Northwest Communicators Garner Awards at National Convention

Nearly 200 Adventist communication professionals and interested students combined forces at this year’s Society of Adventist Communicators Convention, held Oct. 20–22 in Chicago, Ill. Special guests included David Neff, Christianity Today editor-in-chief, and John Bradshaw, It Is Written speaker (pictured here). The Washington Conference communication department received two “Best in Class” awards for: the weekly e-newsletter, Sailing with Jesus; and Accent, the daily newsletter produced for the 2011 conference camp meeting. Heidi Martella, Washington Conference communication director, received honorable mention in the Young Professional Award category. Bev-Lea Wessels, Walla Walla University student, was chosen as the SAC board student-at-large representative for the coming year. View a complete list of the 2011 SAC awards HERE.

Shine Bible Worker Training School Graduates Ten

The Upper Columbia Conference graduated their first class of 10 students last month from the Shine Bible Worker Training School. The one-month course prepared them to assist with evangelism and Bible studies, and to serve as Bible worker coordinators. Some of the students will be assigned to work in local UCC churches. "The results of having a Bible school called Shine have been successful," says Bob Folkenberg Jr., UCC conference president. "No matter where you go, you will shine!" The graduates are Nitzi Barrett, Harold Beebe, Marla King, Tamala Mack, Jay Nawalkowski, Bob Ratcliff, Jerry Risenhoover, Maryann Risenhoover, Tye Schultz and Derek Williams. Read more from the UCC website HERE and in the December GLEANER.

Patzer Zimbabwe Church Project Video Released

A short video report is now available on the just-completed project to build church and school structures in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, near the site where Jere Patzer, the late North Pacific Union Conference president, preached a series of evangelistic meetings in 1998. A dedicatory plaque in honor of Patzer has been placed at the site. In the brief four-minute video, Sue Patzer, describes the project and shares footage of the dedication. Watch it on YouTube HERE.

Looking Ahead

November
6: Daylight Saving Time Ends
11: Veterans’ Day
17: Jan. 2012 Ad/Article Deadline
24: Thanksgiving Day

December
9: WWU Christmas Concert
25: Christmas Day
31: New Year’s Eve

GLEANER Blogs

- Cheri Corder
- Cindy’s Garden Blog
- Dear Counselor
- Let’s Talk
- Mike Jones
- Monthly Archival Photo
- Tip Sheet
Plan Now for 2012 NPUC Pathfinder Camporee

The Northwest-wide Pathfinder camporee for clubs throughout the North Pacific Union Conference territory is planned for Sept. 13–16, 2012, in Astoria, Ore. Complete information including a preliminary schedule, registration form and campground map, is available online through the Oregon Conference website HERE. A contest for the official camporee patch design drew 94 submissions from clubs around the Northwest. The winner (pictured here) was submitted by Lucas Sass from the Palouse Hills Pathfinder club in the Upper Columbia Conference.

Current Issue

November

Power Surge — Spirit-led Ministry formed the theme for the Northwest Adventist Leadership Convention, a camp meeting for pastors. Read more and see photos in the November issue of the GLEANER HERE.

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For Immediate Release
Oct. 24, 2011

Contact: Tamara Fisher, VP for Communication
Cell 678-899-5560 or email tfisher@gccsda.com

SAC Names Award Winners at 2011 Convention

Lombard, IL - The culminating event for the Society of Adventist Communicators (SAC) convention Oct. 20-22 in Lombard, IL was a banquet where several prestigious awards were presented honoring individuals for their work.

SAC president Kimberly Maran, says, "With 35 categories, this is our first foray into the expansion of the awards, and the presentation of them. We previously handed out five awards so this is a hefty increase."

SAC executive director and North American Division Communication Director, George Johnson, Jr., says, "Professional growth and development are greatly enhanced with this awards presentations. It is exciting to see the pride and recognition given to these hard working communication professionals."

The 2011 SAC award winners include:

**Lifetime Achievement Award**
Richard "Dick" Weismeyer, executive director, university relations, Loma Linda University
Mr. Weismeyer served as a public relations leader at Loma Linda University for 46 years by the time of his passing in January 2011.

**Student Award**
Winner: Kristina Penny, Andrews University
Honorable Mention: Michael-Anthony Spearman, Wayne State University

**Young Professional Award**
Winner: Chris McConnell, Rocky Mountain Conference
Honorable Mention: Brod Boyd, Amazing Facts
Heidi Martella, Washington Conference

**Award of Excellence**
AWR is Here
Shelley Nolan Freesland, communication director
Clayton Kinney, designer

**Reger Smith Cutting Edge Award**
*Envision* magazine
Andrews University Communication Department
Debbie Michel, editor
Daniel Campbell, layout editor
Victor Mills, layout editor
Glenn Roper II, managing editor
Michele Joseph, copy editor

Category: Corporate Communication
Class: Constituency or Annual Report Video
No entries

Category: Corporate Communication
Class: Constituency Report (Print)
Best in Class: Atlantic Union College's Quienquennial Constituency Meeting book
Cindy Kurtzhals, director of public relations and publications for Atlantic Union College
Winona Wendth, cover photo consultant
Dr. Lois King, assistant vice president for marketing
Melahn Cable, contract layout/graphic designer

Honorable Mention: Ontario Highlights 2009 Constituency Report Edition
Pastor Halsey Peat, director of communication and religious liberty for the Ontario Conference

Category: Corporate Communication
Class: Annual Report (Print)
Best in Class: Adventist World Radio Annual Report
Shelley Nolan Freesland, Adventist World Radio communication director
Clayton Kinney, designer

Honorable Mention: Telling His Story
Dan Jensen, Potomac Conference communication director
Adrienne Suarez, graphic designer

Adventist Health Annual Report
Rita Waterman, assistant vice president of corporate communication
Lauren Brendel, communication coordinator

Category: Corporate Communication
Class: Website
Best in Class: pcsda.org
Dan Jensen, Potomac Conference communication director
Paolo Esposito, communication intern
Adrienne Suarez, graphic designer

Honorable Mention: Free and Affordable Health Care Services
Brian Weed, web content manager and instructor, Loma Linda University School of Public Health
Sheikh Zulfiqar, 2011 alumnus, Loma Linda University School of Public Health

Category: New Media
Class: App
Honorable Mention: Appventist
Erik de Jonge, general manager, Active8
Niko Koffeman, copy/concept

Homecoming Application
Andrews University Office of Alumni Services
Andriy Kharkovyy, developer

Category: New Media
Class: Email Newsletter
Best in Class: Sailing with Jesus
Heidi Martella, Washington Conference communication director
Raschelle Casebier, Washington Conference communication apprentice
Honorable Mention: *Andrews Agenda*
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication
Keri Suarez, media relations specialist
Darren Heslop, photographer
Todd Freeman, programmer
Martin Lee, designer

**Category: New Media**
**Class: Blog**
Honorable Mention: *Outlook*
Chris McConnell, webmaster/designer

**Category: New Media**
**Class: Use of Social Media**
Honorable Mention: Andrews University’s Facebook and Twitter feeds
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication
Stephen Payne, vice president for enrollment management and integrated marketing and communication
Keri Suarez, media relations specialist

**Category: Print**
**Class: Newsletter (Print)**
Best in Class: *Accent*
Heidi Martella, Washington Conference communication director
Raschelle Casebier, Washington Conference communication apprentice
Maylan Schurch, Belleune, Washington, Adventist church pastor

Honorable Mention: *The Herald*
Communication Department of the Burns Seventh-day Adventist Church
Oliver Page, Ph.D., communication leader

*AUC Today*
Cindy Kurtzhals, director of public relations and publications
Dr. Bordes Henry-Satuene', vice president for enrollment
Melahn Cable, contract graphic designer

**Transmissions**
Shelley Nolan Freesland, Adventist World Radio communication director
Clayton Kinney, designer

**Category: Print**
**Class: Magazine**
Best in Class: *Focus*
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication
Patricia Spangler, editor
Tami Condon, contributing editor
Keri Suarez, contributing editor
Matt Hamel, designer

Honorable Mention: *Outlook*
Martin Weber, communication director
Chris McConnell, managing editor/designer
Brenda Dickerson, copy editor

**Category: Print**
**Class: Editorial**
Best in Class: "Facebook, Twitter have much to teach us about personal, corporate interactions "
Adventist News Network
Chanmin Chung, production manager, Al-Waad Media Center; Beirut, Lebanon

Honorable Mention: "The way we teach sexual abstinence before marriage needs to be reexamined"
Courtney Ray, associate pastor of the Tamarind Seventh-day Adventist Church, Compton, Calif.

"Increasing our media savvy will further the gospel faster"

Brian Hatyoka, reporter; Times of Zambia, Livingston, Zambia

Category: Print
Class: Feature
Best in Class: “Winternet Evangelism”
Chris McConnell, managing editor/designer

Honorable Mention: “Further definition on tap for Adventist fundamental belief on creation”

Elizabeth Lechleitner, editorial coordinator

"In Bermuda, ministers to gang community, enlists support of area churches”

Elizabeth Lechleitner, editorial coordinator

Category: Print
Class: Devotional
Honorable Mention: Our Stories, Volume 2
Rita Waterman, assistant vice president of corporate communication
Brittany Russell Dobbs, communication specialist

Category: Print
Class: News Article for Event Coverage
Best in Class: "Leaders, delegates reflect on top decisions at Session"
Edwin Manuel Garcia, writer

Honorable Mention: “Planting Seeds of Grace”
Focus magazine
Samantha Snively, writer
Patricia Spangler, editor

Category: Print
Class: Column or Department
Honorable Mention: Children’s Corner
Shelley Nolan Freesland, communication director
Brandon Reese, designer

Category: Print
Class: Student Newspaper
No entries

Category: Broadcast
Class: Radio Show or Podcast
No entries

Category: Broadcast
Class: TV/Internet Show
Best in Class: "Hope in Motion – Keerthana, Prolaspe and Safe Haven"
Terry Benedict, producer/director

Category: Broadcast
Class: Video Story/Project
Honorable Mention: "AEC Today"
Robert Booker, executive producer
Charles Williams, executive producer
George Johnson Jr., host/producer/director
Lauren Davis, host/producer
Evan Williams – director/editor/camera
Bryce Williams – graphics/editor
Joshua Martin – graphics/editor

