Inspirational Quote

One of the most common barriers to incarnational ministry occurs when we can't get beyond a teenager's music, appearance, language, or behavior to see a hurting and lonely kid who needs to be shown the love of Jesus.

- Mark Yaconelli

Prayer-Petition & Praise

Florida Adventist Church Van Crash: Several passengers were ejected from the van. One man was killed and 15 others injured. For More Info: Visit MSNews Please pray for everyone affected by this accident.

Slain Adventist Professor in Kenya: More that 60 people were killed and 170 injured from the Nairobi terrorist attack located in a shopping mall. For More Info: Visit AdventistToday

Rick Warren's Son Commits Suicide: The most inspiring interview ever, "I never questioned my faith in God. I questioned God's plan". For More info: Visit ChristianityToday

Ministry Opening
**Youth Worker:** Looking for a Task Force youth worker for next year (Approx. Sept - May) at the church in Kirkland Washington. Close to graduating from undergrad or a seminary student preferred. More Info: Contact Tim Peterson.

**Missionary in South Korea:** Seize the opportunity to do missions to youth & young adults through teaching English, and earn income for your future plans at the same time. More Info: Contact Justin Yang.

**Youth Pastor:** Looking for a Youth Pastor to lead and organize an effective youth program in Fresno, California. Bachelor's degree, theological education, and experience working with teens required. More Info: Contact Rod Turley.

**English Ministry Pastor:** The Dallas/Ft. Worth Korean SDA church is looking for a bilingual (Korean/English) EM pastor to lead a congregation of 30-40 members. More Info: Contact Michael Chong

**Youth and Bible Worker:** Student Missionary or Task Force worker needed for Urban evangelism in Benton Harbor, Michigan. More Info: Contact Pastor Taurus or James Murdoch

**Host/Maintenance Director:** Full time Salaried Position for Mt. Aetna Retreat Center in Hagerstown, Maryland. Tentative starting date is December 16, 2013. More info: Contact Glen Milam

**Assistant Food Service Director:** Cooking for large groups 150-400 people at Camp Au Sable. Must be able to do menu planning for various dietary needs, efficient, and maintains a clean and healthy environment. More info: Contact Ken Micheff

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**Adventist Resources**

**2014 Forever Faithful International Camporee:** February 1, 2014 is the last day for the theme song contest. Enter to win 2 free tickets to the camporee. More info: Contact cye.org

**Evangelist Taj Pacleb:** Based in Hawaii, Taj is one of the first evangelists in this decade to have increasing attendance through numerous public evangelism sessions. Taj has baptized between 20-30 people from each series and 25 people who want to study more. More info: Visit RevelationOfHopeMinistries

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**Non-Denominational Resources**

**Awckward Invitations:** The skinny on Evangelism. More Info: Visit SkitGuys
Barna Update: Introducing Barna: Millennials, a special section of the Barna Group website that contains research, articles and carefully curated info on this elusive and often confusing age group. More Info: Visit Barna.org

Evangelism Girl on Park Bench Video: True evangelism is about being genuine and making yourself available to others. Watch the video or click on the link: Youtube.com

Center for Youth Evangelism Events

Lake Union Pathfinder/Adventurer Leadership Weekend: For: Master Guides/ALG/PLA/PIA Candidates What: Basic Staff Training Date: October 25-27, 2013 Topic: Sabbath School in the Adventist Church More Info: Contact Craig Harris

180 Symposium October 15-17, 2013 Topic: Why are Senior Youth young Adults Sabbath schools growing or dying? What is the future for Sabbath school? More Info: Visit cye.org

FFICamporee Executive Advisory Committee: October 22, 2013, March 25, 2014 Everyone is invited to attend these meetings and participate in the agenda conversations, however, only board members can vote.


FFIC Oshkosh Orientation Walk-Around: April 22, 2014 More Info: Contact Vern Byrd Everyone is welcome to attend.


Music and Worship Conference: January 9-11, 2014 Registration will open soon! More Info: Visit cye.org

Adventist National/International Events


Non-Denominational National/International Events

Group Magazine: More Info: Visit YouthMinistry.com

Youth Specialties: More Info: Visit Youthspecialties.com

Pathfinder Camporees


South American Division Camporee: January 7-12, 2014, in Brazil. More Info: Visit Seventh-dayAdventist.org


Research and Surveys sponsored by ICM:

Poll Indicates Large Numbers of Americans Think the World Is In the Biblical "End Times". Read Full Article From Christianity Today.

Miscellaneous

Jesus Loves Miley Cyrus: Everyone is shocked by her VMA performance. As Christians can we offer another response? Read Full Article From Christianity Today.

