Inspirational Quote

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

- Muriel Strode

Ministry Opening

Andrews University Chaplin: This is a full time University Chaplin salaried position through the Campus Ministries department at Andrews University. More info: Visit Andrews.

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.

Youth Pastor: Looking for a Youth Pastor to lead and organize an effective youth program in Fresno, California. A 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.

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

Adventist Resources

2014 Forever Faithful International Camporee: February 1st is the last day for the theme song contest. Enter to win 2 free registration tickets to and sing on the main stage opening night. More info: Contact cye.org.
**The Creation:** Here is a witness / evangelism tool. Watch the video click this [link](#), Adventist filmmaker Henry Stober spent four years filming the movie around the world. More Info: Visit [DareToBelieve](#)

**New Cohort Forming:** Andrews DMin program will meet for a two-week intensive each year and then implement their learning in the context of their regular ministry for those in full time ministry with an MDiv. More Info: Contact the coordinator, [Steve Case](#) or [Andrews DMin registrar's office](#)

**Doctor of Ministry in Chaplaincy:** Andrews University will offer a new Chaplaincy beginning March 2014. Applications are being accepted until Jan. 31, 2014. Dr. Mario Ceballos, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries associate director, is coordinator of the program. More Info: Contact [Mario Ceballos](#) or [Andrews](#)

**Non-Denominational Resource**

**Understanding Sexual Identity:** A resource for youth ministry by Mark A Yarhouse More Info: Visit [Zondervan](#). Customer reviews click on this [Link](#)

**Adventist National / International Events**

**Music and Worship Conference, Andrews University** January 9-11, 2014 More Info: Visit [CYE.org](#) Sponsored by Andrews University Seminary, Music Department, CYE and NAD Ministirial Department

**Just Claim It** 2014 February 12-15, Miami Florida More Info: Contact the NAD office 301-680-6000 or Visit [AdventistYouthMinisties](#) Sponsored by NAD

**Adventist Christian Fellowship Institute** For public college/university schools ministry leaders. 2014 May 16-25, Locations TBA More Info: Contact [Ron Picknell](#) or Visit [acfi2014](#) Sponsored by NAD

**Forever Faithful International Camporee Oshkosh Walk-Around** April 22, 2014 Everone is Welcome More Info: Contact [Vern Byrd](#)

**Children's Leadership Conference:** March 28-30, 2014 Andrews University More Info: Contact [Walter Rogers](#) or Visit [CYE.org](#) Sponsored by NAD / CYE / LUC

**Cruise with a Mission:** A young adult annual event set for December 14-21, 2014 More Info: Contact [Richard Parke](#) or Visit [CruiseWithaMission](#) Sponsored by CYE
Pathfinder Camporees


Research and Surveys Sponsored by Institute of Church Ministries

Landmark Surveys Reveal Beliefs and perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members. The most extensive research ever conducted on attitudes, beliefs, experiences and spiritual practices. Read Full Article by Adventist Today

This Study Describes the average Millennial in 2013 Does it describe you? Read Full Article by News to Live by

In A Survey of more than 50,000 Adventist Students 81% said: That attending an Adventist School is the most important thing that has helped them develop a religious faith. Ready Full Article by NAD Newpoints

Why Evangelicals Don't Know Asian Americans: We have quite a way to go towards ending racial stereotyping in Christendom Read Full Article by Christianity Today

Four World Divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination Have Voted to End Gender Discrimination in Ordination. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

Research Summit: Why Large Numbers are Leaving the Adventist Church Read Full Article by Christianity Today

Miscellaneous

The Secret Women's Porn Problem: We may not talk much about women's addiction to erotica, but it's happening. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

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they owe more than they own, says Pamela Foohey. It's leadership failure. Read Full Article By Christianity today
Landmark Surveys Reveal Beliefs and Perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members

Based on a Report from Adventist News Network, October 22, 2013

The most extensive research ever conducted on the attitudes, beliefs, experiences and spiritual practices of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination reinforced some long-held assumptions about the denominational loyalty of members, yet revealed an emerging trend toward secularization that is worrisome for some church leaders. The findings were released last week at the annual meeting of the General Conference executive committee. The research comes from five separate studies with more than 41,000 respondents around the world, including 4,260 pastors, nearly 26,000 church members, 1,200 college students and recent graduates, and 900 former Adventists. Research teams from Adventist universities on several continents were involved in the unprecedented effort commissioned by the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research over the past three years. Among the most significant findings, according to Dr. David Tim, director of the office: • Sabbath School teachers were ranked higher than pastors and elders when church members were asked who had a positive effect on their spiritual lives. • About three-fourths of Adventists strongly embrace the prophetic ministry of church co-founder Ellen G. White. • Only about one in three families worldwide conduct daily worship. Previous studies have shown a higher percentage in North America. • Almost half of college students and recent college graduates said they would accept practicing homosexuals as church members in good and regular standing. • About 9 in 10 people who left the Adventist church were never contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending. “In terms of both the breadth and depth,” said Trim, “this is the best snapshot we’ve ever had of the worldwide church.” As he introduced the report to hundreds of church administrators, Trim warned the group to not be quick to judge. “Data is what it is,” Trim said. “What it means, is something else.” The findings debunked long held assumptions about the denomination’s gender makeup. The church is 57 percent female, and 43 percent male, quite a ways off from the belief that 65 percent of worshippers were female and 35 percent were male. The findings also showed a denomination that is young. A total of 54 percent of the members worldwide are between the ages of 16 and 40. This has two disadvantages, according to Trim. For one, young members may be called too quickly into leadership positions without sufficient experience. In addition, older leaders may need training to learn how to understand and work effectively with the younger generation. Only 10 percent of church members globally are older than 60, and the largest proportion of aging congregants are in North America, Europe and Japan. Research done for the North American Division put the median age there at 51. In contrast, Trim said, “Our church in Latin America and Africa in particular is an extremely youthful church.” The findings contained several bright spots, Trim said, including a statistic that shows that 53 percent of respondents stated that the Sabbath School adult Bible study guide helped “very much” to develop their religious life. The study guide is least popular with worshipers in North America, parts of Europe, Australia and New Zealand. “As someone who is both from Australia and Europe, and married to an American,” Trim said jokingly, “I will accept the blame for all those things. We are very cynical people in America, Australia and Europe.” Another “success story,” Trim said, was that 92 percent of Adventists have an overwhelming conviction that the Seventh-day Sabbath is the true Sabbath, and only 3 percent disagree. Because that particular survey’s margin of error was 3 percent actual disagreement could be nearly zero. The findings also pointed to several areas deemed problematic, such as people leaving the church unnoticed, and the seeping influence of secular values, Trim said. Interestingly, the vast majority of inactive and former members do not reject the message and mission of the Adventist church. “They are moving with the strong dynamics of contemporary society away from established forms of religious activity,” Trim said. “The fabric of most Adventist local churches is not sufficient to stem this tide.” He then told the committee, “Brothers and sisters, I think this is a real challenge to us.” While only 9 percent of these inactive and former members were contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending church, a larger number said they had been visited by elders or other church members. However, the findings show that 4 out of 10 inactive and former Adventists slipped out of the church without ever being contacted by anyone. The fact that members leave unnoticed is a “tragedy,” Trim said. From 2000 to 2012, more than 13.6 million people joined the church, mostly through baptism. But during the same time, 5.9 million Adventists were lost (and that doesn’t include those who died). That’s a loss rate of nearly 43.4 per 100 new converts. “That is too high,” Trim said. Approximately 90 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ. When asked if they expect the world to end within the next 20 years, just 22 percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 45 percent strongly disagreed, Trim said. “It’s not that people don’t believe that Jesus is coming, but there does seem to be some kind of skepticism about Him coming soon.” The report concluded that secularization is no longer limited to America, Europe and Australia. “It’s a globalized society,” Trim said. “People are watching the same television programs, reading the same apps and websites on their phones and computers, and secularization is a problem.” Pastor Benjamin Schoun, the General Conference vice president in the chair at the time of the report, acknowledged the challenges facing the
denomination. “We have much to learn and we probably need to incorporate these results into our strategic planning,” he stated, “because it is a very sobering picture in some cases, even though we have our strengths as well.” This report is based on a bulletin from the Adventist News Network, the official news service of the denomination.
This Study Describes the Average Millennial in 2013. Does It Define You?

