Fish Food
Rachel Lemons, author of Fish Food targets young adults in her new devotional book.

Back2School
7 Ways to Stay Focused on God during the week by Zoë Fisher

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What if God had to make Time for you?
August 16, 2012

Dear Friend,

In case you haven’t heard, Central States Conference is engaged in a period of prayer and fasting called “100 Days of Healing.” We are asking God to send the Comforter into our midst to bring healing and restoration of individual spiritual life, Christian Brother and Sisterhood, church vitality, and fiscal stability to move forward the work of God. The official start of our 100 days prayer initiative was July 1st. All of our pastors have been encouraged to keep it before you. This Sabbath August 19th marks the half-way point on our quest to know the Lord more deeply, and moreover, see Jesus accomplish this God-sized task for us.

While our 100 day quest for healing officially concludes on October 8th, I see it similarly to when I say amen at the close of prayer in the morning. I don’t intend the statement “amen” to mean my communication with the Master for the balance of the day has now ceased, but instead, the time I have spent in prayer has opened the door of my soul to be in a state of prayerful submission for the balance of the day.

Recently, a church member pulled me aside and asked, “How long do we do the prayer and fasting event?” I was heartened as she shared her question recognizing her inquiry implied she is participating in our prayer journey. If you have the same question in mind, our request is specifically as follows.

Kindly:

1. **Pray** - Pray earnestly for the Spirit of God to fill our conference with a spirit of true fellowship and where needed, forgiveness.
2. **Fast** - Find one thing you love and each weekday, Monday through Friday, declare a fast in your life from it. It could be anything from a meal each day to something that you enjoy doing to relax such as music listening or television viewing.
This issue of Back2Basics Magazine begins the Back2Basics Tip series. B2B Mag started as idea to be a bi-monthly publication. Lo and behold, God has other plans and it turns out to be a monthly magazine so far. In this issue we’re going Back2School with Back2Basics! Read all about how to stay connected with God during the week as some of you start the semester. Get in the game with David Robinson as he discusses faith in sports. We even have some treats for you to try like delicious veggie empanadas and a “how-to” on thrifty shopping.

As we start a new season, remember your purpose here on this Earth. What ever your incredible plans are today make sure to give them to God!

GOD = (G)ood (O)rderly (D)irection!
Socialites is a mentoring group for girls ages 11-17. The group's focus is to develop leadership, service, and academic excellence in our future leaders. Socialites meet monthly to gather for "rap sessions."

These sessions cover a wide range of topics including: avoiding risk behaviors, money management, bullying, personal hygiene, and etiquette. The group also gathers for quarter mother/daughter outings; to foster growing and building the mother/daughter relationship. The outings include overnight excursions, plays, and musicals.

Socialites are active in community service projects and making a difference in the lives of the unrepresented. Annually we host a purity ball to publicly acknowledge the girls achievements and commitment to abstinence from all risk behaviors including sex, drugs, and alcohol. This year the ball will be held in December.

This year we have visited several mission and homeless centers, started a barbershop/beauty literacy ministry where we installed book nooks in beauty and barbershops. Socialites are preparing now for a mission trip to a South Dakota Indian Reservations in 2013. For our seniors we launched a helping hands ministry to help the seniors in our community and local churches. We have set a goal to give away 100 hats to Children's Hospital and will also give toys during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season. Our mother/daughter Friends Forever 2012 retreat was an awesome weekend of renewal of relationships.

We invite you to join us as a Socialite or mentor in being the change you wish to see in the world. Socialites is sponsored by Beta Qoph Society, a Christian Society for women who want to be Changemakers. For more information contact Bernadict Quarles at 720-885-5575 or Karintha Ragland, Mentor Director at 720-940-5655.
The price of growth is so much less than the price of staying the same. God, through the exhortation of apostle Paul tells us to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2)." In the original Greek text, to "be transformed" is a call to continual growth and not just a one time event.

I’m convinced that the reason why so many of us young adults (18-30) get intimidated or "turned off" by the idea of getting saved, living saved, and/or really being true with it everyday is because we confuse the difference between GROWTH and CHANGE, erroneously making them synonymous to each other. We are apprehensive and even afraid that once we get saved and commit to this lifestyle that we have to change who we are. Be real, we don’t even know who we really and fully are at this age! This is the biggest tactic of deception that the enemy puts in front of young eyes and couldn’t be any further from the truth. Granted, some parts of us change (and should) as a result of growth, but God will not forsake the uniqueness in which He formed you. He created too much of a beautiful masterpiece in you to disregard it and throw it all away. Be encouraged, we still possess the core elements of what makes us so peculiar; it’s just a reformed, better version of ourself.