**Category: Marketing/Public Relations**
**Class: Exhibit or Display**
Best in Class: AWR is Here
Shelley Nolan Freesland, communication director
Clayton Kinney, designer
Skyline Exhibits

Honorable Mention: Andrews University Booth at the 2010 GC Session
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication

**Category: Marketing/Public Relations**
**Class: Promotional Video**
Best in Class: No Child Left Behind: Education with God’s Love
Terry Benedict, producer/director

Honorable Mention: “ Called by God”
Shelley Nolan Freesland, communication director
David Brillhart, Brillhart Media

“Outlook Magazine Redesign”
Chris McConnell, webmaster/designer

“God’s Classroom”
Kenn Dixon, assistant pastor for youth ministries
Kiera Dixon, daughter and student

**Category: Marketing/Public Relations**
**Class: Brochure or Printed Promotional Package/Kit**
Best in Class: “You’re Accepted”
Andrews University Enrollment Management
Jason Webster, enrollment management
Matthew Park, designer

Honorable Mention: Mid-America Union’s 2011 Media Kit
Martin Weber, communication director
Chris McConnell, managing editor/designer
Brenda Dickerson, copy editor

**Category: Marketing/Public Relations**
**Class: Ad (Print)**
Honorable Mention: “Spread the Christmas Spirit”
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication
Matthew Park, designer

**Category: Marketing/Public Relations**
**Class: Marketing Gift**
Best in Class: Andrews University spiral notebook and mug
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication
Rebecca May, director of campus relations
Nadine Nelson

Honorable Mention: “AWR is Here”
Shelley Nolan Freesland, communication director

**Category: Marketing/Public Relations**
**Class: Media Pitching Campaign**
Best in Class: “Women refs blaze a trail”
Cindy Kurtzhals, director of public relations and publications
Coach Sandy Smith, recreation director
Karen Nugent, reporter, Worcester Telegram and Gazette

**Category: Design**
**Class: Book Design**
Best in Class: What Maps Do You Use?
Adrienne Suarez, designer

Honorable Mention: Cardinal
Andrews University Student Association
Lauren Popp, editor
Toni Crumley, assistant editor
Max Murray, marketing manager
Ammiel Mendoza, design editor
Erica Bruso, designer
Katerina Adamos, designer
Boeun Grace Kim, designer
Jay Kijai, photography editor
Sarah Fruth, copy editor

**Category: Design**
**Class: Magazine Cover Design**
Best in Class: *Envision*
Andrews University Communication Department
Debbie Michel, editor
Daniel Campbell, layout editor
Victor Mills, layout editor
Glenn Roper II, managing editor
Michele Joseph, copy editor

Honorable Mention: *Outlook*
Martin Weber, communication director
Chris McConnell, managing editor/designer
Brenda Dickerson, copy editor

**Category: Design**
**Class: Magazine Design Overall**
Best in Class: *Envision*
Andrews University Communication Department
Debbie Michel, editor
Daniel Campbell, layout editor
Victor Mills, layout editor
Glenn Roper II, managing editor
Michele Joseph, copy editor

Honorable Mention: *Outlook*
Martin Weber, communication director
Chris McConnell, managing editor/designer
Brenda Dickerson, copy editor

**Category: Design**
**Class: Project Design**
Best in Class: Andrews University 2010-2011 Calendar
Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication
Patricia Spangler, content
Justin Jeffery, layout/designer

Honorable Mention: “AWR is Here”
Shelley Nolan Freesland, communication director

Collection of postcards by MARC Creations
Iwan J. Voerman, MDiv., creator
The Society of Adventist Communicators is an organization for the socialization, continuing education, recognition, and nurture of Seventh-day Adventists whose careers are in fields of communication.

END
The First SHINE Graduating Class of October 2011.

Spokane, Wash., October 17, 2011, - On October 17, 2012 the Upper Columbia Conference graduated their first class of ten students from the Shine Bible Worker Training School.

They were congratulated by their teachers, Steve Rogers, Dave Livermore, Jordana and Eric Ramirez as well as administrators of UCC as they received their certificates of completion. This one month course prepared them to assist with evangelism, Bible studies and to serve as a Bible Worker Coordinators. Some of the students will be working soon in local UCC churches.

The results of having a Bible school called Shine have been successful,” said Bob Folkenberg, Jr., UCC conference president. “No matter where you go you will shine!” He also charged them to multiply wherever they go and help the church to shine.

The eleven graduates are Nitzi Barrett, Harold Beebe, Marla King, Tamala Mack, Jay Nawalkowski, Bob Ratcliff, Jerry Risenhoover, Maryann Risenhoover, Tye Schultz and Derek Williams.

It was a sweet accomplishment for Jerry Reisenhoover who was told by his doctor not to attend the school because he would not be able to learn anything. He had been diagnosed with a post-traumatic stress illness. But Jerry and his wife Maryann were impressed to come anyway and through the course of the Shine Bible Worker Training School, Jerry was able to retain what he learned and was able to preach an evangelistic meeting. He believes the Holy Spirit worked with him and allowed him this opportunity.
- 911 Gospel Patriotic Concert ([News/news10012011](http://www.uccsda.org/News/news10012011)) 10.06.2011
- UCC Announces HR Director ([News/news09272011](http://www.uccsda.org/News/news09272011)) 09.27.2011
- UCC Announces Youth Director ([News/news09272011](http://www.uccsda.org/News/news09272011)) 09.27.2011
- New App to Locate Adventist Churches ([News/News8252011](http://www.uccsda.org/News/News8252011)) 08.25.2011

[News Archive](http://www.uccsda.org/news/All-News-Stories)

**News Links**

- Gleaner Online ([http://www.gleaneronline.org](http://www.gleaneronline.org))
- Adventist Review ([http://www.adventistreview.org](http://www.adventistreview.org))

**Submissions**

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We were strolling down the beach, barefoot, hand in hand, with the blush of Friday's sunset in the soft summer air. It seemed a good moment for a song like “Day is dying in the West” or “Wide, Wide as the Ocean”. Sure enough, a song came to me, but it wasn’t one of those. It was another one I’d learned as a child:

*Herman met Sally on the beach one night*  
*The sea was calm and the starfish were bright*  
*He looked at her, and she looked at him*  
*And it was: True love at first sight!*

The story turns out to be a bit of a tragedy, however, for Herman’s family did NOT accept Sally. As only the Smothers Brothers could tell and sing the story, we learn that Herman was a lobster. And Sally was a crab. The chorus breaks the woeful news:

*Crabs walk sideways and lobsters walk straight*  
*And we won’t let you take her for a mate!*

Growing up, I had a collection of Smothers Brothers records – about six of them, from their early, more innocent days – and I had those long-play vinyls memorized. I could recite their routines like “Mom always liked you best!” and “Cream of the ‘sparakeet soup” and “Black is the color of my love’s true hair”. It has not just been years, it has been decades since I’ve heard those songs, but they’re still there in my mind and pop up at unexpected times. Like this one. And my husband is not as delighted by these songs as I am, so I kept this one to myself while we walked and while it went around and around and around in my head.

On another walk recently, friends and I spontaneously took turns starting theme songs to childhood sitcoms. We hadn’t heard them for decades, but they were back instantly:

*Just sit right back and you’ll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip …*  
*A horse is a horse, of course, of course…*  
*The bluest skies you’ve ever seen are in Seattle…*
Amazing, isn’t it, how the things we learned as children stick with us? My husband and his brother had never heard of the Smothers Brothers – they grew up on *The Bible in Living Sound* records and occasionally lapse into bits of conversation such as “Noooooooh! If you can hear me, and I know you can…”

My dad, who hadn’t attended church since his early 20’s, could, in his 60’s, still recite the Bible verses he had learned as a child in Sabbath School.

But back to Herman and Sally, the lobster and the crab. While I don’t have a problem with the silly little song itself, Sabbath was approaching and I really wanted to focus on something else. So I did what I often do when I’m trying to change my thoughts: I considered several alternatives (in this case, songs that fit the moment) and chose one:

*Over and over, like a mighty sea,*

It’s another catchy one, and more beautiful than ever with the waves rolling in over and over my feet. All weekend long, when my mind defaulted to “Crabs walk sideways and lobsters walk straight”, I chose to change channels. I chose “Over and over, like a mighty sea”. At one point, I started singing it aloud, and Jon joined in with the counter tune of “Over the sea, over the sea, Jesus, Saviour, pilot me…”

I love that song! Learned it as a little kid…

Knowing as we do how powerful those childhood lessons are, WHY WHY WHY do we so often waste them??? WHY do we spend so much time, even in our children’s Sabbath Schools, on empty (in my opinion) songs like… Well, maybe I’d better be careful here and not name any because I might name your favorites.

WHY are we so seldom teaching our children their memory verses anymore? WHY are we teaching them fewer and fewer songs of substance? In our homes, WHY are we watching so much random TV and so many worldly DVD’s and spending SO LITTLE time (if any) in family worship and teaching our children the Bible?

Were your parents intentional about teaching you spiritual songs? Did they lead you in memorizing Bible passages? Did anyone give you any helpful guidance about what to put in your mind along the way? What difference did it make in your life?

What wisdom do you have for today’s parents and children’s ministries leaders on this issue?

This entry was posted on Monday, September 26th, 2011 at 7:00 pm and is filed under Cheri Corder. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. Both comments and pings are currently closed.

### 2 Responses to “NEW … A Silly Little Song”

1. **Diana** says:  
   **September 27, 2011 at 10:35 pm**

   I Still sing Jesus Loves Me when I can’t sleep at night, and can recite random texts…which is great. (capital) I don’t know the song about the crab and the lobster; might be fun to learn! Next time I am with my grandkids I think I’ll teach them Jesus Loves Me!…have taught them others! Thanks for the fun story AND the reminder!!

   With my grandkids

2. **Heidi** says:  
   **September 30, 2011 at 5:13 pm**

   It’s true that the things children learn stick with them for a long time. My husband and I both recited
the fourth commandment by memory the other day. Unlike my upcoming recital repertoire, for example, these verses are not something I constantly review, but they are instantly available, word for word, many years after I first learned them.

Maybe there are a couple of reasons for that, one of them being that the mind of a child is particularly quick in putting things into the memory. I think it’s also possible that these verses, and Sabbath school songs and the like, are things God is especially interested in helping me remember.

