should not perish, but have everlasting life. He sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him will be saved. ...

Stephen Foster
5 days ago

Whether we internalize or interpret “whosoever” to mean whomever, or anyone, or everyone, or the whole world, we can in no way discount “believeth in Him;” the qualifier whereby the world—through Him—is saved.

On the other hand, nowhere at all in the Bible is it implied that those who have never heard of Him or have had no opportunity to believe in Him are, or will be, lost.

William Noel
5 days ago

Bill,

My view is that "whosoever” is not the issue, but whether a person really believes. Modern Christianity has reduced the concept of belief to mere mental assent to a fact, as in "Yes, Jesus is my Savior so case closed. I'm saved." Belief in God demands far more from us. It requires full recognition of our powerlessness to save ourselves, the desperate nature of our condition and our desire to be rescued. Then it demands we trust Jesus completely and totally to do for us what we are incapable of doing for ourselves. We are like a person drowning in the ocean whom a lifeguard has come to rescue. Will we let the lifeguard save us? Will we resist Him? Or, will we just drown without ever seeing Him?

Bill Garber
2 days ago

Salvation is in no way enabled or otherwise merited by way of one's belief ... or any other action on the part of the object of God's grace. The adoptive father and the good shepherd metaphors both clarify for the believer that their state of or capacity for belief is utterly impotent with regard to their personal salvation.
"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."
Ephesians 2:8.

How can it be that “salvation is in no way enabled...by one’s belief”? Although salvation is a free gift, one must at least believe that the gift exists; and sense the need to accept it. If this is not true, what does John 3:18-20 mean; what is it saying?

There is no 'at least' for the lost sheep. There is no 'at least' for the adoptive child. Neither the sheep nor the child believe anything before rescued or adopted. Grace and the God of grace are not dependent on 'at least' anything by way of the creature that is the object of God's grace.

Now, for living with hope of God's grace, now that requires faith ... belief ...

The 'through faith' part of Ephesians 2:8 is not a condition without which God's grace is impotent.

God's grace is no more dependent on preexisting conditions than God's creation.

... or so it seems to me.

Grace, unmerited favor, is extended to those who don’t believe; or so it seems. Does Genesis 6:3 imply/mean that it is available as long as mortal man lives?

Candidly, I do not understand how John 3:18-20 and “the ‘through faith’ part of Ephesians 2:8” can possibly be explained away.

Isn't Hebrews 11:6 the answer to this? Water is available, we must drink it. Oxygen is free, we must breathe it. Grace is like this; it is available and free, when we believe and claim.

Grace is a characteristic of God. As a characteristic of God grace is not how he...
saves us but why he saves us. Not only is the saving all His, the reason is all His. That is why it is not of our selves, as Paul explains in Ephesians 2:8

John 3:18-20 is not about salvation, but about the present plight of those hearing Jesus' voice. We all feel judged when the light shines on our darkness. This is the present plight of humanity. It is why Jesus prefaces his description of our plight in John 3:18-20 by his scene-setting declaration in John 3:16-17!

In Ephesians 2:8 Paul without reservation or condition declares that all of the hearers of his letter 'by grace have been saved' and then infers that this salvation is held to be true for them in this life 'through faith' and 'that [both salvation and faith is] not of yourselves, it is a gift of God.'

Hebrews 11:6 is about faith, not salvation, about the present, not the future. Thus, it is about how we live today, not what happens when we die. 'And without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for He who comes to God must believe that He is and [that] He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.'

Believing that God is, is about believing that God cannot be bribed by anything we may bring to him, or by even our coming to him. We are rewarded immediately in our seeking to get past our urge to bribe God and see Him by faith for who He is. Such a glimpse is beyond price!

And we may or may not so glimpse God in this way in this life, though we most certainly will when by God's grace we live again. And it is Paul's fervent hope in his letters that we may so glimpse God yet now. It is why he became the world's more widely regarded missionary ... not to bring a saving knowledge to people but to bring the knowledge to people that they are saved by the God who is ... creator and savior.

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**Stephen Foster**

John 3:13-21 and John 14:6 do not say or imply that the entire world is, or will be saved. They do say/imply that Jesus came to provide THE WAY for the entire world to be saved.

“That the world through Him might be saved” is “a little” different than “that that the world through will be saved.”

Who is condemned according to John 3:18?

Grace is offered to the entire unworthy, guilty human family. Unfortunately, the entire human family will not necessarily take the offer; which, by the way, is as simple as calling on His name and asking Him to save you. Acts 2:21.

Cut to the chase, are you saying that no one will perish, and that all are saved; whether they believe in Him, or accept the gift, or not? This would certainly be contrary to Mark 16:16.

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**laffal**

1 day ago

http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=912&action=print
Paul says that Christ by the grace of God saved the world before it was created.
2 Timothy 1:9 - Revelation 13:8
God promised eternal life before the world began. Titus 1:1.2
God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4
Grace BRINGS salvation to everybody. Titus 2:11
Jesus brings the light of life to every man. John 1:4.9
Grace / righteousness / eternal life are a free gift of God to all. Romans 5:15-18

Salvation is based on the predicate that God has given His Son to each one of us. It's up to us what we are going to do with the gift. As far as God is concerned He's reconciled Himself to us thru Christ, and doesn't hold our sin against us, but rather is actively employed thru the Spirit, appealing to us to accept this indescribable gift. 2 Corinthians 5:14-20 / Romans 4:5-8; 5:6-10; 8:31-34 / John 6:29.40

- If we have faith in God's Son, we have believed what God has said. But if we don't believe what God has said about his Son, it is the same as calling God a liar. God has also said that he gave us eternal life and that this life comes to us from his Son. And so, if we have God's Son, we have this life. But if we don't have the Son, we don't have this life. All of you have faith in the Son of God, and I have written to let you know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:10-13 CEV)

How does it go: to believe or not to believe... that is the question.

Elaine Nelson 4 days ago

If we weren't so obsessed with sin, we could realize that God is forgiveness personified. Can there possibly be more forgiveness that what he offers?

Is it a sin to gossip? If one just finished telling someone some "juicy tidbit" and dropped dead, would he be unforgiven? If one drank a cup of coffee or a glass of wine should he ask forgiveness?

As long as we are discussing forgiveness, shouldn't sins be identified? Is it possible that what one person considers "sin" may not be another's definition?

There are many long-time SDA who were taught so many things were sin: wearing makeup, going to a movie, playing cards, not properly observing sabbath, saying a bad word--there was an endless list which was nigh impossible not to commit. All, evidently needed forgiveness before one could be assured of salvation.

Don Watson 5 hours ago

Hi Elaine, I believe that our behavior whether good or bad doesn't qualify us for salvation or disqualify us for salvation. (Not that sin doesn't matter, it does matter, but let me explain.) It is the fact that Adam passed down to us a sinful nature. We are lost not because we sin, but because we are born. 1 Cor. 15:22 says it best, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all
be made alive." The DNA of every person who would ever live was IN Adam, and when Adam sinned that fallen nature was passed down to us all - by no choice of our own (That's very important since a lot of people believe it is not right that God would save us without our consent - we were lost without our consent, Jesus merely restores to us our choice - Now that God has saved us, we can choose to reject it if we wish.). God cannot allow that sinful nature to infect His sinless universe. Sin must be destroyed. But sin does not exist in a vacuum, it exists inside of us, so if God's going to get rid of sin, WE have to die. So, to save us, Jesus comes in the flesh to this Earth as the 2nd Adam (Since Jesus was the creator of Adam all our DNA is in Him as well as Adam - We are IN Christ) and He dies FOR us. When he was resurrected, we were raised with Him as well. God has given us a new nature, by faith. I mean by that, we may not see it (since we still sin) but it is there none-the-less because He says He has accomplished it (see 2 Cor 5:7&17). God wants us to quit sin, not because of fear punishment, but out of love for a God that says sin is bad because it hurts us. Hebrews says the blood of Christ cleanses our consciences of things that lead to death. The cross shows us sin is destructive, but God loves sinners, became sin for us and poured out His wrath on Jesus instead of us. This is the good news - that we ARE saved because of what JESUS DID, rather than on what WE do. This way, Elaine, if I wake up one morning filled with doubts and fears, I can look at the facts of Scripture, and know that my salvation is true NOT because of MY faith, but because of what Jesus DID. Jesus never fails, I do. I am weak, He is strong. Abide in Jesus, and John says, you WILL bear much fruit. Blessings, Don

Darrel Lindensmith  
3 days ago

Hi Don, I just read your 'so-on-target' article; I going to use it in my church if that's ok with you--with credit of course.

thanks

Don Watson  
6 hours ago

Thank you Darrel, and it's the gospel. I perceive that to be public domain, so go for it! blessings. don

Elaine Nelson  
1 day ago

"I have faith, help the little faith I have." Are there degrees of faith?

