SEARCH SEMINAR: A WORD FROM THE PRESENTER

by Subodh Pandit

Introduction

The material presented in the Search Seminar is a distillation of over twenty years of my personal inquiry, followed by five years of structuring the material so that it makes good sense. It addresses questions not usually considered by Seventh-day Adventists because we take them quite for granted. We invariably gloss over them leaving the honest seeker (especially the young ones) dissatisfied. This leaves a gap allowing for severe questions later. One set of statistics shows that 30% to 45% of Adventist's attending secular universities, eventually leave Christianity. This means that the average Adventist is completely ill-prepared to meet the onslaught of atheism, post-modernism and so-called science. Being schooled on Adventist campuses does not seem to be a good enough answer, because I have been to Adventist schools

where 70% of those in grade twelve were not sure they believed that God existed. They confessed that they had no answer to give to an atheist. We urgently need effective education on these questions.

The UN mentions ten belief system groups in the world (although there are actually many more). They are: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jews, Bahais, Others, Atheists, and Non-professors. When I spoke to Mark Finley, Doug Batchelor, Shawn Boonstra and LC Cooper (Gen VP, GC), they all told me the same thing; that the vast majority of those joining the Adventist Church are from other Christian groups. This means we are working among only one of the ten groups. We are uncomfortable dealing with the nine others because we are illiterate regarding them, and are unfamiliar with their language. The

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FINDING MY PLACE IN WOMEN’S MINISTRIES

by Tina Smith

When women come together for spiritual fellowship, lives are blessed. I’ve experienced this firsthand. Several years ago, I participated with a group of new moms in a biweekly study, and I continue to treasure memories of searching the scriptures, sharing struggles and triumphs, and finding encouragement. Our little ones were supervised next door while we laughed and cried together, learned new truths, and prayed with and for each other. The positive impact on me was nothing short of remarkable, and I’ve missed that gift in my life.

Today, I’m in a different place with kids in middle school and a full-time job outside the home. Most days, I struggle just to keep up, let alone find balance, and yet I long to once again have that connection with my sisters in Christ.

As a new recruit to the Women’s Ministries team here at Collegedale Church, I’ve been pleased to learn this group understands the demands that challenge today’s busy women. Rather than adding to the busyness of life, Women’s Ministries is working to provide tangible ways for me – and you – to experience the benefits of spending time talking with other women about Jesus and learning to serve Him together. Since resources are limited, our team hopes to target activities that interest and impact the greatest number of women in our church.

That’s what last month’s bulletin survey was designed to accomplish. Thanks to each of you who shared feedback and creative ideas! Someone will be in touch to follow up with you in the coming weeks.

Small group Bible studies and book discussions continue to be requested and well attended. Morning and evening options are available again this year on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. (free childcare provided) and 6:30 p.m. The morning group seems to be especially popular with young mothers and college students. It would be nice to offer other options for women on different days and times so our team is seeking volunteers who are willing to teach short-term studies (either a single seminar or a three-week study) on particular topics and at alternate times during the week.

Survey responses showed that women have a particular interest in community outreach and brown bag lunch sessions. Stress and time management along with fitness and health also ranked high on the list of relevant issues. Volunteers with expertise in one of these areas are needed to help coordinate more opportunities for women to grow spiritually and socially.

Mark your calendar for the Women’s Ministries Prayer Brunch (originally scheduled for January 19) now set for March 16 with free childcare provided. Watch for additional details coming soon!

Our ministries are for all women of all ages throughout the congregation, so we want to hear from you! Pick up a survey at the Welcome Desk if you haven’t completed one already. If you have suggestions or want to know more about what our team is doing and what’s available to you, stop by or call the Church Office to talk with Pastor Cherie Smith (423-396-2134 ext. 16) or send her an email at cherie-smith@southern.edu.

Participants as well as facilitators are needed and welcomed. Come be a part of God’s special work in and through women!

Understanding Your Spouse

Friday, Feb. 14
6-8 p.m.
Intimacy Styles

Sabbath, Feb 15
3-5 p.m.
Conflict Resolution Styles

Early Bird Discounts available
RSVP (423) 396-2134

MINISTRY OPPS

iserve director needed. Mentor young people to serve Jesus.
For details contact Tim Cross timcross@southern.edu.
BEANIE BABIES FOR SAN SALVADOR MISSION
by Dr. Gordon Guild

Thank you so much for sharing your love through your donated Beanie Babies and other small stuffed animals.

Between 400 and 500 children and their families were examined and treated for their illnesses on a medical mission trip I took over the Christmas and New Year holiday. Each child was given a stuffed animal after their exam. They were hugged, squeezed, and kissed. It was a joy to see the children’s smiles and love expressed to each stuffed animal. One grandmother asked for two for her grandchildren, and was delighted to receive them. A 5-year-old Down Syndrome boy was examined and treated for an illness and was given one. He hugged the animal, smiled, and was lifted off the exam table and set on the floor. He started to walk away, turned and threw kisses to the student doctors and myself. It was a touching moment. The student doctors all had tears in their eyes.

You will never know until Heaven how much love you sent in sharing your stuffed animals to these poor, abandoned, orphaned, HIV children.