By Danny Rubin

Are you average? No, of course not. You’re a Millennial and no one with this many trophies would ever be considered typical or run-of-the-mill.

Then again, maybe our generation does tend to hang out in the same places and do much of the same things. A new study by PayScale, experts in compensation data, and Millennial Branding, a Gen Y research company, has determined what we all have in common.

The 2013 report covers a range of topics: education, salary, workplace satisfaction and, of course, how many of us live with our parents. The findings suggest Millennials are struggling a bit and start their professional lives later than previous generations.

“The economy has delayed [Millennial] careers and their personal independence and forced them to work harder than previous generations just to catch up,” said Dan Schawbel, Founder of Millennial Branding and New York Times best-selling author of Promote Yourself. “They are taking on multiple jobs to pay back student loans and are being forced to create their own careers instead of relying on companies to do it for them.”

News To Live By turned the study into a neat little graphic. Do these stats characterize you?

Take a look and see for yourself.

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Are you a Millennial? (b. 1982-2002)

That means you:

- Make $39,200 as a female with a bachelor’s degree
- Make $49,600 as a male with a bachelors degree

Work as a:

- Mechanical Engineer, Aerospace Engineer, Traffic Coordinator, Marketing Administrator, Sales Team Leader (Retail), Public Relations (PR) Specialist, Human Resources (HR) Assistant, Architectural Designer, Community Outreach Coordinator, Program Coordinator at a Non-Profit Organization
Majored in:

Entrepreneurship & Marketing, Global Studies, Journalism & Electronic Media, Neuroscience, Biomedical Engineering (BME), Fashion Marketing & Management, Quantitative Economics, Actuarial Mathematics, Middle School Education

At work, you have:

High job satisfaction (66%) and high job stress (60%). You also have low job meaning (48%).

You wish you could change your:

Pay (72%)
Commute (6%)
Boss (5%)

Although you love:

When work covers your travel expenses
Getting paid overtime
When it comes to moving back with mom and dad:

- 72% of Gen Y have always been able to live on their own
- 11% have moved back in the past
- 16% live at home right now

Does this study sound like you?

What did it get right? What did it miss?

Share in the comments!

Feature photo courtesy of itupictures (Flickr)


"This is your life after college crash course."

- Paul Angone -- Author, 101 Secrets for Your Twenties

© 2013, Danny Rubin
The posting of An Open Letter from the Asian American Community to the Evangelical Church (dated 10/13/13) illustrated how we have quite a ways to go towards ending racial stereotyping in Christendom and developing a missional church that's contextualized for all peoples.

Coincidentally by the sovereignty of God, I've had a unique vantage point on these series of events because I've got good relationships and friendships on all "sides" involved. It grieved me to see my family members unable to resolve their differences.

Before I unpack some of the multi-layer complexities to begin to understand why all this was so challenging, I'll briefly comment on 2 resolved incidents that I'm most familiar with.

During recent months, I was feeling quite conflicted over these incidents. These are my brothers and sisters in Christ; we're in the same family and on the same team, why would this happen? And I could see how it's complicated, so very complicated. As I worked on
untangling the messiness of these unintentional offenses, I discovered 7 factors for why this is so challenging:

1. Different sense of humor gets lost in translation.

American cultural humor is comparatively much less sensitive, thus insensitive, than minority culture humor. Only in American culture can you have a comedian that gets laughs by insulting people. Offensive everywhere else. Unheard of in any other cultures. Instead of saying something like "get over it" or "you need thicker skin," how about we exhort people to quit being so insensitive and offensive?

2. Different reactions among Asian Americans.

What added to the confusion was the diversity of reactions. Not all Asian Americans get offended equally: some are assimilated into majority culture, some have self-hatred for their own ethnicity, some can overlook of good intentions, some have zero-tolerance for any racial stereotyping and microaggressions. For people less familiar with such diversity, who are they supposed to listen to?

3. Solving problems with questions vs. answers.

I talked with a Caucasian guy extensively on the phone, discussing how to better navigate these issues. We discovered 2 very different approaches to understanding & learning. One group led with questions while the other group led with answers. Some want to take the time to better understand thoroughly while some want to resolve things quickly and move on. Some want to listen and get the full context, while some want the answer in one or two action steps.

4. Different convictions about how to resolve conflicts.

Not all Christians and not all evangelicals approach conflict resolutions with the same procedures. Some say that Matthew 18:15-17 is the biblical way to resolve conflicts, that the offended should go to the offender privately first. Some would look to Paul's example in Galatians 2 and how he confronted Peter's sin in public. One scholar differs on the context for applying that passage, and noted how public speech is confronted publicly.

5. Intentions sometimes don't match impact.

Most people have good intentions most of the time, and these misuses of racial stereotypes were unintentionally offensive to some. The issue at hand is not the intentions or motives; the issue at hand is the negative impact on others. If you unintentionally stepped on my toes, you cannot just say sorry and expect the hurt to instantly go away. One insight I heard afresh at the Mosaix 2013 conference was how good intentions are not good enough when we enter a multiethnic community, and you can expect more conflicts, not less, when building relationships cross-culturally. Christena Cleveland said it this way: "We need more than good intentions, we need to know what's going on below the surface."

6. Social media is great for me but not everyone or everything.

As a long-time blogger myself (since 1999), I've noticed that most Christian leaders have been slower to adapt and adopt the newest modes of communications afforded us with social media. I've also found organizations to be even slower than individuals. I'm personally all for public discourse, even on controversial topics, but not everyone is comfortable with it, and in fact, many issues are better resolved offline than online. Social media is great at fishing for likes and retweets, not so much at civil discourse and thoughtful comments.

7. There's a lack of Asian American voices in the mainstream too.

It's not just evangelicals that don't get Asian Americans; everyone doesn't get Asian Americans because we don't have a voice. Look at this screenshot from the popular news portal Huffington Post.
Do you notice all the voices featured there? Do you notice who's missing? Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial ethnic grouping and yet have no voice.

I decided to briefly share this short list above to kickstart the much-needed conversations. Add a comment so we can discuss the nuances, where I could explain more, and we can learn from one another. I actually have a half a dozen other factors too; I told you it was complicated. And to give you a sneak preview about my next blog post, because Americans are known for liking happy endings, I'll be offering some of my breakthrough ideas for a better future evangelicalism.
Four World Regions of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination Have Voted to End Gender Discrimination in Ordination

By AT News Team, November 19, 2013

Updated November 22 and December 10

Over the past two weeks a total of four of the 13 world divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination have voted to recommend an end to gender discrimination in the ordination of clergy. Each of these recommendations came from an in-depth study of the Bible as well as Christian history and the Adventist heritage, including the writings of Ellen G. White. These studies were conducted by denomination's Bible scholars, individuals who have spent a lifetime studying the Bible in its original languages.