Rethinking $3000 Mission Trips: When I learned that kids in my city couldn't swim, I started to rethink the overseas missions. Read Full Article From Christianity Today.

The Real Housewives of Duck Dynasty: Behind every strong redneck duck-hunter is a strong Christian woman. Read the Full Article From Christianity Today.

For real education reform, take a cue from the Adventists: Adventist schools outperform the national average across all demographics. Read the Full Article From CSMonitor.

Moody Bible Institute Drops Alcohol and Tobacco Ban: The Chicago-based evangelical Moody Bible Institute has dropped its ban on alcohol and tobacco consumption by its 600-some faculty and staff, including those who work in its radio and publishing arms. More Info: Visit ChristianityToday
A van carrying 15 passengers rolled over a few times Saturday in Lee County, Fla., ejecting several of the passengers and killing a man, a Florida Highway Patrol spokesman said.

Lt. Greg Bueno said the accident occurred around 7:30 a.m. Saturday near Corkscrew Road on Interstate 75.

A 20-year-old male died in the crash. The ages of the passengers in the van ranged from 2 to 62 years old — four males and 11 females.

An estimated 10 ambulances and two helicopters were called to take the injured to nearby Lee Memorial, Gulf Coast and Tampa General hospitals.

Fifteen people were admitted to the hospitals – four are said to be in critical condition, three are in serious condition and eight have minor injuries.

Officials said the left rear tire tread separated from the tire causing the van to swerve onto the emergency lane.

When the driver attempted to regain control of the van, the vehicle banked and ultimately rolled over. The car came to a stop on its roof.

Officials have not determined whether any of the passengers was wearing a seat belt.

The van reportedly belongs to a Seventh-day Adventist church in Lauderhill, Fla., and was one of three in a caravan on its way to Tampa. The other two vans were not involved in the accident, Bueno said.

All northbound lanes of I-75 were shut down until 11:15 a.m. The lanes have since reopened, Bueno said.

The car pool began its trip in Broward County, according to Bueno.

The van was the second vehicle to have overturned on I-75 in the same day. A Greyhound bus overturned near Cincinnati, Ohio, injuring 37 people and critically wounding four.
Senate leaders announce deal to end shutdown and avoid default

Strong rally on Wall Street as investors bet on a deal in Washington

Warren Buffett: It would be 'asinine' if US defaults

Deadline looms: Live blogging the debt crisis

Federal judge: Michigan gay marriage ban will go to trial

Fed-up sheriff: Alleged teen bully 'did something despicable'

Boehner: 'We fought the good fight'

more...
Adventist Today

Adventist University Professor Among the Dead in Nairobi Terrorist Attack

From ANN, September 23, 2013

At least one Adventist family from Nairobi suffered a loss during the terrorist attack in Nairobi’s Westgate Shopping Mall in which more than 60 people were killed and at least 170 injured. Harun Oyieke, a faculty member at Co-operative University College of Kenya, was among those killed. He was the husband of Florence Awino, a professor at the University of Nairobi. The attack occurred at about 11 a.m. on Saturday. Between 10 and 15 terrorists armed with automatic weapons and grenades attacked the shopping mall. Among those killed were South African, American, Ghanaian, French, Netherlands, Australian, British, Chinese, Dutch, Danish, Indian and Canadian nationals. Several members of the Kenyan police and military were also killed or wounded as they attempted to rescue hostages. World leaders, including United Nations secretary general Ban-ki Moon and United States President Barack Obama, condemned the attack and expressed condolences with those who had lost relatives and friends. “This is a time of shock for all Kenyans and all – including the UN family – who are proud to call Nairobi home,” Ban-ki Moon said in a statement. “I express my solidarity with them at this moment of grief and loss.” The siege continued into the early hours of Monday night, when the Kenyan forces broke through and released the remaining hostages. The Somali Islamist al-Shabaab militants claimed responsibility for the attack. Kenyans lined up at Uhuru Park to donate blood for persons injured in the attack. A survivor, Jackson Mwema, was quoted in The Standard as saying the attackers released some hostages. “They were asking our names and demanding that we read some information I couldn’t understand,” Mwema said. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who lost his nephew and the nephew’s fiancée in the attack, condemned the terrorists, saying his government would not allow them to break the country’s unity along religious lines.

Reports said the attackers, who had been dropped off at the mall in three cars, overwhelmed security guards by shooting shoppers indiscriminately. They besieged the mall and held scores of shoppers hostage as they exchanged fire with Kenyan police and the military. TV footage and pictures showed bewildered children standing next to dead bodies and wounded shoppers in and outside the mall.

