NEWS

Politics, Rights Concerns in Wake of Gunfire Between Angola Police & Adventist Sect:
News reports indicate that significant numbers of sectarian Adventists may have been affected by mass devastation at their encampment....

Adventists Will Celebrate Peace Sabbath on May 23: An organization known as the Adventist Peace Fellowship is calling on Adventist congregations to dedicate their May 23 church services to promoting non-militancy....

Free Health Clinic Provided in Jamaica: The Adventist Church in Jamaica has long included healthcare as a primary factor in its ministry, and recently hosted a health fair that far exceeded initial goals....

ADRA Continues to Serve in Nepal after Second Quake: A powerful earthquake has again struck Nepal, calling for more assistance from ADRA and other disaster-relief organizations....
OPINION

To Ordain or Not to Ordain, That Is the Question!: The General Conference president some months ago challenged the Church to seek out biblical answers to questions regarding ordination of women to the ministry. Columnist Dan Appel puts on his thinking cap, congratulating Pastor Ted Wilson for his foresight in propounding deeper study....

Not a Rib: English Bibles have a mis-translation that needs to be corrected: Far from being Adam's rib, the Bible says Eve was the product of a covenant God made with Adam, writes columnist Jack Hoehn....

Disconnecting from Change: Prophetic voices within the Church are needed, writes columnist Andy Hanson, if the Church is to face the future relevantly....

Fruitful Trees (DEVOTIONAL): Debbonaire Kovacs reminds us that the Bible represents fruitful trees as those that give timely--not round-the-clock fruit. There appears to be an ebb and flow in the Christian life, rest leading to productivity; recuperation, and then another burst of fruit-bearing....

FEATURE & THE ARTS

Adventist Elementary School Celebrates with First Annual Lego® Robotics Showcase: Students in a
Washington state Adventist primary school celebrate the success of engineering and programming robots, with their fifth- and sixth-grade teacher....

**Abide (VISUAL):** The fruit cannot grow, lest it stay connected to the vine, says John 5, as illustrated by Debbonnaire Kovacs with her camera....

**Welcome Home...Maybe...[Revisited](PROSE):** Debbonnaire Kovacs shares the turmoil of an early Adventist, who struggled to come to terms with God and difficulties with her denomination. A continuing nonfiction narrative....

**In Praise of Fruit (PROSE):** S M Chen writes that the outward appearance of fruit often gives a highly distorted picture of what lies beneath the peel. Fruit-examiners in the Christian sphere, beware....

Contact:  *Adventist Today*  
PO Box 1135  
Sandy, Oregon 97055-1135  
[atoday@atoday.org](mailto:atoday@atoday.org)

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Politics, Rights Concerns in Wake of Gunfire Between Angola Police & Adventist Sect

By AT News Team, May 13, 2015: Additional reports about the armed confrontation between police and an Adventist offshoot in Angola have revealed a different picture than the first news stories from the central African nation. Reports last month stated that the group had killed nine police officers who came to arrest Jose Kalupeteka, a fundamentalist preacher kicked out of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in 2001 who has predicted that Christ will return on December 31, 2015.

For two weeks the government would not allow any journalist into the remote area. Last week Reuters, the respected international wire service published a bulletin from one of their correspondents who was able to visit the site and interview local witnesses. Yesterday, Christianity Today released some additional information from several sources.

"The only traces of thousands of … sect members who were camped [at the site] are burnt-out vehicles, shacks pocked with bullet holes and bloodstains in soil," stated Reuters. The police commissioner told Reuters that only 13 "snipers" were killed, but human rights activists told the news service that “more than 1,000 civilians were killed by the police and military in a siege aimed at crushing a group that has defied the government.”

Reuters pointed out that the ruling MLPA party fought a 27-year civil war with the opposition UNITA party that ended in 2002. President Eduardo dos Santos has ruled the country for 36 years and has recently been attempting to get a new start in terms of international reputation and relationships with the United Nations and other countries.

Local residents told Reuters that at least 3,000 members of the Light of the World group had been camping at the remote site. “I have not seen anyone who lived there since the incident,” the news service quoted a resident who asked not to be identified. “I don’t know where they are.”

“Local human rights activist Angelo Kapwatcha said in a report that the raid involved hundreds of police and soldiers armed with machine guns, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, according to a military source he interviewed," said the Reuters bulletin. A May 1 article in The Guardian, a British newspaper, by human rights activist Raphael Marques de Morais reported that houses were burned down with the residents inside and members of the group were mowed down, according to military personnel he interviewed.

“Some of argued the incident should be taken to the International Criminal Court,” stated Christianity Today. The American evangelical journal also quoted a United States State Department report that despite the fact that Angola’s constitution protects freedom of religion, the government marginalizes religious minorities. “To legally operate, religious groups must gather 100,000 notarized signatures of individuals from at least 12 of Angola’s 18 provinces. Behind the government’s strict regulations [is] a desire to control upstart Pentecostal congregations [and] to combat witchcraft and illegal migration.”

Christianity Today reported that according to the U.S. State Department, representatives of the larger, established denominations are critical of the small, new sects. It is alleged that some of these groups are frauds designed to extract money from believers and misuse charitable donations.

Reuters quoted Paula Roque, a senior analyst for the Crisis Group; the incident and conflicting views of what happened “can be … an opportunity for the government [of Angola] to begin its own investigation and hold its security officers accountable, or it can proceed with a cover up that will only fuel frustrations and dissatisfaction.” The 255,000 members of the Adventist denomination in the country and their 3,000 congregations are caught in the
middle of this situation.
Adventists will Celebrate Peace Sabbath on May 23

From News Release, May 12, 2015: The Adventist Peace Fellowship (APF) has designated the Sabbath before Memorial Day in the United States (May 23) as the first annual Adventist Peace Sabbath. In other nations it will be scheduled at other points in the year.

This particular Sabbath was selected because it is an occasion when some congregations devote part of their worship service to honor those who have served in the military. In view of the denomination’s official teaching of conscientious objection in times of war, and in because of the sacrifices and heroism of countless Adventist noncombatants and pacifists, APF has urged Adventist churches to also remember Christ’s admonition, “blessed are the peacemakers.”

A resource is available to provide material for worship. The six-page guide suggests four appropriate hymns from the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, and it includes the full text for an invocation, a benediction, four Scripture readings and a litany or responsive reading. The theme is “Let Us Be Peacemakers.” The four Scripture readings include two from the Old Testament (Isaiah and a Psalm) and two from the New Testament, one from the Epistles and one from the Gospels.

The worship resource was created by APF member Yi Shen Ma with assistance from Dr. Maury Jackson, a theology professor in the H. M. S. Richards Divinity School at La Sierra University, and Dr. Nicholas Zork, professor of church music at Andrews University. Because everything is included except the words of the hymns, this resource can be used in small groups or family worship.

“We are also urging all Adventist churches to draw inspiration from the five Adventist congregations that have [voted] to be known as official Adventist Peace Churches,” said a statement from APF. “May 23 is a Sabbath when Adventists can bear creative witness in our worship life to the good news of Christ’s peace.”