On November 4 the North American Division (NAD) executive committee voted 182 to 31, “That we receive the Biblical study of ordination prepared by the NAD Theology of Ordination Study Committee and affirm the conclusion that all people, men and women, may receive ordination as an affirmation of the call of God; and that the NAD support the authorization of each division to consider, through prayer and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, its most appropriate approach to the ordination of women to gospel ministry.” This decision was based on a 240-page report, as previously reported by Adventist Today.

A 730-page study of the Bible material on ordination was received and discussed this week at the annual meeting of the executive committee of the Trans-European Division (TED). The report came with a recommendation that gender discrimination in ordination be ended. After a two-hour discussion, the committee voted unanimously in a secret ballot to approve the report.

The executive committee of the Inter-European Division voted a similar recommendation unanimously during its annual meeting, November 1-5 in Madrid, Spain. The executive committee of the South Pacific Division (SPD) voted the same position on November 13 and again the vote was unanimous. The SPD includes a number of developing nations along with Australia and New Zealand, so this unanimous decision may be an indicator that the global consensus on this issue that has ignited so much controversy is shifting. The TED study responded to a large number of questions regarding ordination which had been listed by the General Conference study committee on the theology of ordination. This does not only include the issue of women’s ordination, but the matters of biblical hermeneutics, the biblical teaching on ordination, ministry, offices, terminology, rituals, the significance of laying on of hands, the development of ordination after the completion of the writings in the New Testament, the understanding and practice of ordination in the major Christian churches, its introduction and later development in the Adventist denomination, and the views of Ellen White on the topic. Dr. Bertil Wiklander, division president and chair of the study committee in Europe, said after the vote, “It is clear that the leaders in the TED wish to see a thorough review of ordination as a whole and to have an inclusive ministry without gender distinctions. We have worked for 19 months with this report and have become astonished at what we have discovered in the Bible and various historical sources. The report gives good reasons for the Church to review its practices in order to let them harmonize more with the Bible. We understand, however, that our contribution is only one of many and we are looking forward to continue working with the world church to seek biblical solutions while preserving unity of purpose.” Besides a detailed exegetical study of the Bible and historical study of ordination in all its major aspects, the report contains twelve recommendations to move the denomination "towards a Biblical priesthood of all believers." (1) "Focus on the Mission of God and All Being Servants for the Salvation of the World. The entire matter of ordination should be seen and our terminology should be defined in the context of God’s purpose for the world as the Creator in Genesis 1-2 and the end-time vision of Revelation 21-22. This will revive the doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers and the inspired biblical theology of mission, church, and service. It will give a theological foundation for activating all members in mission. (2) "Remove the current distance between clergy and laity and the levels of ordination. We recommend that the Church embraces truly biblical principles and frees itself from the continuing dependence on ‘Roman’ practices, for example, by: (a) Finding ways to visibly include the role of lay people in the ordination ceremony (lay people are theologically included in the idea of the church delegating authority to ordained pastors, and lay people participate in the conference/union committee decisions to ordain a pastor); (b) Removing any idea of ‘(apostolic) succession’; (c) Removing the existing distance between clergy and laity, and the idea that the ordained clergy forms a separate class of members who are elevated to a higher status than others; (d) Removing the levels of ordination between all the different ‘servants’ who work in the church (globally and locally) and applying, rather, one concept of servanthood but with distinctions of duties and responsibilities which are documented in written credentials; (e) Removing the intricate differences between various levels of ministry, such as the licensed and ordained minister, the licensed minister and the
ordained local church elder, the pastor and the local church elder, etc.; (f) Admitting that there is no biblical command to ordain anyone by the imposition of hands and that there is no consistent biblical formula for how a leader is inducted to office in the Christian church. (3) "An inclusive ministry: Where it is culturally appropriate, the Church should allow for an inclusive and gender-neutral ministry, which means that credentials will be granted to men and women on equal terms for all offices which require ordination, presently the gospel minister, the elder, and the deacon/deaconess. This means that the Church removes all gender distinctions in its Working Policy related to the ministry and thus fulfils the biblical intent of the Working Policy BA 55 on ‘Human Relations’. If this cannot be implemented across the world at the same time, the Church should allow it where unions/divisions request permission to do so. This may mean that the world-wide recognition of an ordination in one country may have to be reworded in the Working Policy to the effect that an ordained minister’s credentials are subject to the acceptance of a receiving division/union/conference. (4) "Recommendation to the GC Session in 2015: We propose that a recommendation be brought to the General Conference Session in 2015 that approves a revised policy in which unions whose constituency meetings in session have voted approval and whose division committee has voted approval, be allowed to maintain an inclusive pastoral ministry which removes all gender distinctions within the work of the Church in that union territory. (5) "Theology and practice of ordination and the education of members: The Church should continue its development of the biblical theology of ordination. Based on our study, we urge the Church to proceed in considerably more detail than in the brief consensus statement now considered by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. This should be accompanied by an organized and intentional attempt to educate members regarding the biblical rationale for ordination and what Seventh-day Adventists believe about it in view of the teaching of the Bible, our only authority for life and practice. "There should be an ongoing teaching of church members regarding the mission of God, the nature of the Church and ordination. This is especially important for new members who come from Roman Catholic or Orthodox backgrounds. The Roman Catholic Church has extensive catechetical teachings about ‘Orders’, which is one of seven sacraments and lays the foundation for the priesthood and the right to determine a person’s salvation or condemnation. ‘Orders’ are part of even brief and popular Catholic Catechisms, but in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we say almost nothing about ordination. This deficit has generated bias and unwarranted traditions that have determined members’ opinion on both ordination in general and women’s ordination. The text of the Working Policy is hardly known by members and is even insufficient as it now stands. (6) "Consider the best terminology: The Church should carefully consider the wisdom of using the term 'ordination', which is ambiguous and loaded with meanings from the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations that are not biblical and that are confusing our members who have come to us from other churches. Its origins in the pagan Roman empirical administration, its laws and idol worship, and in the false Christian theology introduced by Tertullian and Cyprian and others after them, make a Seventh-day Adventist hesitant and uncomfortable about this term. We recommend therefore that terms that are closer to the biblical terminology are introduced, such as ‘appoint’, ‘commission’, ‘dedicate’. If for traditional reasons, it is decided to keep ‘ordination’ as a technical term in denominational language, it should be acknowledged that each language in the world has ways of referring to the concept of ‘ordination’ that does not reflect the English ‘ordination’ or Latin ordinatio. For example, Greek Adventists use the common Greek term of cheirotoneo, which is found in Acts 14:23. Other options abound in various languages and the Church should acknowledge the wish of a union to choose better terms in the local language than ‘ordination’ or ‘ordain’.

(7) "Remove ritualistic and consecrational flavor: Seeing how ‘ordination’ is treated in the New Testament, which is where we must find our guidance on Christian ministry, we recommend that the ritualistic and consecrational flavor of the act of ordination, its vague mixture of granting the Holy Spirit or gifts for ministry and ecclesiastical authority be radically toned done and removed from policy and practice.

(8) "Make the imposition of hands optional. While an installation ceremony is a positive and needed feature in church life, we recommend that the imposition of hands be an optional part of the ceremony. In the New Testament, the apostle, servants/ministers, overseers/elders are nowhere ordained by imposition of hands in clear terms. For these functions, however, there is a clear biblical ground for talking about being ‘appointed’.