Don Watson  
16 hours ago

Dear Elaine, There was a tightrope walker who sent his crew ahead of him to construct a cable on which he would walk between two very tall buildings. They constructed 3 cables instead. One was of polyester thread, a second was of 100 pound nylon cord and the last was of 2000 pound commercial grade cable. When he arrived, he saw what they had done and chose the cable. He had NO faith in the thread, LITTLE faith in the nylon cord, and GREAT faith in the cable. Were these different degrees of faith something inside of the tightrope walker, or was it completely dependant on the OBJECT of his faith. The more we know about God, we will see Him to be cable rather than thread. When it comes to the gospel, there are so many of us for one
reason or the other who do not believe God accepts us as sinners. He is like common sewing thread. But I believe God's word calls us to believe something that IS true. We don't have to have enough faith to make it true. Satan wants us to doubt it, because it is in believing the good news that there is such power over the devil and sin in our life. But if we will always believe that we ARE saved, we will never perish, because Satan will never pry us away from a God who never condemns us. And that is our only hope. To stay connected to God no matter what. Blessings, Elaine.

Don Watson

A number of your who have written comments about belief. I understand there are texts that seem to indicate that our salvation is based on something we do - believe or exercise our faith. Here is a couple of interesting verses: Romans 5:9 says we were justified by Jesus blood. Notice it is past tense. It is something that has already taken place. And it is something that Jesus did. HE died. When He died, all of us were justified. But in Romans 5:1 it says we were justified by faith. That is something we do. So which is it? Are we saved, forgiven, justified by something Jesus did (He died) or something we do (believe or exercise faith)? I know there are wonderful, honest, loving, Jesus-loving, God-fearing, great scholars on both sides of this question. I know I grappled with this for so long, because of all the people I knew who didn't believe yet or hadn't heard yet or didn't even have the mental capacity to believe. And there were texts that said, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Yet people seemed to feel that with "the exceptions" there was another way God saved them. Like God can just forgive some people because they're ignorant, or not old enough, or smart enough, or were raised in the wrong family on the wrong side of the world, or in the wrong religion. I believe the gospel we all love is the good news that Jesus' blood paid for us all. So we are all saved, 2000 years ago when Jesus died. In fact, He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. That's what verse 9 is saying. We were saved legally, in the books of heaven when Jesus died. But God also wants us to be saved in our minds and hearts. He wants us to KNOW we are saved. God wants us to BELIEVE the good news. That's verse 1. Because if we will believe it, "we have peace with God." This is what 2 Cor 5:17-21 is talking about when it says we are reconciled to God - because of the death of Jesus, "God doesn't count our sins against us." So God calls us to believe something that is already true, our believing doesn't make it true. But if we will believe it, JOHN 3:16 SAYS, "We will not perish, but have everlasting life." Not if we're good enough, but if we will simply not reject the good news that the Holy Spirit brings to us. And that good news is that WE ARE SAVED, FORGIVEN, AND ACCEPTED BY THE GREAT GOD OF GRACE. I believe this gospel and this gospel alone is truly "good news of great joy to ALL PEOPLE" Luke 2:9 And it changed my life!
I have never been much into birdwatching merely for the sake of it. Yet I appreciate seeing a feathered visitor in the backyard, observing some kind of crazy bird party while bushwalking, or even watching how a flock of pigeons or seagulls interact with people in the city or on a beach front. And recently I have been enjoying reading a book appropriate to my low-level ‘twitching’ interest — *How To Be a (Bad) Birdwatcher*, by English sportswriter Simon Barnes.

More than an introduction to semi-serious birdwatching aimed at those uninitiated in this pursuit, Barnes’s book is a prompt toward living with awareness and appreciation, particularly of the natural world in which we live. In his first few pages, Barnes describes pausing, as he crossed a park, to watch a group of small common birds darting about. “It was nothing special, nothing extraordinary, and it was very good indeed,” he reflects. “Note this: one of the great pleasures of birdwatching is the quiet enjoyment of the absolutely ordinary.”

But not only is it a principle of birdwatching, it’s also a lesson for life — and perhaps even more important for living faithfully. It says something about our longing and striving to be exceptional that words such as ‘ordinary’ and ‘average’ have evolved to mean something less than ordinary or below average. By so many voices, we are urged that to be ‘ordinary’ or ‘average’ is to never quite measure up. Belying the exaggerated lives of celebrities or those portrayed on our screens — or the updates some of your ‘friends’ might be posting on Facebook — by definition, much and most of our lives must be ordinary and average.

When we talk about ambition, our minds immediately imagine becoming a success or a star in the areas of our career or talents. We could break through or be discovered or somehow otherwise be recognised as the high achiever we deserve to be. Paul’s suggestion for ambition offers quite a contrast; “This should be your ambition: to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we commanded you before. As a result, people who are not Christians will respect the way you live” (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12).

This is not an excuse not to make the most of the opportunities or talents God gives us, nor not to work hard and to do what we do well. But we measure our lives — and the lives of those around us — differently when we seek to, “live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern,” as Jesus put it (Matthew 6:33). Many of our days will look ordinary and average — and that’s OK.

This principle also applies to our spiritual life. We should not measure our growth in faith and faithfulness so much by the mountaintop experiences as by our “walking humbly with our God” (see Micah 6:8) in those ordinary days. For many of us, faithful living is not about exotic mission trips or campaigns to save the world in one way or another. These can be good experiences and worthwhile undertakings but how do we live faithfully a few weeks later when we’re back in the office, factory, kitchen or classroom just doing ordinary things? “Discipleship is often ugly, messy and painful. Faithful service will regularly lead us into dull labours and bewildering struggles that would make unexciting press” (Andrew Byers, *We Need Boring Christians*, relevantmagazine.com).
Many healthy and faithful lives have many ordinary days — in the best sense of ordinary. And these many ordinary days are so much of what makes up a life of faithfulness. And, as Paul says, that’s often the kind of Christian life that is most respected by those who observe it. Such ordinariness can be “very good indeed.”

It’s also the kind of living that lays the best foundation for the extraordinary experience of our life and faith. Obviously, Barnes was still writing about bird watching but his further description also fits with living life with God and the aims of ordinary faith and faithfulness — “That is the first aim of being a bad birdwatcher: the calm delight of the utterly normal, and the rare and sudden delight of the utterly unexpected.”

Bible quotations are from the New Living Translation.

William Noel | 4 days ago
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Any ordinary day walking humbly with God far exceeds the most outstanding day of living otherwise! Thanks for the reminder to appreciate and accept the common and ordinary.

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
Love & War and the Sea In Between -Reviewed by Kevin Villarreal

Submitted Oct 16, 2011
By Kevin Villarreal

By Josh Garrels


Christian singer/songwriter Josh Garrels, based in Portland, Oregon, does not write dramatic music. A typical song floats by like a relaxing, uneventful Sunday. Verses meander, and climactic high notes and attention-grabbing choruses are rare. So, a massive 18-track album with a narrative and, in his words “a thematic quality dealing with intertwining issues,” might appear counterintuitive. Love & War & the Sea In Between is a complex album—but amazingly listenable.

Garrels has spent almost 10 years as a relatively unknown, making music on his own label and on his own terms. He can be described as a traditional folk musician, yet he is anything but traditional in his approach. For starters, there’s the voice. His enviable falsetto is at once comforting and distant, tying the album together. How you feel about the voice may determine how you feel about the whole album.

Then there’s the instrumentation. Violin flourishes and flute glissandos abound à la Sufjan Stevens, but it’s the unusual instruments that stand out. A most intriguing moment comes on “Slip Away,” when Garrels lets the omnipresent acoustic guitar fade into the back of the mix, replaced by mandolin, harp, and cello over a murky two-step beat. Moments like this keep the album sonically interesting.

Lyrically, too, Garrels tends toward the unusual. “I wondered why the good man dies / the bad man thrives,” he sings on “Farther Along.” He confronts hard questions and heavy subject matter, but his belief in the triumph of goodness is tempered with the coldness of the present, and he spends considerable time dealing head-on with these thoughts.

A triumphant ending does come, and when it does, it shows that Garrels intended the album to be a cohesive experience. Tracks are sequenced to form a clear arc. From the cozy crooning of the opening track, to the dark center, and finally to the glimmer of hope in the closing tracks, the album unfolds almost cinematically. Unfortunately, this brings into question Garrels’ bizarre and interruptive stylistic choices.

He has many strengths, but rapping (“The Resistance”) and bellowing (“Farther Along”) are not among them. Folk-rap may fit someplace in the musical universe, but it doesn’t find a good home here. Throwing in these oddities interrupts the flow of the ballads.

The weirdness is blessedly offset, however, by Garrels’ ability to write intricate, memorable songs about the meaning of being a Christian in today’s world. For all the sweeping themes and genre experimentation, it’s the songwriting that sets the album apart and makes it succeed.

There are no comments.

Posting as Center for Adventist Research Andrews University
Peggy Orenstein, HarperCollins 2011

When I quietly (but intentionally) picked up the oddly titled feminist lament, "Cinderella Ate My Daughter," at Barnes & Noble and began walking it down the aisle, the glaringly pink cover stood out so luridly against my plaid flannel shirt, I quickly snagged a bargain copy of Huckleberry Finn to provide masculine cover.

