December 9, 2012

For attractive lips, speak words of kindness. 
For lovely eyes, look for the good in others. 
For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry. 
For beautiful hair, let a child run their fingers through it once a day. 
For poise, walk with the knowledge that you never walk alone. 

People, more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed. Remember, if you ever need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of each of your arms.

As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself and the other for helping others. 

- Sam Levenson 

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21st CENTURY DISCIPLESHIP METHODS

By Juleun A. Johnson, Hillsview church, Birmingham, AL

There is a divine mandate given to us to preach, teach, and baptize. While we may be excellent in exposition and get many baptisms, I believe we still lack one thing: the element of discipling new converts and believers. At our church we've attempted to close the back door with some new methods that are also reasonably priced. Do you like free? I do. The Lord has helped us gain new converts through these new, simple discipleship methods. I have baptized many before, but not like this.

I'd been searching for a new way of modeling the ministry of Jesus, to do something different. One method that has worked in my church is to meet people in a neutral environment. Jesus taught his disciples in a place of comfort for them. For many today Starbucks is a place of comfort. It's a place to relax and talk, a place to be themselves. I embarked on a discipleship journey with someone at Starbucks before they were
interested in being baptized. We would meet once a week and talk about life, being a man, sports. Eventually
that led to him asking what he had to do to join our church. We started having weekly bible studies at Starbucks.
He did get baptized. But after his baptism we still meet at Starbucks to talk about life, being a man, and sports.
This encounter has lead to others joining us.

The second method that we have been using in our church as a discipleship project is a church fantasy football
league. As many know, fantasy football is often used to bet, gamble and most of all talk trash. We instead use it
as a positive way for the men to bond. But more than that we reach out to those that Rick Warren would describe
as on the fringes of the church. It’s attracted both men and women.

After a few months one of the men on the fringes who was in the league asked for Bible studies and was baptized.
He said he never felt prodded or pushed to make a decision to join the church. He said he just felt like he was a
part. We use the fantasy football league to encourage positive fellowship with fellow believers. I wish I could say
that on Sabbaths all that is exchanged are normal Sabbath pleasantries. But the important thing is that the league
is a way that people use to find common ground, a springboard for conversations about, life, kids, work and the
week. The camaraderie that has developed in the group has built anticipation and assisted us in fulfilling the
gospel commission.

Discuss Juleun’s discipling ministries with him on our Best Practices Facebook page.

THE HAPPILY-ABSENT BELIEVERS

by Loren Seibold

Here’s something I’ve been noticing lately, and I think it deserves some discussion.

I do a lot of home visits, especially to inactive members. Sometimes I find people who call
themselves Seventh-day Adventists, who are loyal, knowledgeable, and in some measure
engaged with the denomination.

They just haven’t any interest in attending the local church.

There are programs to try to bring back inactive members, but they’re not necessarily for these people. These
consider themselves good Seventh-day Adventists. In a few cases they took offense at something in church, but
not all of them. Many have nothing against us. Often they’ve been courted by pastors and members to return.
They simply don’t feel the need to gather with others. Some are content with their satellite dish. Some order the
quarterly or read Adventist magazines and Ellen White books. They may come to us for baptism, a wedding or a
funeral. But not regular worship services. Some tell me that they get more out of their own spiritual activities at
home than they get at church. Maybe they do.

I’ve met people who regularly go on Maranatha church-building trips, but never come to church. Young people
who wouldn’t miss Adventist summer camp, but won’t come to church. Those who send out their own doctrinal
newsletters to a mailing list, but don’t attend church. Some who go to camp meetings around the country but
won’t come to church. Many who spend every waking moment watching or listening to Adventist media, but won’t
don’t bother with church.

We all know that people aren’t “joining” like they once were. (VFW, Elks, Kiwanas are all struggling; once-popular
hobby clubs are non-existent.) Even among those who consider themselves members in good and regular standing,
church is more optional than it used to be, easily set aside by a trip to the beach or grandma’s visit or the mildest
backache.