What I love about brains is that it is never too late to put good things into them, no matter how old we get. I played the piano in cradle roll as an adult for a couple of years, and even though it has been several years since that time, the songs I learned in those two years still come back to encourage me during all kinds of trials. And minds, like muscles, get more and more efficient with exercise.
Nelle

Re-written by Cindy R. Chamberlin, as adapted from Paul Kengor’s work. Permission granted via Dr. Kengor.

“You can be too big for God to use, but you cannot be too small,” an annotation from Nelle’s Bible.

On a brisk February evening in Dixon in 1922, shortly after his eleventh birthday, Dutch strolled home returning from a basketball game at the nearby YMCA. His mother, Nelle, was out on a sewing job trying to earn a few dollars. Dutch expected to come back to an empty house. Instead, he was shaken by the sight of his father sprawled out in the snow on the front porch, passed out, flat on his back, freezing, too inebriated to make it to the door. “He was drunk,” his son later remembered, “dead to the world.” The boy leaned over and smelled the whiskey escaping through his dad’s long snores. His hair was soaked with melted snow, matted unevenly against the side of his reddened face.

Dark Demon

Jack’s arms were stretched out, recalled his son, “as if he were crucified — as indeed he was.” He had been taken by the “dark demon in the bottle.” Dutch stood over his father for a minute or two, not sure how to react. He wanted to simply let himself in the door, go to bed, and pretend his dad wasn’t there. Instead, Dutch grabbed a fistful of the old man’s overcoat and heaved him toward the door. He dragged him into the house and to the bedroom, out of the way of the weather’s harm and the neighbors’ fixed attention. It was a sad moment for father and son.

“They were awful poor,” a neighbor reflected years later. Another friend recalled her family sent so many charity food plates over that her father built a hinge next to the family’s kitchen window so food could easily be left inside. Dutch’s father, Jack, a nominal Catholic, alcoholic and unsuccessful salesman, moved his family from town to town, job to job, and rental to rental. Dutch’s family never owned a home and had to sublease the houses they stayed in just to make rent. They could afford few decorated Christmas trees, but undaunted, Nelle decorated a table or created a cardboard fireplace out of a packing box with ribbon and crepe paper.

Bleak Life

Despite the face of alcoholism by Dutch’s father, extreme poverty, and frugal living, Nelle stayed forever optimistic and cheery, accepting her hardships as God’s unerring plan, and throwing herself fully into helping the “poor
and helpless.” Dutch’s most vivid, earliest memory of his mother was of her taking a covered dish to someone needier than they.

“If there ever was such a thing as a saint on earth, it was Nelle,” said friends later. Nelle visited the sick in hospitals, bravely walked into tuberculosis (TB) wards, comforted mentally ill in institutions, and gave weekly Bible studies to jail inmates. Nelle’s flair as an “elocutionist” — notably in her “dramatic readings” of Scripture — made her a favorite among prisoners.

As a prodigious newspaper reader, Nelle followed international events closely out of personal interest and with a sense of Christian obligation. Doing some work for Russian believers, in the summer of 1924, she helped raise money to erect a chapel for the Russian church in New York City — a symbolic act showing solidarity for Russian believers.

**Frugal Life**

There is no doubt if she had the education, today she would have been ordained.¹ Sources claim Nelle lead her church virtually single-handed, writing bulletins, preparing Sunday programs, prodding the congregation … Nelle’s True Blue Sunday school class was the largest (even more popular than the pastor’s) and her church was described by one historian as, “the voice of democracy and individualism in the religious sphere.”

Blessed with an engaging voice and the confidence of a natural performer — Nelle was renowned in Dixon for her recitations both outside the church and within, self-written stories and poems frequently published locally, and for acting in plays. Dutch, always in tow, absorbed his lifelong love for drama and language skills from the time at his mother’s church.¹

Did Nelle ever wonder if her prayers escaped the ceiling? In her frugal life, was her dedication for good in vain? Her heavenward petitions lost?

Nelle’s prayers and good deeds came to fruition decades later, echoing in the voice of the 40th president of the United States of America, Dutch — a.k.a Ronald Wilson Reagan. President Reagan, habitually and unapologetically declared his mother’s God. He projected Nelle’s youthful optimism, exuded her cheerfulness, captured her love for theater, and championed her good deeds.

**Tear Down this Wall**

Reagan’s words at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, Germany, on June 12, 1987, “Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall,” effectively toppled the Berlin Wall and ended the cold war. But these were not accidental words; these were straight from the pew at his mothers’ church. Common recurring threads within his speeches, freedom and opportunity were non-other than Nelle’s winsome optimism peeking out. In his two presidential terms, Reagan was
unapologetic for his Christian beliefs and often referenced “God’s unerring divine plan,” in the face of obstacles— a pattern learned in childhood.

**Nellanomics**

When random requests arrived at the White House that he could fulfill, historians say he did so. Once, an elderly gentleman wrote to him and asked him for a rocking chair, it was the formative Dutch, who took the oval pen and ordered it delivered to the needy address. Nelle’s charities showed themselves in the president’s small kindnesses: He chose to stay at the White House for Christmases rather than return to his beloved ranch so his secret servicemen could be near their families. His most lifelong treasured Christmas gift was a letter describing how his brother brought Christmas to a needy family.

Trickle-down Reaganomics brought about the longest peacetime economic stability in U.S. history, surpassed only by a short time in the 1990s. But in reality these were “Nellanomics,” the trickle down of one godly woman who inculcated a young boy and formed a president in the process.

Nelle did not live to see her son become leader of the free world. However, she always credited her son’s ascent in Hollywood and his financial success to her tithing. As president, Reagan advocated and paid a regular tithe, quoting his mother’s scrupulous training to give 10 percent. During his youth he “tithed” to his brother’s college tuition because the boy had no other way to go. Reagan quoted Nelle’s belief, “The Lord [would] make her 90 percent twice as big if she [made sure He got] his tenth.” (Leviticus) He said she believed being faithful would grant her a tremendous spiritual and earthly blessing in return.

Sources:


6 Ronald Reagan’s Democrat to Republican, p. 68

This entry was posted on Thursday, October 13th, 2011 at 10:15 am and is filed under Cindy's Garden Blog. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.
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Dear Friend:

If as a result of all the religious readings and sermon viewings, your boyfriend is not becoming increasingly kind, courteous, compassionate, and aware of others’ needs, perhaps he is getting into the path of fanaticism. You may be in a position to help him lead a more balanced life.

In order to do so, ask God for an extra measure of tact, patience, and wisdom for a caring attitude and appropriate messages to your boyfriend. Remember Solomon’s words: The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction. Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones” (Proverbs 16:23-24).

A good way to start is by discussing with him a number of activities you both enjoy. Then suggest that you spend time together reading devotional books (or watching sermons). You want to state clearly that you appreciate and love spiritual things. Exchanging religious ideas and insights can be quite an uplifting experience. But also explain to him that, after the devotional activities, you both need to engage in other healthy pastimes that will make your relationship whole.

In your communication about his excessive devotion to spiritual things, do not sermonize or nag. Rather, recognize his religious fervor but also the need to be balanced and to participate in multiple activities. It may be helpful to involve other friends in those activities so that he is exposed to a variety of people and styles, which may help to broaden his exclusive religious emphasis. At an appropriate time, you can explain to him that Jesus spent time with the Father in prayer, but also socialized with his best friends: Lazarus, Martha and Mary. About this friendship, Ellen G. White says: “His heart was knit by a strong bond of affection to the family at Bethany… often, when weary, thirsting for human fellowship, He had been glad to escape to this peaceful household… Our Saviour appreciated a quiet home and interested listeners. He longed for human tenderness, courtesy, and affection.”—The Desire of Ages, pp. 524-525.

As time goes on, your careful and loving efforts should bring positive results. But if your prayerful attempts to bring your mutual relationship to a more balanced position are fruitless, interpret it as a sign that you may need to re-evaluate the relationship.
Blessings

Monday, September 26th, 2011

It’s a setting beyond the ken of an Average Joe. The 6,000-plus-square-foot home commands a hilltop view of a valley and snow-capped mountains beyond. A bright red BMW crouches in the driveway, ready for action. The Hummer, Porsche and Harley-Davidson Road King sit safely in the four-bay garage. “Wow! I’ve been blessed,” says the athlete as he surveys his eminent domain.

Three boisterous, healthy children romp in the park. Their sturdy legs and ruddy complexions testify to an avid diet of outdoor activity. Their mother watches from a park bench nearby, gently rocking a stroller back and forth with the newest pink-cheeked, chubby cherub tucked inside. “We’ve really been blessed,” she murmurs with a contented smile.

A religious celebrity with carefully lacquered hair explains the most recent divine intervention on his behalf. A speeding car, a head-on collision, a crumpled wreck in the ditch — but he walks away with only a bruise and a scratch. “It’s a direct blessing from the Lord that I wasn’t killed,” he exclaims.

Sometimes I hear a children’s story on Sabbath morning echoing such themes. I look from face to face in the congregation, knowing many there have tragically lost children or health or home. The unstated questions are written deep in their hearts: “What’s wrong with us? Why are we not worthy of such blessings? Why have we been selected for such pain?”

Who among us prays for pain or divorce or financial reverse? Abundant money, a flourishing family, faithful friends, good health — those are the things we desire. In our simple way of reckoning, these constitute a sort of Good Housekeeping seal of approval, an affirmation of good choices, righteous living … God’s blessing.

But until the problem of sin in this world is forever wiped clean, the formula of life and death, success or suffering, will often appear to be indiscriminate and unfair. The philandering husband lives to a ripe old age, while the faithful young mother gets breast cancer.

Perhaps this dilemma is why the incongruous book of Lamentations brings such a surprising message of God’s mercies, which are “new every morning.” Perhaps it is why the message of Laura Story’s song, “Blessings,” turns our familiar formulas upside down: “What if your blessings come through raindrops? What if your healing comes through tears? … What if trials of this life are your mercies in disguise?”

Perhaps it’s why I’m intrigued with The Message version recorded in John 9 of Jesus’ response to His disciples about a man blind from birth. “‘Who sinned, this man or his parents?’ they asked. Jesus replied, ‘You’re asking the wrong question. You’re looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do.’”

Today we ask similar questions, with a constant refrain — “Why?” The answer comes when we turn instead
to look for what God can do to redeem even the worst efforts of our enemy.