(9) "Emphasis on God’s blessing and practical aspects. We recommend that the emphasis in the ceremony be placed on the public recognition of the ordinand, the church’s confirmation of the ordinand’s call from God and commitment to serve Christ and the Church, the Church’s approval of the ordinand as teacher, preacher and spiritual leader, and the invocation of God’s blessing.

(10) "Review who is to be ordained in the Church. A special study should be conducted regarding the biblical basis for applying ordination to some offices and not others in the Church. All office holders in the Church are servants of God, but the Bible is not clear on who is ‘ordained’ and who is not. All officials at local church level and in conferences, unions, and the General Conference can be introduced to their functions when they start. This is practical and encouraging, but the biblical basis for ordaining only the pastor, elder, deacon/deaconess is very scant.

(11) "Separate ordination from election to an organizational office of leadership. A clearer distinction should be made between the
ordination (i.e. the ordained minister’s credentials) and the election of leaders for regular church offices in missions, conferences, unions, divisions, and the General Conference. Ordination for the gospel ministry should be for the ministry of the word (Acts 6:2) and not for administrative positions. If an ordained pastor is elected for a church office of organizational leadership, this is a different task from being a pastor (although some functions may overlap). Holding ministerial credentials may certainly be a merit of one who is elected as a leader, but in its theology and policy, the Church should ensure that the two are clearly distinguished, so that ordination does not automatically imply administrative or organizational leadership.

(12) "Improve ministerial training, education, preparation for ordination, and clarify processes, requirements, and qualifications. We recommend that, based on the study we submit, the Church sharpens its processes and requirements for pastoral education and training, and develops better means by which the qualifications of an ordinand are examined, evaluated, and developed."

The SPD has also released a report which provided a summary of six papers by Adventist Bible scholars in its region. The report included the following points: (1) "The foundation principle for the resolution of questions regarding ordination is the use of the correct hermeneutic. (2) The discussion is driven by our understanding of the nature of the church, its role and its function. (3) An Adventist theology of ordination will be based on scriptural principles. (4) Where Scripture is silent on current issues, a theology of ordination must be based on the principles of Scripture, taking adequate account of what Scripture says as applied in its local or issue-specific contexts. (5) The words translated “ordain” have a very wide usage. (6) While the roots of many NT practices can be traced to the OT there is discontinuity between them. There is no practical connection for example, between priests, Levites, elders, and deacons. (7) Ordination is a practice driven by mission and practical needs, informed by biblical studies and theology. (8) The Bible does not command ordination; however it does encourage the church to develop modes of maintaining order in the exercise of its mission. These modes may go beyond biblical practice but must be consistent with it. (9) Ordination is not to be considered a sacrament. Biblical evidence supports the symbolism of the laying on of hands when appointing individuals for a task, but there is no firm evidence for the transfer of grace or virtue in this context. Consequently, we must reject attributing sacramental value to ordination. (10) The theology of ordination informs and is informed by the practical implementation of our ecclesiology, i.e. the global and local nature of the church, which, expressed in its various forms, facilitates mission. (11) The significance of ordination is influenced by culture. In some parts of the world, culture bestows inordinate status upon a minister at ordination. (12) EGW [Ellen G. White] considers that ordination contains an experiential element that has its basis in a call from God. Although some women may not be concerned about non-ordination, for others it creates great angst because of their sense of their divine call, which the church does not seem to recognize."

The reports from the two European regions and from the South Pacific are available at the following Web locations:


http://record.net.au/items/ordination-study-papers-released

This story includes information from tedNEWS and the South Pacific Record, both official news services of the denomination.

_______________________Share your thoughts about this article:

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Scholars in the social sciences from around the world convened this week to try to understand why such large numbers of members drop out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Summit on Nurture and Retention is the second annual gathering of researchers organized by the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research (ASTR) at the denomination's General Conference (GC). The meeting was held at the GC office in Silver Spring, Maryland.

More than 30 million people have been baptized since the 1960s, reported Dr. David Trim, key organizer of the gathering and director of ASTR. Nonetheless the denomination's total membership is less than 18 million. Losses from those who are dropped from membership or stop attending often equal half the number of baptisms, and in recent years audits of membership records in some parts of the world have resulted in large adjustments in the statistics.

A survey based on interviews with 1,053 former and inactive members around the world found that some of the reasons for the large number of dropouts that are commonly believed by pastors and lay leaders are not as significant as stressful life events and the failure of local church leaders to respond with adequate care when members are hurting. Monte Sahlin, representing the Center for Creative Ministry, told the group that 74 percent of the individuals interviewed reported at least one major event in the year before they decided to stop attending church. These included serious illness, break up of a marriage, getting married, moving out of the community, becoming unemployed or getting a new job, a death in the family, and other items well known in studies of stress that use the Holmes-Rahe Scale. Most had multiple events.

Only 40 percent of those interviewed reported that the pastor or someone representing the church came to visit them after they stopped attending. "The general impression is that many dropouts are uncontested, and when visits were made they usually were based on the assumption that the departing member was in disagreement with the teachings of the church, which proved to be relatively rare," said Sahlin. "This pattern of not sensing and responding to the real needs of hurting people appears to be strong in Adventist congregations around the world and is the main reason for the high number of membership losses. A more actively caring church would retain more of the people baptized."

Another important pattern that Sahlin pointed out was the high percentage of members who were baptized as children and then as young adults moved to metropolitan areas to seek education or start careers. "As part of this journey they lost connection with the Church, although most still identify with the Adventist faith." He stated that this includes children born into Adventist families and almost an equal percentage who were baptized prior to adulthood but were not raised in Adventist families.

A second survey was conducted in which the union conferences around the world were asked to have a questionnaire completed by five individuals who had dropped out of the church and five more who had both dropped out and later returned to regular attendance. This resulted in more than 500 responses and an analysis prepared by Dr. Anthony Kent, an associate secretary of the GC Ministerial Association. Kent reported similar findings to those in the Center for Creative Ministry survey.

More information about Adventist young adults and their relationship with the Church was presented in a survey of recent graduates of three Adventist universities and colleges by Dr. Douglas Jacobs and Mia Lindsay from Southern Adventist University (SAU). Most of the...
respondents were graduates of SAU with smaller numbers from Oakwood University and Pacific Union College. "There is a large group who are connected and still active in the Adventist Church," the two reported, despite significant numbers who have stopped attending. "They tend to be found in large and medium-size congregations." They strongly support most of the doctrines of the Church, although "the unique doctrines are less accepted" and "many question the denomination's stand on homosexuality."

Other research papers provided information on family life among Adventists, single parents in the church, the "perceived emotional/verbal and spiritual abuse of adult children of pastors," how Adventist education relates to the nurture and retention of members, an evaluation of classes on "science issues" and the extent to which they strengthen the faith of Adventists, various approaches to encouraging spiritual growth among members and general surveys of members conducted in most of the denomination's world divisions. Trim announced that ASTR would eventually publish as many of the papers as possible through its Web site. The report from the survey conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry which was presented by Monte Sahlin is available at:  http://www.creativeministry.org/transaction_detail.php?id=270

Several presentations showed that the denomination has learned how to better conduct more realistic outreach by learning from past examples, reported Adventist News Network (ANN), the official news service of the denomination. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, many Adventist groups sponsored extravagant evangelism events, eager for the once-in-a-generation opportunity, but most of those new converts soon stopped attending church.

One presentation revealed that in South Africa, the rate of accession of new members had slowed, but membership had significantly increased due to retention. That fact prompted Pastor Harald Wollan, a GC associate secretary, to suggest to the group that future evangelism efforts should focus on nurturing members. “What if the church used some evangelism funds for our own members’ care? We might see a similar increase in numbers,” Wollan said. “We will have to do that,” responded Pastor Armando Miranda, the GC vice president who was chairing the session.

