

## What Inspires You? | BY BONNIE DWYER

**Inspiration comes to more than just prophets and Biblical writers. Its very personal and cultural context plays a huge role.**

Religious words get worn out. Used over and over, they can fix meaning in one way, blotting out other meanings. Take inspiration. Said today in an Adventist context, you can be pretty sure the conversation is headed to a discussion of the authority of a text, be it the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. It will evoke legal or philosophical concepts, not personal motivation.

But inspiration comes to more than just prophets and Biblical writers. Its very personal and cultural context plays a huge role. What inspired scholars and artists in another era may speak differently to us today. What inspires you may not even matter to me. For some people, sports played at the highest level can be an inspiration, so they were glued to the television watching skaters, skiers, and curlers twirl, flip, and dazzle with their athleticism during the recent Winter Olympic Games. The beauty of nature speaks to the hiker arising early before the heat of the day, catching the glory of a desert sunrise. A well-crafted story can provide an aha moment, reframe an idea for the avid reader. Ethereal music can bring tears to someone who treasures sound. The tiniest molecule viewed in all its glory through a microscope can transport a researcher.

What experience outside of you, changes you on the inside?

Bad things that happen can actually be inspirational in their own way. After the Florida high school shooting, did you cheer the activism of the high school students, fire off a letter to your congressional representative

about gun control, for instance?

In this issue, inspiration is the back story to each article and art piece, beginning with the front cover, where artist John McDowell takes a metaphor to a very literal conclusion. To explain a general concept, use specific details. On the back cover, poet George Herbert finds inspiration in the King James Bible for his personal artistic expression. We hope reading this material motivates you to give new expression to your spiritual journey and leads to a revival of your ideas about inspiration. Take action, be it prayer, painting, feeding the hungry, or sharing hospitality, because inspiration has at its root the verb inspire, an action verb that requires doing.

Then, thinking about how our own personal inspiration occurs can also lead to new understanding of prophetic inspiration. Visualizing teenage Ellen White, overwhelmed by seeing heaven, grasping at how to describe her vision, and feeling that God tells her how to express what she has experienced, changes my view of her. Just putting the word teenager in front of her name affects me, given that the images of her we usually see are of an elderly woman. Can you imagine James and Ellen as teenage newlyweds?

With all this in mind, what then is the connection between the divine and personal inspiration?

Where do you meet God? Does knowing what inspires you give you a clue? For me, knowing that a spiritual life depends on inspiration, that a creative life is a spiritual life, gives everyday existence new meaning and possibilities. ■

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