That’s when those morning-fresh mercies of Lamentations finally begin to ring true.

Posted in Steve Vistaunet | No Comments »

Perfect or Passionate

Monday, September 26th, 2011

An old story tells of a hopeful young bachelor searching eagerly for the Perfect Woman. Day in and day out the quest continues until finally he hits the mother lode — the Perfect Woman. She’s unbelievable, with internal and external qualities surpassing every item on his dog-eared list. He’s ecstatic … that is, until one day his friend finds him mournfully nursing a lemonade at the corner deli. Of course, in the original tale it’s neither lemonade nor a deli, but you get the picture. “Why the long face?” the friend asks. “You found the Perfect Woman … you should be happy.” “Yeah, but there’s a big problem,” moans the young man. “She’s looking for the Perfect Man!”

Your spouse or best friend has no doubt discovered the truth by now. Even the dog knows it. Weighed in the balances of perfection, we all come up tarred and feathered.

The reality that we are not the only blemished gems in God’s creation is fed by an ocean of data incessantly sweeping over all of us. With blinding speed, the Internet and other media continually confront us with the fallibility of politicians, professors, preachers and presidents. We are an increasingly jaded, skeptical, cynical society. We’ve witnessed sports heroes unmasked as charlatans, corporate icons turned to greed, religious pillars reduced to dust. And in the process, we’ve exchanged our rose-colored glasses for those of a darker tint. Far from expecting the best, we have begun to assume the worst.

Throughout my office are volumes of GLEANERS from the past century. Every so often, I coax one down off the shelf to join me for lunch. Sandwich in one hand, I step via musty pages into another time and place. Some might say they invoke a simpler, naïve view of the world and of our church. It was a time when Linketts were considered health food, H.M.S. Richards walked on water and Del Delker had perfect pitch.

But these pages also tell of innovative leadership — the kind of vision that enabled Northwest members to become leaders in supporting the church’s mission around the world. They may not have been perfect, but they were passionate.

This September, delegates will gather in Walla Walla, Washington, for the North Pacific Union Conference constituency session. Leaders will be elected, budgets reported, and strategic decisions made.

As these delegates take their seats, it will be 10 years to the day since the horrific tragedy of September 11, 2001 — when, by the actions of a few, our world became somehow darker and filled with fear.

May God grant us the wisdom to revise this story with a better byline that reads: “On this September 11, 2011, by the actions of a few, our world became somehow brighter and filled with hope.”

It can happen, one personal, passionate connection at a time. I won’t ever succeed at becoming the Perfect Man. But you and I can share One who is with the world right next door and just down the street.

Posted in Steve Vistaunet | No Comments »
There are vaccines for smallpox, polio and tuberculosis. Flu shots and inoculations against all sorts of unspeakable are in plenteous supply. But there is no such remedy for being dumb. Personal pedigree is no guarantee. Academic degrees do not prevent it.

I do not speak of mental or physical challenges brought through birth or illness. What I describe here is often perpetrated by those with the highest measurable IQs. I need only dip into my distant collegiate past to illustrate how dumbness can be cultivated in the very crucible of academia.

It could be the fire pole which swiftly transported tardy young men from the upper floors of the dorm to the worship hall — at least until an enterprising young profligate smeared a wide band of honey around the shaft about 6 feet from the bottom. The braking effect on bodies hurtling downward was breathtaking.

Or it might be the sophomore theology student with too much time on his hands who drilled a hole through to the dorm room next door and connected his own stereo amp to his neighbor’s loudspeakers.

Then there was the physics major, working clandestinely in the dark to install a remote volume control inside the church organ. His surreptitious ministrations from the balcony a few days later caused inexplicable things to happen during chapel, to the chagrin of the horrified organist. The inscription “Physics Dept” etched into the handle of a screwdriver inadvertently left inside the organ led to his eventual demise.

Sure they’re dumb, and perhaps juvenile. We chuckle, though, because some of us have similar shenanigans under our belts.

But there is dumb and there is dumber. Paul’s admonishment is key: “When I was a child, I spake as a child … but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Some continue to struggle with that transition. The ubiquitous social media so many of us use highlighted this recently. Rep. Weiner’s misuse of “key texts” is a clear reminder that increased age and a vast store of knowledge, do not always add up to an advanced degree in wisdom.

But think twice before you pile on the minister, professor or politician who lays bare his or her human frailties. Those who slip from dumb to dumber, sometimes in the most public ways, reap their reward without us even casting the first stone.

Our responsibility lies closer to home, with the potential log in our own eye. With our computers or mobile devices constantly at hand, it’s far too easy to let an irreverent moment slip out to worlds unknown. More than ever before, our digital world demands we live with transparent integrity.

So, why not instead embrace the age-old principle in Proverbs 11:25. To paraphrase: “A word fitly spoken, a photo thoughtfully sent, an action carefully considered, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

Thinking of an investment in gold or silver? Try a word fitly spoken.
Tech-NO

Thursday, June 30th, 2011

They were gathered around the restaurant table — husband, wife and two girls. Between bites of my own dinner, I observed their marked lack of interaction. There were no shared smiles or playful winks. Each was lost in a separate world, fiddling with their mobile devices. Were they playing games, texting, surfing the Web? I couldn’t tell. But I could see the bored expressions, the vacant eyes, the distant body language. I felt sadness for this family where the simple joy of sharing a meal together was lost. Surrounding that little table, they were miles apart.

Their unintended tableau reminded me of a quote from Christian media guru Phil Cooke: “The most sought-after commodity today is someone’s undivided attention.”

The plethora of mobile communication devices, including ever-present cell phones and iPads, mean many of us carry a billion streams of information with us wherever we go. Atlas mythologically carried the world on his shoulders. Hey, we carry it in our pockets.

Having immediate access to all this information is exhilarating. Got a question? Even an obscure one? Give me a couple minutes with Google and you’ll have your answer. Want to reach me immediately? Send me a text. I can answer that quietly, even in a meeting, or, ahem, in church.

But, this multitasking we’re getting used to is taking a toll. While we connect with the outside world, we are in danger of losing what’s nearest at hand. Talking with a friend recently, I noticed him repeatedly looking down at his cell phone as incoming text messages interrupted our conversation. “Sorry,” he said. “I’m addicted to this thing.”

He’s not too far off the mark. Our mobile devices are enabling us as information junkies, addicts in every sense of the word. FOMO is a new acronym coined to describe what many are experiencing with Twitter, Facebook and other social media networking — Fear Of Missing Out.

Flash mobs, hundreds of individuals prompted by the peer pressure of a Twitter message to do something in common at a given time and place, converge on shopping malls. Personal accounts of news and events blaze around the world, passing from one person to the next — as quick (and reliable, at times) as gossip.

Now, I’m a fan of technology and mobile communication. But this headlong rush that so often absorbs us prompts two basic questions: Is quicker better? Because we can, should we?

I think not — at least, not without first taking stock of more basic and lasting values. The simple act of lending our undivided attention to a friend, giving respectful eye contact to a colleague, lets them know they matter. In spite of all our virtual “friends” on Facebook, the ones who really count are those right in front of us who search our faces for evidence we care.

There’s another Person who desires our attention. We were designed to walk with Him in the cool of the evening through a garden of another place and time. As we eagerly seek out the latest, coolest gadget, or provocative tweet, is He watching anxiously for a glimmer of eye contact with us?

Turn your eyes upon Jesus … you don’t even need an app.

Posted in Steve Vistaunet | No Comments »
Fate or Faith

Thursday, June 30th, 2011

“\textit{We walk by faith and not by sight.}” 2 Cor. 5:7

In Mark chapter 5, fate makes its play, but faith comes out the winner.

Two lives hang in the balance as Jesus makes his way through the pressing throng. Two lives, with everything to gain and everything to lose, await His next move. The drama has been 12 years in the making. Everything hinges on what happens now.

It had all started simply enough. An important man’s daughter, all of 12 years old, lay dying. That Jesus should come to his town is Providence too great to ignore. But time is short. Jesus must hurry. And so He does, pressing through the crowded street toward Jairus’ home.

But fate intervenes, as it so often does. A woman also views Providence at work on her behalf. She does not see the father’s anxiety-ridden face. She does not know his 12-year-old daughter is near death. Her own past dozen years have been filled with an illness so great it has ostracized her from family and friends. All her resources have evaporated in the failed efforts of a litany of doctors. Fate has left her destitute of any other support. She is a woman with no future — unless there is something Jesus can do. So she stretches out a hand of faith to touch One who carries the promise of something better.

And everything stops. Jesus stops. The crowd bunches to a halt. Jairus, pushing ahead, turns around with anxious agony. Every moment counts. But beyond his immediate understanding something else has stopped as well. The bleeding has ended. The desperate reach of faith has brought instantaneous healing to a weeping woman who kneels now at Jesus’ feet. And Jesus is giving something even more. “Daughter,” He says. “Go in peace and be whole.” Daughter — an outcast no more; a welcomed part of the family; a woman with a future!

But there’s another daughter at stake here, and fate strikes again. A grim-faced messenger wedges through the crowd. He tugs at Jairus’ sleeve. “There’s no need to trouble the Teacher anymore,” he murmurs with a grim face. “Your daughter just died.” Something inside Jairus crumbles then. If only the interruption had never occurred. If only Jesus had kept going. If only … they might have been in time.

But Jesus has overheard. He has seen the agonized face; He has felt the anguished heart. He knows the brutal whimsy of fate is no match for the reach of faith.

You know the rest of the story. The ledger does not stop at 12 years for Jairus’ daughter, who is awakened from her “sleep” by the Master’s touch.

And so today, fate and faith continue the struggle for mastery in our own hearts and lives. Sometimes we reach out in faith and find our prayers answered dramatically, immediately, just like the woman. At other times, fate seems to intervene. Like Jairus, we wait anxiously, impatiently, wondering at Jesus’ delay. Like Martha of another time and place, we cry, “Master, if only You had been here…”

But beyond our immediate understanding, God is on His way. Those who have fallen asleep awaiting Jesus’ arrival will, like Jairus’ daughter, hear His call and awake to something far better.