Understand that GROWTH always and automatically produces CHANGE, but change in and of itself is not always for the good and does not cause us to grow. Anyone can change things about themselves outwardly, but in order to have a long-lasting effect inwardly growth must take place, and we all know that nothing can grow without a strong root system. Christ is that root system and the Holy Spirit is the only one to cause this transformative revolution in our hearts and mind. NO this walk isn’t easy by any means, but it's so worth it! The best you is yet to be discovered!

~Pray hard, live easy...God bless~

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We’ve assassinated God’s presence for our freedom.
Finally, we can celebrate.
Let the ash confetti fall into the midst of our victory
I heard freedom ring from the bell tower of humanity
Sounded a little like winds being released
Sounded like the erasure of guilt after uncensored
Godlessness
Felt like an earthquake of dirty impulse
Bondage must have been voluntary
Freedom must mean no discipline then
No divine authority to tell us how to live!
Let’s give a toast to our demons that are no longer
discriminated against
From unwanted to invited, no more protests, we’re
desegregated now, we let them go where we go
Look at how much progress we made!
Freedom looked like fireworks when I saw it
I could have sworn I saw a free man light his soul on
fire like it was a burden until it shot up in the air
And I saw those sparks burst into greed that looked
like happiness when it fell back and masked that
possessed man’s face
I looked around and saw the neighborhood
participating lighting their soul fuses to their benefit
and to the detriment of those who can’t afford it
Looked like a forth of July soul massacre darkening
the lightness of brotherhood with economic genocide
fog and debris aftermath
Looked like a Mission group came to clean the
streets by getting rid of our old beat down discipline
and rebuilding our immoral whim
And I watched men celebrate a plague like they won
a war
But I was infected
And I felt freedom crawling underneath my skin
Felt like a not-for-profit support group for sin
splurges
A bliss party for the heroes who ambushed morality
and gunned down the fear of God
It felt like desensitized backsliders who can’t
remember their way home
I tasted freedom deviate from any sign of self-control
An acquired taste to say the least
It was sour like released winds
Or cheap words or a processed world or apologies
that never knew remorse or the ethics that disowned
don’t do it and married go ahead
It tastes like spiritual amnesia washed down with
saturated origin free tradition
I had a whiff of freedom on my way to success
It smells like chaos marinating in held back winds
Or a world of faithless Christians. like bamboozled
blind folk walking around using their eyes to see
their well-beings
Stinks like back up plans in case their only option
doesn’t work.
It holds and spreads the aroma of deliberate oblivion.
The sweet fragrance of not being committed to your
conscience
I experienced freedom.
Seemed like we helped our souls pack up and leave
town and we celebrated it
So cheers to freedom ladies and gentlemen.
I heard this is going to be one hell of a party
If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?

I’ve always wanted to learn how to become ambidextrous.

When you have 30 minutes of free-time, how do you pass the time?

By reading books, or playing basketball.

If you had a 60 second Super Bowl advertisement what would you want to show a billion people?

I’d probably want to advertise for the WNBA (Womans National Basketball Association) in a humorous way.

Do you believe God has a sense of humor? Why?

Yes, definately! I think His humor is one of the many ways God has in order to communicate with us in certain situations.

What job do you want?

The job I want is a Physicians’ Assistant.

What is your number one goal in school?

To always put my best effort forward.

What was the last experience that made you a stronger person?

When someone very close to me was diagnosed with breast cancer. This situation not only made me stronger, but also more responsible.

What’s the #1 most played song on your iPod?

Heard A Word by Michelle Williams

I Am the Church

Regardless of how I stand in the church, I have a voice. And as a voice, I have to the power of change, and also the power of opinion as a part of the church. I would like us Youth to work towards outreaching more about God to our community and everyday peers.
Meet Rachel...

Author of

fish food:
what if God values relationship more than religion?

