Dear Lexie,

"Scarcity"

As some of you may know, I recently celebrated my birthday as I turned the ripe old age of fifty-five. Now, I know that this may not seem old to some of you that have reached greater milestones in your life, but for some reason this birthday above all the others has caused me to do a great deal of reflection...

Stewart Bainum
Sligo member, businessman and avid supporter of Adventist Education passes away
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Saturday evening, March 1

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As some of you may know, I recently celebrated my birthday as I turned the ripe old age of fifty-five. Now, I know that this may not seem old to some of you that have reached greater milestones in your life, but for some reason this birthday above all the others has caused me to do a great deal of reflection.

I guess you can say that it all began following a sermon I shared a few weeks ago, after which one of our members suggested that I read a book titled Scarcity. Now, allow me to pause for a moment to say that one of the best things about serving at Sligo is that someone is always telling me about some interesting book that they are reading or have recently read. And because our congregation is diverse in so many ways, you can imagine that this would be reflected in what is being read as well.

The book Scarcity, as its subtitle suggests, examines the condition of Why Having Too Little Means So Much. The authors Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Sharif have written this book based on their cutting edge research from behavior science and economics, and they reveal that “scarcity”, having less than you feel you need, can have a tremendous impact on one’s behavior, sometimes for the better and other times not.

One of the basic premises of the book is that whenever we experience “scarcity” in a particular area in our lives, it then becomes hard for us to focus on anything else. For instance, if you have an impending deadline that is about to run out to accomplish an important task, it then becomes difficult for you to spend your time thinking about anything else. Or if you are experiencing extreme hunger and have no viable options of getting food anytime soon, then it becomes extremely difficult for you to focus on anything other than what you lack, which may cause you to miss out on other important things at the time, such as “hearing the gospel.”

This brings me back to my recently turning fifty-five. Because I have conceivably already lived more years on this earth than I have left, the scarcity of what remains has caused me to rethink the rest of my life, however long or short that might be. Because when you think about it, as we say so often in the church, these are my “last days.” And since I have fewer days remaining, shouldn’t I be more determined in my heart to live them not pining for more, but instead being content to living them with less: that is, less of me and more of Christ. And when you look at it that way, it’s no longer living a life of scarcity but it’s living life with true abundance (John 15:5).
Bainum, Businessman and Avid Supporter of Adventist Education Dies

February 12, 2014 · by Taashi Rowe · in Education, Potomac Conference

Story by Nadia McGill/Visitor Staff

Stewart Bainum, founder of Choice Hotels International, the second-largest hotel chain in the world, died today at 94 following complications with pneumonia. But Bainum wasn’t known only for his business acumen. A member of Potomac Conference’s Sligo church in Takoma Park, Md., Bainum was also known for his commitment to Seventh-day Adventist education.

“Today, the Columbia Union Office of Education mourns the loss of a true friend, generous benefactor and model Christian servant,” said Hamlet Canosa, EdD, the union’s vice president for education. “Mr. Bainum’s tireless efforts to ‘make a real difference’ in the academic pursuits of the young will be heralded for years to come and will continue to be deeply appreciated by all who were directly or indirectly touched by his kindness and support.”

For more than 40 years, the Bainum family has operated the Commonweal Foundation and donating millions of dollars every year to support programs and projects that help disadvantaged youth across the country succeed academically.

“One of our core beliefs at Commonweal Foundation is that, if you want to go far, you have to have an education. We believe that each individual has value and potential and deserves a quality learning environment. Our goal is to provide them with that.” Bainum shared in a 2011 Visitor article titled “Giving Back.” Portions of that article is below:

A Pocket Full of Dreams

Bainum was forced to drop out as a student at Mount Vernon Academy (MVA) in Mount Vernon, Ohio, in the 1930s because he could not pay his tuition. With no real prospects and only $3 in his pocket, he hitchhiked to Washington, D.C., looking for work. Once there, he got a job as a plumber’s assistant, making 30 cents an hour.

After a year and a half in the city, he managed to save enough money to return and finish his studies at MVA. He continued his education at what is now Washington Adventist University (WAU) in Takoma Park, Md., ultimately settling in the capital area.

Due to self-discipline, perseverance, strong work ethic, vision and business acumen, Stewart grew more and more successful. He developed several businesses, including a plumbing and mechanical contracting company, and got into the apartment and office development industry. In 1951 he founded the Realty Investment Company, Inc.

