

july-september 2007
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help!

helping hurting youth

in this issue:

ABORTION

SUICIDE

OBESITY

GANGS

ABUSE



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viewIT: movie/dvd review

Prepare to peel out with this revved-up animated adventure featuring classic automobiles, plenty of fender benders, guffaws galore and a Route 66 road trip with a crew that doesn't make pit stops. The star-studded voice cast includes Paul Newman, Owen Wilson, Bonnie Hunt and Cheech Marin. Nominated for the Best Animated Feature Oscar, *Cars* won Best Animated Film in the first category of its kind at the 2007 Golden Globes.



Starring: Owen Wilson, Paul Newman ...

Director: John Lasseter

Genre: Children & Family

Format: Widescreen ...

Language: English ...

G General audiences. All ages admitted.

One Night with the King

chronicles the brave and historic legend of Hadassah (Tiffany Dupont), a Jewish orphan with exceptional beauty who rises to become Queen Esther of Persia and saves Persian Jews from genocide. By revealing her heritage to the king, Esther thwarts the plan by evil Prime Minister Haman to annihilate all Jews in the Persian Empire. The annual festival of Purim is inspired by Queen Esther's heroism.



Starring: Tiffany Dupont, Luke Goss ...

Director: Michael O. Sajbel

Genre: Drama

Format: Widescreen ...

Language: English

Subtitles: English ...

For violent content, some thematic material and language

PG-13

In *Freedom Writers* (2007), Hilary Swank stars as a young teacher who inspires her at-risk students in this moving drama based on true events. Erin Gruwell (Swank) assigns her class an ambitious project: While studying works such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the kids keep journals about their troubled lives, applying history's lessons to break the cycle of violence and despair that threatens their futures. Scott Glenn, Imelda Staunton and Patrick Dempsey co-star.



Starring: Hilary Swank, Imelda Staunton ...

Director: Richard LaGravenese

Genre: Drama

Format: Widescreen ...

Language: English ...

PG-13 For violent content, some thematic material and language

Will Smith (in an Oscar-nominated role) and his real-life son, Jaden, star in this tear-jerker about a struggling single parent determined to build a better life for himself and his child. In *The Pursuit of Happyness* Chris Gardner is smart and talented, but his dead-end salesman job barely pays the bills. When he and his 5-year-old son are evicted from their apartment, they face trying times as Chris takes on an unpaid internship at a stock brokerage firm with hopes of getting rich someday.



Starring: Will Smith, Thandie Newton ...

Director: Gabriele Muccino

Genre: Drama

Format: Widescreen ...

Language: English ...

Subtitle: English ...

Awards: Academy Award® Nominee ...

PG-13 For some language



listen to them

Jonatán Tejel

It's a Friday, I am picking up Edera, my 5-year-old daughter, from school; she comes out with a big smile on her face and eyes sparkling as she says "Dad, there is a boy in the school, so nice, so gentle. I want to marry him." Well, I tried not to laugh too much; I tried to joke about it, asking his name, his address, his parents names; you know, the type of questions you would ask a teenager, not a 5-year-old girl. I was shocked, (maybe I should get a shotgun...just a thought) but I wondered if she will be coming to me when she turns 15 to tell me that she is in love. Sure, I would like to be the first one to know what she wants, what she needs, what she is crying for, what she is laughing at, who she is with. I would love to be the first to know her thoughts.... But you know, although I would like to be, I am not sure I will be the most important person in her life at that time.

Astrid, my 7-year-old daughter, broke my heart in a thousand pieces. In my job I travel a lot, and as I was at the airport getting ready to leave on one of my trips, Astrid piped in, "Daddy, I have an excellent idea." "Okay, tell me, what is it?" "You know Daddy, I think I have to come with you on this trip..." I stopped her. "No darling, you know this is not possible, we don't have the money, and now, we don't even have your clothes." But

I was thinking differently than she. "No, Daddy, I can go with you now, on this trip, then the next trip Edera [her sister] will go with you, and the next one Mama can go with you, so we will not feel alone and neither will you."

I couldn't talk. No sound came out of my mouth. I wanted to cry. I hugged her as we parted. I must admit, I did not have a nice trip because I kept thinking on her words, "We will not feel alone and neither will you". It made me lonely.