Words by Michael Vance
Photos by Stanfield Jeanty
Human beings are social creatures. Whether you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert, on some level you desire human interaction. From our very first childhood friend, to the spouse we choose to spend the rest of our life with, God created us to desire relationships with others. It should come as no surprise that God created us to desire a relationship with Him as well, though sometimes our lives fail to reflect that truth. In her book Fish Food, Rachel Lemons, through the use of biblical examples and her own personal experiences, shares her own journey and lessons learned on how to develop a lasting relationship with God.

While the phrase “fish food” serves as a rather intriguing title, Rachel would describe it as “an experience.” Taken from the story of Jonah, she explains that, “It’s a time in your life that might seemingly work to your detriment and appear to take you out, but God uses it for your good.” It is from Jonah’s experience that Rachel explains how we are all called “to be someone unique and do something specific.” The realization of this fact serves as the catalyst to our lifelong journey towards a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

By her own admission, Rachel recounts how she never had a “striking spiritual experience” while attending Oakwood University (then Oakwood College). It wasn’t until the summer before her senior year during a study abroad program in Brazil that she realized that God would speak to her on a personal level. Through something as simple as the sincerity of the prayers to bless the food and the genuineness in which the students embraced each other and their faith, Rachel was moved by how God knew exactly what would touch her. God has since taken her on a journey in growth and development that eventually led her to write Fish Food.

Rachel is an avid lover of languages and cultures and has studied Spanish, Portuguese, and even Arabic. It is through this love that God has given her some of her most memorable spiritual experiences. If you ask her, she’ll share with you many of her other experiences in Brazil, or she’ll tell you how her knowledge of Spanish allowed her to have a profound spiritual encounter with a blind man who was only trying to get someone’s help with ordering food at McDonald’s. It is also her love of language and culture that prompted her to leave her job in the Corporate America structure to work as a writer and lecturer at Middle East University in Lebanon.

God did not limit His interactions with Rachel to only foreign soil and tongues, but He revealed Himself through a variety of situations and experiences as she wrote the book. She can vividly recount the first time, that she can remember, that God conducted His own Bible study with her. She spent a weekend in a hotel working on the chapter about the Sabbath and was amazed at how God revealed scripture after scripture for her to read. It was during that encounter that she learned “to hear the voice of God more clearly... trust that [she] was hearing it... and trust the lessons that He was trying to teach [her].”
Looking back at her life from 2009, when she finished Fish Food, to now, Rachel wonders at how she was qualified to undertake the task of writing a book on developing a relationship with God. She’s humbled to know that God could use her, even with her lack of understanding and knowledge at that time. Rachel now realizes that it was God’s plan all along to use her writing of this book as a way to reveal Himself to her. She acknowledges that she had “so many questions about who He is and what He is like”, but that it was through writing the book that He gave her the answers she was searching for. That being said, it is easy to tell that Fish Food wasn’t written by an elitist know-it-all, trying to sprinkle knowledge on the masses, but by someone who was experiencing the beauty and joy of their own developing relationship and sought for others to have that same experience.

By delving into the lives of “famous” Bible characters like Job and Jonah as well as lesser-known characters like Hosea and the Samaritan woman at the well, Rachel illuminates principles that will give a better understanding of how to commune with God. Rachel laments that noticing how some of her friends and other young people she grew up around didn’t see the value in having a relationship with God struck a chord with her. By opening herself up like a book and sharing her own experiences, her hope is that others will see both the practicality and necessity of communion with God.

Rachel specifically wrote Fish Food in an easy-to-read, conversational style so that it would be relatable to anyone picking it up, whether they were a lifelong church goer or a new believer. Her desire is that by reading the book not only will people be compelled to experience God for themselves but also that their desire will be to help someone else experience that too. Her own experience is that through writing Fish Food some of her own friends, whom she never would have seen an opportunity to have an in-depth conversation about God with, have asked for a copy of the book thus opening the door for dialogue and discussion about her beliefs.

As you read Fish Food for yourself, Rachel gives three questions to consider: When was the time you felt the closest to God? When was the time you felt the furthest away? What were the circumstances in your life that brought you to those places? The answers to those questions, coupled with the lessons learned in the book will put you on the right path for your own one-on-one experience with God.

Fish Food will be available for purchase starting September 4, 2012. It is published by Review and Herald Publishing Association, a publishing house of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and will serve as the young-adult devotional for 2013.
7 Ways to Stay Focused on God during the week
by Zoë Fisher

There comes a time in a teenager’s summer that is completely dreaded: when we have to go back to school. Groans and sighs fill our bedrooms and cars as we prepare to embark on what I consider to be a glorified jail. With tests, homework, classmates, and clubs, the drone of school work can easily drown out the voice of God.