BEGIN THINKING ABOUT SONRISE

In the next several weeks you will begin to hear and see more information about SonRise, the Church’s yearly Resurrection Pageant. This year’s Pageant will be held on April 19.

Since 1996 our Church has presented SonRise as a gift to our surrounding communities. Every year, God has blessed tremendously and many lives have been changed.

However, SonRise would not be possible without you. Your involvement as volunteers has made this great endeavor a much easier process! If you have volunteered in the past, we want to urge you to volunteer again. (Please sign up, don’t make us call you!) If you have never volunteered, here is your chance to start a tradition of participation!

In February we will begin recruiting volunteers. There are many ways you can be involved. We need people to greet, direct people in the parking lot, serve refreshments, take tickets, set up the scenes, help with costumes, lead groups through the Pageant, and more.

We also need actors. Consider auditioning for Jesus, Peter, John, Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene. Non-auditioned cast are also needed, whether it’s a disciple, soldier, leper, or part of the crowd. Families enjoy being part of the Marketplace where kids can be kids and a sense of community can be felt.

Auditions for the main cast will be held March 10-13. Watch for more information, or email sonrisecasting@southern.edu. More information about auditions may be found at www.comeseeyesus.com.

Over the next several weeks begin talking to your family, friends, and your small group as to how you can become involved in SonRise 2014.

To learn more about SonRise, visit www.comeseeyesus.com.

SONRISE MINISTRY OPP

Sonrise Dancing Girls Coordinator, Destiney Farley is relocating next year and currently looking for an adult female volunteer to take her place. The position will starting the first week of February and entail shadowing and helping with the process this year, and then continuing independently as coordinator next year. For more information call Destiney at (423) 508-2014.

BEANIE BABIES FOR SAN SALVADOR MISSION
Flocktoc
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On January 18, the Collegedale Church launched Flocktoc.com, a video chat website committed to supporting Seventh-day Adventists who want to take their faith online. Through Flocktoc, Adventist church members around the world will be able to have their own video chat room where they can study the Bible “face-to-face” with several people at the same time just as if they were having a small group Bible study in their home. Okay, it’s not quite the same, but close. No, there won’t be any warm hugs or the smell of freshly baked cookies, but the “room” can still be filled with the Holy Spirit and the outcome just as life changing. Church members can invite anyone they know to join their video chat small group. They also have the option of advertising their small group on flocktoc.com and encouraging others they don’t know to join their group. The ability of the Adventist church member to study the Bible with those from “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” is becoming a reality.

But before we reach out to the world, it’s important to first reach out to our own nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Who in your circle of influence could you invite to study the Bible with you? In Acts 1:8 Jesus made it very clear that we are to share the gospel with those closest to us, then slowly work our way to witnessing to those who live at “the end of the earth.” This is exactly what we want to do here in Collegedale with the flocktoc.com ministry.

The first several months while Flocktoc is being tested, we are inviting Collegedale church members to try out the website by inviting family, friends, or co-workers to join them in an online Bible study. If you would like to be a leader of a group, simply go to www.flocktoc.com and sign up to be a leader. A curriculum will be provided for you. If you don’t feel comfortable in leading, you may look over the many groups listed on the website and join a group as a participant. The groups will only be meeting two or three times online for Bible study during the trial time. We want to hear about your experience and make any changes needed before opening the website up for use by other Adventist churches across North America and the world.

The gospel of Jesus Christ never changes, but we can and should change our approach of sharing Jesus as advancements in technology and knowledge allow us to use a variety of new witnessing tools. You now have a new tool to use in talking about the Savior and the truths you love with those you know or with those you will get to know. Join the movement to reach the world for Jesus Christ—one video chat room at a time.

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Search Seminar hopes to help this and broaden the horizon.

The Seminar Material

The first question addressed is that of the existence of the Supernatural (God). What would be the result of using only (scientific) evidence, reason and logic (their language)? Would Atheism or Theism stand rational scrutiny better? Amazingly, an honest inquiry leaves little doubt. This information helps open a decent dialogue.

The next question considers the basis of postmodernism, called Relativism. Religious relativism called Pluralism is then examined. These discussions set the stage for the core part of the seminar.

The main bulk of the seminar goes through a unique method of comparing the five great world religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity. It is a simple and yet an open, fair and effective method that clearly shows the Christian claim to be in a class by itself – not from a Christian perspective alone but also from an inter-religious angle. This is what gives credibility to the conclusion.

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The information and method are new to most, and cannot be envisioned or evaluated until heard/ read, because we have never been oriented to this approach when we think of witnessing for Jesus.

I have authored a book containing the material and is called, Cross Examination, The Evidence for Belief. It will be available during and after the seminar. But best to hear it presented live.

Responses To The Seminar
I. From Atheists
a. A Jew-turned-Atheist: “For thirty-five years I felt I had structured my belief well and that it made excellent sense. You dismantled it all in one hour! I cannot go back to atheism again.”

b. A graduate engineering student from MIT, MA and a Philosophy major from Grand Valley State University, MI said nearly the same thing: “I was terribly perplexed. I did not know which way to turn. I know you came for my sake!”