In the meantime, we still have a choice — to live under the shadow of fate or the promise of faith.
The Wall

Thursday, April 21st, 2011

As a lad and the youngest of three boys, I eagerly accepted the role of chief underdog and pest. Having three guys in one bedroom was interesting enough, but placing me in the backseat of an automobile with two older brothers was a formula destined for disharmony. Trips longer than 30 minutes in the faithful old ’49 Plymouth crossed some sort of invisible barrier beyond which decibels rose and turf wars raged.

“If you don’t settle down RIGHT … THIS … MINUTE, I’ll …” Dire words such as these from the front would inspire a tenuous truce. Elbows would be withdrawn from seatmates’ ribs, and a thin veneer of civility would form for a fragile few minutes — but only for a few.

And thus was born my mother’s invention, a fabric contraption to hang over the front seat. In it, each of us boys in the back had our own pouch for books, games, toys and such. The effect was miraculous — almost as if a wall had been created between us. With better things at hand than fomenting strife, we three sons would arrive at the distant destination — fingers, toes, noses and ears all accounted for — still friends.

In spite of all the rhetoric we hear in America today about walls of division, perhaps some walls are best left standing. Perhaps they protect what would otherwise be forever damaged or destroyed.

Human relationships flounder when force is applied; they flourish when freedom is fostered. But liberty, and with it all the freedoms we cherish, is fragile. Like three bouncing boys in a back seat, it needs boundaries to survive.

So, I worry when I hear voices rising in our country, calling us to tear down the wall that guard the distinctly different roles of church and state, religion and politics. I worry when I hear Adventists joining others who berate the core values of religious liberty for what they imagine is the greater good — a “Christian nation.”

Such was the climate that led some Adventists of an earlier generation to align themselves with a charismatic leader promising pure motives, a return to solid values and a bright future. Their hopes died along with the ashes of a million and more Jews. Must we countenance another Hitler, another Holocaust, before we wake up and smell the Postum?

Sound-bite opinions travel with lightning speed through the Internet and social media connections like Twitter. Personal perspectives are formed with little contemplation, providing fertile ground for a populist movement with no critical evaluation of history or principle. It’s not hard to imagine a prophetic timetable accelerating to a place unthinkable just a few years ago.

There has seldom been a more important time for Adventists to place the message of religious liberty front and center. The wall of separation we champion is not just a good idea for three rambunctious boys on a journey to Grandma’s house.

It’s on behalf of all of us in this dying world and the message we’ve been asked to share, as the celestial clock ticks off the final minutes.
Wake Up

Monday, March 14th, 2011

I remember the earthquake vividly. Ceiling tiles cascaded; walls crumbled. As I tried to run, the floor rolled violently up and down, then gave way. I felt myself falling, falling.

With a deep shuddering breath, I opened my eyes to darkness. My heart was pounding, yet all else was quiet. I was alive and in my own bed. “I just had a horrible dream about an earthquake,” I murmured to my long-suffering wife. “I’ll bet you did,” she said with a sigh. “You were snoring so loud, I had to bounce up and down on the bed to get you to stop.”

While I smile at that memory, I’m confronted with staggering images of Japan’s recent devastation, with miles of coastline buildings, boats and bodies churned into a sickening slurry. Television reports benignly beamed into our homes thousands of miles distant can never adequately convey the stories of personal loss and lives forever changed. While relief agencies scramble to help, we who remain are left to ponder our own mortality. Our beautiful Northwest is due something just as dramatic, just as devastating.

No doubt this earth, as the Bible says, is “waxing old like a garment.” Many of us will see this latest disaster as yet another measuring stick of prophecy. But let’s not miss this present “teachable moment.” This is a wakeup call to our immediate need: everyday, Christ-centered living.

For sleep, while necessary, can go on too long. The 13th chapter of Romans cuts straight to the core. “Make sure you don’t get so absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-by-day obligations that you lose track of the time and doze off, oblivious to God. The night is over, dawn is about to break. Be up and awake to what God is doing! … Get out of bed and get dressed!” (Romans 13:11–13, The Message)

Both physically and mentally, it’s good to get a benevolent spousal shake when our snoring gets too loud. Spiritually, an earthshaking experience provides an opportunity to re-engage and replace our own status quo with priorities of eternal value.

A disaster like that in Japan sobers us all. But every day there are individual earthquakes, too, when relational or financial tsunamis come in like a flood; when our faith hangs in the balance; when personal defeat seems more than we can bear. From my hard experience, one thing is certain — Romans 8:28 is true. Satan’s worst efforts are God’s best opportunities. Faith, when stretched, gets longer and stronger. Like Jacob, we wrestle with God in our most intimate challenges, and cry, “I will not let You go without Your blessing!”

And because of this daily, weekly crucible of faith, when the final minutes of this tired earth tick away, when the ultimate wakeup call comes, we’ll be ready to heed the joyful summons of Scripture: “Look up; lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh!” (Luke 21:28)

It’s a wakeup call I refuse to miss.

Posted in Steve Vistaunet | No Comments »

Revival

Monday, March 14th, 2011

“If in faith you seek for a greater measure of God’s Spirit, you will be constantly taking it in and
breathing it out. Daily you will receive a fresh supply.” (Ellen White, The Upward Look, p. 143.)

The crisis came suddenly. One minute the strong young man was enjoying the ocean swells out beyond the breakers; the next, he was in a grim battle for life, caught in an unyielding riptide.

Whether the struggle took minutes or hours, he does not remember, but he does recall a face — one he will never forget.

It belonged to a petite teenage girl who found him motionless, face down in the water. She dragged him to shore and administered CPR. Helpless to help himself, this moose of a man drew a sudden, rasping breath, fluttered his eyes open and beheld the face of his savior — the source of his revival.

When a pastor or church leader calls us to revival, urges us to pray for the Holy Spirit, what should be our response? Some Adventists through the years have determined the Holy Spirit is hard of hearing or, worse yet, reluctant to answer. After repeated prayer meetings and fasts, they reason the delay is all because of them — they are not yet ready, not yet dedicated enough. They feel no rush of emotion. They see no tongues of fire.

It’s a strange parallel to the earnest Jews who, millennia ago, prayed in vain for a Messiah to match their expectations. Today their descendants line up at Jerusalem’s western “Wailing Wall,” still pleading for a Messiah who has already come.

Is there a lesson here for us? Could it be those tempted to think they must become better or pray more earnestly before the Spirit will listen are unaware the Spirit is a gift already given? Have our human expectations blinded us to the amazing promise already at hand and daily renewed?

Acts 2 reminds us of two conditions for receiving the Spirit: repentance and baptism. One involves a willingness to renounce self and do things God’s way, and the second, a public acceptance of new life serving a glorified Lord. Acts 2:38 is no mystery: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

The Spirit is not offered as a reward for becoming good. It’s a gift to guide and empower believers on a growing journey of faith. That seems so simple. When did it become complicated? Why did it become so uncertain?

Will revival come when we recognize the gift has already been bestowed … that the Spirit is already ours? To the cripple at the pool, Jesus said, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” His command was a promise.

Today the same promise is ours. Every morning we have an opportunity to “rise and walk” with Him. So take a deep breath and get ready to watch the Spirit at work.

Posted in Steve Vistaunet | No Comments »

Beyond Regret

Tuesday, January 18th, 2011

I grew up without a gun. In my era, that was a handicap, since the rite of passage for kids in my neighborhood was a daily make-believe battle involving cowboys and outlaws who chased each other from yard to yard.
My parents didn’t like toy guns. So, if I got caught in one of these scrums, I spent my time wisely — running for my life. Life and death was a fantasy then — something contained in play, in stories, in the flexible world of imagination. If you didn’t like how a story turned out, you made up a new one.

The decades since then, however, have brought a rude education about the dark prince of this world and the death he wields. Real people have been ripped unceremoniously from my life. I know now, death is an adversary beyond the realm of “bang-bang-you’re-dead” make-believe.

Adventists believe death is a sleep until Jesus arrives to make everything new. Paul claims Christians do not “grieve as others do” over death. But the apostle does not intend to whitewash the emotions that accompany loss — anger, regret and, in some cases, a crushing sense of responsibility. It’s why the story of Chad and Ryan Arnold is so compelling.

In the prime of life, Chad was diagnosed with a chronic liver disease. A liver transplant was his only hope. His brother, Ryan, was a perfect match for the operation and volunteered to go into surgery to donate two-thirds of his liver to Chad. All went well, but just four days later, while still recuperating, Ryan suddenly, tragically died.

What do you do with a gift when someone has died to give it? Chad started an online blog at cometoofar.com entitled “Come Too Far — When you can’t go back to how it was.”

Early on, sorting through conflicting emotions, Chad realized his response was his decision. In one of his journal entries, he wrote: “Suffering is like a pile of rocks. You can choose to carry the load, throw them at someone, just let it lay there, or you can build an altar.”

Make no mistake — this choice was (and is) not easy. “Faith,” Chad wrote in another blog passage, is “the thing you cling to when you’re taking your last breath in a freezing river whose current is too strong. Well, the current is too strong for me right now, and so I’m clinging.”

The journey of faith is neither a make-believe story or an automatic formula. It’s a winding, uphill road with ruts full of rocks. Like Chad says, it’s what we do with those rocks that counts.

Are you staring at a pile of rocks today? Tired of throwing them back at God or others? Take a step of faith beyond regret. Pick up one of those rocks — and begin to build an altar.

Posted in Steve Vistaunet | 1 Comment »

**Imitation**

Tuesday, January 18th, 2011

“When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other.” — Eric Hoffer

During Friday evenings in my childhood home, an old Electro-Voice reel-to-reel tape recorder filled our living room with strains of the Kings Heralds, Del Delker and other Adventist artists. It wasn’t stereo, but its powerful influence created synaptic pathways I still recall.

Music is still an important part of my experience. But the other day I was listening to some contemporary Christian music, when suddenly it all started to sound the same. Every voice, every message, seemed reminiscent of the last. Frustrated, I went downstairs and dug around in my treasure trove of vinyl LPs. I
pulled out several and put them on my turntable — an ancient audio device held dear by some Baby Boomers. Ah, the relief — the old tunes refreshed musical memories of years past.

And then, a strangely familiar feeling: Those old songs began sounding alike, too.

In every era, sacred music has often mirrored common styles and sounds of society. My vinyl albums of Adventist artists from the 60s and 70s groove to sounds first made trendy in the secular arena. There is no coincidence that Walter Arties mimics Johnny Mathis and other crooners of the past; the Wedgwood Trio — take your pick from the Kingston Trio or other such folk groups. Take Three sounds suspiciously like Peter, Paul and Mary.