So to keep Him at the forefront, try some of these tips:

1. **Listen to Gospel/Gospel Rap in the car.** In the morning, I need some inspiration to get me ready and awake, so I usually throw on my iPhone to help hype me up. I also like to act a little ratchet in the car while listening to music. Gospel Rap gives me the energy I need, plus I don’t have to worry about the negative influences I might get from listening to secular music.

2. **Set your iPhone/Smart phone up to give you a devotion or bible text in the morning.** Downloading the free Holy Bible app or another devotional app helps connect you to God in a convenient way. You can read it when you first wake up or if you get to school early. The Holy Bible app, particularly, allows you to pick out verses or devotions on a topic you might be struggling with at the time, i.e., forgiveness, temptation, friendship.

3. **Pray Before Tests.** Praying before every test furthers your humility and reliance on God. Personally, studying only takes me so far before I have to put it in God’s hands. I know some of you aren’t going to study. You then reason with yourself and say things like, “The bible said ‘Ask and ye shall receive,’ or ‘With God all things are possible.’” These things are true, but I don’t think it works like that (trust me, I’ve tried). Instead, ask God to help you remember the information you studied, and praise Him in advance for the things He has done and will do for you.

4. **Write in a Journal.** It’s sometimes easier for me to write down my prayers rather than to pray in my mind because I tend to get distracted and lose focus. By writing down my prayers to God, I concentrate more and it allows me to go back and see certain things I was struggling with and how God helped me through.

5. **Friday Night Dates.** To welcome in the Sabbath and to relax from the week, God and I have a little date night. I get some candles and food. I might watch a sermon online, listen to some Christian music/poetry, or maybe read my lesson or a book I got from Family Christian Book Store. It just depends, but it really helps me enjoy the rest I get from the Sabbath.

6. **Fast before finals or ACT/SAT.** During my junior year, I was preparing for my AP Tests, finals and the ACT. To keep myself connected with God, I would fast before each one of them. Not all fasts have to be in the traditional biblical sense. For example, I fasted from T.V. and juice (so hard). This gave me more time to spend with God and His word while also studying for my exams. If you really want to have moral support, you can also ask a friend to join you.

7. **Community Service/Volunteering.** God calls on us to serve the poor and share the gospel with the world. Community service allows us to do both. Find a local rescue mission or food pantry and volunteer with your friends or church group. If you are stressed out, it puts back into perspective all the blessings God has given to you. It also allows you to minister to someone else in their time of need.
During an NFL season, thousands of fans morph into couch potatoes as they absorb multiple NFL games on Sunday. Some nights, hundreds of people who live on the east coast stay up well beyond healthy bedtimes to watch west coast teams play, and let’s not even delve into our country’s phase of un-production during March Madness. With fans devoting so much time to sports, it’s almost as if it’s a religion of its own. However, is there any room left for God? For the answer, we must turn to the best source available; the Bible.

**Past**

The Apostle Paul wrote two key texts that described Christianity using sport metaphors. In both 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 and 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul imagines a Christian’s journey on this earth as a race and describes the intense training that it takes to win. This concept latched on with a couple people and as time progressed, sports and Christianity were further infused. At its apex, it berthed Muscular Christianity. The term first appeared in 1762, but wasn’t popularized until 1857. Muscular Christianity describes a Christian commitment to one’s faith and physical health. The basis of this concept stems from the New Testament text on character, Philippians 3:14, and well-being, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. As a result, Muscular Christianity’s influence spread across the globe spawning other organizations such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Athletes in Action.

**Present**

At the 2012 London Olympics, 16-year-old, African-American Gabrielle Douglas, gymnast for team USA, captured the world’s attention. Her petite frame starkly contrasted her huge personality and warm smile. After performing marvelously and winning two gold medals, Douglas expressed her faith in God through twitter: http://guidemagazine.org/images/bloggers/david/gabriella-douglas2.gif

In an interview after winning her first gold, Douglas also stated, “I give all the glory to God. It’s kind of a win-win situation. The glory goes up to Him and the blessings fall down on me.”