As a lifelong Adventist, I am aware of Adventism's early dalliance with the concept that children are "tabula rasa" for which, if we inscribe only the best and the blessed, we will virtually guarantee salvation. Many parents have suffered keen grief and guilt that their children, despite every effort, have left the church, and they lie awake at night pondering wherein they as parents went astray from the strait-and-narrow formula.

John Harvey Kellogg believed it so intensely; he reared a street urchin to adulthood, thereby hoping to prove that even a child of the poorest background would respond to the beneficent touch of nurture over nature. That the boy in question really never "turned out well," led Kellogg put the experiment to rest without his usual book-long commentary on yet another triumphal experiment.

Author Peggy Orenstein seems a bit overly concerned about the effect of the current cultural emphasis little-girl glamour in this short book about the Cinderella Complex, an observed tendency among some women to exaggerate their need for a Handsome Prince and Deliverer to watch over them through life. That feminists abhor this "retrogressive" attitude goes without saying, and here Orenstein writes an informative lament about the advantage she believes American business is taking of the Princess Complex that through the Internet and other marketing avenues is pushing girls still in their pre-teens to emphasize their sexuality at earlier and earlier ages. The author also says the syndrome is leading younger and younger girls to engage in sexual behavior, as part of the Princess/Cinderella fantasy.

Discussion of this very real syndrome is nothing new in the world of psychology, but is generally not observed or understood by many Adventist parents and grandparents. This book, in my opinion, overstates the danger—in line with the author’s view that environmental and cultural pressures are far more influential than heredity and early childhood upbringing. But when I saw the book on sale, I thought immediately of my granddaughter. “This I must read,” I told myself. “I want to understand the kinds of challenges she’s going to face. Besides being a wizened grandpa, I want to be a wise one.” It’s informative and accessible reading and should be available at discount.

It’s normal for girls to want to feel comfortable with their presentation of self, but culture and merchandising, movies and glamour, can push some toward neurotic fixations. There’s a siren’s call out for our little fantasy sirens, and the bandwidth is as broad as the entire range of American media. The rewards to the marketers are in the multbillions of dollars per year. Caveat Gramptor!

There are no comments.
Adventist Today: Cinderella Ate My Daughter - Reviewed by Ron Spencer

http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=890&action=print
Breakaway Adventists Expected October 15 Second Coming

Submitted Nov 2, 2011
By Atoday News Team

Echoing recent North American predictions of Christ's Second Coming, Adventist Church officials in the South American nations of Bolivia and Perú have reported a breakaway group of former Adventists suffered a disappointment of their own, October 15.

The group, which advocated living far from towns or cities in preparation for the Time of Trouble and worldwide Sunday law, formed in South America in the late 1990s under the leadership of Edgardo Zagarra (pronounced Sah-GAH-rah) a former Adventist pastor known for his radical messages and animated style of preaching.

During the early 2000s, his followers, said to number in the hundreds, broke off from local Adventist congregations and often moved to remote encampments where they could await the Lord's return in peace, at one time setting May 17, 2000 as the day in which Sunday legislation would be announced worldwide.

"I read a manifesto distributed by Zagarra, and the first half of the lengthy paper sounded very much like standard apocalyptic Adventist preaching," says Edwin A. Schwisow of the Adventist Today news team, who personally interviewed several members of the breakaway group.

"The problems arose in the second half of the paper, in which Zagarra argued for specific times when these events would be fulfilled. Most Adventists in the Andean area rejected Zagarra's teachings, but as I interviewed various breakaway members, it appeared the decision to follow Zagarra was fueled in part by dissatisfaction with some aspect of their local congregations — they may have felt overlooked or demoted by the nominating committee, or have lost a vote in what they believed to be a rigged business meeting. Fallout seemed particularly strong in congregations that were building new structures. Disagreements over how to build, finish, decorate, and pay for a new house of worship seemed to be associated with the decision to move away into a separate enclave and await the Lord's return alone."

Recent communication from Bolivia to Adventist Today indicates the breakaway group met for Sabbath services on October 15, singing and preaching throughout the day, then dispersed quietly at sundown.

“There was no uproar, nothing noteworthy,” reported Samuel Antonio Chávez, a former education director in the eastern (Andean) portion of Bolivia and now a doctoral candidate at the Adventist university in Vinto, near Cochabamba. He said to his knowledge no one currently on Adventist church books took an active role in the day of waiting, October 15.

Share your thoughts about this article:

Vernon P. Wagner

Missed another rapture? Must not be livin' right!
Horace Butler 1 week ago Reply

This underscores the perils of disregarding the counsel of Ellen White. She clearly states that there will be no more messages based on time.

I remember back in the early 60's some folks thought the time of trouble might be imminent because, just as Noah preached for 120 years before the flood came, so Adventists had been preaching for nearly 120 years since 1844.

Then there was a group back in the 80's that predicted the beginning of the time of trouble around 1992. They based it on their understanding of the Jewish Jubilee Year cycles.

Will we never learn?

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago Reply

These "end-of-the-world" followers do not come from the Mormons, the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, but from the sect and fringe groups who began with announcing the end of the world. JWs have also been unsuccessful in their predictions as have Adventists. It is easy to blame Adventists, but those who still need to believe and follow the out-dated EGW advice to "head for hills and out from the cities" are vulnerable to such preachers. Blaming them for fully following the prophet's advice is counter-productive: they have been taught to beware of "city folk" and retreat to the hills as the time of trouble is soon coming.

Where else could they have gotten such ideas if not from the Red Books?

Horace Butler 1 week ago Reply

What makes you so sure that the counsel to leave the cities is so out-dated? Who is most vulnerable in a crisis? City dwellers. I've lived in suburbia and I've lived in the country. Those in the country are much more independent and able to cope with major disruptions in the flow of goods and services. During a major ice storm back in the 90's it was those in cities who suffered the most. They had no heat, no electricity, and, in some cases, no water. In our country home, heated by wood, we were warm and well fed, and had access to water. But that's not the only reason she counseled us to move away from the cities. Another reason was the corrupting influence found in the cities. Life in the cities is like living in an artificial world.

Certainly during the time of trouble the city is the last place one would want to be because I suspect that nonconformists who live in the city will be the first to be rounded up.

No one who reads the "Red Books" carefully could come away with the idea that the end of the world scenario should be sensationalized or that dates should be set. Just the opposite is true. So I heartily disagree with you last statement. And I must take exception to your characterization of the Millerites as a “fringe” group. And, by the way, SDA’s have not been announcing the end of the world; only that we are in the time of the end, and that the final events will be rapid ones. We’ve never set a date for the end of the world. The SDA Church didn’t exist until nearly 20 years after...
1844.

Trevor Hammond

Ex-Adventists do and say some weird stuff as usual. Talk about kool aid.
♥T

Vernon P. Wagner

Hiding in the hills is useless in the 21st Century. We live in an era of smart bombs, stealth aircraft, and drones. A computer geek can blow an entire mountain away on the other side of the planet with a single mouse click.

Vernon P. Wagner

Erratum: 'palnet' = 'planet'

Horace Butler

That was a joke, wasn't it? As if modern technology could outwit the Creator and Ruler of the universe. That's almost comical. It sort of sounded like Nebuchadnezzar's boast about no one being able to deliver the 3 Hebrews out of the fiery furnace.

Just as an angel blinded the wicked men of Sodom when they tried to break into Lot's house, so they can disable even the most sophisticated technology. You greatly underestimate the power of God.

Elaine Nelson

What's the flavor of that Kool-aid?

Trevor Hammond

Well I do hope it's NOT the potassium cyanide flavor...for one.! Maybe just the good ol' Ex-SDA flavor...perhaps!
♥T

Vernon P. Wagner

Loma Linda Foods used to make a nasty, brown fruit drink. Can't recall the name, but it could kill without the cyanide!
No, Horace, I wasn't joking. Taliban terrorists pray 5 times a day, but get blown away nevertheless. Of course, western religions say they prayed to the wrong god, but our Christian brothers & sisters are getting blown away by IED's everyday as well...in spite of the prayers of their loved ones.

How many souls, stranded at the top of the WTC. were caught on 'angel wings' as they fell to their deaths? I went to war four times in two wars. Body bags containing Christians outnumbered those of atheists. To assume that God will intervene in ANY situation is not something to count on. That's why 'I-of-little-faith' wore a parachute during my 230 combat support / search & rescue missions.

Go back and read Great Controversy. Sure people will die during the time of trouble. As long as they're ready it's no big deal. But after the close of probation the devil can't touch the faithful, with or without all the modern technology. God has promised to shield the righteous during that time, and, though I may be in a minority, especially here, I take Him at His word.

Many biblical texts promise full, miraculous protection...the O.T. is full of them, and that was a long time before the 'time-of-trouble.' I honestly wish those texts were true, but I've been to war too many times...it just doesn't work that way.

One can only hope that those promises will come true...eventually!