We all crave success, so it is natural to copy what is already a winner. I find the endless spate of television “reality” shows are such an effort — ad nauseum.

I suppose there’s nothing inherently wrong with imitation — be it music, entertainment or vegemate. But, frankly, has this ability to imitate aided our divine calling? Has it enhanced or diminished the Adventist mission in our world?

The words of an unknown scribe ring in my ear: “He who never walks except where he sees other men’s tracks will make no discoveries.”

Do Adventists have what it takes to become leaders instead of followers — to use God-given creativity to go beyond what everyone else is doing? Our history says “yes.” Our pioneers were innovators — unafraid to be unique. But while the Lord tarries, we run the risk of becoming society’s own version of background noise. In our efforts to fit in, some of us have passed up brilliant blue and vibrant red. We’ve settled for beige.

While imitation may indeed be the sincerest form of flattery, it is also the surest path to obscurity. Unless, that is, we find a new Source for imitation.

Perhaps Ellen White had this in mind when she wrote: “We must free ourselves from the customs and bondage of society, that when the principles of our faith are at stake, we shall not hesitate to show our colors … Do not imitate men. Study your Bibles, and imitate Christ,” (Our High Calling, p. 345).

Preach it, Ellen. Now there’s an exhortation worthy of imitation.

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NEW … Casting out demons and raising the dead?

Monday, September 26th, 2011

Is it crazy to suggest we start casting out demons and raising the dead?

If you think I’m not in my right mind asking such a question, I would remind you that in Matthew 10:8, Jesus instructed His disciples (and presumably you and me) to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons” as an integral part of sharing the gospel message.

It seems to me we’re quick to discuss healing the sick and cleansing lepers. But when’s the last time you heard SDA Christians talking about raising the dead or casting out demons? Will the role of the demonic be included in any of the formal presentations on the church’s first-ever International Conference on “Emotional Health & Wellness!” scheduled to take place October 12 – 15 at Loma Linda University?

I wanted to know, so I called the GC Health Ministries Department to ask. No one was available to take my call. But I did receive a call just at deadline for this piece from a very nice person who told me that the only person in the department familiar with the Conference was out on an extended health-related leave. So no one remaining could answer my question.

By the way, as I’ve researched such mental illnesses as Tourettes, Asperger’s, Autism, and Schizophren-ia, I note that the behavioral science community offers no specific causes for these diagnoses. The same holds true for Bipolar disorder which the authors of the book, Sway, point out came into existence largely through pharmaceutical company marketing of Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft. Prozac, by the way, has now been shown to be no more effective than sugar pills.[1]

Is there any reason not to think the demonic might play a role in these illnesses?

Despite Ellen White’s contention that multitudes are under the control of demons today just as they were in Jesus’ time,[2] doesn’t the whole demonic thing seem just plain weird in today’s modern world? BTW, do you think that homosexuality, too, might have demonic origins? Read this letter from a young man to a popular advice columnist and tell me what you think:

“I am a male in my early twenties. I have never had any sexual interest in men. Even though my re-lationships with women have been few and far between, I have always been attracted to them.

“Recently I had a dream that I was with another man. Since then I have been very confused. My sex drive has diminished, and I find that I am questioning my sexual orientation .

“I have no desire to be with a man, but the fact that I had a dream like that has left me flustered and wondering how something like that could have come into my head.”[3]

The columnist had no answer and suggested that he come up with his own interpretation of the dream, perhaps with the help of a therapist.
Now I don’t believe for a minute that all of our dreams are devil produced. But I’d like to suggest that one was. And how devastating such an event must be for the poor soul who doesn’t have a clue what is really going on and concludes, “That must be the way I am.”

In one horrifying sentence, the Bible says the natural man (unconverted, in other words) can be “taken captive by (the devil) at his will.”—2 Timothy 2:26 (KJV).

It’s interesting to observe the increasing number of media personalities—CNN’s Anderson Cooper and Don Lemon, for example—who are known to be gay (Lemon has announced it). Wouldn’t that make sense if you were the devil, to go after people who were highly visible presenters of the news? What an impact that would have in giving homosexuality an aura of acceptance!

And since Matthew 10:8 references raising the dead, does that only mean those who are dead in their sins? If you think so, please read Greg Rudd’s One Miracle After Another, the story of Pastor Pavel Goia and some of the incredible events of his early life. You’ll be amazed at the story of the boy who died beneath the wheels of Pastor Goia’s car who came back to life after being pronounced dead and his body sent to the hospital morgue over night. What happened the next morning when the keeper of the morgue arrived for work will amaze you. Contact your nearby ABC for this wonderful book.

Despite the craziness that has happened in the past over the demonic (prolonged exorcisms led by church folks attempting to cast the demons of allergies or the demon of chocolate out of someone, for instance), I wish to conclude with an appeal for anyone reading this blog to consider what it might mean if he or she took seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:8.

[2] See Ministry of Healing, p. 92. And here’s another interesting Ellen White’s quote in 2Selected Messages, p. 353, “I have again and again met those who have been thus possessed, and in the Name of the Lord I have rebuked the evil spirit.”

Dying for a Good Relationship?

Thursday, August 4th, 2011

Relationship guru John Gottman[1] says 69 percent of the issues all couples face in their relationships never get resolved.

If you’re in a relationship, two-thirds of the issues you will face (You never take the garbage out. You always leave dirty dishes in the sink. You overdrew the checking account again...) will be irreconcilable.

Intriguingly, however, the Masters of relationships do just fine despite neither partner ever coming around to the other’s viewpoint, but the Disasters of relationships crash and burn (fight or break up), Gottman says.

Oh, by the way, where do you see yourself in this arena? Are you a Master or a Disaster when it comes to personal relationships?

I tell couples I counsel, “Love is never enough. Work at meeting each other’s primary relationship needs. Then tackle your differences.” Most couples I work with admit they don’t know their partner’s top
relationship needs. Do you know yours?

Before I married Diane 15 years ago, I asked her what her primary relationship needs were. She replied, “I need to be worshipped and adored.” I told her, “I worship God, but I’m willing to adore you.” She replied, “That’ll work.” And so far, it has.

Author Harville Hendrix[2] contends that most of us have relationship expectations at a subconscious level. When we meet someone special, he says, we drape those expectations over the other person, unaware that we’re doing this. We just expect the other person to intuit our relationship needs and are majorly unhappy when they don’t.

In the movie, “Don Juan De Marco”, aging psychiatrist Marlon Brando has an epiphany when he’s in his 70’s and asks his wife of many years, Fay Dunaway, about her hopes and dreams. She gets teary, and in one of the movie’s great lines, replies, “I thought you’d never ask.” May I suggest that you and your partner (if you have one) might do well to ask about the other’s relationship needs if you’ve never done that.

But let’s switch gears now and examine some issues the two of you never get resolved? (You drive too fast. You’re always on the phone. You never pick up after yourself. You’re too easy on the kids. You spend way too much on…) How well you do will depend to what extent you’re a Relationship Master and not a Disaster. Here are some points I make at men’s conferences about handling relationship issues. Most of them should work for women as well.

1. Just go along if it’s not life threatening. Case in point. Diane and I are empty nesters, but she likes to shop at COSTCO. Ridiculous, I used to tell her, especially when it comes to purchasing produce. Because COSTCO only sells larger quantities, lots of our produce goes bad before the two of us can eat it. I used to complain about this. Then I learned something. Shopping at COSTCO (one of her few indulgences) brings her pleasure. So I’ve learned to back off. Sometimes I even help her unload the car and lug in the 500-lb. (just kidding) buckets of kitty litter she brings home.

2. Pray (silently) when the matter is not resolvable. Once when Diane was going off on something I did (I threw out one of her half-dead plants without asking her first), I told her I couldn’t believe we were even discussing such a mundane matter. She assured me we were. Finally in a brilliant stroke, I shut up, prayed silently for God’s intervention, and watched Him intervene. And He really did. By the next morning, we were fine again.

3. Go from “you never” to “you always”. Diane says when she’s tempted to tell me I “never” clean out the garage that she’s learned to say to herself, “But at least he empties the dish-washer.” The point? Practice saying something positive to yourself about your partner every time you get upset about a relationship difference. Do this and your relationship will prosper.

4. Choose to have low horizontal expectations. By now you know you and your partner won’t agree on every topic, so cool your jets when disagreements arise. And, remember, as my friend Clarence Schilt says, we tend to sin more when we’re right and right is not happening. So once you’ve made your point, why do you have to control the outcome? Do you always have to be right? Why not give your partner permission to be wrong once in a while!

5. Be sure you’re emptied of self if you’re dying for a good relationship. Self is the enemy most to be feared. So make the choice every day for the Holy Spirit to drain off all of your natural self, replacing it with a brand new Jesus self (“It’s no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me.”—Galatians 2:20) This won’t make you a wimp; it will simply enable you to be more balanced in knowing when to take a stand and when not to in dealing with your differences.

Remember, (if Gottman got it right), all of us should expect our relationship differences to never get resolved. But you and your partner can sail along smoothly anyway IF you become a Relationship Master.
It’s your call, of course. Some folks would rather fight. I hope you’re not one of them.

Mike Jones leads seminars on reconnecting with inactive members and does a certain amount of couple counseling. His newest books are entitled *Help, Lord, I Blew It Again* and *Sometimes I Don’t Feel Like Praying*. Reach him at www.reconnectnow.org or mjones@paclink.com.

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**Mike Jones … Missing Members**

Thursday, June 23rd, 2011

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*Do you ever notice that some folks you used to see regularly in church aren’t present any more? Do you say to yourself, “I really should give them a call,” but you don’t?*

The purpose of this column is to stimulate you to make to make that call.

Several years ago, someone at my home church mentioned a couple we used to know who were no longer active in church. I did a little sleuthing and was able to obtain their phone number. When I got the husband on the line and identified myself, I chatted with him initially about our children who used to hang out together when they were teenagers. From there, we caught up on the rest of our families what he and I were doing now 20+ years later.

Toward the end of the call, I said, “I hear you haven’t been in church for a long time. Don’t you think you should get your act together and start coming again?”