APF is an international organization of Adventist Bible scholars, theologians, clergy and laity. It has the purpose of supporting the traditional Seventh-day Adventist teaching about refusing to participate in war-making activities in the military or war-related civilian industries.

The worship resource is formatted for printing as a PDF and can be downloaded free of charge here: https://adventistpeace.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/adventistpeacesabbathservic.pdf
Free Health Clinic Provided in Jamaica

From News Release, May 14, 2015: Nearly three hundred people attended a free health fair hosted by Seventh-day Adventists at the Exchange Health Clinic in St. Ann, Jamaica on April 28, 2015, reported both the Jamaica Observer and the North Jamaica Conference (NJC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Participating health professionals represented a number of institutions—the St. Ann Health department, Broadbent Jamaica Limited, the Registrar General’s Department, H.E.A.R.T Trust NTA, Adventist Health Professionals and First Regional Co-operative Credit Union Limited.

Pastor Karl Archer, who serves as NJC president and Health Ministries director, welcomed the attendees by saying, “I don’t want you to just think about getting physical healing because God wants to also apply spiritual healing to your lives today. God wants his children to experience total healing, which includes the spiritual, mental and physical. And that is our main purpose here today, to help you on the path of being healthy and happy.”

Many people gathered at the clinic location up to three ours before the event was scheduled to begin. When organizers Daniel and Felisha Miller from the Exchange District of Seventh-day Adventist Churches saw the crowd, they decided to begin an hour early with the only doctor who was present.

“It was more than we expected”, said Daniel Miller. “We had a modest goal of forty persons to be seen by the medical doctor. However, we exceeded that goal as our doctor saw sixty. Many expressed how happy they were with the care and attention they received.”

Those who were waiting were offered soup. They visited informational booths and listened to a presentation from the H.E.A.R.T Trust NTA representative.

Individualized care was given to each person in the comfort of a private, air conditioned room. Services included health checks, Pap smears, optical screening, dental cleaning, blood pressure checks, diabetic testing, diabetic foot care, and HIV and Sexually Transmitted disease testing. There was also a prayer room.

“Persons came in with belly problems, head problems, back problems—all kinds of problem” said Phuwna Taylor, prayer coordinator for the Exchange Adventist Church. “We prayed for each person believing that with the medical attention today, God can heal and answer prayers. We also gave the children old Sabbath School quarterlies (Bible story books) and Christian literature to the adults.”

Sylvia Oddman was satisfied with the care she received at the clinic. “I did my blood sugar test this morning and it
was good. The doctor even told me that I don’t need to go back on my medication based on the result. This is good news and I am glad for this clinic because I wouldn’t have known this today,” she said.

Miller said the church will likely provide another free health fair. “Based on the success of the event, many are demanding that we do this again. We will be looking at the possibility closer towards the end of the year.”
ADRA Continues to Serve in Nepal after Second Quake

From News Release, May 14, 2015: The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was helping Nepalese communities recover from April’s 7.8 earthquake when the country was hit by a 7.3 earthquake on May 12.

ADRA president Jonathan Duffy said in an email that the “new disaster has claimed close to 50 lives on top of the already 8,000 lives that were lost from the original earthquake. The destruction of homes has left tens of thousands sleeping outside with monsoon season fast approaching.” "Even as strong aftershocks rattle the country, our emergency response team has not stopped distributing vital shelter supplies and food to families in need,” he added.

Prior to the most recent earthquake, ADRA formed a partnership with GlobalMedic, a nonsectarian humanitarian aid organization, to provide large tents, which will provide a temporary replacement for health posts that have been damaged or destroyed.

“The people of 10 communities in Kavre District will have a better place to receive health services through ADRA working with GlobalMedic and Scheer Memorial Hospital,” explained Simon Lewis, former ADRA Nepal country director and emergency response team member.

ADRA and GlobalMedic delivered a 36-by-20-foot (10-by-6-meter) tent to Scheer Memorial Hospital, increasing capacity for patients at the hospital.

“This tent is going to allow us to hang onto patients that could go back but don’t have a home to go back to,” said Dale Mole, president of Scheer Memorial Hospital. “After the earthquake we had to have C-sections outdoors because patients were too afraid to enter. This tent gives us capacity we’ve never had before.”

For now, ADRA and GlobalMedic are distributing a total of 15 tents—10 in Kavre, including one at Scheer Memorial Hospital, and five in Dhading. “These tents are so multipurpose,” said David Sakaki, GlobalMedic volunteer. “They could be used for hospitals or for child-friendly spaces, or medical storage.”

A total of 240 health posts were destroyed in areas affected by the earthquake, and 347 health posts have suffered severe damage. Lewis explained that while these 15 tents will make a large difference in these communities, there remain significant unmet needs.

“For now, these communities in Dhading and Kavre will have somewhere safe, secure, and dry to meet their doctor, nurse or health worker in dignity,” said Lewis. “But we still need support from the global community to help us provide tents for healthcare.”

Related Article
Adventists Respond to Devastating Nepal Earthquake (April 28, 2015)
To Ordain or Not to Ordain, That Is the Question!

by Dan Appel, May 10, 2015: As we draw closer and closer to the upcoming General Conference session, many of us are getting deluged with material concerning one of the items on the agenda – whether or not to ordain women to ministry. Having read a number of the books, papers and videos that are proliferating throughout our world church trying to create a groundswell against the idea of ordaining women and implying that there is only one way a committed Christian or Adventist could look at the issue, and believing that a person needs a fair and balanced opportunity to examine all sides, I decided to write the following essay.

Recently, our General Conference President issued an amazingly bold, courageous and unexpected call for people to study for themselves the issue of whether or not women should be ordained for ministry. He called the people in the world church he leads to return to the rock-solid foundation that undergirded the Protestant Reformation and the stated tradition of our own church – “Sola Scriptura!” – and to study the Bible evidence, one way or the other, for themselves.

Normally, a person in his position would issue a charge to hew to church tradition and orthodoxy or make a plea to his followers to carefully study any number of different extra-Biblical sources and authorities or issue a call to arms to defend what has always been. Instead, as we approach what promises to be a watershed moment in the history of this issue in our church, our world President has taken us back to the Bible – what we claim is our only true source of authority on issues of this nature.

Given the almost instantaneous scramble to spin what he said by those who are almost frantically committed to maintaining the status quo, and the sudden proliferation of invitations to seminars and special events proclaiming that they will reveal to their attendees why the Church has always been right in their traditional position, it is refreshing to hear our president entreat to go beyond the religious traditions of the 1920s through the 1960s and to submit to the Bible’s authority alone in this matter.

In the spirit of his invitation to use the Bible alone, I have prepared the following Bible study guide outlining some tools and principles that might prove useful in your personal quest to discover God’s will in this matter. And, I join our President in praying that God’s will will reign supreme in this matter.