II. From Non-Christians
a. A Hindu from London, UK: “This is the happiest day of my life. I now know the path I must take.”

b. A Buddhist priestess in NSW, Australia: “Don’t ever stop presenting such inspiring, moving messages.”

III. From Christians (Non-Adventist)
a. Four Charismatic leaders from Newcastle, South Africa: “You taught us what it really means to be a Christian.” I was invited to their pulpit the following Sunday.

b. A Lutheran university student: “You have laid a true foundation.”

IV. From Adventist’s
a. An Elder from Asheville, NC and another from Newcastle, South Africa: “I have been a Seventh-day Adventist for 40+ years. This is the best I had in all those years. My life has been touched anew.”

b. An earlier convert from Hinduism: “I have been an Adventist for many years, but today I can honestly say I am proud to be a Christian.”

c. A brilliant, youth leader; a stalwart in his church, who put his head on my shoulder and wept like a child: “You don’t know what this means to me. I had all these questions, and I didn’t know who to ask for fear of being seen as an unbeliever. You addressed the questions and answered them to my satisfaction. Thank you. Thank you.”

An Evangelistic Tool
a. A common response from Adventist’s after the seminar: “I wish my father (or uncle or sister, etc) was here.” “Can you come and speak to my husband (or relative or friend etc)?” Why do they ask me and not do it themselves? Because they do not know what to say and nobody has helped so far. The seminar will provide help.

b. I had “taught” a group of students this material as a course, and the most frequent comment was, “Now I can face the world.” Why could they not say this after studying the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, The Three Angels messages? Because these apply primarily to Bible-believing Christians; and the world is made up of more than Bible-believing Christians. We should be able to reach out to everyone.

c. A university student went back to her speech class after the seminar and for her final persuasive speech entitled it, “There is a God”. The professor, who was a hard, rank atheist, not only gave her a good grade, but also had a chat with her about the information she had presented and confessed that it actually made sense. The seminar helped open a dialogue with an atheistic professor.

We are generally fairly adept at defending our “distinctive” beliefs before a Christian audience, but feel like a fish out of water when it comes to non-Christians. But if we must go “into all the world,” we must be able to hold a reasonable conversation with the five billion others too. We cannot share our distinctive beliefs before an unbelieving world until we have established the relevance of Christianity. The information in the seminar can equip one to meet a truly wide spectrum of people with some degree of assurance and confidence.

EGWhite (paraphrased): “Truth will never lose its luster. The closer it is examined, the brighter it will shine.” The Search Seminar aims to demonstrate this as clearly as possible, especially in those areas we seem to have neglected. It changed my life. It will surely benefit you. Come and see for yourself!
THE FAMILY OF WILLIAM RUFUS WILLIAMS thanks the church family for their many gestures of caring and support: prayers, visits, food, cards, and phone calls, during the recent loss of our beloved father, grandfather, and friend. You have truly been with us. Together, let us eagerly await “the gleams of the Golden Morning.”

THE FAMILY OF IRMA HYDE wishes to thank all the church family for their cards, visits, food, prayers, flowers, and caring support during this time of our loss.

THE COLLEGEADLE PATHFINDER CLUB is selling a limited edition “Forever Faithful” Camporee puzzles for $20 to raise money to go to Oshkosh Wisconsin next August for the International Pathfinder Camporee. Contact a Collegedale Pathfinder to order, or visit www.pathfindersrus.com.

RELATIONAL CHRISTIANITY PRESENTS YOUTH CONNECTION ...an in depth study as to why Adventist young people are leaving the church in large numbers. Hear presentations from leading professionals addressing a very critical issue in our church concerning our next generation of leaders. Running January 25 to February 18—four sessions on Sabbath morning from 10:15-11:15 at the Hulsely Wellness Center. For more information, contact Sam Chetty or Dr. Rick Norskov.

COME LEARN GOD’S WAYS of handling money with Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University! Classes begin on Sunday, Feb. 23, at 3:00 p.m. at Lester Coon Adventist School, 11429 Bates Road, Apison, TN. Register at daveramsey.com or call Shawn at (423) 508-9005.

COLLEGEADLE LITTLE LEAGUE AND SUMMER SOFTBALL are swinging into action for a great 2014 season. We are seeking coaches who are interested in working with the youth in our community. We will be having a coaches meeting on Sunday, Feb. 9, at 6:00 p.m. at the Summit Fields Community Room located between fields 5 and 6. Call Renita Klischies at (423) 304-5754.

SEEKING A PART-TIME CAREGIVER, with dementia experience, for my mom. Must have own transportation and be willing to take her out and about. My mom loves classical music and opera. Will guarantee 25 hours a week. Additional hours with flexibility available. Contact Christina Shrode (423) 827-2906.

IN MEMORY

David Twombly, son of Bill and Sandra Twombly and Margaret Twombly, passed away January 9, 2014. Services were held January 15.


Steve Fuller, brother of Jane Barto, nephew of Norma Fuller, cousin of Jacque Sadowitz and uncle of Alice Kidwill, passed away December 24.