One delegate, Jimmy V. Adil, from the Philippines, asked why conferences feel pressure to increase membership, often from the parent unions, whom he said feel pressure from the divisions. He asked if the world headquarters was exerting pressure for growth. Dr. G. T. Ng, GC executive secretary, replied, “There’s no pressure for growth. Do we pressure a papaya tree to produce? … If so, we may stunt its growth.”

Trim said the problem is common in some regions. He had earlier revealed that 30 percent of church clerks in one of the denomination's world divisions had been pressured to inflate baptismal numbers. “It’s a sin to lie about anything ... but for some reason, too many people think it’s OK to lie about membership numbers.” Trim stated that several regions have made membership audits a priority, including South America, Southeast Asia and West Africa.

On the meeting sidelines, the youngest attendee, Cheryl Simpson, told an ANN reporter she was encouraged by the summit because she said it showed church leaders wanted to encourage young adults like her. Simpson, a senior psychology student at Andrews University, said she was glad that church leaders were willing to look at reality. “For me, this is essential because it’s showing me that theologians aren’t afraid to face the facts,” Simpson said.

A statement from the participating scholars, released November 21, concluded, "Responsibility for ensuring that every church member remains part of the body of Christ, and for reconnecting and reconciling with those who do not, is mutually shared by the Church at large, each congregation, and every church member. We therefore affirm that building loving and Christ-like relationships within the local church must be an urgent necessity for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We recommit ourselves to God’s vision of mission, which is founded on discipling, believing that this will enable us better to fulfill the prophetic mission of the Remnant Church."

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We may not talk much about women’s addiction to erotica, but it’s happening.

Trillia Newbell, guest writer

It's difficult to find concrete numbers on women's pornography viewership. We shouldn't be surprised; adult entertainment has always been designated as the "man problem." But the little research on the topic, plus anecdotal evidence, reveals otherwise.

In 2007, Nielsen/NetRatings found that approximately 13 million American women click on pornographic sites each month. They make up an estimated one in three visitors to adult entertainment websites.

With the uptick in Internet use and the growth of online pornography, we can assume more men and women are viewing this content. Women also read erotica in huge numbers, with 50 Shades of Grey by E. L. James breaking records as the fastest-selling Kindle eBook and paperback novel in history, according to Business Insider.

Even as Christian groups work to combat our culture's porn addiction, their efforts continue to skew male. The Gospel Coalition editor Joe Carter published helpful findings on the effect of pornography on the brain, adding to the ongoing discussion over men and porn.

It's much harder to find similar articles tailored for women, leading many to deduce that pornography remains a struggle only for men. When we don't talk about women and porn, women everywhere hide in the shadows with this deep-rooted secret. Thousands, perhaps millions, of Christian women struggle with sexual sin, and we must speak openly about these temptations.

Many of these women start viewing pornography young—very young—and continue to struggle into their 20s. Three have volunteered to share from their stories.
Rachel: Googling Sex

It started when I was 9. A few days before, some friends were giggling about this thing called sex. I searched for it on Google, and up came countless links to pornographic websites. I clicked on many of them, and the screen was soon covered with explicit pop-ups. A flood of intense shame came over me, but I wanted to see more. I almost got caught, so I resolved to never do it again. I came too close to being exposed, and the shame was too much.

As a teenager, I became romantically involved with a guy who had just graduated from my school. Before long, we were discussing sexual fantasies. I went back to pornography, and I began to masturbate frequently. When things between us ended, I combated rejection and heartache with pornography and masturbation. It was an intimacy that I could control.

Every morning and evening—sometimes even in the afternoons—I would engage in those things. On the outside I was a straight-A student, a leader in my high school's chapel band, a core part of my youth group, a social butterfly, and a talented athlete. On the inside I was slowly wasting away, chained to my addictions and the woundedness that I was trying to avoid. For those four years I led a double life, and I was good at it.

Sally*: Chasing Endorphins

When I was 13, I would stay up late at night and watch scrambled porn on my TV in my room. I still remember, on my cable provider the Spice channel was 73, which happened to be the reverse of VH1, which was 37. I found it by accident one night, and it changed my life for several years. When my friends came over, we'd watch it together.

I eventually started experimenting while watching it. I was a virgin and I was curious, and at the time, I didn't think it was doing any harm. My addiction with porn and masturbation lasted until I was a senior in high school, when I entered into a relationship with a guy in my church. We were both Christians, but neither had any self-control or a strong conviction about premarital sex. We swore it off at first, but after a few months, I had experienced my first kiss, and then I was rounding second base and third base and was headed quickly for home plate. It was only by the grace of God that we never actually had sex.

After our relationship ended, I craved that feeling that I no longer was experiencing. I wanted those "feel good" endorphins. I knew it was wrong, but I still wanted to experience an orgasm. I remember watching a steamy scene from The Notebook (and if you've seen the movie, you know the one) on YouTube, and before I knew it I was viewing pornographic material. I was shocked at how fast it led there. The Lord had worked to get me out of that bad relationship, and I didn't intend to go down that path again. I closed the computer and wept. It was a changing point for me. I cried out to the Lord for help. I asked to be delivered from my sexual sin, and I was.

Sarah*: Satisfying Curiosity

As a kid, I was exposed to sex scenes in movies and sex chatter among other students at school, who repeated details of what they had heard of, seen, or done. I began to develop impure thoughts and daydreamed about sexual activity. I knew this was not right, but I continued to talk with others about sex, and imagine what it was like. Even at age 11, I heard a sermon about lust that ended with an altar call for congregants struggling with lust. I knew I had impure thoughts—I was yearning to see something that I had never seen before—but I could not stand because I was too ashamed.

A few years later, I realized I could gratify my desire to see what I was imaging in my head, so I would stay up and watch porn after-hours on premium cable channels such as HBO and Showtime. When I was about 15, someone prayed that lust would be removed from me. I felt much better, shared my issue with my mother, and did not have any desire to watch that stuff anymore.

In college, I was a virgin addicted to pornography. More of my friends were having sex and telling me about it, and I wanted to see it for myself without actually taking part. I ran into pornography on social networking sites. I would go to sexually explicit chat rooms and watch webcams. Though I was raised in the church, I did not realize my true identity in Christ and wanted to experience life on my own. I knew it was wrong, but I did not really care. I just wanted to satisfy my flesh. I went through periods where I felt completely stuck in my addiction to this stuff. I could not go to bed at night until I watched it.

Helping Women Fight Sexual Temptation

These few stories offer a small sampling of a widespread problem.
Women, you are not alone in this struggle with temptation to sexual sin. You aren't the only one ashamed of the sexually explicit material in your browser history or on your e-reader. For all who face these temptations, the power of the gospel enables you to say no to sin. Each of these women eventually confessed their sin to friends and received the grace available to them by the Holy Spirit to stop watching pornography.

While I have not struggled with pornography or erotic novels, I did fall into sexual sin prior to marriage. I write as one who has had to remember that as temptation came once I became a Christian, I was no longer a slave to sin but a slave to righteousness (Rom. 6:17). God's restraining power is greater than our sin and so is his grace.

If you are tempted to hide your sin and temptation because of shame, regret, and fear, know that in Christ, you are forgiven and pure—righteous, just has if you'd never sinned and always obeyed (1 Cor. 1:30).