Credit should be given where credit is due! So, again, I would like to honor our President’s courage in the face of what must be almost overwhelming opposition to his choice from some of his most influential and well-heeled supporters, and pray that it signals a sea-change in his approach to leadership that will begin to unite our increasingly fragmented world church!

Pastor Dan M. Appel

“To Ordain or Not to Ordain, That is the Question!”

I heard a sermon a while back where the speaker spoke at length on the subject of the ordination of women. It would have been very easy to view his remarks as nothing more than an emotional polemic and to dismiss them out of hand. Because he is someone whom I respect personally, I felt his ideas deserved careful consideration so I headed to the Bible to study the subject. His arguments deserve careful and thoughtful scrutiny because they are the major arguments put forth by the Church’s leadership in the Dark Ages and by many even today who argue that women should not be ordained to gospel ministry.
The Adventist Church has chosen at least twice in the past to not ordain their women pastors for good cause, not for good reason. Much of the impetus has been the women’s liberation movement that was prominent in North America, especially during the 80s and 90s. As a church which has claimed to take the Bible as our rule of belief and practice, this was not a good basis for change. Because we did not take the time to thoroughly and carefully study the subject from Scripture, God, I believe, kept the change from occurring in our church. But the fact that it was rejected in the past for good cause does not mean that it should not be adopted, for the right reasons, should we take the time to do our homework in the Bible and show good Biblical basis for doing so.

That is what I hope to begin to accomplish in this article. I have no interest in countering the sociological and biological arguments which are often given for opposing the ordination of women. Those who would claim things like the intellectual inferiority of women and hormones and gender-determined inability to lead and minister do much more damage to their own credibility and the veracity of their arguments than I could ever hope to accomplish.

I would like to look carefully at what the Bible teaches on the subject and offer my reasons why I believe God would be in favor of ordaining women if we would just be open enough to his leading to give him a vote at the upcoming General Conference Session.

A Basic Biblical Paradigm

When God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and led him to Canaan and promised him that he would be the father of many nations, he wasn’t just referring to the Jews and all of the Arab nations. We begin to discover the extent of this fatherhood when we come to Mt. Sinai with the Israelites after their 400-year captivity in Egypt. God’s intention for Israel was that they would become “God’s own possession among all peoples . . . a holy nation, a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:5-6). God told Moses to speak these words to “all of the children of Israel.”

One either has to argue that God was only intending the males to be considered “the children of Israel,” and that his intent was that only the males in Israel would be his own possession and part of his holy nation, or you must accept that both males and females were to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

God carried Israel out of Egypt on eagles’ wings (Exodus 19:4) for a purpose. He didn’t set them aside as special because they were better than anyone else; nor were they to serve just themselves; but they were to be his means of taking the Good News of the Kingdom of Light to the rest of the world. Every Israelite, rich and poor, prominent and hardly known, male and female, servant and freeman, was to be actively involved in the priestly ministry of taking the Gospel to the nations.

In Exodus and Leviticus we discover the tribe of Levi set aside, perpetually, to be trainers constantly preparing each new generation to minister effectively. God designed that every Israelite would be spoken of as “ministers of our God” (Isaiah 61:6), and that they would bring those from all nations and tongues who accepted citizenship in the Kingdom of Light and that they too would be chosen and trained to be priests and Levites (Isaiah 66:18-21). It was to be an ever-widening circle of people called to relationship with God, trained in ministry, and sent out to tell others. The Gospel, to use Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:18-20, “was to go to the whole world – to every nation, tribe, tongue and people” until the whole world knew about his love for humanity. The day would come, God desired, that “every pot in Jerusalem and Judah would be sacred to the Lord of Hosts” and that anyone coming to Jerusalem to sacrifice could “choose any pot in the country and use it to make his sacrifices” (Zechariah 14:20-21). Unfortunately, Israel began to imagine that they were chosen because they were somebody, that they were somehow better than everyone else and that their value lay in their specialness to God rather than in God’s ability to use them. Instead of becoming a nation of priests taking the Gospel to the world, they became exclusive and hoarded the Good News to themselves. The Levite males, who had indeed been chosen by God for the special task of leading the rest of the people, men and women alike, into ministry became closed and exclusive. As a consequence, the males in Israel began to imagine that they were more privileged than the women and instead of leading them into intimate relationship with God and ministry and honoring them as equals, they relegated them to secondary position in the spiritual life of the community and nation. When the New Testament Church was driven out of Judaism after
Pentecost, God once again tried to restore his dream for his people.

Jesus, when he was here on earth, picked 12 males as the first servant leaders of his church. Those who argue that Jesus only called males to be in his inner circle are correct. But, he chose them not because they were the only ones to be qualified by God, but because they were the only ones culturally acceptable to lead his people from a narrow, mistaken view of God's will to what he had designed for them to be.

Peter, one of his inner circle, understood God’s intent for their leadership when he tells us that Jesus told them that his followers were: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

One cannot pick through this passage and apply some attributes to both men and women – a chosen race, a holy nation, God’s own people who are called to declare God’s wonderful deeds, God’s people who have received mercy – and just one to men only. Again, one either has to say that only men are a chosen race, a holy nation, a royal priesthood and God’s own people who have received mercy, or one is forced to acknowledge that all those terms apply to both genders.

It is even clearer earlier in the chapter where Peter says, “Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4-5).

Again, either the call to come to Jesus as one of his chosen and precious ones and to allow him to build us into a spiritual house so that we can offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus as holy priests all applies only to men, or it all applies to both men and women. The great New Testament theologian, Paul, was one of the most gender-progressive people in New Testament times. At a time when women, if they made it through the door of the synagogue at all, were forced to sit in a separate part of the building behind a screen in silence, he encouraged women to sit with their husbands in the main part of the room (1 Corinthians 14:33-35). He did encourage them to remain silent while they were in the building and to not push for leadership so that they did not “upset the apple cart” and destroy his efforts to lead people to where God wished them to be.

Paul’s clearest statement on the subject of the spiritual equality of men and women is found in Galatians 3:27-29 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

John, in the Revelation, picks up on this theme in two places when he writes: “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen” (Revelation 1:5-7).

Again, in Revelation 5:9-10 he writes, “Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom people for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.”

As in the previous verses, either Jesus freed only males from their sins by ransoming them from everywhere on earth by his blood and made them a kingdom, priests to his God and father destined to reign on earth, or it applies to all no matter their gender.

Once again, as in Old Testament times, rather than using their position as servant leaders to lead all of God’s people into their priestly ministry (called, during the Reformation, the “priesthood of all believers”), the male leadership of the church instead took the opportunity to make priestly ministry an exclusively male domain and to use it to exercise that power to subordinate women.
In the process, one of the most basic Biblical concepts was lost, and God and his church on earth misrepresented.

Now that we have laid a basic theological baseline for the Bible’s purpose for both men and women in ministry, what about those texts that seem to state or imply something different?