You really don't get it, do you? There is nothing in the Bible that promises absolute protection from physical harm or death in this world. But, Jesus shed light on those promises of protection when He said not to fear those who can kill the body, but not the soul. Death is not the thing we need to fear. Being deceived or falling away is the thing to fear. Paul encourages us with the promise that all things work together for good to those who love God, and also with the promise that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our level of endurance. He will give us strength to go through the trials, whether they end in death or otherwise. Paul has a lot of credibility when it comes to discussing trials and persecution. He had more of them than most people will ever have.

But, according to GC, there will come a time when the devil will not be allowed to touch the righteous. That is after the close of probation. I have no reason to doubt that prediction.

Our probation ends at our death. Millions have their probation ended daily. To think of some uncertain future time as when probation ends is futile. What good would it be to know the exact date? What would anyone do differently?
This has been heard for more than 100 years: "when probation is closed." Please explain its importance and what one should do as we have as little control over that fact than of earthquakes.

Horace Butler

We don't know the exact date, either for our death, or the close of probation; nor do we need to. That's why we must live as if that time is today. I can't predict when the next tornado or earthquake will come, but I can be prepared. That's why we are told about the close of probation.

The final generation of righteous people will be a unique group. They will have overcome sin, and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will maintain their loyalty to God, living without an intercessor during that short time between the close of probation, and the coming of Jesus in the clouds. But since you don't believe the scenario outlined in The Great Controversy, there's not much point in my discussing the subject in more detail.

Edwin A. Schwisow

As educated readers and writers, we often address situations like this in the abstract, using impersonal terms such as "sect" or "cultural tradition," and to do so is necessary in an academic world. But to the people involved in these radical movements, the situation is anything BUT academic. Especially for the followers, these things are very real—very around-the-corner, very much "even at the door." In working on this story, I was moved by the calm and careful devotion of the followers, who had submitted themselves in faith to the charismatic leader, Zagarra. For the followers, the association with the end-time group in the wilderness provided assurance, focus, and boundaries for their lives. They regarded their situation as a blessing, whether or not the actual event took place as predicated. I believe we, as an outgrowth of an apocalyptic persuasion, must gain a great deal more understanding of the human element caught up in these strange movements. Though members of these movements display simple faith, their reasons for participating in such groups are often exceedingly complex and very personal.
In 1879, teens Luther Warren and Harry Fenner wanted to do evangelism for Jesus. Praying together often for ideas and vision, young Fenner and Warren initiated the first Adventist youth group. Their Michigan Adventist Youth Society was successful from the beginning, and soon spread to other conferences.

In the early years of Adventism, youth work was often initiated by youth for the purpose of sharing Christ with their non-Christian friends, first in their own communities. Soon, their focus expanded, and youth began extending their evangelistic outreach to the world. Early SDA Youth Societies’ emphasis on personal revival combined with regular missionary activity buoyed the members, providing a strong sense of purpose, structure, and community.

So how does youth ministry compare today with the purposes of youth societies in the early years of Adventism?

Although nearly every facet of youth ministry today — Pathfinders, short-term mission trips, youth camps, youth and young adult retreats, youth camp meeting programming — could be said to have sprung in some way from Warren and Fenner’s dreams in 1879, there are differences. Are those differences in principle, or merely differences in practice?

Today’s youth programming and ministries are usually adult-initiated (GYC might be an exception) and administered. Although there is still an underlying aim of evangelism, that focus is often centered on evangelizing the youth of the church, rather than for the conversion of non-Adventist youth. In addition, the methodology for achieving the salvation of Adventist youth is often more entertainment-oriented than organized with the purpose of providing opportunities for youth to do sustained, systematic evangelism.

Let’s again note that Youth Societies in early Adventism sprang up as youth-initiated and youth-managed organizations in response to Christ’s clear mandate to evangelize the world. (Matthew 28:19-20) Although the response to the call to witness and save souls was strengthened, perhaps even awakened, by adults in Adventist congregations who shared this passion for the lost and by Ellen White’s own messages on youth organization and empowerment, nevertheless early Adventist Youth Societies were largely the outgrowth of youth commitment.

By 1903, however, adults had largely assumed the management of Youth Societies. Certainly, every organization goes through periods of growth that include some degree of institutionalization. But this growth need not stifle the initial purpose for the organization if some plan is kept in place whereby that original purpose and vision is not obscured by bureaucracy or programming that does not contribute to the founding purpose. In the case of Adventist Youth Societies, the vision of reaching the world for Christ appears to have remained intact at least to the turn of the 20th century.

Unfortunately, however, personal proclamation and verbal witness have been in serious decline in churches now influenced by a post-modern culture. Adventist youth ministries may now be in danger of not only a loss of mission (outward — toward others) but even a distortion or reversal of mission (inward — toward us). Additionally, it is becoming increasingly rare to find an Adventist youth professional who is willing to identify ‘Babylon,’ much less suggest that the mission of Adventist youth includes calling other Christians out of it.
In 2011, at least in North America, with occasional exceptions in the Hispanic and African-American culture, there are few or no Youth Societies, no Missionary Volunteer societies, and even Adventist Youth Societies (AY) are largely defunct. With the exception of student literature evangelism programs, on-going, systematic organization of youth for the purpose of working for the lost is largely missing from Adventist youth ministries.\(^2\)

Though there is evidence of informal small Bible study groups within the Adventist youth ministries structure, much of today’s youth ministry focuses on youth rallies, camporees, retreats, forums, and camp meeting programming. These feature dynamic preaching, drama, and culturally relevant gospel music, with little or no emphasis on organizing and training for soul-winning outside the Adventist community.

In his book, *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage*, evangelical James Logan writes, “For a long time, some leaders and analysts within Methodism have regretted the unfortunate tradeoffs experienced when Methodism went ‘a whoring’ after [the respectability of the more formally-structured main-stream denominations], and shifted its accent from lay ministry to professional ministry.”

Although the transfer of youth ministry from youth to professionals may have affected the paradigm shift from evangelism to entertainment, that shift may not have been inevitable. Youth professionals could successfully restore evangelism in youth ministry if they again see themselves as coaches and mentors, training youth for actual soul-winning, rather than seeing themselves as primarily programmers of inward focused ministry.\(^3\) It seems evident that today’s Adventist adolescents need more than entertainment or fast-moving programming to anchor them to Christ and to His church body.

Youth ministries advocate Kevin Ford once wrote, “The problem with most Christian young people is that they have no game. We keep giving them all the things they need to do as Christians — read the Bible, have devotions, study, pray, do God’s will, do the right thing — but they have no reasons to do all that. There is no game to use it in. They need a mission.”

The reason today’s young people do not appear to have the same appetite for evangelism as evidenced by the members of early Youth Societies may be they’re getting little exercise in evangelism. Adventist youth in the 21st century, particularly in western culture, are in danger of being spiritual couch potatoes — over-entertained and under-challenged, and filled with spiritual junk food. To appreciate the meat of the Word and the beauty of a living, life-changing relationship with Christ, they must once again organize and seek training in order to experience the rejuvenating reality of evangelism.

It is yet possible that this generation of youth will re-capture the vision of early Adventist youth societies and become that segment of the church body who model, lead, and inspire the church at large to engage in Spirit-led inclusive evangelism. Maybe it will be today’s youth who will see beyond gender, age, education, power, and tradition so that, “the boundary of man’s authority will be as broken reeds, and the Holy Spirit will speak through the living, human agent, with convincing power.” (*Selected Messages* Book 2, pp 58-59)

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\(^1\) I am defining evangelism here as sharing the Good News about Jesus (the gospel message) in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14.
There are some fine exceptions. Philadelphia Youth Challenge and REACH Philadelphia led by Pastor Tara Vincross is a model of systematic, on-going youth-led evangelistic training.

A good example of such coaching is in Robert Folkenburg’s generationally inclusive ShareHim initiative.

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**Thomas "Vastergotland"**

I agree with your main point regarding making evangelism a main part of church life for youth, and adults alike I might add. Following Jesus doesn't work all that well as a spectator sport. That said, I must ask why you have to insist on evangelism being about shuffling cells around within the body of Christ. How does influencing someone who is christian by the preaching of Peter or Apollos to become a Christian by the preaching of Paul count as evangelism by any biblical standard or definition? As if there were a lack of unbelievers. What exactly is the deal here?

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**Elaine Nelson**

It is becoming increasingly rare to find an Adventist youth professional who is willing to identify ‘Babylon,’ much less suggest that the mission of Adventist youth includes calling other Christians out of it.

If that is to be the central theme, it is no wonder that it is neither appealing to Adventist or other youth. Looking upon all non-Adventists as being in "Babylon" is a terrible motive. People want to be invited INTO something that is better, not coaxed out of their former lifestyle as Babylon. Adventists must eradicate these outdated words from their vocabulary and mind if they wish to look at others as just as good, kind, and worthy of the kingdom.