This quarter our focus is on helping hurting youth. One way we can help them is to listen to them... Listen to your children when they are young; when you mean everything to them. Learn from each of their words. Show them your love. We know Jesus is the most important person to all of us, including our children; but they must see you as the most important person in this world to them. Only as they trust you now will you be able to help them tomorrow. Only if you show them that you care for them today, will they approach you tomorrow.

May God give you the wisdom to recognize when to talk. Help hurting youth! Wisdom to know when to listen. Help hurting youth! And the wisdom to know what decisions to make. Help hurting youth!

God bless you. 



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COVER: Roberto González

contributors



Gerald Winslow is Professor of Christian Ethics at Loma Linda University. He is also Vice President for Spiritual Life of Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center.

He received his undergraduate education at Walla Walla College and his masters degree at Andrews University. He earned his doctorate from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. For the past thirty years, he has specialized in teaching and writing about ethics, especially biomedical ethics. His books include *Triage and Justice* published by the University of California Press and *Facing Limits* from Westview Press.

His articles have appeared in academic journals such as the *Western Journal of Medicine*, the *Journal of Pediatrics*, the *Hastings Center Report*, the *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, and *General Dentistry*. He has presented lectures and seminars at universities and for professional groups throughout North America and in Australia and Europe. He currently serves as an ethics consultant to a variety of organizations. He

is a founding member of the California Technology Assessment Forum, a public forum for the evaluation of new health care technologies.

Professor Winslow is married to Doctor Betty Wehtje Winslow, who teaches community health nursing at Loma Linda University. The Winslows have two daughters, Lisa who is a computer software engineer and Angela who is an occupational therapist. (page 8)



Carlos Acosta is a youth pastor and the youth director for the Hispanic region of the Southern California Conference.

At the time this article was written Carlos was serving as an Intern Assistant to the Youth Director of the North American Division. (page 28)



We continue our celebration of 100 years of service to the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with Robert Holbrook's "The Story Behind Our Logo". In this article Bob takes a look at the changes the logos have gone through.

Robert Holbrook is the Youth Director of the Oklahoma Conference. (pages 7, 34)



Corrado Cozzi is the Youth Director of the Euro-Africa Division of SDA. In this issue Corrado introduces us to the current Value Genesis survey that is taking place across Europe and the Euro-Africa regions. (page 16)