Because much of the textual basis used by those who oppose or favor ordaining women is drawn from the writing of Paul the Apostle, we need to remind ourselves to use good hermeneutics as we seek to determine just what the Bible, and especially Paul, meant in certain places and instances. As Peter said so eloquently, “… our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking … as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand …” (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Using the conservative historical-grammatical method, it is fair to try to determine which of Paul’s statements are personal and cultural and which are based on sound theology. Even when he is talking about clearly held beliefs we need to ask which are his opinion and which are a clear “thus says the Lord.”

The New Testament statements most often used to combat the notion of ordaining women are as follows:

**Colossians 3:18-20** – Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

This passage sounds clear-cut, and if it were the only text from Paul we had on the subject, it would be pretty clear that in the family, wives are to subject themselves to their husbands.

But, Paul speaks in other places on the same subject, where he takes the opportunity to clarify what he intends.

In **Ephesians 5:21-33**, Paul says, “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

The identical word is used in both Ephesians and Colossians. Here “subjection” is a two-way street, required of both spouses in a marriage. Paul describes what he intends in Ephesians 5:33 when he says that each one should love his wife as he does himself, and the wife should respect her husband. The meaning of the subjection Paul admonishes wives to have for their husbands is not blind obedience, but respect – something not given because it is deserved or demanded, but because the person offering it chooses to do so. Men are challenged to give up themselves (their pride, power and desire to control) for their wives as Jesus gave up himself for the church. Love always gives up its desire to dominate, and serves. Paul clarifies his meaning when he says that husbands are to spiritually lead their wives to God by lining up themselves and becoming servants in love to lead them to a relationship with God. In this setting, the “subjecting” Paul advises for men is much greater than that which he advises for women.

This is far from the power and pride of position that characterizes many who wish to use this passage to exert their predominance over women.

Another passage often used by those opposed to the ordination of women is **1 Corinthians 11:1-16**, where Paul says, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head – it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. . . . (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels. (Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.) Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. If anyone is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do
the churches of God.

This passage must be considered as a whole.

First of all, Paul says that what he has delivered to them on this subject is part of, literally, the Jewish traditional laws (paradosis), the Jewish traditions handed down orally from Moses’ time to the Pauline present which illustrated and expanded the written law. Paul was still keeping many of these non-Biblical traditions because they were a part of his religious culture, not because he believed that they came from God – although he tried to excuse them by appealing to religious grounds like any good Talmudic rabbi would.

If we are going to be honest about what Paul intended, we must admit that the issue in this passage is hair – the hair of the Christian. Anything he says about the relationship between men and women is by way of illustration – based on tradition and Paul’s opinion based on those traditions. After stating his opinion that the head of every woman is her husband, he goes on to state that any woman who prays or prophesies without her head covered might as well have her head shaved. In fact, he goes on to say that if she is not going to wear a veil she might as well shave her own head.

Most in today’s religious world, even those in very conservative circles, would say that what Paul says here about hair here was cultural, based on his times, and not normative for the Christian. No one I know insists that his wife and daughters veil their heads in church. And, if he does not veil their hair, I have never heard of him trying to shave his wife’s head, or advocating that she do it herself. It is therefore disingenuous to make his aside illustrations a standard for whether or not women should be ordained.

**Titus 2:2-6** – *Bid the older men be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Bid the older women likewise to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited. Likewise urge the younger men to control themselves.*

First of all, it should be obvious from this passage that the issue is not whether women should or should not be ordained. Rather, Paul is admonishing all concerned to live lives that will not discredit God or the church in the eyes of the world. In a culture where men ruled the women that were their legal chattel, Paul is concerned that women not use their freedom as followers of Jesus to bring discredit on the church so they should be respectful of their husbands.

**1 Peter 3:1-6** – *Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of fine clothing, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you.*

Even a careless reading reveals that this passage is not about ordination of women or even the place of women in the larger scheme of things. It is about winning souls for Jesus.

Peter is writing to women whose husbands were not Christ followers, and he suggests that the wives, through their respectful behavior, can win their husbands to Jesus. It is a voluntary submission or respect to someone who is not a follower of God for a purpose, not because God or even the church demands it. Sarah chose to relate to Abraham and to win him to a relationship with God, Peter says, and so can you if you are willing. (This is an interesting insight into who originally, way back in Ur of the Chaldees, first became acquainted with God in Abraham’s family. Sarah’s choice to respect Abraham apparently won him to God just like any other wife has the opportunity to win her
unbelieving husband.)

1 Timothy 2:11-15 – Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

This passage may be one of the most rationalized passages in all of scripture. Most commentators dance through these verses like Fred Astaire. Let’s just let Paul say what he says and ask ourselves if this is what the larger context of the rest of the Bible teaches or if this is another of those hard-to-understand Pauline sayings that were based on his opinion.

Does any thinking Christian really believe that the Bible teaches that the only way that women can be saved is by having plenty of babies? In addition, does God really intend that women learn obediently in total silence and never teach anything to any man? Finally, is it the message of scripture that Eve and all her female descendants are the source of all the bad that has happened in this world, so this is their lot in life and she should get used to it!

If a person truly believes that Paul was basing his statements on God’s intent and that this passage is normative, then he should be willing to practice and advocate everything in this passage. If we don’t believe that everything Paul says here is an accurate picture of God’s will, then it is not reasonable to pick bits and pieces and apply them to the subject of ordination.

Many sincere, well-meaning Christians down through the centuries have used the Bible to justify their desire to “be the boss.” The strongest human drive is the drive to control others. It is convenient to be able to find a Bible verse that justifies it. But the Bible, when a person just reads Scripture with an open mind, does not teach that women should not be ordained. On the contrary, it was God’s original intent that his people restore the equality that was in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. He set in place leaders who he hoped would make it happen, and intended that his church would illustrate the restoration of the equality between men and women that comes when our sinful humanity has been redeemed.

Maybe it’s time we finished the work God gave his Church and honor the female side, the heart, of the priesthood of all believers.

To review, if you are going to take the Bible passages as literally as many wish, then you have to take all that they say literally. You cannot pick and choose your way through them, using some of what Paul and Peter said and ignoring the rest.

How Did We End Up in This Mess?

The subject of the ordination of women was not a major issue in early Adventism. Women held many responsibilities in the church hierarchy equally with men; a female prophet spoke and wrote authoritatively in and for the church and was credentialed as if she was ordained – even though she never felt the need to be formally ordained because her ordination, she believed, was from God. Women led out in church services, preached, evangelized and were generally accepted in roles that were unusual in Victorian America.

There were apparently instances where women were licensed to preach and were considered by those who worked with them as ordained – even though we are not aware if they did or did not go through a formal ceremony.

As time went on, though, in a Victorian age dominated by men where women were often chattel and were not considered equal or physically or mentally capable enough to deserve a vote in national or local elections, women were increasingly relegated to second-class status. To support this situation, well-meaning but misguided men trying to defend their position, developed theologies that were as egregiously wrong, hermeneutically, as those developed to defend slavery. Emotionally they were attractive to those proffering them, but Biblically they were very weak.
Eventually, during the Women’s Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, some women of the Adventist Church began to agitate for a change. Unfortunately, the basis for many of their arguments was social rather than Biblical, and the church was very slow to change. On the other side, the same tactics and arguments used against abolition and women’s suffrage were used to discredit the idea, and it was reduced to a slow simmering volcano that occasionally raises its head – generally around General Conference times.