Has anyone asked the youth for suggestions on approaching other young people? Perhaps we should also remove the word "other" signifying they are not "one of us, the saved" and consider that all of them are God's children and have equal rights to heaven. Stop looking and treating non-Adventists as needing "to be salvaged" and they are just as worthy as we who are "out of Babylon."

The whole vocabulary and mental view of non-Adventists must change if we are to welcome them into our family. Just as a marriage brings into a family someone who we may not know too well, she instantly becomes part of the family, no training in family practices, rituals, and habits must be taught first, by rite of marriage, she is now "family."

With this attitude, young people would have to make and be friends with those not in the church. This is a complete turn-around, as since Adventism began we have been taught to have nothing to do with the "world" and its amusements. Young people are eager for the new, and they are far more jaded than their parents with all the visual and aural technology available. Discover what they are looking for, what they want in their future. Listen, Listen, Listen, both to the SDA youth and all young people. Make friends with them, remembering that most young people don't initially trust "anyone over 30" and you must be able to both understand and talk their language.

This is a daunting task, but the most important of all is a complete change of attitude: see all young...
people as valuable and worthy and that understanding the third angel's message is probably so far down their list of importance as to be unrecognizable. They are worried about their future: education, jobs (where are they?) and far more than what Adventists have usually been eager to tell them. Remember: telling someone about something in which he has no interest will be given no interest.

William Noel

Elaine,

You are making a great point.

Something that gets quickly overlooked in most discussions (and laments) about youth evangelism is that our teachings are historically weighted heavily toward convincing people about facts first and hoping their hearts will follow instead of winning their hearts first so the facts can follow. Over time this has become a horribly negative presentation, except we're so convinced of the facts that we have a hard time understanding how anyone outside the church could see it as negative. My Baptist friends go around telling people they need to accept Jesus so they can avoid going to hell. That makes the Gospel sound like it is the only slightly better of two very undesirable options. The love of God and the sacrifice of Jesus to make salvation possible are presented as minor attractions.

Just like you and me, our youth are repulsed by negatives and attracted to positives. The big reason so many are leaving the church is all the negatives they see as compared with positives elsewhere. So, what if we were to reorient our message to focus on the incomparable positives of how much God loves us, what he's done and doing to save us, and the joys of having a daily walk with God? This is the challenge we must meet if we're going to keep our youth in the church and have that army of well-trained workers to spread the Gospel.

Ella M.

Elaine,

You have provided a lot of good insight in your above post. Listen and know their needs. William, I agree with you as well. After listening and helping, present that message that brings a life time of stability and peace that we wouldn't otherwise enjoy.

Doctorf

Elaine,

What an insightful post! There are a lot of "terms" we need to get rid of in Adventist ministries. I am an American citizen and hardly associate myself and lifestyle with what the term "Babylon" encompasses. Maybe Cindy should ask another question. That is, why is the SDA message so unappealing to 21st century youth?

Bill Cork

"Today's youth programming and ministries are usually adult-initiated (GYC might be an
exception) and administered. Although there is still an underlying aim of evangelism, that focus is often centered on evangelizing the youth of the church, rather than for the conversion of non-Adventist youth."

I think we need to be clear who we mean by "youth." In much of the world, that term means 18-25 year old young adults. In the US, it tends to mean teenagers (sometimes even children). GYC, though operating in the US context, has a global understanding--it targets young adults over 18, and was organized by college/grad students and young professionals.

That being said, I think you are right about the shift in focus. Though in my church, our youth invite their friends to Pathfinders, and we have seen baptisms as a result.

It might be well to remember that we got the idea of Missionary Volunteer societies from Evangelicals--specifically, from John Mott (complete with his call to "keep the morning watch"). We followed the evangelicals then ... and we're doing so now (for better or worse).

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Adrian

2 weeks ago

Cindy,

I think you have hit the nail on the head. We have become so worried about 'losing' our youth that retaining them has become the main focus. However, this inward focus comes from adults that seem to inevitably focus on youth and kids rather than externally, as keeping the kids/youth is extremely difficult, but reaching out to secular minds is even more daunting.

I would have to question the idea suggested by Kevin Ford that youth don't see the relevance because there is no game or mission to use the tools provided as surely there are many reasons and motivations for using them. The anachronistic calling people out of Babylon would not be the answer in terms of motivation.

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William Noel

2 weeks ago

Cindy,

Again, you have given us a thoughtful exploration of a timely topic. Thank you.

What happens with our youth is critical because they are the future of the church. With growing numbers of churches in North America having few or no children it is obvious that our denomination is headed for a serious decline in membership as the senior generation dies.

You touched on a number of serious contributing factors. First is that the youth are not allowed ownership or even significant input into the ministry that is supposed to be for them, so they become disconnected from it. Second is that the historic emphasis on calling people out of Babylon has ceased to be an issue for them, not because it is unimportant, but because the way it is presented is so boring and negative. What is there in the topic to give them purpose and make the topic a priority when they have no ownership of it and the topic fails to resonate with their community? Adults who are quick to answer that they should feel otherwise are illustrating how differently they view things than our youth.

Sometimes success requires that we let failure be complete, that we let the wrong approach die and...
stay undefended long enough that whoever takes on the challenge does so with a view unatinted by the failures of the past. That may be what has to happen with youth ministry. What clearer proof of the failure of the old model do we need than the current working state of youth ministries? Our youth need a vision of effective mission outreach that they are not seeing in the church today. They need to be given ownership of the challenge and the freedom to run with it without interference or limits from older generations. When that is allowed to happen we will all be amazed at what God does through them.

Cindy,

How relevant is the Value Genesis Report to your observations? In addition, do the youth see evangelism as the work of witnessing / taking Christ to a lost world? Or do they see evangelism as a process of making Adventists? With so many Adventist youth leaving the church, and many joining the other churches, how do they see the value of being a 7th Day-Adventist?

As you well know, there are many theological in-house differences / debates (many very much intrenched). This has been as much a turn off to young folks as anything we have / have not done in our planning for their active participation in the church / evangelism. How can we train the youth aright with so many in-house disturbances going on?

Could it be that the grown-ups can / will only be able to empower the youth for becoming that "army of youth well trained" when we determine to lead by example? By that I mean, follow the lead of the disciples in the upper room after Christ's ascension and work out / settle our differences in the light of Christ's great love for us in the context of how much we have actually misapprehended what He's called us to do / be? What will happen when the grown-ups determine to no longer do anything that will cause Christ the grief that He has borne because of our self-styled (that which we are actually not yet aware of = Revelation 3:17) ministry / evangelism? I believe this has a lot to do with why the spirit of evangelism is waining in the church today. Let the Media Ministries do the work, we'll support them as we watch them from our couches, and send the our $$$ so they can keep on doing the work we were called to do.

The body of Christ, which includes the youth, lacks the unity that only the Holy Spirit can develop / bless. And if there is anything a young person can detect is disunity. All of us want to belong to something that gives us a sense of belonging / well being, especially 21 century youth. So my question is this, is the church ready to receive, much less develop a youth movement that will change / charge the world for Christ? Or are the present schisms within the church doing their appointed work of dividing and conquering, of which the youth (or lack of) are a documented casualty?

If the same 'vibrant spirit' that was part of the MV Society in bygone years were even just a small part of the current AYS and Ay (both Senior and Junior), there would be a whole different ballgame. I have found that much of today's focus is been directed towards getting the youth 'qualified for buying power', which has its important place, however this is done at the expense of spiritual development and growth. Yeah sure, the youth are 'smart' and can see right through hypocrisy, dodgy standards and of course the self-righteous lukewarmness of those who profess...
Christ. Economics (including Sabbath work/vocation/affluenza), Cultural peer pressure (including worldliness/dress/music/lifestyle/behavior), friendships and marriage, sinful living, etc., all play a major factor in choices young people make. Then also a major player all of this is education which in itself is good but this can easily sway a child of God by virtue of the 'buying power' it affords which in turn can also lead one astray.

I was a different case. I left the church in my teens as a result of many reasons but much of it was a result of losing my focus on Christ. I got mixed up in some political activism at school, messed up with drugs, alcohol, smoking, sinful living - I even played in a band which made music a negative influence too - you know, the textbook prodigal - been there, done that, got the fed the pigs T-Shirt.

I don't know if this will work for the youth of today, but I got saved the old fashioned way: the Cross. (Sorry to mention this all the time but this is the best way I know by my own experience. Someone even remarked on another blog that I make a big deal of the Cross. Well yes, guilty as charged but I will stand by this position: THE CROSS OF CHRIST WILL SAVE OUR YOUTH!). It wasn't saved in a church or evangelical meeting with fiery sermons etc., jus' Jesus and me. Yeah! I got saved - hook, line and sinker - by God's grace power and mercy. Jesus changed my life and I KNOW he can do the same for all the young people of today.

There's a song that the Sunday Churches and some Adventists sing which I like to sing too: "I went to the enemy's camp an' I took back what he stole from me..." - It's time parents, and church leaders and young people take back their turf from the devil and take back the young people he has ensnared and "In Jesus Name" claim them back...