Kenyans responded to the attack by donating blood for the victims and sending messages of hope. The national blood bank had exceeded its annual average of 40,000 liters, and over $600,000 was collected in two days, to which the Adventist Church in Kenya gave $12,000. Vice President William Ruto said Kenyans had defeated evil by meeting it with kindness.

The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The primary reporter for this story was Dan Okoth.
Rick Warren Tells Story of Son's Suicide on CNN

'I never questioned my faith in God. I questioned God's plan,' said Warren in what Piers Morgan called his most-inspiring interview ever.

Kate Shellnutt
[ posted 9/18/2013 ]

Pastor Rick Warren shared for the first time intimate details of his son's suicide and his family's grief in what Piers Morgan called his most-inspiring interview ever.

"I have cried every single day since Matthew died," the megachurch pastor said on CNN Tuesday night. "But that's actually a good thing. Grief is a good thing. It's the way we get through the transitions of life."

He choked up on camera, too. His wife, Kay Warren, wiped tears from his cheek as they talked about the five months since their 27-year-old son, who had borderline personality disorder, shot himself with a gun he bought illegally online. Matthew's death, they said, came after years of threatening suicide and even asking his father, "Why can't I just die?"

The Warrens combined personal moments from their story—Kay hugging her son's body as the coroner took it away, Rick reading sympathy letters from people who Matthew had led to Christ—with their advocacy for a more robust response to mental illness and their continued hope in God. Christian leaders and viewers tweeted along to the hour-long conversation; their hashtag, #WarrensOnCNN, trended into this morning.

The author of The Purpose-Driven Life, Rick repeated that there's a purpose to their pain, affirming his belief in God even after "the day that I prayed would never happen happened." He said:

"I never questioned my faith in God. I questioned God's plan. There's a big difference. I know God is a good God. ... But not everything that happens in the world is God's will. Everything that happens in the world God allows, he permits, because it couldn't happen without his permission. But we live in a world where there are free choices, so if I choose to do wrong, I can't blame God for that. So God isn't to blame for my son's death. My son took his own life. It was his choice."

The Warrens told Morgan their son was not afraid to die and is now in heaven. "Matthew's body was broken. That gun broke his body, and he was buried in brokenness. But he's going to be raised in glory," Kay said, referencing 1 Corinthians 15:43 (NLV).

The interview aired hours after LifeWay Research reported that nearly half of evangelical, fundamentalist, or born-again Christians (48%) believe that people with serious mental illness can overcome their condition through prayer and Bible study alone.

Even as evangelical leaders like the Warrens and former Southern Baptist Convention president Frank Page (who lost a daughter to suicide) publicly share their stories, mental illness continues to be seen as a spiritual deficiency or character flaw by some Christians. Researchers also found that 54 percent of Americans said churches should do more to prevent suicide, and 68 percent said they would feel welcome in church if they were mentally ill.

When he returned to the pulpit at Saddleback Church six weeks ago, Rick Warren launched a sermon series on grief and a campaign to help churches address mental illness. "There's no shame when any other organ in your body fails, so why do we feel shame if our brain is broken?" he asked.
Poll Indicates Large Numbers of Americans Think the World Is In the Biblical “End Times”

By AT News Team, September 12, 2013

According to a poll released on September 11, a total of 41 percent of all United States adults, 54 percent of Protestants and 77 percent of Evangelicals believe the world is now living in the "end times" described in the Bible. Barna Research Group, based in Ventura, California, asked a random sample in an omnibus poll, "Do you, personally, believe that the world is currently living in the ‘end times’ as described by prophecies in the Bible, or not?" The response was much different among Catholics with 73 percent saying no, although among Catholics who attend mass regularly 45 percent said yes. The poll shows a split between ethnic groups on this question. A total of 54 percent of Blacks said yes as did 48 percent of Hispanics, about one out of two in both cases. Whites were at 39 percent, slightly below the national average. The survey also revealed that married adults were more likely to believe we are living in the end times and the same was true with families that had children in the home. The polling firm used recognized techniques with 1,000 online respondents among a representative sample of adults, ages 18 and older in the United States from July 29 through August 1. The margin of error was plus or minus three percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. But, it is also true that Barna polls have a reputation among experts in survey research about religion of a consistent conservative, Evangelical tilt. And, this question in an omnibus poll was paid for by the publisher of a new book entitled, The 9/11 Prophecy—Startling Evidence the Endtimes have Begun.

"Even I was surprised by the findings," said James F. Fitzgerald, the author who commissioned the question. "I thought the numbers could possibly be as low as 10 percent for the overall population and maybe 30 percent for Christians in general, or less. I had no way to know before the survey. But the response of the overall population was higher than what I expected from Christians, and the Evangelical’s response was nearly twice what I thought."