Of course I said nothing of the sort. I didn’t even mention church, as I recall. But I did suggest it might be fun to catch up some Sunday morning with our wives and have breakfast together. He said that might be enjoyable but that he and his wife were pretty busy just now. Perhaps I could call another time.

Three weeks later, I called again only to find he and his wife were busy again. About a month later after praying for God’s guidance, I was impressed to call again. This time he and his wife were avail-able. Our two families had breakfast in a local restaurant, me with a different wife from 20 years earlier, and we had a really enjoyable visit.

Toward the end of this encounter, I mentioned that our church had a free buffet meal every Wed-nesday evening and perhaps they might join Diane and me in the near future. A few weeks later, they did join us. We had great fellowship once again. But even better, some of the longtime members who were present also welcomed them.

After two or three of these Wednesday evening encounters, I said we’d love to have them join us in church some Sabbath morning. A few weeks later they joined us. They came sporadically at first, but now come quite regularly, and Diane and I have two new friends.
Perhaps this story reminds you of some folks from your church who’ve become inactive. Most churches have two to three times their active membership who are no longer active. If someone comes to mind you’d like to connect with, perhaps some of these ideas will help you get started.

**Make a non-religious phone call.** (Possible message: “What’s going on, _______? Haven’t seen you around for awhile. What’s new? Let’s get together some time.”) No texting or emails in the early going.

**Schedule a connection.** Try for a casual encounter, perhaps at a Starbucks or some other nearby hot (or cold) drink place. Or you might opt for a Sunday morning breakfast. But no fancy restaurants or invites to your house or church. Not yet unless your prospect says, “I sure do miss church.”

**Touch Your Prospect.** Handshakes, hugs, whatever seems appropriate. Remember that God’s love will be flowing through all of these connections, including your tone of voice if, say, the telephone precludes your being physically present because prospect has moved away.

**Keep asking questions—caring questions.** “How’s everything going in your life?” Areas to ask about: family and work. “How’s Hank? What’s up with Jimmy & Susie? Anything new at work?”

**Maintain good eye contact, smile.** These expressions convey empathy, show that you care. (P.S. If you smile even though you’re on the phone, your voice will make your connection more winsome).

**Keep listening & asking followup questions.** Listen for problems and pain. Famed theologian Francis Schaeffer once told his teenage son, “We help people find healing not by so much by what we tell them, but by listening to them.” Everyone has issues.

**Pray silently.** You’ll feel inadequate when you hear some of your contact’s complicated problems. So pray for wisdom and grace and for God’s blessing on your connection while it’s happening. Jesus promises to be your adequacy. “You are complete in Him.”—Colossians 2:10.

**Schedule a next time.** “Hey, this has been fun. Let’s get together again soon, okay?” Then ask what time of the month or day of the week is better for your prospect and indicate that you’ll be in touch in whatever time frame seems appropriate. Try to maintain the lead without being pushy.

**Pray before, during, and after your connection.** Someone has said, “Prayer is not so much preparing for battle; it IS the battle.” Plead the merits of Jesus’ shed blood that your prospect’s sins may be forgiven and that the Holy Spirit might be enabled to bless your contact (perhaps even your son, or daughter, or grandchild) in response to your intercessions. Pray even when everything looks hopeless. God promises to respond *speedily* to such prayers. (Luke 17:7-8).

**Back off if your prospect shows no interest in connecting.** The Holy Spirit will guide you in such matters. Perhaps down the road your prospect will be more receptive. Or perhaps the Lord has someone else in mind for you to connect with.

Always remember in connecting with inactive or former members, Jesus does the heavy lifting. All you need to do is be their friend. He promises, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again, that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.”—Ezekiel 34:16

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Mike Jones leads seminars on reconnecting with inactive members. The story of his return to membership after 16 years away appears in his book, *Sometimes I Don’t Feel Like Praying*. Reach him at mjones@paclink.com or www.reconnectnow.org.

**Posted in** Mike Jones | 1 Comment »

**Mike Jones — Aren’t There More Effective Ways to Do Evangelism?**

Wednesday, May 18th, 2011
Recently I suggested to longtime evangelist Don Gray that the church needs to find more effective ways to do evangelism.

Think about it. You can accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord in a few moments or at a meeting. But typically you have to slug through at least a month or more of meetings—or many months of Bible studies—before you can join the Seventh-day Adventist church.

In the 21st Century where everything is speeded up, does this make sense? And if you say Yes, let me ask, What would you think of the idea of the church’s colleges and universities offering CE credits for those who attend an evangelistic meeting or complete a Bible course and pass an examination? Perhaps, too, attendance would be enhanced at a long series of meetings if college credits could be earned.

Don responded to my complaint with a smile and suggested that if I had a better way to do evangelism I should implement it (demonstrate that it works, in other words) and get back to him.

In this column, I’ll throw out a few thoughts to stimulate your thinking. But if you already have your own ideas about evangelism, I’d like to hear from you.

One thing I noticed during the years when I pastored was that most prospects at evangelistic meetings had some kind of crisis in their lives. Whether it was an illness, financial problems, a relationship issue, an addiction, or something else, they hadn’t solved that crisis and were now willing to look outside themselves for answers.

Therefore, I believe the church would do well to create many more potential points of entry built around common crises people have. And while we’re at it, I don’t see why we can’t speed things up when it comes to the presentation of church doctrines. I’m all for Bible studies, but does every belief call for a full-fledged Bible study? Why not a well-publicized weekend series on just one topic sometime (the Second Coming perhaps) when that’s in the news! Not a bad way to attract prospects, don’t you think?

Back in the day when I was starting out, I was instructed to do two Bible studies per week with folks, forever. Okay, I jest! But with vacation stops, illnesses, and other interruptions, it frequently took from four to six months to get through a full series of studies with a prospect.

In addition to expediting the process, I believe we would do well to help our prospects not just say Yes to Jesus, but to really learn how to have an ongoing experience with Jesus. He tells us to eat His flesh and drink His blood if we want eternal life. Do we have studies explaining how to follow those instructions? How to pray? How to take up our cross daily? How to really ingest the Word?

Right now in a typical set of 25 Bible studies, Jesus is central in only one of them. I once asked a young woman what impacted her most after she had attended an entire evangelistic series. What she remembered most vividly were the Mark of the Beast and the change from Saturday to Sunday worship. Jesus didn’t make her list. And she never got baptized as far as I know.

Would it be heretical to suggest baptizing people into Jesus once they’ve accepted Him and then voting them into membership later after they’d studied the beliefs of the church? Did you ever notice in the New Testament that folks who accepted Jesus seemed to get baptized pretty quickly most of the time.

I’ll conclude this column with one point-of-entry idea. A telephone-based community service to help frustrated people who need to vent. At the moment, I’m calling it The Frustration Line. Here’s an anecdote of how it could work.
Susan, a 38-year-old nurse and mother of four, was about to explode. Her life seemed out of control. Married to Brian, a 39-year-old diesel mechanic with a drinking problem, Susan was in her second marriage and had a blended family. Susan and Brian had a pre-teenage boy and girl from their own marriage plus two teenage girls from Susan’s previous marriage. She and Brian were often at odds over disciplinary issues with the children and they struggled financially.

The last straw came yesterday when Susan learned that Brian was a sex addict. He had been arrested and booked by the local police on charges of attempting to solicit sex from an under-cover police person. She had to post bail to get Brian out of jail. Not sure whether to leave Brian or kill him, she was referred by a friend to The Frustration Line sponsored by the __________ Seventh-day Adventist church.

A soft-spoken Adventist lay person named Nan returned Susan’s call to The Frustration Line call center. Nan, a 53-year-old bookkeeper, introduced herself and invited Susan to share what had precipitated her call. For the next 35 minutes, Nan listened and Susan vented.

Over the next few months, Nan and Susan established a telephone friendship with Nan doing a lot of listening. About four months after their first conversation, the two met personally for the first time at the __________ church. Several weeks later, Susan joined the Bible study class that Nan attended. A few weeks later, Brian and the four children also visited. The older children eventually became involved in the church’s youth group, the younger ones in Pathfinders, and Brian began attending a men’s group.

The church’s Exchanged Life Class enabled the entire family to stabilize and learn how to handle their issues with better communication skills and with God’s grace and forgiveness[1]. Also they’ve become regulars at the __________ church.

Might this kind of story be emanating from The Frustration Line if your church had one going? The Frustration Line requires only an answering service or call center and, perhaps 6 to 10 each, Christian men and women trained in the art of therapeutic listening. Men would deal exclusively with men and women with women. All calls would initially be handled on a first-name-only basis.

Want to know how I’d launch a frustration line if I were doing one in my church? I’d start it by publicizing it initially to my church’s list of inactive and former members. I mean where could you find a finer list of folks who might find some healing if they were listened to? Also, many churches, if not most, would probably have a list two to three times its typical attendance.

Perhaps you have a completely different idea for more effective evangelism. Even if it’s a stretch and involves Facebook, Twitter, texting, concerts or something else nontraditional, tell me about it! I might even share it with Don Gray. Of course, Don would probably smile and tell you to try it, then let him know how well it worked. Share your comments below—and allow a day or so for them to show up.

Mike Jones is the author of two new books, HELP, LORD, I BLEW IT AGAIN & SOMETIMES I DON’T FEEL LIKE PRAYING. Both books deal with the challenges of Christian living. Mike was out of the church for 16 years and had been back for 12 years. He is a former pastor and presents seminars on reconnecting with former members. His books are available at the ABC or at www.reconnectnow.com.

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[1] The Exchanged Life program teaches those who learn it how to be successful with their life’s issues by daily exchanging their human nature for one that is divine. (See Ephesians 4:22-24 & Galatians 2:20).

Posted in Mike Jones | 2 Comments »

Mike Jones … My Daily Checklist
Recently I came across two pieces of information about Seventh-day Adventists that left me surprised and chagrined.

The first was a story in USA Today in March stating that our church is the fastest-growing Christian denomination in North America. (Some of us have wondered if the church was shrinking here, so that was unexpected). The second was a statement attributed to Pastor Lee Venden that, on average, 70% of Adventists in churches where he’s conducted revival meetings in recent years admit to having little or no daily devotional life.

Wow! These aren’t the inactives he’s talking about. These are the folks who turn up in church most every Sabbath. You and me. The regulars.

How does one synthesize these two disparate pieces of information? I mean, how much more growth might our church have achieved if, say, 50% of us had a daily devotional life powerful enough to impact our Christian witness? Or 75%?