Maybe that is one route we can use: the Cross. Now I know the First World kids are smart - but the love of Christ outsmarts us all. I would suggest though that if ALL church leaders, including Pastors, were to complete the good old Master Guide Class at least, either doing the Junior or Senior Youth course or both, we would have leaders equipped to commit to the objectives of the Adventist Youth Society.

There are some other points regarding some of my thoughts about in-house reasons why we as a church need to 'come to the party' so to speak regarding Youth Ministry but I cannot discuss this on a public platform where many good non-Adventists and ex-Adventists frequent and I don't want to weaken their faith further by any Adventist ordinary domestic issues which may alarm them.

By the way, let's not forget that there are many many youth in our churches and outside who are faithfully walking in the path God has blazed for us, under the blood-stained banner of Christ our Lord. Praise the Lord for the youth we HAVE and have always HAD!

- "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come,—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where “the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever;” where “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,” and “the voice of weeping shall be no more heard!” [Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 33:24; 65:19.]—“Education,” page 271. {GW 66.2}

I would say though, that part of the Adventist Youth issue seen in the cultural dominated churches is that many adults, both members and parents, have openly given Ellen White the boot and
historical Adventism the backseat which unfortunately the Youth are bearing the brunt. That's why we pray for them ALL. Sadly though many pass the blame on Traditional Adventism for this; but they have themselves to blame - not the Church.

♥T

Thomas "Vastergotland"

Trevor,

You mention two different paths to salvation in your post. The path of the cross where you meet Jesus, and the path of the evangelical meeting (revelation seminar type?). Those who champion the first path, which brought you to God, often get slandered as goodless liberals by people who champion the second path. And despite of having been brought to God through the cross, you conclude your post in your final paragraph as a champion of the second path, which did not work for you to bring you to God (per your testimony above). Tell me Trevor, is it the Gospel of the Cross, or the "yes gospel, but/and" of the historical Adventism that is needed? Is the church in lack of the message that worked for you or the other message?

Trevor Hammond

Hey Thomas "Vastergotland"

Didn’t mean to confuse anyone but let me explain. My personal experience was different as I didn’t get back to God via a formal evangelism program of some sort. It just happened under odd circumstances which I have mentioned on another blog. A chain of events so to speak, while still away from church. So my point is that one doesn’t necessarily have to have only certain forms of ministry or programs to reach others. We shouldn’t limit evangelism to just a few options only but rather that ALL possible avenues of evangelism should be pursued where and when or if possible albeit that they remain in principle - ‘Christ centered’. Neither should youth ministry be a forced overbearing effort but one that is stimulating, uplifting, energetic and most of all loving and supportive without compromising our church standards. Different strokes for different folks would also apply here. We should meet the needs of our youth in terms of spiritual direction and their personal development also.

(I know of a preacher who learnt about Jesus from his ‘drunkard’ dad who used to have regular family worship in spite of him been intoxicated). That obviously won’t be our first choice to minister to our youth or even as a mainline means for outreach though. I’m saying that the cross has to be the central focus in all our formal and informal efforts at winning souls to Christ. There is no name under heaven by which we are saved (Acts 4:10, 11, 12).

I only stressed the Cross and its ultimate importance in all of this to make my point and in no way intended to allude ‘different’ paths to salvation. At the end of the day it is the Cross that matters and young people should not be denied this or be side-tracked with fixing their focus on just entertainment and compromise only.

Regarding Ellen White and Traditional Adventism. There’s no denying that Ellen White, by default, points sinners, always, to the Cross. Cultural Adventists have lost the beneficial Ministry of Ellen White by, as I have said, giving her writings the ‘boot’. Then they blame Traditionalists, who I must add, preach the Cross just the same, yet they are blamed for not
compromising enough with cultural and socio-political changes and therefore responsible for youth leaving the church.

The ‘but/and’ gospel is an illogical approach to me: I would prefer the ‘either/or’ which we all have to eventually at some point make a choice. This would include the youth. I have a seventeen year old son and a thirteen year old daughter (a real cutie) - which I as a parent have by God’s Grace been committed to leading them to Christ – firstly by example and then with much prayer and supplication, allowing them to make their personal decision for Jesus. Both aren't baptised yet but I am praying and doing and contributing towards a conducive 'place' where they can choose whom they will serve. In our church planting effort which my family is involved in, we have about fifty or so who meet in a school hall on Sabbaths. About ninety percent are 'pre/non-SDA' and come from diverse religious persuasions. Thirty of the fifty or so are children and young people. We really 'get down' with praising and worshipping God and learning about Jesus and the Cross. A lot of hard work and sacrifice goes into something like this and we usually spend the entire day at 'church' doing stuff and cooling off. Our youth and kids at church accompany us into the neighborhood where we have singing, stories and some tasty treat for kids on the block. Just a guitar and lots of energy is all you need for this exercise. Youth enjoy going out in the community and distributing, clothing, food, toys, tracts, dvd's, etc. We work in an area with many souls from poorer communities reside and have made a difference together with our young people leading out with us.

Peer pressure, music, the media, fashion, worldliness, ungodliness, sexual immorality etc., etc., is a reality and challenge we must face. I would be fully in agreement with Ellen White when she wrote that “While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march against us”. Many youth regretfully have and will also become casualties in this war against the powers of darkness. Christ is our only hope.

♥
T

Thomas "Vastergotland"

Trevor

When you write, "At the end of the day it is the Cross that matters and young people should not be denied this", I agree fully with you.

Regarding Ellen White and Traditional Adventism, the problem with Traditional Adventism would be that it does not take the good example of Ellen White and point sinners always to the Cross. Rather it wishes to entertain those who would hear and who's ear are suitably tickled with prophetic interpretations of days both in the future and the recent past. Had this been otherwise, it would be the Desire of Ages that was printed by the millions to be spread over the earth, rather than the Great Controversy.

I find the work done through your church commendable. Really, how you describe it, it sounds like the average SDA church has much to learn from it (including churches of any theological leaning). I wonder though whether you misunderstood what I meant by "yes, gospel, but/and". To try and be a little less cryptic, it meant a refusal to let the gospel stand alone. "Yes, the gospel is important, but not until these other requirements have been fulfilled." Or, "Yes, the gospel is important, and it will apply to you as soon as you have ticked off this modest list of other requirements."
The Gospel, meanwhile, teaches that there is nothing you can do to make God love you more, nor is there nothing you could do to make God love you less, and every aspect of your salvation is provided for free by God. Last week's SS-study indicated that this includes even the faith that leads to salvation. And, the implication of this is that since you provide 0% of your salvation requirements with God providing the other 100%, there is no foundation for stopping someone who is not with us from preaching the gospel (Mark 9:38), and there is no valid foundation for placing any pride in coming to faith through this preacher rather than through that preacher (1 Cor 1:12). Indeed, when Christ is become all in all (Col 3:11), gone is all foundations for and desire to place ourselves as better than others (Phil 2:1-10).

There is a time and place for the "either/or", but that line is not drawn through the church, or between the churches, or even at the borders of the Church. That line is drawn equally accessible for all men and women, and it goes through the heart.

/Thomas

Trevor Hammond

2 weeks ago  Reply

Dear Thomas "Vastergotland"

It's nice to know that we can agree on a number of things. Thanks for explaining your "yes, gospel, but/and". I read it loud and clear now. I did misunderstand what you meant. Maybe it's because of the mandate in Matt 28:19, 20 that some may tend to get a bit carried away which really isn't necessary. The Gospel has that covered quite adequately. All we have to do in essence as instruments in God's hand is to preach and teach the Good News wherever, whenever, however and let the Spirit of the Lord water the seed that is planted.

Thanks for the kind words regarding our church planting effort. I have been involved with other church planting efforts in the past but this one has been special to me as it is the only one which is, not just a 'low' budget initiative, but a NO budget initiative, which has been faith based from inception and going strong for over six years now. The Lord God Almighty, Jehovah Jireh is indeed Provider. We don't have fancy pews and airconditioning and other five-star church luxuries, but hey, what can I say - the we have the Lord...

I like this statement you've made regarding how God provides everything we need in terms of Salvation: "this includes even the faith that leads to salvation." God is Provider.

♥T

Ella M.

2 weeks ago  Reply

Thomas Vastergotland: An excellent post and quote: ... . "Had this been otherwise, it would be the Desire of Ages that was printed by the millions to be spread over the earth, rather than the Great Controversy."

You have really made the point that is right in my opinion. We are to point to Christ first. I was appalled by the decision to send GC to millions of people as it gives a wrong first impression of what the SDA church is about. It is not the Gospel and it is not even the Gospel in the context of the third angel's message. (Neither of which I believe is
Kevin Riley

Perhaps you should take a look at the STORMCo program in Australia. It is led mostly by youth (with the adult supervision required by law) and finds creative ways to reach the community. It has had an impact on the youth in my church.
http://stormco.adventistconnect.org/

Elaine Nelson

With all the youthful energy and innovative skills, they should be trusted to design their own programs. They are not attracted to a church where the main activity is sitting and listening to a speaker or watching 3ABN, but need action. Let them decide their weekends could be spent helping the many in every community today who desperately need so many things. Let them walk and take a census of a neighborhood, registering the specific needs and addresses and then return next week to help. All help does not involve money. There are yards that need cleaning, houses that need painting (ask for donated paint from nearby stores), perhaps transportation to doctors. All these are wonderful sabbath activities and imitate Jesus who did not spend all day sabbath sitting in a synagogue.