The issue was made worse by a set of circumstances that virtually destroyed any meaning of the idea of ordination itself.

A number of years ago, the Adventist Church faced a difficult dilemma. The Church had a two-tiered system of setting aside individuals for pastoral ministry. A person went through a period of being "licensed" (eventually called commissioned) – sort of a time of professional probation; then, when he was judged to be ready, was “ordained.” The church claimed the same tax privileges for both classes. The IRS then ruled that for individuals to be entitled to the same tax benefits, they had to be allowed to perform the same duties. In short order, commissioned or licensed pastors were allowed by the church to perform anything an ordained person could.

This created a second awkward situation. We had commissioned women in many areas of church service clear back to the late 1800s. Suddenly, by IRS ruling, these commissioned employees were qualified to do anything ordained ministers could do.

This created the theological equivalent of the Keystone Cops, as church administrators scrambled to figure out what to do, and those on the fundamentalist side of Adventism sprang to find some way of holding on to their two-tier – male and female – distinctions in the church. Soon we were left in a position that made a mockery of ordination for everyone involved.

Because of the widely and forcefully held diversity of opinion on the subject, the Church at large has continued to “ordain” men to ministry and has chosen to “commission” women – even as certain Union and local conferences have begun to ordain them. Both commissioned and ordained individuals can fulfill the same responsibilities, perform the same functions, lead and direct the same activities, programs and departments, and take advantage of the same tax and employee benefits. The two words have become absolutely synonymous – their meaning and choice for use determined solely by whether they are being applied to a man or a woman. The semantic hairsplitting that leads to the distinction between the two different classifications is demeaning to both genders; it degrades the whole idea of ordination; and it creates an artificial distinction, not based on scripture – the main reason why a growing number in the church are beginning to call for the elimination of ordination altogether.

At some point we will either have to say that the ordination of female clergy is truly a moral issue and refuse to bow to government pressure and penalize all of our commissioned individuals by not allowing them the legitimate tax advantages our ordained clergy enjoy, or we should realize that the issue is primarily a cultural one and set aside our personal prejudices and vote to ordain women.

There are parts of the world where ordaining women may never be practical – where, culturally, it will probably always be anathema. There are other areas where the majority of the church may consider it culturally and theologically acceptable – where the majority feel that there is legitimate reason to ordain women. If it is one of those basic areas that define who we are, then we should not budge and compromise. If, on the other hand, it is not, then we should be willing to allow others to see things differently than we do and not attempt to impose our will on them. In those cases, it should be a matter of personal choice, not church mandate. That is one reason why recent church councils have recommended to the world church that each Division be allowed to make the decision for themselves.

One thing neither side should be willing to allow this subject to do is to divide our church any longer.
As Augustine said, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things love.”
Not a Rib

*English Bibles have a mistranslation that needs to be corrected.*

By Jack Hoehn

Humans usually have 24 ribs. The ribs come from the 12 thoracic vertebra (back bones) and provide support and protection for the chest and its contents. The top 7 pair are attached by cartilage directly to the sternum (breast bone) in the front of the chest. Three of the next five are attached indirectly to the sternum through an arch of cartilage that forms the upper margins of your abdomen and an attachment for your thin flexible breathing muscle, or diaphragm. The last two ribs of the bottom five are often not attached and hence can be called “floating” ribs, although all 12 pair of ribs are attached to each other by the several layers of intercostal muscles and connective tissue called fasciae, or on the inside of the chest, pleura.

When you take a breath, the intercostal muscles between the ribs contract to pull the ribs up and out, at the same time that the diaphragm contracts and flattens pulling down, together inflating your lungs.

**Bilateria**

The Creator used the vertebra/rib design in many Bilateria (creatures with a right and left half, as opposed to round animals like jellyfish or sponges that don’t have two equal halves). Dogs have 13 pairs of ribs; snakes, of course, have many more, but frogs only have one pair. The turtle’s eight ribs are made to fuse into its shell. Fish have two ribs on each vertebra: dorsal and ventral ribs. But sharks only have short ventral bony ribs, with the rest cartilage, and lampreys have no ribs at all.

**5th rib?**

The King James Bible translates a Hebrew word for “fifth”(*chomesh* from *chamesh*, five) as “fifth rib,” as a lethal point of entry for killing. “*Under the fifth*” of the top 7 ribs on the left would put your sword or spear into the heart. “*Under the five*” lower ribs would put you into the “belly” (as most modern translations prefer); either entry would be quite lethal. Abner, Saul’s general, killed the brother of David’s general Joab, named Asahel (2 Samuel 2). Then Joab killed Abner (2 Samul 3). After Abner died, two of Saul’s soldiers murdered their master, Saul’s surviving son Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 4), mistakenly thinking to curry David’s favor. Finally, Joab dispatched his own cousin Amasa who had joined Absalom in rebellion against David (2 Samuel 20). All died using the same lethal method: “*and smote him there under the fifth [rib], that he died.*”

**“Rib” versus “Half” or “Side”?**

There a proper anatomical Hebrew word for “rib”, *ala*, that appears in Daniel 7:5 where the Bear of Medo-Persia has three of them in his mouth.

But there is another Hebrew word in the Bible, *tsela*, that 40 times means “side,” as in one of two sides or halves – as in “*siding*” planks of cedar in 1 Kings 6:15. Or as the two “sides” of the Ark of the Covenant with rings for carrying
poles on each of its two “sides,” in Exodus 37:3. Or as rooms along one “side” or the other (north or south “sides”) of the Temple of Ezekiel 41:5,11. The Table of Showbread was on the north “side” or “half” of the Holy Place (Exodus 26:35). Or two cedar “halves” or “sides” of a split door leading into Solomon’s Temple. Each “half” or “side” (tsela) of the split door was covered with carved “cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; and… overlaid… with gold” (1 Kings 6:33,34). The two sides or half panels made one entrance into the Holy Place.

So why, in Genesis 2:21-22, where it says God took one “tsela” of Adam, does the English translation say a “rib” instead of one of his two “sides?” Or instead of one of the two “halves” of the bilateral first human? This mistranslation starting with Wycliffe through the King James Version has been entrenched in most English Bibles.[1] But the word “side” makes wonderful sense to understand that woman was not 1/24th of a man, but one half.

Adam’s Trance

The deep sleep (Genesis 2:21) that God put Adam into as introduction to his life partner was not surgical anesthesia. It was a dream or trance like the one God put Abram into (see Genesis 15) so God could reveal to Abram in a dream His one-sided covenant of grace. Here Abram divided a 3-year-old virgin cow, a 3-year-old female goat, and a 3-year-old male sheep into 2 halves each, and placed one half on one side, and the other half on the other side. Then Abram too fell into a deep sleep-like trance, and God revealed Himself in Abram’s dream as a moving pillar of cloud and pillar of fire through the two halves of the bilateral animals, the right and left halves. To Abram this meant God was taking a solemn oath, making a promise that must be kept, offering himself to be hewn asunder if He did not keep His word.