After building his first motel in 1957, Bainum joined an association of independent hotel owners that he would eventually be asked to run. That association became Choice Hotels International, which is now the second largest hotel franchise company in the world. He is also the founder of ManorCare, which in 1998 became part of HCR ManorCare, the nation’s top nursing home corporation.

Turning Dreams Into Reality

Despite his achievements, Bainum never forgot his humble beginnings. In 1968 he created the College Fund, as it was originally named, as...
a means to give back to his community. He provided financially needy students with loans to help them pay for their college education.

However, since then, he has grown the organization’s mission and objectives, changing not only its name in 1985 to the Commonweal Foundation, but also shifting its focus to support disadvantaged youth currently enrolled in secondary education.

The catalyst for this change came in 1988 when Commonweal was a key supporter of the “I Have a Dream” Program. Stewart agreed to pay the college tuition of 67 seventh-graders at Kramer Junior High School in southeast Washington, D.C., if they finished high school. The results were spectacular! Nearly 75 percent of the 67 “Dreamers,” as they were called, graduated high school, compared to only 27 percent of their peers. In addition, of the 10 that Stewart sent to his alma mater, Mount Vernon Academy, nine graduated.

From this experience, he developed Commonweal’s Pathways to Success Program (PSP), through which he continues to provide low-income middle and high school students with scholarships to attend private, faith-based boarding and day schools selected by Commonweal.

“Both of my parents grew up in poverty,” explains Barbara, Bainum’s daughter and his successor at Commonweal, and also a Sligo church member. “Having the opportunity to go to boarding school, they really felt that it changed their lives … this had an immense impact on how the focus of the foundation has evolved.”

Helping Schools Help Students

Through Commonweal, the Bainums also provide schools with the resources they need to help students reach their potential, in the form of grants and multi-year service contracts. Some of this assistance has gone to meet school needs, including staffing shortfalls, staff training and development, and facility renovation.

Since Commonweal’s inception, the Bainum family has given thousands of scholarships to needy students, and they partner with, on average, approximately 39 schools each year, more than half of which are Seventh-day Adventist.

In addition to the PSP, Commonweal’s other programs help supplement and improve students’ chances of academic success. Through the Learning Support Program and Partners in Learning Program, students between kindergarten and 12th grade can get free tutoring to help improve their literacy rates and math skills.

Through the Grants Program, Commonweal staff manages the financial assistance they provide their partners. One such grant allows them to target community-based organizations focused on youth development; another empowers staff at PSP partner schools to get the training and technical assistance they need to increase student achievement.

The Commonweal Foundation continues to grow, and the family behind it remains dedicated to helping its students and partners succeed. As a matter of fact, says Barbara, the growth and development of their students and partnering organizations is essential to the foundation’s success. “As we move forward, our intent will be to be much more involved with our schools,” she explains. “I am gratified to lead the Commonweal Foundation, knowing that the work that we do embodies what my father wants to give back to his church and community.”

Portions of this article were reprinted from “Giving Back,” a November 2011 Visitor magazine article. Click here to read the article in its original format.
Tennis night!

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Tennis Anyone? Whether you are pro, a beginner or would just “LOVE” to learn the game of tennis, you are invited to join your Sligo family for a night of indoor tennis on Saturday evening, March 1, from 7:00 – 12:00 p.m. at the Fairland Sports and Aquatic Complex in Laurel, MD. There will be lots of good food and tons of fun for all ages. There is no cost for admission, although food will be sold by the Sligo Pathfinders to help raise money for their upcoming trip to Oskosh in August. So bring a racket and your enthusiasm for a night you will never forget.

Don’t forget to Bring a Friend!

Directions: Fairland Sports and Aquatics Complex
“Love and Other Things”

PREPARE/ENRICH Relationship Workshop

March 1 – April 19, 2014 1-2:30pm Sabbath Afternoons Location to be determined by size of group

Additional Information: PREPARE/ENRICH inventory is a customized couple assessment completed online that identifies a couple’s strength and growth areas. It is used for marriage enrichment, marriage counseling, and dating couples considering engagement. It is also one of the most widely used programs for premarital counseling and premarital education. As part of the 8 week workshop each couple will receive a Couple’s Report based on the PREPARE/ENRICH assessment. The assessment will take 30 – 45mins to fill out. After you register you will receive information from Pastor Fielder with directions on how to complete the online assessment. The price per couple, paid directly to PREPARE/ENRICH, is a onetime fee of $35.

If you have any questions, please email Pastor Fielder at pfielder@sligochurch.org.