These activities from a high school group or club are regularly shown in the local papers. Wonderful publicity and far better than announcing an upcoming Revelation Seminar.

Harlen Miller

Sitting here in my SDA K-12 School office, after 35+ years as SDA educator, after 1-18 grades of SDA education (plus non-SDA M.A. and numerous+ summer non-SDA workshops) (choral music, by the way), (plus Music Director in many Protestant Denomination churches), I find myself wondering about the value of the SDA educational system from the standpoint of this blog. Are our members stronger in their witness as a result of our system of education? I have found that my biggest enjoyment of Christian witness (no-not SDA witness), and my greatest growth in my Christian experience, has come in conjunction with my relationships with non-SDAs. Too much fish-bowling our denomination. Too much salt staying in the shaker. Too much light under the bushel. What would happen if we let our kids go to public school, invest half that tuition-cost into the church directly, and minister to our kids needs via the church? I wonder what would happen. I see the Mormons doing it that way, and they don't seem to be shrinking. I watch us, and look what's happening.

William Noel

Excellent question! I think the value of SDA education varies from place to place depending on
circumstances and whether or not it is a "mission" school that recruits students outside the membership of the sponsoring SDA church. This turns teachers into evangelists and gives students real-life experience testing their beliefs by contrasting them against the beliefs of the non-SDA students. This produces both more believers and more students who know what they believe.

Kevin Riley  2 weeks ago  Reply

In Australia, most of our schools have a majority of students who are non-SDA, sometimes up to 90%+. It changes the nature of the school. Most schools have baptisms of non-SDA students (and sometimes their family as well) each year. Because of government limits on how small schools can be and remain open, we don't have a multitude of small struggling schools like the US.

Connie Severin  2 weeks ago  Reply

Mr./Dr. Miller, I found your particular post very interesting as our son is about to graduate with a piano performance degree from a secular school. He's interested in masters programs in sacred and choral music and has been directing our church choir. Unfortunately, our he had a rather bad experience in the one SDA school he attended with his sister and they both did much better at the primarily Baptist though nominally nondenominational school where they did most of their pre-college education. While both of them are uncomfortable with churches that emphasize Ellen White, I think both of them are better Christians than I am as far as their walk with God. They're both very active members of the churches to which they belong. They weren't exposed to some of the more rigid SDA beliefs that aren't particularly biblical in origin but rather more social 1800s cultural, and I think they are the better for it.

Elaine Nelson  2 weeks ago  Reply

SDA education risk innoculating young people to Adventism, and with rejecting Adventism they also risk rejecting Christianity as that is the only form of Christianity that they know.

Whether or not this is the intent, the results demonstrate it. A Mormon family I know sent two their four children to BYU, the other two to public universities. Guess which ones remained Mormon? Not those who attended BYU.

What surveys have been done of SDA-educated youth vs. non-SDA education some 10-20 years later. If we don't know, how can we make plans for the youth?

JaNe  1 week ago  Reply

You're a walking Gallup Poll with a representative sample size and a margin of error of +/- 3%? What was the confidence level of your survey? Just curious....

Cindy Tutsch  2 weeks ago  Reply

Kevin, I'm headed "down under" on Monday. Would love to hear more about "STORMCo"!

Kevin Riley  
2 weeks ago  

Cindy,

Ask any Youth person. They will tell you as much as you're prepared to hear.

Cindy Tutsch  
2 weeks ago  

Kevin,

I am prepared to hear about anything that combines an outreach to the whole person--body, mind, and spirit. Painting houses is great, as well as soup kitchens. My students and I have done plenty of it and been blessed. But if we are not combining acts of mercy and progressive social concern with care for their souls, that is, taking an interest in where our neighbors are spiritually and pointing them to Jesus and His Word, we are missing the proverbial boat.

Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago  

What are the specific details for "caring for the soul"? Is this a corporate or private undertaking? Does individual prayer and/or meditation not aid the soul? If it not merely a cliche, please explain in detail what a church or group should be doing to properly care for the soul.

Kevin Riley  
1 week ago  

Cindy,

Part of the reason many STORMCo teams return to the same towns year after year is that it takes time to get to know people and be able to talk to them about Christ. I can't speak for every STORMCo event, but unless the youth in my church are telling less-than-truthful stories when they come back, they do take every opportunity to share the gospel when they see an opening. Australia is a lot more secular, and I suspect has always been less overtly religious, than the US and most people do not appreciate having religious forced upon them.

Konner Dent  
2 weeks ago  

In regards to the Kevin Ford quote.

I'm kind of new to this so hear me out. It seems (to me, after switching from public school to Adventist) that any Adventist (undergraduate) program should have a steady, important witnessing program. I mean when I went to public school I had a need to represent my faith because there was so few Adventists and I wanted to give it a name it deserved as well as witness about it when times when the subject was brought up (which was like every other day). At my current Adventist academy everyone is Adventist, so it feels that there is no reason to "get the word out" or give the faith a good name. I have no reason to witness (that they tell me of) and nobody to do it to. I/we (I feel as Adventist youth) not only need a "game", but also a field to play it on. That field is the mission field, in its many forms - something all Christian youth (Adventist or otherwise) should be...
all-too familiar in.

Konner,

Great point! Our traditions in the church typically limit our concepts about where and how it is "safe" to minister God's love instead of being willing to expand our views and go anywhere. That restrictive attitude shows how little we trust the power of God to be a light that dispels darkness.

I was raised in the church and taught that the apostle Paul's statement about spiritual gifts being for the "building-up of the church" was so we could be more effective at public evangelistic crusades and other overtly spiritual outreaches designed to bring in new members. Along the way I've seen at least as many people leave the church as we brought in because the church was not a loving community of believers who nurtured each other in various facets of life. Fortunately, I am not part of a congregation where gift-based ministries are encouraged and nurtured. What we have discovered is that the first blessing from spiritual gifts is building the internal community of the church. That makes it something people really want to be a part of, including visitors and non-believers. That is a big reason why we're growing without holding public crusades, distributing literature, or any of the other traditional outreach methods. The sooner we expose our youth to the unlimited creative opportunity that gift-based ministry offers, the sooner they can find their own opportunities to minister.

Konner,

You are right. Every Christian school should have some sort of outreach to the public. This could be community work (even within already-established organizations). It could be creative evangelism. It could be a concert series or Christian dramas or musicals at the school (and a reception) in which to invite the community. You are in a position to suggest something like this and bring it to the attention of the faculty.

Konner,

When I was a Bible teacher at various SDA day and boarding academies, I organized outreach and witnessing activities for the students to do in the communities where the schools were located. We had hundreds of students involved. You could get ideas for such activities from my book "Teens on the Witness Stand." It's out of print now, but I noticed you can still get it on Amazon for a student affordable $3.24!

Cindy,
Seems to me that much "entertainment-oriented" ministry results - not from youth leaders gone astray - but from a church that has no greater vision for its youth than to "keep them in the church" - or perhaps, to "keep them in their place in the church." There is a tendency for adults to view adolescents as either gods or monsters. We both fetishize and fear youth. We want to be associated with their energy and vibrancy, yet see them as a threat to order and stability. So we try contain them and use them to our advantage.

We may do this in a couple of ways. 1) We placate youth with programs meant to socialize them into a "nice' but otherwise lack-luster life in the church. We diminish any real transformative power they might bring to the table and treat them in ways that could be seen as hegemonic. 2) We use youth as poster children for an idealized image of the church. We send them door-to-door and take pictures for the union paper, as if to say "See, all is well with the church." We may even try to use young people as foot soldiers for our agendas. One youth organization I know of comes dangerously close to this. It concentrates its resources on the production of large conventions, which includes short bursts of "witnessing" activities. Church administrators flock to the photo-op and organizers claim victory for their cause. I would call this the ideological approach to youth ministry.

What is needed more now than ever before is a deeply pastoral approach to our youth - one which takes them seriously as persons - not as a market segment, an ideal category, or "boots on the ground." They each have real hurts and struggles. Unimaginable wounds, at times. They are looking for purpose and significance, yes. But they don't want to be used as props. They long to be drawn into a accepting, healing and passionate communities of faith filled with adults who are leading the way. They need real mentors in life and in mission, not just someone to drive the van while they knock on doors. If we seek to involve youth in mission and evangelism, it should be the mission and evangelism of the church as a whole. Kenda Dean fears that the church may be "just another sagging social convention, like Dracula, that needs young blood to survive." And that is my concern, too. That the church may simply be "shooting up" on the enthusiasm of youth, like a heroin addict looking for another fix. This is a dead-end street - for young people and for the church.