Fitzgerald has been working since 1993 to produce a video edition of the New Testament. It is called the WatchWord version and published on 10 DVDs totaling 26 hours of viewing time. To date he has sold 700,000 copies, according to a news release from the Religion New Services (RNS).

"I am not surprised," a veteran Seventh-day Adventist evangelist told Adventist Today. "There has been a recent increase in the number of people who have some interest in the Book of Revelation and the end times. Historically, we have always seen an increase when there are economic problems or international tensions and the potential for war. But, an interest in this topic does not always translate into people getting serious about joining a church and making a contribution to the mission of the church. It does not necessarily make evangelism any easier."

A 2009 survey of members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America indicated that 23 percent had volunteered in some way to help conduct a Revelation Seminar in the last year. The survey was conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University for the Office of Information and Research at the denomination’s North American Division.

"This is a confusing and upsetting time for people of faith," commented Monte Sahlin, an Adventist who monitors trends in American religion as part of the multi-faith Congregational Studies Partnership based at Hartford Seminary. "As America becomes more pluralistic, its tradition of tolerance and liberty puts more and more people into the position of choosing between deeply-held values. On the one hand there are people saying and doing things that are abhorrent to one's faith and on the other hand we are supposed to allow this without responding with anger or vehemence because we are all Americans. Also, contemporary political and technological change create new issues that are more difficult to understand in terms of religious traditions. It all adds up to a feeling that the world is coming to an end in one way or another."
Jesus Loves Miley Cyrus

Everyone's shocked and offended over her VMA performance. As Christians, we can offer another response.

Laura Leonard  [ posted 8/28/2013 ]

Charles Sykes / Invision / AP

What's left to say about Miley?

The former tween star's already-notorious performance at Sunday's MTV Video Music Awards has everyone freaking out, about the vulgarity, about the sexism, about the racism – not to mention the problematic celebration of drug culture in her song "We Can't Stop" and the misogynistic date-rape vibe of Robin Thicke's song "Blurred Lines," which the two performed together.

Sigh.

Are we really back here again? It's been 29 VMAs since Madonna writhed in her wedding dress to "Like a Virgin," 23 VMAs since Prince wore butt-baring pants, 12 VMAs since Britney performed "I'm a Slave 4 U" wrapped in a live snake, and four VMAs since Sacha Baron Cohen dressed as a dark angel and landed crotch-first on Eminem's head.

The VMAs exist to shock, and by promising to deliver a moment "even crazier" than 2003's Britney-Madonna kiss, Miley left little doubt about her intention to use this performance to carve out her own place alongside these icons of pop.

Part of me hates even acknowledging this event by writing about it—we're giving MTV and Miley exactly what they want. But when people are talking, they're also listening, and it's important to think through what our response communicates about who we are.

As Christians, when confronted with something offensive, we often condemn it on instinct. We want to make sure everyone knows how strongly we disagree, how completely we disapprove, how far we want to distance ourselves from such behavior. (To some extent this seems like a human instinct, given how much everyone has gone on and on this week about Miley at the VMAs.)

There's absolutely a time and a place to call out sin, but if all we do is shame Miley—a 20-year-old girl who grew up extremely privileged, extremely sheltered, and extremely publicly and is now in the process of discovering her adult identity—for her behavior, and bemoan one more nail in the coffin of this world, what are we communicating about a God who loves sinners and offers hope not just from them but to them?

Jesus loves Miley. Nothing she could do could separate her from his love. Even more than she needs to know how we feel about her dance moves, or her drug use, or her sexual history, she needs to know that truth. The world needs to know that. The way we talk about other people, particularly those we condemn, communicates a lot about who we are and what we are about to other people who are "outside," even when it's not their choices we're berating in a public forum.

So when it comes to our response to Miley, should we be shocked? No. It's no surprise when an awards show celebrating the music industry peddles sex appeal, the very force that drives so much of today's pop music.

Should we be disappointed? Sure. Miley's Disney origins made her a role model to many kids, and once upon a time she spoke out...
about her Christian beliefs, though she distanced herself from her faith long before this weekend.

Should we be offended? Absolutely. Her suggestive dancing and tiny outfit are really the least of our worries. Robin Thicke has gotten far less attention for his role in this, but as a 36-year-old, married, father, he took on a power position, singing fully clothed while Miley grinded on him and bent over. And don't even get me started about Miley's appropriation of "ratchet" culture and objectification of black women.

We don't know Miley personally, so it's easy to bash her. We never have to look her in the eyes and watch her face as we call her performance trashy. If we did know her, maybe we would think more deeply about why she made those choices, and how we can help support her in a way that keeps her from making them again.