Even if you disagree with her hairstyle, Douglas’ faith through sports at such a young age is a testament to all, especially all of the young African-American girls.

During the last shortened season of the NBA, a woeful New York Knicks team fought their way to become the Eastern Conference Champions. Oddly enough, another shortened season brought more good news for the Knicks. With most of the roster depleted by injury, Jeremy Lin found himself at the center of attention in the home of basketball’s biggest stage; Madison Square Garden. How did he perform? Lin responded by putting up huge numbers in all categories and guided the Knicks to seven consecutive wins; ergo “Linsanity.”
It’s important to note that Lin is of Asian descent. There are many stereotypes that come with the territory of being Asian-American, but Lin defies them all and the biggest one starts with his faith in God. With only about 13% of Asia practicing Christianity, Lin is 100% a believer. In an interview with the San Jose Mercury Sun, Lin accredits his success in the NBA to the fact that he plays with no pressure. “I’ve surrendered that to God,” he says. “I’m not in a battle with what everybody else thinks anymore.”

Lin’s public display of faith hasn’t gone without challenge though. After being knocked out of the playoffs by the Miami Heat, Lin and other members of the Knicks were spotted drinking alcohol and mingling with models all into the wee hours of the morning. Lin made no comment regarding this but ESPN analyst Stephen A. Smith questioned how much temptation a Christian can take:

“Now you might not be the one drinking and smoking, and you might not be the one chasing the fine honeys and all of this stuff, but you’re in the those confines subjecting yourself to a level of temptation that you [say] you’re not all about.”

Lin may have his doubters, but he knows that God is his ultimate judge, and that’s what keeps him motivated to keep going. In an interview, Lin stated that Romans 5:3-5 was his favorite Bible verse. It’s a verse that reads: “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope…”

Speaking of hope, this next athlete inspires it more and more to people every day. New York Jets QB Tim Tebow has had the opportunity to express his faith throughout his entire career. Following a great collegiate career in NCAA Football, Tebow quickly found himself as a hot topic by wearing eye-black that read “John 3:16.” Tebow is quick to tell anyone who will listen that he believes in God and that all glory goes to Him. He’s considered role model for many because of his clean image and positivity on and off the field. His popularity grew so much that people began mimicking his movements ala “tebowing.” Whenever he started a game or made a big play, Tebow would drop to one knee and send up a short prayer to God. This became an overnight sensation. Just Google images of “tebowing” and you’ll see what I mean.

**FUTURE**

There have been many more athletes that have played sports and maintained their Christianity. Athletes like Allyson Felix, Manny Pacquiao, Mariano Rivera, KaKa, and plenty more all have given praise to God for blessing them with their athletic abilities.

For those that can’t fathom spending time in a foreign country to build churches, sports offer an alternative place for witnessing. Fans are drawn to competition and in the heat of battle, moments are seared into brains. This is one of the best places to encourage a teammate after a big loss, help an opposing player up off the floor, and ultimately, reflect Christ.

In a society that is increasingly leaning toward protecting an individual’s freedom and cries foul at even the slightest hint of infringement, it’s nice to know that God still has, and hopefully always will, a place within the sub-religion of sports.

Sources:
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Empanadas are a delicious treat enjoyed throughout Latin America. They can be stuffed with meat, cheese, fruit, and other fillings. My husband is partly of Colombian heritage so as you can imagine, empanadas are high on his request list. This vegetarian version of empanadas are the perfect way to end the summer, and also make a great party appetizer year-round.

Yield: 8 empanadas

**Ingredients**

**Dough**

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons double-acting baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

½ cup very cold water

¼ cup canola oil

**Filling**

Canola oil

1 ½ cup Morningstar crumbles

salt

½ cup chopped onion

1 cup frozen mixed vegetables (carrots, corn, string beans, and peas)

¼ cup pimento stuffed queen olives

**Directions**

**For dough**

1. Measure water in liquid measuring cup and add ice cubes. Allow to chill.

2. Combine dry ingredients in a bowl and then make a hole in the center of the mixture.

3. Measure out ½ cup of ice water (omitting ice cubes) and pour into hole along with the oil.

4. Blend wet and dry ingredients together with your hands, and knead into a firm dough.

5. Wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
For filling

1. Prepare mixed vegetables according to package directions so that they are heated thoroughly, yet firm.

2. Brown crumbles over medium heat in lightly oiled frying pan for 2 to 3 minutes. Add onions and sauté together until onions become translucent. Add a dash of salt (or to taste).