You don't have to hide your sin and temptation to sin, even when it's a sexual sin, the kind we don't like to talk about. You are forgiven and loved. Let this knowledge of amazing grace motivate you to cry out "By no means! I will not continue to sin that grace may abound" (Rom 6:1). God can enable that in you.

Trillia is a wife, mom, and writer who loves Jesus. She is the author of


*Sally and Sarah's names have been changed for privacy.

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International Orders
In the heydey of his crusade ministry, Billy Graham would travel across the globe to preach to stadium-sized audiences. Now, though confined to his home in the mountains of western North Carolina, the mass evangelist is still able, using modern technology, to continue proclaiming the gospel. November marks the beginning of the "My Hope America with Billy Graham," campaign, a video evangelism course designed for individual and small group use. In conjunction with the launch of My Hope America, Graham has released what may be his final book, The Reason for My Hope: Salvation. CT asked Graham about his thoughts on the present state of Christian belief and his confidence, amidst theological and cultural confusion, in the core gospel message.

Do you call yourself an evangelical, or a Christian, first? Why?

What really matters is how God sees me. He isn't concerned with labels; he is concerned about the state of man's soul. The Bible tells me that I am first a sinner. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). But because of the saving grace Jesus has extended to me, and my repentance of sin, I am his child—having been saved by the blood of my Savior on the cross. At that moment, I entered into a life-changing relationship with him. Those who read The Reason for My Hope will see clearly from Scripture how to be saved and how to live the Christian life.

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Master. I have repented of my sin, turned my life over to Christ, and seek daily to obey his Holy Word. I am his follower. Before my conversion on November 1, 1934, which I tell of in the book, I always thought myself a Christian. It wasn't until I was confronted and convicted of my sin that I realized that Christ makes a difference in the lives of those who not only claim his name but obey his Word. If there is no change in a person's life, he or she must question whether or not they possess the salvation that the gospel proclaims. Many who go to church have not had a life-changing transformation in Christ. Those outside the church expect followers of Christ to live differently, yet today many in church are chasing after the world—not to win them, but to be like them. This is very dangerous and the Bible gives account to the tragic result.

In the New Testament, when people heard the truth Jesus taught and received his glorious gift of forgiveness and hope for eternal life in Heaven, others who observed the change in their lives called them Christians—Christ followers (Acts 11:26). Just as Jesus came willingly to rescue mankind from sin, I willingly serve him and seek to glorify him with my life because I am a child of the King. Being called a Christian should identify us with the demands Christ makes on those who belong to him. He tells us to count the cost of following him.

My preaching is that of an evangelist and I wholeheartedly believe in the fundamental teaching of the Holy Scriptures. This is the foundation of my book. My hope is that people will read it. My desire is that readers will comprehend the privilege and responsibility of
living the Christian life. When Jesus becomes our Master we set aside our way and walk his way. It is not always easy but enormously productive and challenging, because those who follow him become shining lights in a very dark world. This is why the Christian has hope. The reason I have hope for the world is because Christ died for the whole world and is calling the lost and weary to come to him. Jesus said he had "come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Why, according to the title of your book, is **salvation** the reason for your hope?

As I approached my 95th birthday, I was burdened to write a book that addressed the epidemic of "easy believism." There is a mindset today that if people believe in God and do good works they are going to Heaven. But there are many questions that must be answered. There are two basic needs that all people have: the need for hope and the need for salvation. It should not be surprising if people believe easily in a God who makes no demands, but this is not the God of the Bible. Satan has cleverly misled people by whispering that they can believe in Jesus Christ without being changed, but this is the Devil's lie. To those who say you can have Christ without giving anything up, Satan is deceiving you. While I am no longer able to stand in the pulpit and deliver a sermon from the Bible, God laid on my heart a burning desire to put this message in book form—a message that resonates within me every time I switch on the news. When I visit with people from all walks of life the question is asked, "What is happening in the world?"

Many politicians and government leaders have asked me this question. Countless students on university campuses have begged to hear the truth. I have always explained that Almighty God is the architect of earth, the Creator of mankind, and has fashioned the soul. He is the Beginning and the End and the Giver and Finisher of Faith. All answers lie within the revealed Word of God. Salvation is God's gift to the world, but the gift of God's love and forgiveness must be accepted on his terms—not ours. Gifts are never forced; they are offered and received. Many today say that the idea of redemption is antiquated. I write in the book about Hollywood, and even professional football, loving stories of redemption. Why? A film critic stated that people want to overcome what troubles them from within. Christ is the only source that can remove the despair within our hearts. This is the reason for my hope, that people everywhere will open their hearts to Christ's salvation—the redemptive gift that offers peace and the certainty of eternal life.

Why do you think God has seen fit to give you additional time on earth before calling you home?

Traveling around the world and preaching for over 70 years did not give much time for reflection. But no matter where I was in the world when I came home, Ruth was always here waiting. We enjoyed those moments, and she and I always found time with the Lord together, rejoicing with answers to prayer. I miss that fellowship with her. She was a prayer warrior and loved to sit and talk about the Bible. She's been in Heaven six years now and I believe the Lord has given me this season of life to consider all that is still left to do and to be faithful to the message of Christ while I still have breath. Whether we preach from a pulpit or sit in quiet contemplation, there is always much more to learn as we seek the face of the Lord. Looking back there are times I was not as strong as I should have been, but my heart and my ministry have always been rooted in God's Word. The message I preach is anchored on what "the Bible says."

I try to spend my days encouraging others to serve Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, praying for those who labor in his name, and asking that many more answer God's call to preach the gospel truth, declaring what the Bible says. It is truth. His word is life.

How did you select the topics and illustrations that speak so specifically to people's needs?

This book addresses many issues and concerns that weigh heavy on my heart, and while I have written over 30 books, I believe this book focuses on matters that are on the minds of people everywhere. There are so many religions in the world, and I have never witnessed as much confusion as there is today about where to find truth. We have people preaching that God is a God of love, not of wrath. We have people proclaiming that Heaven is real but Hell is only a figment of imagination. As research was done for this book, my heart ached to hear story after story of people bragging that Hell will be one continuous happy hour; high profile comedians joke that they are happy to know they will one day go there.

This book is written to sound a warning—a loving warning from Heaven—that Heaven is created for those who humble themselves before God and Hell is created for Satan and those who serve him. Christ came to turn mankind away from the hold Satan wants to have in people's lives. Jesus Christ is the answer for the world—he is the anchor of the soul—he is the God of hope that came in human form to rescue us from Satan's grip. A seminary professor once made a profound statement to his students: "Never preach Hell without tears in your eyes." My message is to proclaim that we are all sinners in need of a Savior and ask each one this question: Have you ever been saved?

In your book you pose the question: Who would refuse rescue from tragedy? Why is this?

It seems unreasonable that a human being would refuse rescue from a sinking ship, but people actually have because they didn't really believe they would drown. Likewise, the world is full of people who do not believe dying in their sin will send them to Hell, so they refuse...
to be rescued by way of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have known many intriguing people and write about some in the book, like American war hero Louis Zamperini, who was rescued out of the Pacific Ocean only to be captured by the enemy during World War II. But he found out later that a greater enemy was master of his soul, and he wasn't willing to be rescued from alcoholism until he came face-to-face with the enemy and was rescued by the saving love of God.