So Adam’s deep sleep was not surgical anesthesia; it was a trance, a spiritual dream where he saw himself hewn asunder, and one of his “sides” (not merely one little rib), one half of him, turned into the woman he would shortly be introduced to. God revealed to Adam in this trance that Woman was his side, his half, his equal. When Adam awoke from the dream sleep, he understood that Eve was not just his little rib, but “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” his side, his half, flesh and bones all together.

Formed of Dust

Animals, like man, were formed of chemistry. “God formed from the soil every living thing of the field and every fowl of the heavens” (Genesis 2:19). Man was alike mortal, chemical, “formed of dust from the soil” (Genesis 2:7) and also given the breath of life. This “formed of dust” is not a scientific explanation of how chemistry became biochemistry, how biochemistry became complex cells, and how cells became living beings. It is a statement of our mortality, our earthiness. Dust we are, and except by the grace of God and access to the Tree of Life, dust we will become.

So the dream of Adam is not a scientific explanation of woman’s origin; it is a God-given vision of woman’s place in the order of creation. Although mortal, as animals and men, she is half of humanity, she is one side of mankind’s two sides. She is not a rib, she is one of the two sides that make a human, an equal partner.

What does a human look like? Here is a picture of a human as presented by the Genesis 2 creation of mankind story—male and female, two equal halves of humanity, side by side.

YHWH, God, formed the human of dust from the soil,
he blew into his nostrils the breath of life
and the human became a living being.
YHWH, God, planted a garden in Eden, in the east,
and there he placed the human…

But YHWH, God, said it is not good for the human to be alone,
I will make him an equal helper.
So he had the human name all the other animals formed from the soil,
but found no equal helper for himself.

So YHWH, God, put the human into a trance where he saw God
take one of his two sides and close up the flesh.

And YHWH, God, turned this half of man into woman and
brought her to the man, who exclaimed,
“At last, finally, this is what I have been waiting for!
Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh!
She shall be called ISHA (woman)
because from ISH (man) she was taken.”

Therefore men leave parents and join with a woman,
for they are really two sides of one flesh.

No More Ribbing

Ellen White can also be read (omitting the “rib” mistranslation) in complete harmony with woman as coming from the side or half of man.

“Eve was created…from the SIDE of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his SIDE as an equal…A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation…they shall be one.”[3]

Many male lips have “ribbed” women, and it helps me to understand that the translation error has served to diminish women from their equality, at creation, with men. My sisters are not a rib; they are my equals.

A man with a paralyzed side is a cripple, having hemiplegia, as seen in some stroke victims. Like Jacob, whose hip was dislocated in struggling with God, he ever after limps along needing a crutch. Till the end of his life Jacob was disabled by loss of one of his sides in that battle, and till the day of his death, worshiped leaning on a crutch.[4]

The male headship heresy promoted by some of my brothers should be challenged not only as un-Christ-like, but also an un-Biblical view of female diminution. Genesis 2 teaches that humans were created mortal (like animals,
from dust), and that women were created equal to men (half of Adam). This is in full harmony with the Genesis 1 account where the image of God is male and female.

A church that does not recognize women’s full equality in service will be hemiplegic, crippled with one weak side, limping along on crutches instead of running quickly towards the kingdom. How can an Adventist church founded by a woman of God not understand this?

John Mark Reynolds, Provost of Huston Baptist University, is quoted in Christianity Today with this insight. “If Genesis is true—if you believe male and female are deep categories that are tied to the creation of humankind and the image of God—then to fail to hear a woman’s voice on a topic would be to fail to hear something the Holy Spirit is saying to our generation.”[5]

FOOTNOTES:


Please feel free to copy or share (by clicking below) this article with family and interested friends.

All comments will be read with interest and edited by the author.
He will retain selected comments that he feels contribute to the topic or have useful corrections.

Addendum: Personal Note by Author: Dear Readers and Commenters– I had fully intended to try and control the comments to this article like a good magazine would, and only post those that really helped support or improve the simple idea presented in this blog, but frankly the comments have been so fast and furious that I just don’t have the time to do it. So mostly as often happens on this website the comments take on a life of their own. I am sorry. If you don’t want to be upset by the inevitable tone of the critics and the pointed rejoinders and tit and tat from all the “usual suspects” just stop reading here, and send the article to your friends ignoring the comments.

I have written many blogs for the Adventist Today website. None I have written have ever had as many Facebook posts as this one. Within 24 hours of it being posted there are 919 reposts to Facebook! This is a close to “going viral” that a small Adventist blog can ever hope for!

I am so happy that this means as much to others as it did to me. Deanne can tell you that when I suddenly understood this two weeks ago, I shouted out with delight, this is so wonderful, it all fits and makes sense now!

It is a little thing, a small mistranslation, but it carries with it big attitude changes that every boy and girl learn when they hear the creation stories. I don’t know how girls feel, but I know how it gave me an unwarranted sense of boy-big, girl-little to my child like mind.
I thank God he has since removed that misunderstanding from my heart. We must stop doing this to our boys and girls in the future. We must correct this translation in every Bible Story book and every Kindergarten Sabbath School Class, and every Church School Bible class. It is a little change, but it must be done for the sake of truth and fairness. Boy 50%–Girl 50%= together One Fine Balanced Human. Two great sides of one greatly loved creation.
— Jack Hoehn
Disconnecting from Change

by Andy Hanson, May 13, 2015: The following meditation by Richard Rohr was contained in an email sent to me by a close Adventist friend. She simply said that Mike Van’s description of a prophet reminded her of me. I’m flattered, but paraphrasing Amos, “I’m not a prophet, nor son of a prophet.” And I feel certain that my fellow AT bloggers would be equally uncomfortable were they to receive a similar missive. However, all of us at AT strive to support prophetic voices of encouragement, concern and warning.

My wife, who left Adventism after listening to Ted Wilson’s inaugural speech, and is now part of a loving, inspirational, and spiritual Community of Friends, explains AT’s “prophetic efforts” as the result of a “spiritual calling.” (Quakers believe in such things.)

Perhaps my “calling” is grounded in this Kathleen Norris quote:

Disconnecting from change does not recapture the past. It loses the future.

And I want Adventism to have a future because I am a third-generation Adventist, and I am aware of the potential for good that remains unrealized because of the irrational beliefs and actions of my generation’s official Adventist dogma.

Richard Rohr’s meditation is a reminder that institutional religion, once incorporated, begins a journey to irrelevancy and requires loyal insiders with a “spiritual calling” to a prophetic ministry if it is to remain vibrant, timely, inspirational, and attractive.