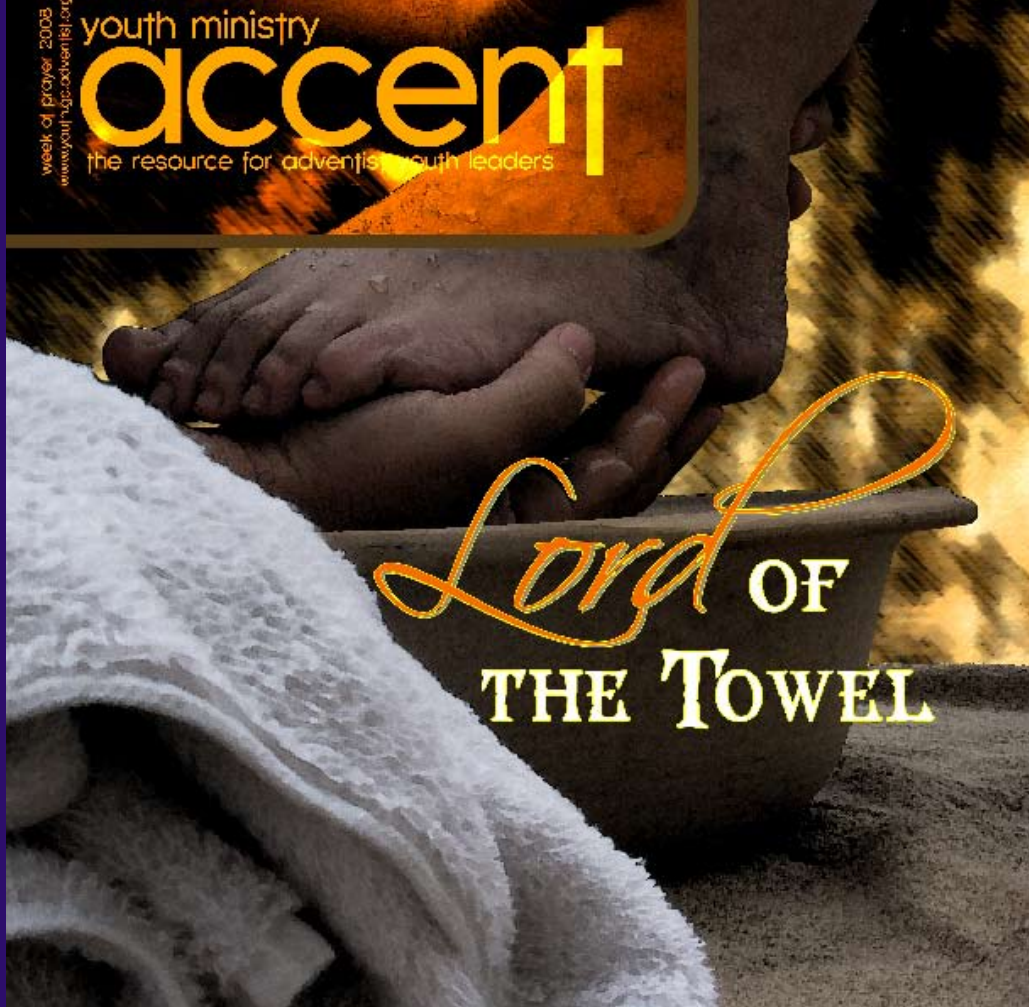


Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Th.D., Andrews University) is director of the Biblical Research Institute of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

His article, "Suicide and the Bible" takes a closer look at cases of suicide in the Bible. It appears on page 11.



A. Allan Martin, PhD, CFLE is the Associate Professor of Discipleship and Family Ministry, at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Allan and his wife, Deirdre, are cofounders of *dream VISION ministries* (info@dreamVISIONministries.org), dedicated to empowering new generations in Christian lifestyle and leadership. (page 27)



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THE STORY BEHIND OUR LOGO

By Robert Holbrook

Yes, our AY Logo has its own history. It is a history nestled into the beginnings of youth ministry in our church and its various titles.

Early efforts at some kind of organization for and on behalf of our youth carried with them titles. Some titles were simple, some were a bit long. In Wisconsin Luther Warren began what he simply called Sunshine Bands in 1894. In Nebraska the year before an organization began with the title of Young People's Society of Christian Service—a bit of a mouthful at the least! Entities need something that distinguishes them easily and so along with titles, various emblems were developed which would serve as a pictorial representation of the title and of the objectives of the entity. Most of these early organizations had something, but they are lost to us today—until someone comes across one by accident in hidden dusty corners of an attic or long forgotten files.

By 1901 the church officialized youth ministry by introducing the Young People's Department as a part of the Sabbath School Department and the activities were referred to as the Young People's Work. By 1907 this work had grown so much that the General Conference voted to finally establish the Young People's Department on its own feet with its own leadership—enter M. E. Kern, one of the early proponents of youth ministry in Nebraska. The new department chose to name its societies as Young People's Missionary Volunteer Societies and abbreviated it by Y. P. M. V. S.—still rather cumbersome to our streamlined views today. However, it was also the catalyst for the new logo which would be only superficially modified through even today.

continue on page 14

OUR CHURCH *and* ABORTION

By Gerald R. Winslow, Ph.D.

The appetizers had nearly disappeared, and dinner was about to arrive. We were looking forward to a pleasant evening, sharing a meal with close friends at a fine restaurant. Then my friend's beeper went off. It was an emergency. One of his obstetrical patients was in the hospital hemorrhaging. Just as the waiter brought dinner, my physician friend rushed from the restaurant and headed to the hospital.

At his home later that evening, while eating his reheated meal, he recounted the story. One of his patients, a young Hispanic wife, had been hoping to become pregnant. Conception had occurred. But instead of attaching to her uterine wall, the embryo had attached to the fallopian tube. The result was an ectopic pregnancy that could not continue. The physician was saddened by the fact that he had needed to end a pregnancy that both he and his patient had hoped would result in a healthy baby. It was this young prospective mother's first pregnancy, and the resulting damage to her fallopian tube might reduce her chances of having children in the future. Moreover, she was Roman Catholic, and morally opposed to abortion. But even her priest advised her to let the doctor "practice good medicine." There was simply no hope for developing a viable fetus, and the pregnancy was a serious threat to her life.