Just as I began working on the book, the Costa Concordia went down off the coast of Italy. Such terror that strikes human hearts is indescribable. Suddenly people begin to realize that the good life cannot save. They cry out to be rescued but the people around them are also in despair, unable to help. Where does one turn? This is the state of our world, and the only One who can save is the One who was born for that sole purpose, as the Christmas story tells us. The Virgin Mary will bring forth a Son conceived of the Holy Spirit, and his name will be Jesus, "for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

The Bible is still the best-selling book of all time, yet people refuse to believe. They refuse to accept the greatest gift that has ever been offered to mankind. Why? Because it calls for the confession of sin and the complete surrender of one's selfish ways. It calls for repentance of sin against God. Many would prefer to live it up for a short time on earth in hope that there is no Hell to suffer in the afterlife. They believe Satan's lies that there is no life after death. But Jesus spoke of Hell much more than he spoke of Heaven. This is why I have spent my life calling out to the people of the world: Come to Jesus just as you are, and he will receive you and strengthen you each step of the way.

You write that "Sin is in." What do you mean by that?

In the 21st-century society, people have given sin a makeover, calling sin a mistake. God calls it iniquity. It is a disease of the soul. Society generally wants to campaign against disease, raise money to eradicate it. But the disease of sin is celebrated and glorified by society and especially in the pop culture of the day, ignoring the toll it takes in the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms. Society may boast that "sin is in," but the truth is that sin is in you, me, and everyone.

Secular media carry stories frequently about men and women who commit horrific crimes, and mankind demands that a penalty be paid. Yet, mankind resents God demanding that a penalty be paid for sins committed against Creator God. God shows Himself the loving Father that he is by sending his own sacrifice, his only Son, to die in man's place, paying the penalty for the sin that the Bible says "easily ensnares us" (Heb. 12:1). Many people who transgress God's laws resent their sin being judged by a righteous God. We reject the idea of our own transgressions, but when it comes to transgressions as in common sports language, we accept the rules; in fact, we love them. If we are rooting for our team and the opposing team commits a transgression, we cheer. This is what is in the heart of man, but I can assure you that God does not cheer from the sidelines when we go out of the bounds of his law and commit transgressions (sins) against him. His heart is grieved. Sin is poison and destroys. Salvation is the antidote that purifies.

Society today is obsessed with technology, something you write about in detail. Is there a biblical view of technology?

The Bible declares that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9). Nothing surprises God. He enables his creation to tap into the resources he has given to us on earth. We have certainly watched the plethora of communication capabilities explode as we moved into the 21st century. I have always loved the art of communication, and there is no question that my preaching ministry benefitted greatly by utilizing amplification and magnification in arenas and stadiums around the world. Television and radio enabled the gospel to reach far corners of the earth, as the Bible predicted. But while God allows blessing to come from such grand inventions like wireless and mobile devices, Satan has also used technology to cleverly advance his deception. There are generations today that take pride in their ability to communicate instantly through Facebook or Twitter but are unable to communicate face-to-face. People are finding solace sitting in front of computer screens willing to talk to total strangers about anything and everything through electronic communication, but don't believe God could ever hear their cries of loneliness, grief, and pain.

A Harvard University president once told me that what young people desire the most is "to belong." Multitudes are willing to belong to just about anything except God. The human race has always been on a quest for truth and acceptance, yet men and women are unwilling to accept the One who is the truth. Instead they are turning to a new fad—designer religion—faith blending, a little Christianity, a little Buddhism, and a little New Age. This is a trick of the Devil, who loves to mix some truth with his lies. The Bible warns about this and tells us that we must hold fast to truth and fight for the faith. "In latter times some [will give] heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons…having their own consciences seared" (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

But technology is a gift from God when it is used to proclaim the gospel. This is why I am excited about My Hope, an evangelistic program developed by our ministry that has been used around the world. Through every means of reliable communication, we are proclaiming the
Good News that God loves sinners and calls men and women everywhere to repent and turn to him, receiving true hope that comes from God. I have been preparing for several months to deliver this message through My Hope America, a television special that will be seen in homes across the nation the week of my 95th birthday. I cannot think of anything I would rather do to celebrate another year of life than to proclaim God's truth. My prayer is that all Christians will open their homes to their family and neighbors who need Christ and tune in to see what God is doing in these days that may seem dark, yet are full of hope.

This is the message of the book, and it is the message of our upcoming television special this November. "Hope and change" has become a cliché in America the past several years. In the book I write about the disappointments Americans have experienced when hope and change promised by men failed. But there is no disappointment in the God of hope. The Bible says that it is in Jesus, God's Son, that the world can have hope and that the "God of hope" can fill us with joy and peace in believing this great truth through his power (Rom. 15:12-13).

Sixty years ago, you awoke in the middle of the night with a dream to start Christianity Today magazine. CT is still in circulation, now reaching millions of people along with a host of sister publications. Is that surprising and encouraging to you?

I give God thanks and all the glory for every avenue that carries his message into hearts and minds. Christianity Today has been kind to me and the ministry God has given to us. I am grateful that CT is supporting My Hope this fall. I appreciate the opportunity to share about this book that is so much on my heart.

It is always a joy to read articles that lift up Jesus Christ and point people to the cross, and I encourage the editors, writers, contributors, researchers, and the board of directors to always keep Christ at the center of everything. Let's honor him and him alone.
Where we went when we stopped going to church... and why we came back.

Addie Zierman, guest writer

Editor's note: When We Were On Fire, Addie Zierman's memoir and the inspiration for this post, was named among the top 5 religion books of the year by Publishers Weekly.

There has been lots of talk lately about the millennials leaving the church, the roughly 60 percent of us who step away from Christian community at some point.

It's a perplexing issue, a knot that church leadership has been trying hard to untangle. I can't tell you how to fix it, but I can tell you that I was one of them. I left the church for a lot of reasons – some legitimate, some imagined. Eventually I found the courage to come back.

As in my new book,

When We Were On Fire: A Memoir of Consuming Faith, Tangled Love and Starting Over, I share this story not to assign blame, but to add a new dimension to the conversation. I hope it will give us the courage to offer one another grace as a generation of Jesus Freaks like me tries to find their way home.

During my self-imposed exile from church, I journeyed with others. The wounded, the cynic, the angry, the doubting.

First, we joined gyms. We started training for 5ks and 10ks, marathons and triathlons. In the mornings, we ran next to strangers, breathing in tandem, keeping stride, and though they didn't know us, they called out the strength in our tired bodies.
"You got this!" they called. "Almost there!"

At the finish line, people we didn't know cheered for us madly. They held up their hands to meet our sweaty palms, and for the first time that we can remember, we feel like the victors that the pastors always promised we were.

We attended book clubs that we found from craigslist postings on the Internet. We sat in some stranger's house with a glass of wine, and we felt strangely free to express our opinions. We said what we thought about the book. We asked questions. We wondered aloud what the author was trying to say about hope.

We batted around ideas, feather-light and beautiful, and we thought briefly of all of the Bible studies we attended. Those times when we kept our complex, doubt-filled questions bottled up in our hearts because we couldn't figure out a way to ask them.

Back then, we were in search of a place where we fit. We were leaving the churches where we grew up. The youth groups where we took our first wobbly steps toward whoever it was that we were going to become.

We knew it wouldn't be pizza parties and camping retreats and yellow buses heading toward Florida – this new, grown-up church experience. But we expected belonging. We expected grace and support and love.

For a while we tried, moving from one church to another. We were never looking for perfection. We weren't that naïve. We couldn't even name what we were looking for – a fit, a holy place, some siren song calling us home.

Some of us searched longer than others, but in the end we faded out. We were looking for Jesus. Instead we found programs, guilt, and awkward small talk. We found fog machines and Five-Simple-Steps-to-Spiritual-Growth and fill-in-the-blank Bible studies.