Cindy Tutsch

SecondOpinion,

I agree whole-heartedly with many of your points. Though I think large conferences or events, particularly those that train for evangelism, have merit, it is not the ultimate solution. Most young people will not return home from these mega-events and continue to engage in systematic, regular mission activities. Thus, the spiritual enthusiasm generated at such convocations could end in apathy or even disillusionment. Pastors and older church leaders need to partner with the youth to provide on-going leadership and witnessing opportunities and training.

I am indicting myself as well. When I was conference youth director, I did have a program whereby 35-70 youth were trained for evangelism and engaged in it systematically for eight weeks each summer of my tenure. For four of my six years as youth director, I even had a school year program of training and engaging in evangelism one night a week. I was focused and intentional in mentoring the student leaders among the group. and several of them have gone on to establish their own on-going evangelitic missions, even training other youth to become engaged in active witness.

What I did NOT do, and regret deeply, is have regular training events for local church leaders to
show them how to develop a plan whereby all of their local church youth could be invited to participate in on-going witnessing. We did sporadic training events, but nothing that really resulted in training a conference-wide movement of youth to not only know how to give an answer for the hope that is within them, but provide structured opportunities for that witness to occur on an on-going basis.

Youth rallies and short-term mission trips can be a great experience, an enriching experience, even a learning-more-about-what-it-means-to-be-a disciple of Christ experience. But again, I don't see those things as the ultimate solution. Witnessing for Jesus must become a lifestyle. Leadership opportunities must go far beyond Junior Deacons. Interest in our young people, many of whom face huge spiritual and emotional challenges, must go beyond "casual." It will take time, effort, self-sacrifice to know them in ways that allow trust to develop. We neglect those opportunities at peril to their souls--and ours.

William Noel
1 week ago

SecondOpinion,

My contention is that the concept you defend is a major reason why the youth are leaving the church. That traditional approach has become hugely ineffective because our society is no longer as receptive as it was once upon a time. I want to urge you to buy and study the book "Unchristian" because it will give you an unvarnished "look in the mirror" to both see Christianity as the world sees it and understand why. That book was a real eye-opener for me that changed my thinking about evangelistic outreach. It is time for new approaches with continual ministries that focus first inside the church before reaching out.

Jan
1 week ago

First, my admission is, I have not read every post in this blog. I would like to make a defense of the "youth". In attending a pre-mission trip planning session with my son last night, I learned that many students at his "Adventist" high school, arrive to school **without breakfast**. One of the teachers, is trying to set up a corner in his classroom, to address providing breakfast options. In this same meeting, of 5 student missionaries, there was one student with his father present. The other 4 students were there with their mother(s) or other significant female relatives. Maybe part of this issue is that there has been no leader, no father power, in the lives of our youth. "I just need a dad", one student said, so clear and profoundly. Can we consider, many of our youth, do need to be reached to as if they themselves, are the mission field? This is a fatherless generation. This takes the wind, completely down, out of their sails. Even Jesus, had Father Power. What about the youth, who have yet to see a role model who they can call "Daddy"?

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago

You can't feed someone the Gospel until you first feed his stomach. There are longings which will not be met by the G.C. or 2300-day prophecy. Meet people's needs FIRST, then be willing to listen to those needs.
1) **The Love**-Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Matthew 25:36

2) **The Gospel**-Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18

3) **The Doctrine**- And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,... I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Revelation 18:2,4

Kevin Seidel 1 week ago  Reply

I was thankful when became old enough to say "no" to going door to door. Kevin Ford's tool kit is sadly incomplete: "read the Bible, have devotions, study, pray, do God’s will, do the right thing". They are very general tools. There are more tools that are needed to apply these to specific situations, problems, issues. William Noel mentioned Spiritual Gift based ministry. That is getting closer. Helping youth to discover and develop their Spiritual Gifts is one part. But it is even bigger than Spiritual Gifts. It is discovering and becoming the person God created us to be. The hard part is finding the tools to do that. Part of that is a community that recognizes and expresses appreciation for people and also role models the wide variety ministry. Cleaning up after potluck is just as important a ministry as singing in the choir.

William Noel 6 days ago  Reply

Kevin,  

Please allow me to expand your understanding of gift-based ministry. The relationship we enjoy with God in a gift-based ministry blesses us in many ways and He uses that experience to teach us what He wants us to be regardless of our age. Listening to sermons about what we're supposed to become fills us with theory that is generally detached from reality. Actually working with God helps us discover things about ourselves and God we might never have seen otherwise. It is a wonderful experience in both spiritual and personal growth. What is more, gift-based ministry is not getting closer to what God wants us to be, it is actually experiencing what God wants us to be today as He leads us into tomorrow.

My ministry is called the Angel Team. We were given that name by the people we helped who said we were like angels to them for what we had done. We focus on home-related projects that improve lives by solving problems. Two years ago we had a project where we were helping a widow in the church after her house flooded. A two year-old insisted on going with his mother to help. His mother recounted to me with amazement about how he had avoided play and worked steadily at her side because he wanted to help "Grandma Linda." Today that boy is four. He has no idea what he wants as a career when he grows up, but will tell you without hesitation that he wants to do things that make people happy by helping them.
When I think back on my youth which was not really a happy one after my sister died. I was not part of a church, but when the family went back (after my father's heart attack and his awakening), I was so shy I hardly spoke to any one. I attended a youth convention which was helpful spiritually but not socially. I wish the Adventist schools/colleges I went to after that would have taught me how to socialize and build self-worth and give me a cause.

I think youth need a mission and to be taught how to give. Youth by nature are very self-centered on their appearance, acceptance, popularity, and self-worth. They need affirmation but also that they are needed to give affirmation, to help and to be sensitive to others. They need to mentor as well as to be mentored. They need to have leadership roles in the local church and beyond. None of them should be ignored no matter how introverted they may seem. They may be hiding some wonderful talents.

Running a youth organization is a daunting task. Those who succeed, in spite of unbelievable temptation, are very special people.

I saw many failures during my four college summers as an MV camp cook. Even the most sincere prayer can barely quell a continuous display of raging hormones all summer, every summer! Between the married staff members, counsellors, campers, and co-workers, it was like walking through a mine field. Chastity, in my case, was due to fear rather than virtue.
The Other Barack: The Bold and Reckless Life of President Obama’s Father

Submitted Nov 2, 2011
By Edwin A. Schwisow

With the 2012 presidential just one year away in the United States and the incumbent president, Barack H. Obama II, virtually assured a place on the ballot, books are now rolling off the presses to capitalize on, and in some cases contribute to or detract from, his candidacy. This book, The Other Barack, seems to belong in the first category — it is by no means a complimentary or image-building portrayal of the President’s father and depicts the man in the fullness of his strengths and weaknesses. Conversely, it is clearly not intended to overtly embarrass the President or his family, but to fill out the picture of a man Barack II has alluded to frequently in his own writings. This book is clearly journalistic in its approach (consistent with the vocation and reputation of the author) and presents a picture of the President’s father as a complicated, gifted man caught up in Kenya’s transition from colony to sovereign nation, between 1935 and 1982. The book is highly recommended for reasons stated below.

That the main character in this nonfiction, posthumous biography was educated in an Adventist school (Gendia Primary School, about three miles from his ancestral home, near Lake Victoria) and that his own father (the President’s paternal grandfather, Onyango Obama) had at one time been a Christian is clearly stated in the book. But Onyango, an ambitious and compulsive man in search of upward mobility, apparently appreciated the sterner personality of the Muslim faith and its allowance for multiple wives — he renounced Christianity as an adult, but remained on friendly terms with Christians and clearly practiced a form of ‘liberal’ Islam that among other diversions allowed him and his family to drink alcoholic beverages (addiction to which would at least lead to the untimely death of the President’s father, in 1982, at age 47).

This transition to Islam allowed Barack Sr., as a youth, to express his gifts as an accomplished dancer, and his connection with the Adventist education program helped spur him forward to remarkable achievements in mathematics. Barack Sr. eventually became the first Kenyan to gain an all-expenses-paid scholarship to Harvard University. On the negative side, Barack Sr.’s life was immensely complicated by his aforementioned addiction, his arrogant attitude toward those he regarded as his inferiors, and his sense that as a first-born son of Islam, monogamy did not apply to him.

For Adventist readers the book is particularly interesting in its portrayal of the nation of Kenya, and the influence of the Adventist church’s missionary outreach in the upward mobility of its people, including Barack Sr. Adventism, in fact, is proportionately far more prominent institutionally in many Third World nations than it has ever become in the United States. In many countries, it is one of the larger, and in some cases the largest, Protestant denomination. This is a story not always told well by the Adventist press (and perhaps it cannot be told well, because of the church’s complicated relationship with governments in some of these countries). While by no means is Adventism the...
theme of this book, the story told here adds dimension and context to mission stories that rarely dwell with the immense sociological and political realities inherent in the cultures where Adventism ministers.

There are no comments.

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