3. Add mixed vegetables and olives and toss to combine. Remove from heat.

Making the empanadas

1. Remove dough from fridge and divide into 8 balls.

2. Roll dough ball out into thin circle. Spoon 2 to 3 tablespoons of filling onto lower half of circle, leaving room around the edges.

3. Using your finger, wet the edges of the circle with cold water.

4. Fold top half of circle down over filling. Seal the empanada by using the tines of a fork to press the edges together.

5. Heat oil over medium heat in frying pan to deep fry the empanadas.

6. Carefully place 2 to 3 empanadas in to the oil. Fry on each side for 1 to 2 minutes, until golden brown.

Note: Fry empanadas at a moderate rate. If they fry too quickly, the dough on the inside will remain uncooked.

Recipe/Photos by Aminta Cross.

For more vegetarian and vegan recipes visit Aminta at demangotree.com.
THRIFTING TIME

Thrifting refers to the act of shopping at a thrift store, flea market, garage sale, or a shop of a charitable organization. Here are my top 10 tips for ensuring thrifting success.

by Alinka Johnson
inourdna.com

1. **Get your mind right.** It’s going to take time and energy. If you stroll in expecting to easily grab the perfect color in the perfect size with the perfect material you’ve already defeated yourself.

2. **Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.** It is the absolute worst pain to pass by a piece your husband thought was hideous only to have your sister buy it the next day wear it to church and listen to everyone comment on how great it looks. Yea, I’m clearly not over it.

3. **Forget the popular labels.** Flying through hangers looking at tags will have you leaving some really great items behind. First shop with taste and quality in mind then when you get home research a few of the labels off items you really love. You might discover some really great high quality vintage designers!

4. **Make a new best friend;** one that can work magic with a needle and thread. There will be times you stumble across the perfect piece only to try it on and it’s two sizes too big. Don’t put it back! The tailor can make it yours!

5. **Budget for dry cleaning.** Over seventy percent of clothes in the thrift store are dry clean only. You can also look up washing information for the fabrics and you might find a shortcut.

6. **Be frugal while thrifting.** Pieces are sometimes overpriced even at thrift stores.

7. **Seek and Find.** Thrift stores hold many treasures like accessories, books, records, electronics, furniture and more. Don’t forget to browse through those isles before you leave.

8. **Place quality above all.** No matter how wonderful the garment, faded material and permanent stains are an absolute no!

9. **The early bird gets the worm.** The sooner you get to the store the better chance you have at getting the nice stuff.

10. **Have fun!** If you’re not you’re doing it wrong!

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STAGES OF LOVE

by Sherelle Palmer
I would like to share my story on how my fiancé, Joseph Gilbert, and I are building a Christ-centered relationship as we prepare for marriage.

Joseph and I have been friends since the 9th grade, but we didn't start dating until September of 2011. We experienced the fantasy stage where our focus was to build our friendship. We both shared an interest in each other, and the physical attraction was there. We decided that we would take things slow by focusing on building our friendship, getting to know each other now as adults, and most importantly, allowing God to lead.

One interesting thing about our relationship was that it was long distance. We were building our relationship and going through the affirming stage from two different states, so the need to communicate daily was very important. We visited with each other in either Alabama or Michigan at least once a month. This allowed us time to experience each other in our individual comfort zones around our family and friends.

An important aspect of our relationship is our desire to always include God whether it is during morning and nightly prayers together via phone, weekly worship thoughts via Skype, or fasting from social media in order to draw a closer relationship with God and also keep Him in the center of our relationship. Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” This is one of my favorite verses because it reminds me to put God above everything else, and once that is done, He always sees to it that I have the things I need.

Joseph and I got engaged on June 16, 2012, my birthday weekend. Prior to the engagement, we decided to fast together for the month of June. We were fasting for God’s guidance and direction in our relationship. We had been talking about me moving down to Huntsville, AL where he is, but I felt I needed God to tell me and show me that this is what He wanted me to do and what He wanted for our relationship.
Joseph and I thought long and hard about what we could sacrifice for God -- something that we both do often that could separate us or distract us from Christ. Social media came to both of our minds. This is something that we both engage in on a daily basis and often put it before Christ without even realizing it. So we decided that this was what we were both going to give up for the month of June in order to gain a closer connection and clearer understanding of what God wanted our next step to be.