In our eagerness to hate on her, we forget that we know Mileys, women and men who have so deeply absorbed the messages that in-your-face sexuality is the easiest way to get attention, and that attention is the same thing as value. God offers more to us, and he wants more for us. That is a response worth communicating – Jesus loves you, Miley, and he loves all the Mileys of this world. He can't stop.
Rethinking the $3,000 Missions Trip

When I learned that kids in my city couldn’t swim, I started to rethink how much I’d invested in overseas missions.

Doug Banister | posted 7/23/2013

Painfully thin for his age, Martin shivered uncontrollably by the side of the city swimming pool. He held his sides in a futile effort to keep warm. I was puzzled. A rare June heat wave had swept through Knoxville, and the temperature was pushing 90.

A few weeks later, Martin squeezed in beside me on the bus ride to our first swim meet. He was a wiry, bouncy 10-year-old with mischievous blue eyes and a killer smile. He could rarely sit still long enough to hear the workout set. Yet today he slumped down against the window and curled into a ball.

"Coach Doug," Martin asked after a few minutes, "can I have my dinner now? I haven't eaten in two days." A father of four, I know a con when I see one. "No, buddy," I teased. "You need to wait until after the meet like everyone else."

The summer got even hotter, and Martin kept shivering. One evening, a social worker who knew Martin dropped by the pool. I asked her if she knew why Martin always shivered. She pulled me aside and whispered, "It's because he's literally starving. The woman he lives with told a judge that she was 'starving the Devil out of him.' " I felt sick.

Summer swimming is enormously popular in Knoxville. Until a few years ago, however, kids like Martin could not compete in our summer swimming leagues. Every year on the last weekend of July, 2,300 wet kids jam into The University of Tennessee aquatic center for three days of fast times, cheers, and soggy ribbons. Until recently, however, no children from our urban neighborhoods were able to join in the fun. Lacking access to pools, few knew how to swim. As a result, drowning is a major cause of death among children in the inner city.

Five years ago, Emerald Youth Foundation, a Christian urban youth ministry, saw the need and launched Knoxville's first inner-city swim team. Today the team has about 50 kids. I'm the head coach. Our swim team is one beautiful example of how the church in Knoxville is seeking the common good of our city. The team is run by dozens of volunteers. Emily and Spencer, for example, compelled by God's command in Jeremiah 29:7 to "seek the peace of the city," moved into Martin's neighborhood.

Emily noticed Martin roaming her neighborhood from morning to night, and asked if he wanted to join the swim team. When he said yes, Emily went to work organizing rides and meals. Other families began taking turns in the car pool line. It costs $25 to join the team because Emerald Youth Foundation raises funds to cover caps, goggles, bus transportation, food, insurance, and pool time. All Souls Church, the downtown congregation that I pastor, included the swim team in our mission budget and supports the team with volunteer coaches.

The broader community is also partnering with Knoxville's churches in serving Martin and his friends. For example, I recently stood up at a coaches' meeting and asked if any team had old lane lines they could loan us. I had three offers in three minutes. Swimmers from the Pilot Aquatic Club, Knoxville's nationally ranked club team, have donated fins, suits, and kickboards. Even the University of Tennessee swim team has gotten involved, providing suits, coaches, and lane lines.

Rethinking the $3,000 Mission Trip

In some ways, however, what is happening with our urban swim team is more the exception than the rule in our city. Some well-meaning Christians have a theology of mission that seeks to alleviate the spiritual and physical suffering of people far away, but pays little attention to needs here at home.

I know because I was one of them. I spent many years taking mission trips to Tulcea, Romania. We shared the gospel, cared for orphans, and started a medical clinic. It seemed that God moved in powerful ways. Then my friends Jon and Toni moved into one of Knoxville's marginalized neighborhoods. Jon invited me to go on prayer walks with him on Wednesday mornings. I saw syringes on playgrounds, prostitutes turning tricks, hustlers selling drugs. Our walks led me to volunteer at the elementary school in Jon's neighborhood. I'd assumed all the schools in our city were pretty much the same. They aren't. Kids with B averages in Jon's school score in the 30th percentile on standardized tests. Kids with B averages in my neighborhood score in the 90th percentile.

Along the way, a pastor named Johnny began showing me what the city looked like from the front lawn of his cash-strapped...
inner-city church. As I spent more time in Knoxville's at-risk neighborhoods, I realized that I knew more about poverty in Tulcea than I knew about poverty in Knoxville. I was pursuing the common good of a city across the world while neglecting the common good of the place where I lived.

I don't think I'm alone. Martin Luther King Jr. once preached, "All of life is interrelated. . . . We are inevitably our brother's keeper because we are our brother's brother. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." Most Christians I know believe this in a global sense. We feel a God-given burden for the starving child in Haiti. Yet we sometimes lack a similar burden for the Martins back home.