So we started sleeping in on Sunday mornings. We went to the farmers market and bought good things straight from the earth. We drank our morning coffee at small café tables outside, and people walked by with their dogs at a slow, Sunday-morning pace. It felt more like rest to us than those chaotic church mornings, when we moved through the loud small talk of the church foyer and felt invisible.

Some of us went to neighborhood bars after work or late at night, and we were surprised to find that all we had to do was sit down at the bar. All we had to do was sit down, and we were part of that place, that crowd, that beautiful mosaic of people, all of them broken in their own ways – few of them pretending otherwise.

Under a fluorescent Miller Lite sign, nobody told us to "get plugged in" or suggested that nursery duty might be just what the Lord wanted us to do for the next 8,000 Sundays. Instead, we drank a few too many, and we began to ramble, and people we didn't know listened earnestly, layering their memories over ours until we were united by our stories.

We went on Facebook and played at community. We went out to dinner and to concerts and to the movies. We went dancing and felt the thrum of the music in our bodies, and once, some Church Person told us that dancing was a gateway to sin – but there we were, in a haphazardly formed circle of strangers, singing the same song at the top of our lungs.

We went on road trips and on airplanes, and we were searching, still, even then. We slung our backpack over our shoulders and went farther out into the world.

Some of us went to therapy and began the hard work of untangling our knotted-up hearts. If we were really brave, we tackled our angst about the years when we were on fire. We tried to find the heart of Christ beating, still, under the sticky, webbed Christian culture that had grown up over it.

Some of us went under the dark waves of our own depression and pain, never to resurface.

Some of us came back.

Tentatively.

Slowly.

We came back because we were beginning to believe that it might be here too. In these churches with all of their brokenness, all of their clunky programs and squeaky-clean sermons. We'd figured out that it still existed, and that it can be found in the most imperfect of people.

We saw it, after all, at the end of our first 5k. We found it slumped over at the bar, sobbing out our story to a stranger. We encountered it on
the unfamiliar roads that we were driving, felt it course through our body like dancing music.

And it turned out to be that unnamable Thing we'd been looking for all long.

And in our better moments, we've learned to recognize it for what it is: Grace.

Addie Zierman is a writer, blogger and recovering Jesus Freak. She recently published her debut book, *When We Were on Fire: A Memoir of Consuming Faith, Tangled Love and Starting Over* through Convergent Books. She lives in Minnesota with her husband, Andrew, and their two young sons.

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International Orders
11 Christian Colleges Offer Best 'Chance of Finding a Spouse'

Facebook's classmate research puts the 'soul' in 'soulmates.'

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The longstanding stereotype of Christian colleges being good places for MRS degrees seems to have gotten an empirical boost this week, thanks to Facebook.

The social network's Data Science Team ran an analysis of how many married college graduates in America state on Facebook that they are married to a fellow graduate of the same institution. The answer: 28 percent.

And while school size and shared political affiliation play a role, the strongest correlating factor proved to be religion.

In fact, 12 of the top 25 colleges for women also rank among the top 25 colleges for men—and 11 are Christian schools (plus Brigham Young University, depending on how the Mormon school is categorized). For all 12, between 50 and 70 percent of graduates married a fellow alumnus.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) counts 11 members among top schools for men (led by Cedarville University), but only 3 members among top schools for women (led by Kentucky Christian University). Three CCCU schools appear on both lists: Dordt College, Oklahoma Christian University, and KCU.
Facebook notes that, given limitations, the findings are only "a rough proxy for the chance of finding a spouse" at a given college.

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After its revenues plunged from $55 million to $25 million over three years, in 2010 the Crystal Cathedral filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code. They weren't alone: nearly 500 others did over a five-year period. University of Illinois law professor Pamela Foohey took a closer look at church bankruptcy filings from 2006-11 and continues to track them. Her study, "Bankrupting the Faith," is forthcoming in the Missouri Law Review.) She was interviewed by Ken Walker, who wrote today's article on the effects of so many church bankruptcies.

What motivated you to take a closer look at church filings?

I decided to hone in on religious organizations' use of bankruptcy law. They occupy a distinct place in our society and have a distinct mission, which I thought would be useful to explore.

You mention religious organizations and small businesses have some of the same vulnerabilities. Are there any ways churches use Chapter 11 differently?

They're much different when they enter Chapter 11. They come into bankruptcy owning a larger church building, but the amount outstanding on the mortgage is less than the building's value. The fact that they have a significant asset and own part of it makes them distinct from small businesses.

You say that leadership helps determine the viability of a financially troubled church. Is that any different than a small business?

Many times churches using Chapter 11 are only going to succeed if a dynamic leader is part of the church and does what he does to make the church a viable business—to revitalize the membership or work to change what the church is doing so there is a better revenue stream. So in that way they're very similar.

Did you observe any structural weaknesses of churches?

That has to do with why they're in bankruptcy—the church purchased a building that only looked like a good deal. The structural weakness might be looking ahead enough at how the church and its members are going to pay the mortgage. That's what I call a leadership failure in terms of not looking into the future about what is, essentially, the church's business model.

Any particular findings that surprised you?

What surprised me the most was that churches entered bankruptcy saying they owned a building that was worth significantly more than
they owed on it: an "equity cushion." Most businesses that enter Chapter 11 are hopelessly insolvent; they have debts three times what they own. Churches look a lot different. I was surprised to find that so many churches had a healthy asset vs. debt profile. Because of that, I was also surprised that they were in Chapter 11. I would have thought that there would be an incentive on the part of the mortgage holders, the banks, to try to come to a deal.

You say that 72 percent of church filers were balance-sheet solvent, but there is often a major difference between total assets and liquidity.

That's part of why I was surprised they were filing. Balance sheet solvent means a church that is filing may be saying its church is going to be worth $2 million if they sold it at market value. But the minute you try to sell a church at an auction, the value drops a lot. So the usefulness of the code is to allow the church to hang on and realize the market value of the property (and) the plan is confirmed by the bank. And obviously leaders and members are happy they get to stay in the place where they've been worshiping.

Overall Chapter 11 filings peaked in 2009, two years before religious organizations. Why did churches have a tougher time recovering?

My best guess at this point is that there's a lag in how churches are dealing with the economic downturn, so people keep giving money and then they stop, waiting for their life to get better and they just haven't quite gotten better yet. Or that there's some kind of social network norm going on, where churches slowly are realizing this is a way to deal with their financial issues in a way that can be useful.

In the conclusion you say that it can be productive to allow a church to remain in place while it tries to revive, but at what point do members need to wake up?

I was asking, "When is Chapter 11 going to be useful?" Probably in situations where a church has significant equity in a building. And they have members and a leader who are committed to making sure that they're going to be able to pay back the rest of that mortgage. On the flip side, if there's a church building that might be hard to sell on the market and isn't worth as much as the mortgage, that church may need to think about trying to close what they're doing right now. Focus on creating a new ministry.

What's next with your ongoing study?

There are a couple things. I've been reaching out to pastors and attorneys involved in these cases to learn more about what they were thinking when they filed for bankruptcy. And from that, I will be tailoring suggestions for how attorneys can help churches through bankruptcy more effectively. I would like to continue reaching out to the communities and creditors, including letting religious leaders know this is something you can turn to when things go very poorly; it can help you with your ultimate mission. Bankruptcy is an opportunity that might be overlooked when things kind of go bad.

Sounds like you have a book brewing.

I hope. It would be awesome to do something on all the non-profits. The New York City Opera just filed Chapter 11 (Oct. 1) and that's a whole different ballgame. It would be really interesting to write something about non-profits' use of bankruptcy. But clearly half the book will be about churches.