WHO WOULD WANT TO BE A PROPHET? Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditation

Thursday, February 19, 2015, adapted from The Way of the Prophet by Mike Van

“By definition, the prophet has to be on the edge of the inside of institutional religion. It’s a hard position to hold, and it must be held both structurally and personally, with wisdom and grace. There are many times it would be easier to leave the system or to play the company man/woman and just go along with the game. Jesus understood this. He loved and respected his Jewish religion, yet he pushed the envelope wide open. He often healed people on the Sabbath, which was a deliberate statement against making a practice into a dogma that was higher than human need (Matthew 12:1-8). Yet he honored the same Jewish establishment by telling some he had healed to “go show yourselves to the priests” (Luke 17:14). Jesus walked the thin line of a true prophet, or what Ken Wilber so wisely names as the central principle, “transcend and include.”

“Being a prophet demands two seemingly opposites: radical traditionalism and shocking iconoclasm at the same time. If people see just one of those first, they’ll presume you’re only that. “Oh, he’s just a pious little Christian boy” or “She’s an angry woman!” They cannot imagine that those two can really coexist, tame, and educate one another. Holding the tension of opposites is the necessary education of the prophet, and the Church has given little energy to it. Frankly, it takes non-dual thinking to pull this off, and we have pretty much trained people in the simplistic choosing of one idealized alternative while denigrating the other.
“To put together these two immense opposites demands a good deal of human maturity, groundedness, spiritual intelligence, and readiness to not be liked—even by good people whom you really respect. You must be willing to believe that God is calling you to do this, that God is using you, and that you are an instrument. But don’t believe anyone who is wearing the loud badge of a prophet; it is never anything anyone should or would want to do, it seems to me. It is a calling, and often for only one single issue or time.

“Ironically, a prophet must be educated inside the system in order to have the freedom to critique that very system. You have to know the rules of any tradition, and you have to respect those rules enough to know why they do exist—and thus how to break them properly, for the sake of a larger and more essential value. This is what Martin Luther King Jr. taught America and what Gandhi taught the British. Here is the key: you can only unlock systems from the inside. A prophet critiques a system by quoting its own documents, constitutions, heroes, and Scriptures against its present practice. That’s why they eventually win, but at a huge price to themselves.”

Prophets Then, Prophets Now (CD, MP3 download); and Scripture as Liberation (MP3 download)

• 3

Sharing is caring!
Fruitful Trees

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, submitted May 13, 2015

They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season,
with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper. Ps 1:3

When I was young, I believed that the truly dedicated Christian life would be continuously fruitful, continuously victorious, and reasonably balanced. That is to say, I never was naïve enough, even as a child, to believe that life on this planet would be problem-free. I knew there would be ups and downs; I just thought if you could maintain your dedication, “stay your mind on him,” those ups and downs would be less extreme than otherwise.

Let’s just say…life wasn’t. Not balanced, not particularly victorious, and only erratically fruitful.

One day I was reading Psalm 1, and it dawned on me that I had it all wrong. According to this verse, life is actually meant to have seasons. Like the planet. “Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter.” God promised with the rainbow that those wouldn’t perish from the earth. Was it possible he meant the same for human lifespans?

What does it take to be a truly dedicated, fruitful Christian?

Like [a] tree planted by streams of water…

In the Middle East, then as now, water is a big deal. Well, it’s a big deal everywhere, but in arid climates it’s not taken for granted. To be truly healthy and fruitful, a tree needs to be planted near water. This means that even when the summer sun has dried up the surface water, the tree’s roots can still reach an aquifer.

Jesus likened the Holy Spirit to “living water,” that is, an artesian spring, flowing from deep within. What are the ways that you nurture your awareness of and participation in that welling of eternal life?

…bearing fruit in due season…

This was the line that startled me. No fruit tree bears all year. They bear for a few weeks each year. And some require bad weather, too. Apples, for instance, don’t bear well if they don’t get at least 30 days below freezing.

Huh.

What would be the “due season” of the soul? Are there times when we are meant to be producing fruit and times when we are meant to be resting? Then, of course, there are the in-between seasons, of preparation for bearing (budding, flowering, being pollinated, losing flowers, and beginning hard little fruits) and of weariness after bearing. Some fruit trees look pretty ragged after bearing, especially if they bore a bumper crop.

I wonder if that’s why Jesus sometimes wandered off into the hills? How do you seek nurture before, during, and after fruiting times in your life?

…with leaves that do not wither…

See, this is what threw me off. I thought it meant you stayed green, so to speak, all year. But fruit trees are generally (though not always) deciduous. And even evergreens go through a season of dropping yellow needles and being
rejuvenated. Right now, in May, my hollies all look pretty scruffy, with nearly half their leaves yellow and tons of them on the ground. No barefooting around here right now!

Is this a “due season” thing, too? Does it just mean you don’t wither from actual disease or drought, since you have that artesian spring nearby? Can you think of times when your “leaves” have “withered,” and after the fact, you can discern whether it was a timely and expected withering or not? If not, what can you do to seek healing for spiritual disease, or seek more water?

… everything they do shall prosper.

Everything? Boy, it sure doesn’t seem like it! Could it be that this, too, has a different definition than I thought?

Something to consider, and pray about.

• 1
Adventist Elementary School Celebrates with First Annual Lego® Robotics Showcase


BATTLE GROUND, WA—This year, a few brave Meadow Glade Adventist Elementary School parents took the reins of a program that would prove to be a phenomenal experience for those who participated. Michael and Stephanie Mowry, Peter and Heidi Schmalenbeger, and Jonathan Erich headed up the program which consisted of bi-weekly classes for several months where students learned to assemble and program robots. The program was sponsored, in part, by Murr Elektronic.

Preston Schafer, part of the team that placed first in the Lego® Robotics Showcase on March 12, said, “It was really fun learning about robotics. I also liked spending more time with my friends. At the showcase our robot performed the best it ever had!”

Each week the students attended one class after school and an elective class on Sunday. Working in pairs, students took turns programming and assembling the robots. Then, they would test their programmed robots on one of two boards. One board was dedicated to checking for accuracy in getting their robots to accomplish particular goals. A robot would be programmed to make a Lego® windmill turn and release an energy cell, activate a Lego® dam to release an energy cell, or perform other similar tasks. The other board was a test board where students would check a robot’s progress.

“We had so much fun watching the kids learn new skills this season. Many of the kids signed up because they liked to play with Legos®. They learned pretty fast this wasn’t just about building. There was design, engineering, programming, and strategy involved. Most importantly, it was about teamwork. I loved to watch a team finally accomplish a mission and see the other kids get excited and give high fives. I’m so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this.” said instructor Heidi Schmalenberger.

Every year, Lego® provides a theme for participants. This year, MGAES used the theme, “Green City Challenge”. The idea was that robots would be programmed to turn a Lego® city “green” by releasing energy cells that were located inside different Lego® buildings. Once enough energy cells were collected, they would be inserted into a Lego® house that was then operating on a more efficient, “greener” level. Mission accomplished!