This difficult case illustrates only a fraction of the complexity when the termination of any pregnancy is given careful consideration. What reasons, if any, are morally sufficient to justify an abortion? Who can best weigh these reasons? Who should be authorized to decide? In the culture I know best, no social issue has been more contentious. And the moral discourse, as conveyed by the popular media, seldom rises above the level of bumper stickers. People are supposed to be "pro-life" or "pro-choice." Their arguments are so well-known, and apparently so intransigent, it would be easy to wonder if any new understanding is possible.





Against this background, first-time readers of the Seventh-day Adventist “Guidelines on Abortion” are often surprised.¹ (And, in truth, many Adventists are unaware that these “Guidelines” exist.) I have noticed, for example, that my medical students usually express appreciative surprise that our church has developed biblically-based norms that rise above the bumper stickers. I believe that the principles of the official Adventist statement have helped our church avoid the seemingly interminable debates that have often

divided societies, and sometimes even strained relationships within communities claiming Christian faith. The Adventist guidelines also provide meaningful direction to those who, like my physician friend, need to make difficult decisions.

The Adventist statement is accompanied by a dozen biblical principles that serve as the ethical basis for the guidelines.² In my view, it is best to read these principles first. They affirm that God is the source of the unique gift of human life (Gen. 1:27; 2:7; Acts 17:25-28), and this

gift should be respected and protected (Ex. 2:13; 23:7). They also affirm the important responsibility of persons of faith to explore the Scriptures and learn to make principled decisions for themselves (Acts 17:11). They call the church to practical expressions of faith and love that help to restore those who have experienced brokenness (Gal. 6:1, 2; Phil. 2:1-11).

Based on such biblical truths, the Adventist guidelines incorporate seven important principles. While readers should be encouraged to consider the full statement of the

The following is a list of useful abortion statistics. All abortion numbers are derived from pro-abortion sources, courtesy of The Alan Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood’s *Family Planning Perspectives*.

WORLDWIDE

Number of abortions per year: Approximately 46 million

Number of abortions per day: Approximately 126,000

Where abortions occur: 78% of all abortions are obtained in developing countries and 22% occur in developed countries.

Legality of abortion: About 26 million women obtain legal abortions each year, while an additional 20 million abortions are obtained in countries where it is restricted or prohibited by law.

Abortion averages: Worldwide, the lifetime average is about one abortion per woman.

guidelines, let me summarize what I consider to be the essence of each one:

- Prenatal human life should be respected and protected as God's unique gift. This means that abortion is never a morally trivial matter, and it can only be justified for the weightiest reasons.
- The church should offer gracious support, rather than condemnation, to those who are personally confronted with a crisis pregnancy.
- The church should express its strong commitment to human life by engaging in practical actions that reduce or eliminate many of the forces that lead to abortion.
- In those tragic cases when abortion is deemed necessary, because of reasons such as threats to the pregnant woman's life or health, the final decision rightly belongs to the one who is pregnant.
- In making decisions about her pregnancy, the woman is accountable to God, and she should not be met with attempts at coercion.
- The church's health care institutions should be provided with the guidance as they develop their policies in harmony with the principles stated by the Church, and these institutional policies should make provision for individual conscience.
- Members of the church are encouraged to study the principles of Scripture and develop their own sense of moral responsibility regarding abortion.

Will these Adventist guidelines ensure that all members of our church arrive at identical conclusions about difficult cases? No. As one who has spent decades providing ethical consultations on complex clinical cases, I know for certain that honest-hearted people will sometimes disagree. But the guidelines do provide significant assistance for those who are motivated by the Spirit to do the right thing. For example, in light of the Adventist guidelines, my

physician friend acted in a biblically principled way when he saved a young wife's life, and did his best to preserve her ability to become pregnant in the future. He respected her decisions, and he took the ethically responsible course under the tragic circumstances.

It should also be evident that most of the abortions performed in our society would not comport with the Adventist guidelines, which specifically rule out abortions for purposes of convenience or birth control. However, if someone insists on asking if the Adventist position is "pro-life" or "pro-choice," the only accurate answer would be that the values of life and of responsible freedom are both espoused. In carefully nuanced language, our church's guidelines seek to preserve our commitment to life and our commitment to the value of individual conscience. In their affirmation of personal responsibility, the guidelines reflect the words of Ellen White: "In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions."³ Every thoughtful member of our community of faith should be grateful for a church that offers balanced, biblically principled guidance while showing deep respect for personal conscience. **□**

(Endnotes)

1 The Seventh-day Adventist "Guidelines on Abortion" are available on the church's Web site at http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/guidelines/main_guide1.html

2 This statement is titled "Principles for a Christian View of Life" and is available with the SDA guidelines at the web site listed above. It was the intention of those who wrote both the "Guidelines" and the "Principles" that these statements should always appear together as a unified document.