A good example of this imbalanced approach to mission is the exploding popularity of short-term missions. In his book When Helping Hurts, Brian Fikkert observes that short-term missions have become a $1.6 billion annual enterprise in America. Every year, thousands of Christians in our city take short-term trips that cost anywhere from $1,000 to $3,000 per person.

I believe in missions. I also believe in short-term mission trips. Yet the longer I work in the resource-poor inner city, the more frustrated I become with the amount of money God's people spend on these brief trips. We seem so eager to spend thousands of dollars sending our people overseas for one week without stopping to ask, "Would some of this money be better invested in my own community?"

Every time I hear of another $3,000 short-term mission trip, I think about Dan and Mary, whose ministry to Knoxville's refugee community is chronically underfunded. I think about the 1,600 meals that the same sum would pay for at our rescue mission. I think about the inner city schoolteacher who dips into her $34,000 salary to pay for pencils and treats. I think of the 83-year-old widow with the $700 winter heating bill, waiting for a new roof she can't afford. I think about the 50 children of prisoners on the waiting list for the underfunded Amachi mentoring program. I think about the 50 children who have never seen a deer who could go to a Bible camp in the mountains for the same amount of money it takes to send one person overseas for a week. And I think about the starving boy on my swim team.

I do believe we are changing. Churches in Knoxville with strong foreign mission programs are beginning to invest considerable resources in meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the weakest members of our community.

Without these resources, I couldn't coach Martin.

Martin never stopped shivering that summer, but he did start swimming faster. I made some calls to see if Martin might join a year-round swim program. The local swimming community was eager to help. Then Martin stopped showing up. Nobody at his house returned our calls, and Martin missed the rest of our meets. At our year-end swim banquet, we gave Martin the "Most Improved Swimmer" award. He wasn't there to receive it. A friend and I drove the award to his house after the banquet. After many knocks, a man answered the door. He wasn't happy to see us. We handed him Martin's trophy and told him how well Martin swam. "I don't know where he is," the man said. He shut the door.

Doug Banister lives in Knoxville, Tennessee. He is the pastor of All Souls Church and coaches the Emerald Youth Foundation Swim Team. His new book, Seek the Peace of the City: Ten Ways to Bless the Place Where You Live, is available for free download.
Behind every strong redneck duck-hunter is a strong Christian woman.

Who could have ever predicted that on television would be a reality series about a family who makes duck calls?

For over a year now, Duck Dynasty has forsaken all the reality show formulas, instead focusing on a Christian family living in the middle of Louisiana. There are no cat fights, no hot tub makeout scenes, no eliminations, no barely dressed women. The staples of the reality show genre are noticeably absent from Duck Dynasty, which is both family-friendly and laugh-out-loud funny. It's also why millions of viewers like me keep tuning in. For humor, the show relies on family dynamics, such as fan favorite Si Robertson. The zany uncle of the show, Si is an endless source of hilarious one-liners, all delivered with perfect comedic timing.

This humor and heart is what makes Duck Dynasty so appealing, but the show is also a refuge of sorts. Viewers don't have to worry about bad language, sex, or violence—unless you count killing ducks.

While you might expect a show about a Southern family of self-avowed "rednecks" to be an unfriendly environment for women, it is quite the opposite. The women of Duck Dynasty are respected, and they are strong.

Miss Kay, the matriarch of the family, has been married to her husband Phil for nearly 50 years and has four sons. Although she is sometimes portrayed as silly or out-of-touch, she is a woman of dignity and substance.

Viewers learn that Phil and Kay endured difficulties during their decades of marriage, including Phil's struggle with substance abuse and eventual return to sobriety. Today, Phil is a man of God, and Kay is the apple of his eye. In spite of Phil's occasionally obtuse
generalizations about women—comparing them to labrador retrievers or declaring that all women like romantic tearjerkers—he reveres Miss Kay. He constantly praises her character, her gentleness, and her mothering, and he also affirms the loveliness of her full figure. If Phil's adoration is any indication of Miss Kay's integrity, then she is a fine woman indeed.

As an additional testimony to Miss Kay's legacy, her sons also married women of great character. Korie Roberson is married to Willie, the CEO of Duck Commander. They married just after high school and have five children. She works as the office manager of the family business, and she's a get-things-done kind of woman. Viewers witness her leadership over church and family events and catch glimpses of her important role in the company. She seems to have a natural instinct for business and marketing; I wouldn't be surprised if Korie was the brains behind the family's branding.