Columbia Adventist Academy generously allowed the class to use their robots and space on campus for the year. They had been purchased for a Lego® Robotics class at CAA a few years ago. Working together, principals Jeff
Jackson of CAA and Ric Peinado of MGAES were hopeful that the program could begin at the elementary school level and continue to build into a program across the street at the high school level.

The culminating showcase event featured each team’s robots attempting to release energy cells and activate the “green” house. It took place in CAA’s Ad Building and was attended by CAA and MGAES faculty along with parents, grandparents, and friends of the participants.

The Lego® Robotics class was comprised of students from grades 5 and 6 at MGAES. The 16 students were: Tommy Aitchison, Camron Bordeaux, Marideth Childers, Ethan Erich, Branden Ermshar, Dylan Farrell, Trey Hart, Tyler Havens, Jamie Mayhew, Joshua Mowry, Ryan Mowry, Aidan Scalf, Preston Schafer, Dawson Schaffer, Noah Schmalenberger, and Bailey Waldon.

Ric Peinado, MGAES Principal, said, “We, (MGAES and CAA) are thrilled with the club’s success and the opportunity to provide our children with an engaging way to learn about engineering. I am so thankful for the parent volunteers and want to also thank Murr Elektronics for their support of our school’s team and the hard work of everyone involved. It was a great night to not only showcase our kids’ skills and talents in STEM education, but also to show our students and community that science and fun can go together.”

Following the class, an anonymous donor provided funding so that the program can continue to the next level. The moneys will mean MGAES can purchase new robots, software, and form at least one, potentially two teams that will participate in the state Lego® Robotics Invitational in Walla Walla, Washington in April of 2016. The program that MGAES will be joining next year, the Adventist Robotics League, is comprised of schools across the NPUC. The ARL also includes instruction and demonstration in project management and presentation as well as robot building and programming.
Abide…

Photo by Debbonnaire Kovacs, submitted May 13, 2015

*If you abide in me and I in you…you will bear much fruit…John :5*
Sharing is caring!
Welcome Home...Maybe...[Revisited]

Posted by Debbonnaire Kovacs, May 13, 2015

Next week we will begin publishing the autobiography/memoir of an anonymous woman who was featured in a recent sermon published as a two-part feature. (This link will take you to part one.) As an introduction, here is a preface written by her long-time internet pastor and friend, Gregory Matthews.

This is the story of a woman raised in the heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who early in her life found herself on the outside looking in, and of her struggle to find peace with God and the denomination of her childhood. It is a story of human failings, some on her part and others on the part of congregational members who thought they were doing what was right. It is a story that did not have a perfect ending. At the end of her life she had restored her relationship with God but she remained estranged from the denomination of her choice.

Her last words to me, a couple of hours before she died, were to the effect that when she next opened her eyes, she would look into the loving eyes of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That was one of the issues. She had experienced the love and salvation of the Christ. In her desire to share that love, she sometimes got in the face of those who saw things differently. In her spiritual journey there were doctrinal understandings that departed from standard Seventh-day Adventist teachings, and life-style issues that others felt she needed to work on. Some just did not understand how she could be so excited about her salvation.

In the months preceding her death she and I worked together on what she wanted to be her last proclamation of God’s grace, love, and salvation. This was the story of her life and her relationship with the God who spared nothing to bring her back into a positive relationship with him. As she and I worked together, she charged me with the task of getting her story published. But the time was not right for immediate publication and for several years her story has remained untold.

This story is told in the words that she wrote. Names and identifying content have been changed to protect embarrassment to some. As part of that, she has been given a pen name. Other than such changes, editing has been minimal. This story is her story and generally in her words.

Parts of this story reflect our human condition and are not pretty. As she would say, in telling them they give glory to the God that is capable of saving anyone and desires to do so. As Paul said: “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.” (Romans 5:20 NIV) Our objective in publishing this material is to honor her desire to proclaim the availability of God’s salvation to all. Like a prodigal daughter, she had wandered deep in the world of sin. But her Lord had continued to pursue her like a hound from heaven chasing a fox. (“The Hound of Heaven” is a poem written by Francis Thompson.)

Gregory Matthews
In Praise of Fruit

By S M Chen, submitted May 13, 2015

My typical breakfast consists of cold cereal, soy milk, and a banana. When the banana is gone, typically before the cereal and soy milk, I sprinkle frozen blueberries atop the cereal. I often down the few pills I take with orange juice (this despite the admonishment of some that fruit should be taken in solid, not liquid, form)

I often have an apple, pear or grapes at lunch or dinner.

What I’ve noticed – and I admit this must be by no means original – is the lack of correlation between external and internal blemishes/flaws/imperfections.

Sometimes a banana, say, will have a spot of varying size on the peel. When I remove the peel, halfway expecting the underlying fruit to be tarnished or damaged in some way, I am pleasantly surprised to discover that the blemish was, in fact, only skin deep.

Other times a small spot on the peel indicates a similarly small bad spot in the fruit, which I can scoop out with ease.

Once in a while, however, I’m surprised by the discrepancy, in which a comparatively small flaw of the peel conceals an almost full-thickness rottenness of the underlying fruit, in which event I discard a considerable amount, perhaps up to half the length of the banana.

I’ve had similar experience with both apples and pears. Because of a dental condition, I peel and section both of the above before consumption. During the peeling process, I scrutinize the fruit for any imperfections, which, again, has a relatively low correlation with what one sees externally.

I’ve been tempted to term this the Iceberg Effect, but it would be inaccurate, in that the appellation implies that visible flaws in the skin/peel of a fruit mask a consistently larger defect in the flesh of the fruit, and such is not the case.

What the above brings to mind is what Scripture tells us: “… for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:7).

After all, I care little about a given fruit’s exterior, so long as the underlying interior is reasonably esthetic, nutritious, palatable and not a potential source of illness.

This is one reason, I believe, we are admonished to: “Judge not.” For, if we judge (and I have been guilty of this in the past), we do so on the basis of what we observe, and perceive to be true. What we observe may or may not be indicative of what is really going on inside the person we form an opinion (often negative) about.

It makes sense to be kind, generous, and compassionate to others, assuming the best about them, giving them the benefit of the doubt. This is, in essence, the crux of Christianity. If we call God our Father, we are all His children, and others, whether they be blood relatives or otherwise, are our brothers and sisters.

Most of us give preferential treatment to our family members, including siblings. We likely tolerate/endure differences – whether political, religious, or other – that we wouldn’t in non-relatives. We cut them slack, and expect to be treated in kind – to maintain or foster equanimity and harmony.

If we can develop the mindset that there really are no strangers, that, because we’re all in the same boat, that no
one gets out alive – we’re born, we live, we die – then it’s easier to consider all men our brothers, and women our sisters. In which event, the sermons we hear week after week may become internalized, and our lives may become living sermons.

As Edgar Guest put it, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one, any day.” There are countless others like him.

And, although I’ll continue to peel my bananas, pears, and apples, I’ll now have the trace of smile on my face. What’s more, I think God will, too.

• 19