3 *The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

Suicide and the Bible

By Angel Manuel Rodríguez

one of my best friends recently committed suicide, leaving us all shocked and very sad. what does the Bible say about suicide?

Suicide is usually defined as the taking of one's own life. The emotional scars left in family and friends are deep, and produce not only feelings of loneliness, but particularly a sense of guilt and disorientation. In providing an answer, I'll have to limit my comments to the following brief observations.

Let's first distinguish between suicide and martyrdom, which is the willingness to surrender our lives for fundamental convictions that we hold to be non-

of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him," killing himself (1 Kings 16:18, NIV). Judas was so emotionally disturbed after betraying Jesus that he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). Samson took his own life and that of many prominent enemies by causing the collapse of a building (Judges 16:29, 30). After the earthquake, the Philippian jailer concluded that the prisoners had escaped, and attempted to kill himself out of fear, but Paul persuaded him not to do so (Acts 16:26-28).

WITH INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE WARNING SIGNS OF YOUTHFUL SUICIDE, THE CHANCES INCREASE THAT A SUICIDE CAN BE PREVENTED

negotiable, and heroic acts of self-sacrifice that result in the preservation of other lives (for example, a soldier throwing himself or herself on a grenade to save others). While suicide is fundamentally a *denial* of the value of our present life and the final solution to a life perceived as unbearable, those other cases are expressions of *respect* and *love* for life.

I will list the cases of suicide or attempted suicide recorded in the Bible, draw some conclusions, and make some general comments.

1. *Cases of suicide in the Bible:* Abimelech, mortally wounded by a millstone thrown on him by a woman, asked his armor-bearer to kill him to escape shame (Judges 9:54). Saul, after being seriously wounded in battle, killed himself (1 Samuel 31:4). Seeing what the king did, the armor-bearer "fell on his own sword and died with him" (vs. 5, NIV). These deaths were motivated by fear of what the enemy would do to them. Ahithophel, one of King Absalom's counselors, hanged himself after realizing that the king had rejected his advice (2 Samuel 17:23). Zimri became king after a coup d'état, but finding that the people did not support him, he went into "the citadel

2. *Comments on the biblical incidents:* From the incidents listed above, we notice several things: First, most of the suicides took place in the context of war, in which killing oneself is the result of fear or shame.

Second, other cases are more personal and reflect, in addition to fear, a poor self-image, or low self-esteem. All of them take place when the individual is in a highly emotional state of mind.

Third, suicide is mentioned without passing any judgment on the morality of the action. That doesn't mean that it is morally right; it indicates that the biblical writer is simply describing what took place.


The moral impact of suicide is addressed through a biblical understanding of human life: God created it, and we are not the owners to use it and dispose of it as we please. The Sixth Commandment also has something to say about the topic. Therefore, a Christian should not consider suicide a morally valid solution to the predicament of living in a world where there is physical and emotional pain.

3. *Comments and suggestions:* How then should we relate to the suicide of a loved one?

First, psychology and psychiatry have revealed that suicide is very often the result of profound emotional upheaval or biochemical imbalances associated with a deep state of depression and fear. We shouldn't pass judgment on the person who has opted for suicide under those circumstances.

Second, God's perfect justice takes into consideration the intense turmoil occurring in our troubled minds. He understands us better than anyone else. We must place the eternal future of our loved ones into His loving hands.

Third, with God's assistance, we can face guilt in a constructive way, keeping in mind that often those who commit suicide needed professional help that most of us were unable to provide.

Finally, if you are ever tempted to commit suicide, there is professional help available, medications that can help you overcome depression, friends who love you and would do all they can to help you, and a God who is willing to work with you and through others to sustain you as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Never give up hope! 