A week after we started the fast, Joseph proposed. I felt this was my sign from God answering my prayer about what my next step would be. We continued in our fast and prayed about my moving to Huntsville. I was waiting on God to bless me with a job. I figured that would be my reason for moving to Huntsville, but He had a different plan. He instead blessed me with a man who is loving, caring, kind, dedicated, and most importantly, a man of God. This is where faith steps in and where I truly learned about faith. I felt the Holy Spirit speaking to me more and more on so many different occasions about faith. I will admit that I was very doubtful about moving to another state without a job to be with my fiancé. People questioned me and I questioned God about how was I going to move to Huntsville without a job to support myself. However, Joseph was very faithful and often assured me that God would not lead us astray and that “He does not give us the spirit of fear or timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

One evening during a revival at my church, my Pastor told the story about Abraham and his faith. How ironic it was for me to be at church on that evening to hear that story. Genesis 22:1-18 talks about how the Lord asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, something of great importance to him, and Abraham trusted God and believed that He had a purpose for him.

Abraham didn’t question God, and he didn’t try to bargain with him. He went up the mountain and attempted to sacrifice his son as God had asked. God stopped him, acknowledged his faith, and blessed him.

From hearing this, I realized that I had a mountain of doubt and fear to climb, not knowing what would be at the top or why God was sending me on this journey. All He asked me to do was to be faithful.

Another verse and story that came to me one morning during my devotion was Acts 9:6 which says, “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do”. This for me was yet another confirmation about my decision to step out on faith. I realized that my securing a job before I moved to Huntsville would lessen my faith in God. If I had a job secured prior to my move, I would be less dependent on Him to supply my needs when Philippians 4:19 says that “My God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

God honored the fast that Joseph and I did and answered our prayer for guidance and direction. This test of faith is not only helping to strengthen the relationship between Joseph and I, but it is also strengthening our relationship with God individually and collectively.

Now that Joseph and I are living in the same state during our engagement stage, God is challenging us to take our relationship to a new level with Him. The stages we have gone through and are going through have been and will continue to be a wonderful journey that is helping us to build character, strength, faith, and above all, a testimony for other Christians who are seeking to build a Christ-centered relationship.
Please take a moment to evaluate your spiritual gifts and interests. There are no right or wrong answers! Next to each statement, check the column which best describes you. Those statements where you checked "often" may indicate your spiritual gifts. If you have any other comments, requests, or ideas, please feel free to email info@back2basicsmag.com. If you would like more information about your spiritual gifts, or a longer, more complete version of this inventory, please contact Pastor Donald Rolle at youthministry@central-states.org.

### SPIRITUAL GIFTS INVENTORY (short form)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: __________________________</th>
<th>Age: _______</th>
<th>Phone: ___________________</th>
<th>Email: _________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation_______________________</td>
<td>Date: _________________________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please take a moment to update your spiritual gifts and interests. There are no right or wrong answers! Next to each statement, check the column which best describes you. Those statements where you checked "often" may indicate your spiritual gifts. If you have any other comments, requests, or ideas, please feel free to write them on the back of this page. If you would like more information about your spiritual gifts, or a longer, more complete version of this inventory, please contact Connie at firstchurchalive@hotmail.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy singing or playing a musical instrument with a group of fellow Christians (traditional or contemporary). (Vocal and Instrumental Music)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I find it rewarding to teach people about God's love and our Christian faith (Teaching)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am confident in God's guidance as I make important decisions. (Faith)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I have fun working with my hands at various arts and crafts or I like participating in drama or liturgical dance. (Craftsmanship -- Arts)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I am joyful about sharing my material and spiritual gifts to help others. (Giving)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I enjoy making guests feel comfortable whether they are in my home or at church. (Hospitality)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I am able to share words of encouragement, comfort, or cheer with others. (Encouragement)</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. It's easy for me to show care and concern for small groups and individuals. (Shepherding)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel comfortable talking with other people about spiritual matters. (Evangelism)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I enjoy helping and working with people during illness or problems. (Mercy)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I enjoy using my skills to build or repair objects. (Craftsmanship -- Manual)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I am glad to assist others when asked. (Helping)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I see what needs to be done and I take responsibility for doing it. (Serving)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I am able to &quot;see the big picture&quot; and plan to get things done. (Administration)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am able to set goals according to God's will and to help motivate people to accomplish them. (Leadership)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I know that God hears and responds to my daily prayers. (Intercession)</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My study of the Bible has proven helpful to others in their faith journey. (Knowledge)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. When a challenge is presented, I am usually able to identify an appropriate solution. (Wisdom)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am able to take a thought or idea and put it into a clear and inspiring written form. (Writing)</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. **Administration**: Better understand and set goals for various groups. You will be able to work with facts and/or figures, plan programming and see that goals and ideas are accomplished. *Scriptural References*: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Acts 14:23