But maybe numerical growth isn’t all that important! Spiritual growth—becoming more like Jesus—is what matters most, wouldn’t you agree?

So how are you doing in that department?

In that context, let me share with you an amazing little tool that has been helping me bigtime in my devotional life. It’s called a checklist. I have one and use it relentlessly every day. Let me tell you what got me started.

In his book, The Checklist Manifesto: How To Get Things Right, Atul Gawande, a surgeon, writes how a simple checklist is enabling mankind to be more successful in a variety of fields. He describes a typical checklist as five to seven points on a 3” by 5” card that cover the essentials of how to do something. Like performing a successful surgery. Building a skyscraper. Or flying an airplane. Here’s a case in point.

On Oct. 30, 1935, the U.S. Army Air Corps held a flight competition for airplane manufacturers seeking the contract to build the military’s next generation of long-range bombers.

It wasn’t supposed to be much of a competition. Boeing’s bomber had trounced the designs of Martin & Douglas with a plane that could carry five times as many bombs and fly faster and twice as far as previous bombers.

But when the Boeing plane roared down the runway and took off, it climbed sharply to 300 feet, stalled, turned on one wing, and crashed in a fiery explosion killing two of the five crew members, including the test pilot.

What had gone wrong? Pilot error! This plane was substantially more complex than previous aircraft. Amid all the procedures, the pilot had forgotten to release a new locking mechanism on the elevator and rudder controls before taking off. “Too much airplane for one man to fly,” said the experts. Douglas’ smaller design was declared the winner. Boeing nearly went bankrupt.

Afterward, however, a group of test pilots got together and reflected on the problem. They did not come up with the idea of better pilot training. Instead they came up with an ingeniously simple solution: they created a pilot checklist. Perhaps one of the first checklists ever. They made it simple, brief, and short enough to fit on an index card.

The checklist contained the kind of basic steps all pilots know. Dumb stuff, Dr. Gawande writes. But with the checklist in hand, pilots went on to fly this airplane 1.8 million miles without one accident. The army ultimately ordered almost 13,000 of the aircraft which you and I know as the famous B-17, the plane that gave the military a decisive air advantage during the Second World War and helped defeat the Nazis.

This anecdote appears in Gawande’s book where he eloquently makes the case for the lowly checklist to become a tool to help all of
us be more successful in a world where increasing complexity and TMI (Too Much Information) causes increasing mistakes and failure.

I was intrigued at the possibility that a checklist could help me be more successful in my Christian journey. I present mine here as just one example. Whatever its limitations, it helps me stay on course and not meander, especially in my early morning prayer time before I'm fully coherent. My checklist has helped me so much in so many ways that I'd like to encourage you to create one of your own.

A checklist, experts say, should contain no more than 5 to 7 points and should fit on a 3” by 5” index card. It need not encompass your entire prayer life, but should cover the essentials. For whatever it’s worth, here’s what mine looks like.

My Daily Checklist
1. Invite God into my life first, seek the Holy Spirit’s infilling, surrender my will to His will. (Matthew 6:33).
2. Go to the cross, look at Jesus, and die there (to self). (Eph. 4:22f)
3. Ask God for a new heart & to install in me the mind of Christ. (Ezek. 36:26; I Cor. 2:16)
4. Ask God for a fresh provision of power, wisdom, & grace.
5. Ask God to change me into a different person (I Samuel 10:6).
7. “Eat” Jesus flesh & “drink” His blood (His promises) & “set my heart & mind on things above” (John 6:53-56, 63; Col. 3:1-2).

Here are some of the ways my checklist is helping me.

1. My checklist reminds me to seek first the kingdom of God before I check the weather report, read the paper, or powder my nose. (My days always end better when I seek God’s kingdom first).
2. Going to the cross helps me remember I’ve got to die if I want to live. For one thing, like the snakebit Israelites of old (see Numbers 21), when I personalize looking at Jesus hanging on the cross (“Jesus, You Yourself bore my sins in your body on the tree…”—I Peter 2:24), I more quickly choose to die to my old self (and my old compulsions and obsessions get hammered). Then I receive the amazing new life that Jesus promised—Zoe life. Life as it is in the Godhead; I receive a new DNA.—John 10:10.
3. Getting a new heart daily enables me to love as Jesus loved and to obtain the mind of Christ. Obtaining the mind of Christ gives me the Heavenly software to think correctly and reprogram the hardware that is my messed-up brain.—I Cor. 2:16.
4. Knowing I have received “power...over ALL the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19) and wisdom (James 1:5) gives me far more oomph to face my day than if I hadn’t obtained these gifts.
5. For me, being “changed into a different person” (I Samuel 10:6; Romans 12:2) every day is a wonderful new way to live the Christian life. I don’t become a nicer person, I become a different person who also happens to be nicer.
6. Nothing beats heading into the war zone of our planet each new day knowing that I’m fully protected by the “shield of faith”. And with the “sword of the Spirit” in my mouth (God’s promises), I can even win my battles. Of course, it’s wonderful knowing “the Lord will fight for (me)” Exodus 14:14 if I ask Him to. And believe me, I do.
7. With Jeremiah (“When Your words came, I ate them”) Jeremiah 15:16, I feast on Jesus’ promises every day and ingest His love, wisdom, grace, and power into my life. I often finish “eating” by “drinking.” “For God’s love has been poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit.”—Romans 5:5.

So how does my checklist impact my daily life? Here’s a small example of how my checklist affected my relationship with my wife, Diane, recently.

It was a Sabbath morning when Diane criticized me about something. Like most criticisms between spouses, it was no big deal. Rather, it was more like, “We can’t go to church until you trim your nose hairs,” though that wasn’t the actual incident. However, thanks to my having processed my checklist earlier, I was able to receive her criticism instead of rejecting it. And I told her (seriously, not sarcastically), “This will be a good anecdote for one of our upcoming talks.”

Diane was horrified. She apologized and made me promise not to tell the story. So I won’t. But I will tell you the rewarding result for
our relationship. Instead of responding defensively (which would have been normal for me), I was able to be positive. Not because I'm such a nice guy. But my checklist—which calls for me to be emptied of self and to be changed into a different person every day—had done its work. So I was able to receive what was in fact a valid criticism even if it was hurtful.

Now if you were to tell me, “It sounds like Diane’s criticism was just a little thing, Mike,” I would remind you that it’s often the little things that ruin relationships—or enhance them. Thanks to my checklist, however, Diane and I did not have the conversation that might well have left our day (“Since when did you take on the role of Deity in my life?”) like the aftermath of a tsunami.

If checklists are important enough to be used for surgeries, flying airplanes, and building skyscrapers, might they be important enough for you and me to use every day in our devotional life? For me, the answer is a resounding Yes.

If you’re among the 70% who have no devotional life, you might think about creating your own checklist. With my checklist in hand, I find myself in a closer walk with Jesus, becoming more of a healing agent in the lives of others, and tackling life’s challenges more successfully.

Would creating your own checklist help you on your journey? I hope you’ll think about it. P.S. If you’d like to see the expanded material my checklist is based on, contact me at mjones@paclink.com. Just say, “Mike, send it!”

Mike Jones is the author of two new books, HELP, LORD, I BLEW IT AGAIN & SOMETHING I DON’T FEEL LIKE PRAY-ING. Both books deal with the challenges of Christian living. Out of the church for 16 years and back for 10, Mike presents weekend seminars on revival and reformation plus reconnecting with missing members. His column appears monthly in the Gleaner. His books can be purchased at the ABC or at www.reconnectnow.com.

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DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS?

This building was the precursor to an existing Adventist academy in the North Pacific Union Conference. During the 1920s it housed 10 grades of students who were trained to partner with area pastors and churches for evangelistic visitation throughout a major Northwest city. Here’s a clue: The current academy is very near to an Adventist medical center. What was the original school called? What is its current name? If you think you have the answer, add your comments below or email us at talk@gleaneronline.org.
Do you know where this photo was taken? Do you know approximately when this was taken or several of the people pictured? Leave your comments below.

Posted in Monthly Archival Photo | 3 Comments »

**August Archival Photo**

Saturday, July 23rd, 2011

*We need your help.* Do you recognize any of these faces? Do you have an idea of where and when the photo was taken? Help us identify this photo in our archives. Add your comments below.

Posted in Monthly Archival Photo | 6 Comments »

**July Archival Photo**

Thursday, June 23rd, 2011
These fine folks do not deserve to disappear into the *GLEANER* archives, unnamed and unsung. If you know when or where this photo might have been taken or the names of any of these individuals, we'd like to know. Add any information you can share in the comments below.

**June Archival Photo**

Wednesday, May 18th, 2011

This group of adults and children appears to represent a school group of various grades. The exact date and location are unknown. Can you tell us where or when this was taken, or who any of these people might be?
There’s a story and mystery behind this photo feature on page 5 of the May GLEANER. It was discovered in the attic of an old house in southwestern Oregon more than a decade ago. Also in the attic was the actual prophetic chart shown in the photo. The chart, still in good condition, was printed by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, copyright 1908. The members who now have this chart would like to give it to family members of the gentleman in the photo, but they need to know who he was.

Do you know the identity of this “mystery man”; when or where the photo was taken? Was he an evangelist or pastor? Help us solve the mystery. Add your comments below.

Posted in Monthly Archival Photo | No Comments »
This photo deserves to avoid anonymity. We invite all armchair historians from around the Northwest and beyond to help provide the answers. Join the dialog. Submit your thoughts and comments BELOW.

All comments are made public upon approval—a process necessary to sort out SPAM. Thanks for understanding the short delay to seeing your stellar commentary appear online. –GLEANER Editors

Posted in Monthly Archival Photo | No Comments »

**March Archival Photo**

Monday, February 28th, 2011

Do you know (or think you know) the who, what, when or where about this photo highlighted in the March 2011 *GLEANER*?
These august individuals deserve to avoid anonymity. We invite all armchair historians from around the Northwest and beyond to help provide the answers. Join the dialog. Submit your thoughts and comments BELOW.

All comments are made public upon approval—a process necessary to sort out SPAM. Thanks for understanding the short delay to seeing your stellar commentary appear online. –GLEANER Editors

Posted in Monthly Archival Photo | 13 Comments »

February Archival Photo

Monday, January 31st, 2011
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