But is there more than that going on? Does it have to do with the spiritual and emotional condition of some of our
congregations? Perhaps we can’t compete anymore? Small congregations aren’t all that exciting. Many of the small
churches, especially, are largely old people. Why listen to the local average pastor when it’s easier, and less
stressful, to tune in Pioneer Memorial?

Do you think this is becoming more characteristic of the church than it used to be? How do we draw people to
church again?

Or should we give up trying to be a gathered church, and simply share the same beliefs remotely, electronically?
And if local church doesn’t survive, what happens to parish ministry?

What do you think? Discuss this with me on the Best Practices Facebook page.
USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD YOUR CHURCH

In this video Vicente Lopez, member of the YG church in Arlington Texas, shares how he uses social media to build an awareness and appreciation of his congregation in his social media world. This is just one example of how media can be used to strengthen adventist congregations in North America. Using media is one of the building blocks that the NAD would like to use to help build up local churches in North America.

READING FOR PASTORS

I find it creepy and a bit frightening that a school would fit all of its students with tracking chips.

Quote: “To 15-year-old Andrea Hernandez, the tracking microchip embedded in her student ID card is a ‘mark of the beast,’ sacrilege to her Christian faith - not to mention how it pinpoints her location, even in the school bathroom.” This reminds me of many scary discussions about Revelation 13 we Adventists have had through the years. What do you think?

Can Rick Warren take the spotlight again? 10 years after PDL, he hopes to.

Quote: “This nation is in desperate need of some direction and purpose and meaning. Somebody’s got to speak up now. And I thought, OK. If nobody else volunteers, I’ll step up.”

Is growing your church as simple as this?

Quote: “Put down the latest church growth book. Cancel your trip to that church growth conference. Stop trying to emulate the megachurch down the road or across the state. Open your bible and reacquaint yourself with the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ.” What do you think?

According to David Lose, pastors are taught to see themselves as experts who perform certain tasks.

Should they, perhaps, be coaches who help others to excel? Excellent article! What do you think?

Advent can be a lovely and profound family tradition, according to this Wheaton College professor.

I wonder: do we need something more spiritual for the December holiday season? Would there be anything wrong with adopting some Advent traditions? Or too ritualistic? What do you think?

A swap meet collector buys a WWII era letter from a Seventh-day Adventist soldier’s visit to Mount Wilson, and writes about it.

TO THE POINT: KINDNESS

I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness.

- Mother Teresa

I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers.

- Khalil Gibran

Whether one believes in a religion or not, and whether one believes in rebirth or not, there isn’t anyone who doesn’t appreciate kindness and compassion.

- Dalai Lama

You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

It has always seemed strange to me... the things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling, are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest, are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the produce of the second.

- John Steinbeck

A mistake made by many people with great convictions is that they will let nothing stand in the way of their views, not even kindness.

- Bryant H. McGill
The average dog is a nicer person than the average person.*
- Andy Rooney

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt

IDEAS, EVENTS, RESOURCES, ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 6th International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition (ICVN) will be held at Loma Linda University again this year, February 24-26. Early registration deadline has been extended.

Win an iPad mini! Your input is needed for the Public High School Ministry Discipleship Resource Center. Browse the Living it website and then fill out the survey to let the creators know what you think of each portion of the site and how they could improve it. By filling out the survey you will be entered to win a iPad mini. Deadline: 11:59 p.m., December 15.

Mayan calendar and end-of-the-world predictions: Pacific Press has released Steven Wohlberg’s The End of the World: Facts versus Fiction as a response to the hot topic of the Mayan calendar apocalypse. Only $1.29!

Previous resource links:
- eGracenotes mobile app
- New PlusLine at AdventSource
- NY13
- Pastor’s convention, NAD Ministerial Department
- The Seven Campaign to stop child abuse
- Family Ministries Facebook page
- Andrews University Press, Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church
- General Conference International Field School of Evangelism
- NAD Theology of Ordination Study Committee
- General Conference Annual Council response to ordination without regard to gender
- Jesus 101 Biblical Institute with speaker/director Elizabeth Talbot
- Elder Ted Wilson’s book Almost Home
- The ADVENTISTS - 2, by Journey Films
- The Great Controversy Project e-newsletter
- Real Family Talk
- Interactive health program on Hope Channel

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