2. **Craftsmanship - Arts and Crafts**: use your hands, thoughts and mind through creative, artistic means to further God’s kingdom. *Scriptural References*: Exodus 31:1-11, Psalm 149:3a

3. **Craftsmanship - Manual**: use your hands and ideas in areas of maintenance and upkeep of God’s physical and environmental settings. *Scriptural References*: Exodus 30:1-6, Exodus 31:3-5, Ezekiel 27:4-11

4. **Evangelism**: share the Good News of the love of Jesus Christ in such a way that others will experience that same love and will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. *Scriptural References*: Matthew 28: 16-20, Ephesians 4:11-16, Acts 2:36-40

5. **Encouragement**: minister words of counsel, comfort or encouragement to members of the community of faith in such a way that they feel uplifted, helped or healed. *Scriptural References*: John 14:1, II Timothy 1:16-18, III John 5-8

6. **Faith**: see the spirit at work and know with confidence what God’s will is for your life and the community of faith. Trust the leading of the Holy Spirit where it may lead. *Scriptural References*: Genesis 12:1-4a, Mark 5:25-34, I Thessalonians 1:8-10


8. **Helping**: using the gifts you have to assist others in the life and ministry of the church, allowing the person helped to increase the effectiveness of their spiritual gifts. *Scriptural References*:

9. **Hospitality**: to be caring and open to those in need. You feel good as you provide food and lodging and enjoy having people in your home. *Scriptural References*: Romans 12:13, Romans 16:23a, Luke 10:38


11. **Knowledge**: accumulate, discover, analyze and share ideas and information that are pertinent to the growth and well being of the community of faith. *Scriptural References*: I Corinthians 12:8, I Corinthians 14:6, Romans 12:2

12. **Leadership**: set goals in accordance with God’s will and share these goals with others in such a way that they work together to accomplish the desired outcome. Others look to you for guidance and direction. *Scriptural References*: Romans 12:8, John 21:15-17, II Timothy 4:1-5


15. **Music - Instrumental**: Play an instrument in such a manner that it brings praise to God and inspires and leads others in worship. *Scriptural References*: Psalm 33:1-5, Psalm 150, I Samuel 16:14-23

16. **Serving**: identify unmet needs involved in a task related to God’s work and make use of available resources to meet those needs and accomplish the desired goals. *Scriptural References*: Luke 23:50-54, Romans 16: 1-16, Philippians 2:19-23

17. **Shepherding**: serve as one who is a facilitator or counselor. You will see that God’s Word is fed to whose in your care and you will also feel responsible for the well being of a group of individuals. *Scriptural References*: I Timothy 4:12-16, I Timothy 3:1-13, II Timothy 4:1-2

18. **Teaching**: share knowledge with children and/or adults that will aid in their growth and the spiritual health of the community of faith. *Scriptural References*: I Corinthians 12:28, Matthew 5:1-12, Acts 18:24-48

19. **Wisdom**: offer counsel and advice with a special understanding of situations that arise in people’s lives. Active listening skills are often used. *Scriptural References*: I Corinthians 2:6-12, James 3:13-18, II Chronicles 1:7-11

20. **Writing**: put your thoughts and ideas into written works that will be relevant and meaningful to those who read them. People will find knowledge, guidance, and courage as the words are read. *Scriptural References*: I John 2:1-6, 12-14, I Timothy 3:14-15, Jude 3
Back2Basics Magazine (B2B Mag) is an Adventist Christian Lifestyle Magazine designed to serve as a platform for youth to express, encourage and excite. B2B Mag is for the youth, by the youth. There is no better time than now to get back to the basics in living. We are facing the end, which means that we are too close to lose sight of our goal. God has given us Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth, the Bible.

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