Korie's daughter, Sadie, also has a prominent role on the show. We watch Sadie navigate adolescent milestones such as learning to drive or attending a school dance, all with the "help" of a protective father and quirky family members. It's also clear that Sadie has inherited her parents' entrepreneurial spirit and passion for ministry, as she has recently debuted a weekly video devotional and hopes to produce a modest clothing line.

Missy Robertson is married to Jase, another one of Phil and Kay's sons. Missy is very involved in the family and seems to have a playful relationship with her husband. Although the show portrays her as being somewhat high-strung, Missy seems to be a hard worker, a diligent wife and mother, and a woman of faith.

Jessica Robertson is married to Jep, Phil and Kay's youngest son, and they have four children together. Jessica rarely appeared in the first season but she emerged as a more frequent character in the second and third. We know the least about Jessica, but she seems to have a sweet disposition and is a friend to her fellow Robertson sisters-in-law.

Although Duck Dynasty sometimes defaults to gender stereotypes—i.e. the "citified" daughters-in-law who hate to hunt, or the slacker husbands who want to squander the day fishing and not showering—the characters are both loving and deep. The women of Duck Dynasty are not wallflowers, subservient doormats, or flat types. Each woman on the show has contours, has a voice, and serves as an important partner to her husband.

That's what I love most about Duck Dynasty. Of all the shows on television right now, Duck Dynasty is one of the few that does not objectify women, but portrays them as whole persons. Furthermore, it pushes back against shallow stereotypes of Christian womanhood. The Robertson women are not cookie cutter look-alikes. They're not all stay-at-home moms, or incredible cooks, or silent submissives. Korie is a businesswoman without a knack for cooking or sewing, and Miss Kay wields a gentle yet authoritative power in the family. As the two main female characters, Korie and Miss Kay are not cut from the same cloth, but each woman has her own strengths, her own areas of influence, and her own expressions of self. And amidst this diversity, each embodies the biblical image of a woman "clothed in strength and dignity" (Prov. 31:25).

By no means do the Robertson women represent the diverse spectrum of womanhood as God created us, but they do make some space for it. Rather than conform to the arguably narrower depiction of womanhood that pervades American media, the Robertson women remind us of a different way. Women come in all shapes and sizes—both figuratively and literally—so following Christ is not a call to conform to any stereotype or cultural expectation. It's a single call to conform to Christ, but it manifests in surprisingly diverse ways.

Who better to remind us of this truth than some wild men in the wilderness? After all, they wouldn't be the first.
By Elissa Kido / November 15, 2010

Amid all the buzz on education reform, the Seventh Day Adventist school system might seem an unexpected place to look for models in improving student achievement. But by educating mind, body, and spirit, Adventist schools outperform the national average across all demographics.

By Elissa Kido / November 15, 2010

Riverside, Calif.

Education reform has taken center stage lately as Americans struggle to close the oft-condemned achievement gap. But quietly in our midst, the second largest Christian school system in the world has been steadily outperforming the national average – across all demographics.

The Seventh-Day Adventists' holistic curriculum serves as a model for how to overcome that gap – the disparity in academic performance between low-income and minority students and their peers in higher-income communities. But even more, it shows how to narrow the gap between mind, body, and spirit, truly educating students for success.

Now, I'm not advocating for religious instruction to be included in school curricula. Rather, what my research indicates is that holistic learning – an education that doesn't erect artificial barriers among disciplines and between mind, body, and spirit – does indeed result in greater student achievement.

Adventist schools outperform their peers

Since 2006, as part of the CognitiveGenesis study, two colleagues and I have gathered data on more than 50,000 students enrolled in Seventh-Day Adventist schools. (Unbeknownst to many, the Adventist Church runs a Christian school system second only in size to the Roman Catholic parochial schools.) While we have long believed in the effectiveness of the holistic approach Adventist schools take, we wanted to quantify, empirically, how well students in Adventist schools perform.

Even we were surprised by the results. Our four-year, independently financed study showed that students at Adventist schools outperformed their peers at the national average in every subject area.

Between 2006 and 2010, my colleagues and I analyzed test scores of 51,706 students, based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for Grades 3-8, the Iowa Test of Educational Development for Grades 9 and 11, and the Cognitive Abilities Test for all grades, as well as surveys completed by students, parents, teachers, and school administrators.
Moody Bible Institute Drops Alcohol and Tobacco Ban for Employees

School follows Wheaton, Huntington, and Asbury in emphasizing 'values not rules.'

Sarah Pulliam Bailey - Religion News Service

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Son of Thunder/Wikimedia

Moody Bible Institute

(RNS) The Chicago-based evangelical Moody Bible Institute has dropped its ban on alcohol and tobacco consumption by its 600-some faculty and staff, including for those who work in its radio and publishing arms.

The change in August reflected a desire to create a "high trust environment that emphasizes values, not rules," said spokeswoman Christine Gorz. Employees must adhere to all "biblical absolutes," Gorz said, but on issues where the Bible is not clear, Moody leaves it to employees' conscience.

Employees may not drink on the job or with Moody students, who are not allowed to drink while in school.

Founded in 1886 by evangelist D.L. Moody, the Moody Bible Institute pays the cost of tuition (about $6,000 per semester before federal aid) for its 1,600 undergraduates who attend the main campus in downtown Chicago, many of whom go into ministry after graduation.

Students must abstain from tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs and "sexual promiscuity" for at least one year before they enroll and during their time at Moody.

"In addition, students are to refrain from gambling, viewing obscene or pornographic literature, and patronizing pubs, bars, nightclubs,
comedy clubs, and similar establishments," the catalog says. "There will be no on- or off-campus dances sponsored or organized by Moody Bible Institute students or personnel."

Last year, the school lifted a ban on long hair for men and nose stud earrings for women. "Hair is to be well-groomed and should avoid extremes," the guidelines say, and hair should be of natural color.

The change at Moody represents the latest shift in attitudes at different Christian institutions in recent years.

Ten years ago in suburban Chicago, Wheaton College lifted the ban on student dancing and now allows faculty, staff and graduate students to drink, though not on campus. Other schools, including Huntington University and Asbury Seminary, have changed their stances on employees and drinking in the last five years, said Jennifer Woodruff Tait, managing editor of Christian History Magazine.

"It's part of a larger trend of wanting cultural acceptance," said Tait, who noted that professors would go to academic conferences and be embarrassed when they couldn't drink with friends. "A lot of people saw attitudes to alcohol as a witness. Many people are saying there are other ways to witness and this is a way to fit in."

Colleges and seminaries are one barometer to gauge current evangelical thinking on social issues, said Larry Eskridge, associate director of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals.

"Generally, permissive attitudes about alcohol within an evangelical denomination or school are looked upon by many conservative evangelicals as a hallmark of decline, perhaps even of apostasy," he said.

"By contrast, more 'progressive' elements within the evangelical community these days are likely to look upon those institutions with strictures against alcohol use as legalistic and accuse them of 'majoring on the minor.'"

Many, if not most, Christian colleges do not allow undergraduates to drink, but the policy for faculty and staff varies. The umbrella organization Council for Christian Colleges & Universities does not keep statistics on where its member institutions stand. CCCU spokeswoman Pamela Jones says she knows of no CCCU-affiliated school that allows alcohol on campus.

Many late 19th-century evangelicals and fundamentalists were leaders of the temperance movement against alcohol. The evangelist Moody was among those who argued for voluntary abstinence rather than the prohibition enforced by law, according to the encyclopedia "Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History."

Moody was particularly interested in reaching drunkards, according to the book "Moody's Talks on Temperance, with Anecdotes and Incidents." He stressed "the power of God's grace to take away the appetite for liquor," wrote the Rev. James B. Dunn.

"I think for us, this is really about what Scripture says," Gorz said. "I don't know if what D.L. Moody's opinion might have been was really taken into consideration."

Policies on Christian college campuses can be trickier than other religious institutions like denominations, as some students are under the 21-year-old drinking age limit.

Forty percent of evangelical leaders said they "socially drink alcohol," according to a 2010 survey of evangelical leaders conducted by the National Association of Evangelicals. In a survey of mostly Southern Baptists, the SBC's LifeWay Research found that 29 percent of Southern Baptist congregants drink alcohol, compared with 3 percent of Southern Baptist pastors.

Affirming a long-standing stance, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution in 2006 of "total opposition" to alcoholic beverages, urging that no one who drinks be elected to leadership in the denomination. Individual SBC churches determine their own position.

Like sex, alcohol has been a sensitive issue for younger evangelicals as many were told to abstain from both.

"You have a generation that's eager to dive into the gray areas. Sex and alcohol aren't on the same page, but we were told to not do both," said Tyler Huckabee, a 2007 Moody graduate who's now the managing editor of Relevant, a magazine for young evangelicals. "It backfired as some started doing (one or both)."

Young evangelicals still fall on different sides of the aisle, he said.

"It's something that we need a developed philosophy and theology on," Huckabee said. "It's like, instead of just being told to abstain from
sex, we need to develop something on what a healthy sense of sexuality is."

Moody Bible Institute has campuses in Michigan and Spokane, Wash., and owns 36 radio stations across the country. Popular Moody Publishers authors include Gary Chapman, Jerry B. Jenkins and Nancy Leigh DeMoss.

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