Risk factors for teenage suicide

Teen suicide statistics offer a look at the most likely causes of teen suicide. Some of the strongest risk factors include the following:

- Aggressive behavior
- Disruptive behavior
- Substance abuse
- Depression

These are risk factors that play on the often tumultuous feelings experienced by teenagers. Intense feelings can contribute to a teen's sense of helplessness and to a general feeling that life is not worth living. Taking these feelings seriously is an important part of preventing teen suicide. Another risk factor to consider is the presence of firearms. Because firearms are used in more than half of teen suicides, it is important to realize that easy access to a firearm and ammunition can contribute to a teenage death by suicide. Teenagers who express suicidal thoughts and feelings should not have ready access to firearms.

Teen suicide warning signs

It is important to take the warning signs of teen suicide seriously and to seek help if you think that you know a teenager who might be suicidal. Here are some of the things to look for:

- Disinterest in favorite extracurricular activities
- Problems at work and losing interest in a job
- Substance abuse, including alcohol and drug use (illegal and legal drugs)
- Behavioral problems
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Sleep changes
- Changes in eating habits
- Neglect of hygiene and other matters of personal appearance
- Emotional distress brings on physical complaints (aches, fatigues, migraines)
- Difficulties concentrating and paying attention
- Declining grades in school
- Loss of interest in schoolwork
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Complaints of boredom are more frequent
- Not as responsive as before to praise


Not all of these teen suicide warning signs will be present in cases of possible teen suicide. There are many cases in which a good student commits suicide. It is important to watch for two or three signs as indications of depression, or even teen suicidal thoughts.

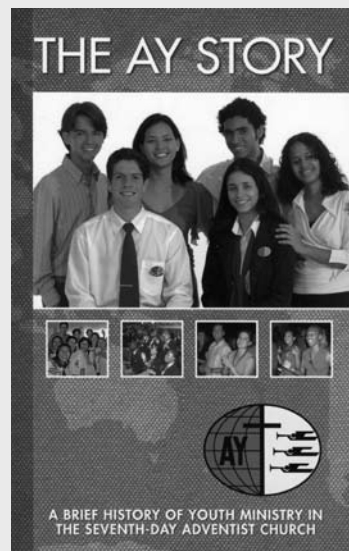
continued from page 7

The oldest logo I have been able to locate so far is found on the front cover of the little book *Steps to Christ*, in its special Army-Navy edition during World War I (circa 1917-1918). It shows a simple circle with the letters MV within. The book *Missionary Volunteers and Their Work* by Matilda Erickson, first published around 1920, shows the same circle concept with a map drawing of the Americas and Africa and just the Southwestern Iberian corner of Europe. It served nearly unchanged for the early cloisonné class pins, first Pathfinder uniform worlds, and other uses. The first tin pins used for the JMV classes that came out in 1922 were also a world map (showing more of Euro-Asia along with the Americas) and the letters J. M. V. boldly across the front. The letters MV or JMV seem to have been used interchangeably on the world map background for the progressive classes but otherwise M. V. always represented the senior youth organization and the JMV stood for the juniors—until the change from Missionary Volunteers to Adventist Youth (AY) in 1979. An interesting example of the interchangeable usage of MV and JMV can be seen in C. Lester Bond's little book published in 1938, *Ideals For Juniors*. The title page of the book has a blue and white circle-map with red MV letters, the next page of authorship information has a black and white circle-map with the letters JMV.

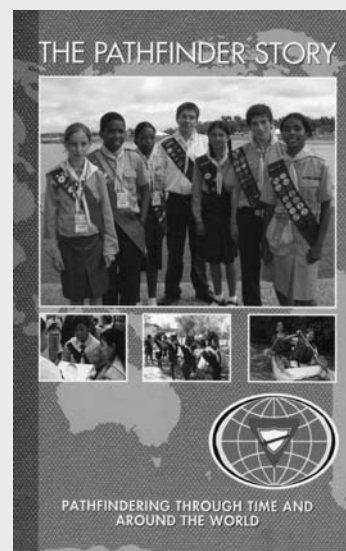
When senior youth leadership development was separated from

the Master Guide and given its own identity, a globe divided by a cross was selected as its emblem. Three flying angels were placed on one side and the letters AY were on the other side. However there was considerable confusion for some years as to the use of this new logo. It has been used to represent the AY Society, youth ministry as a total package, and numerous other uses. The requirements for the AYL (Adventist Youth Leader) were nearly forgotten in many parts of the world field and the Master Guide logo continued to symbolize the leadership level in youth ministry—both junior and senior. It has been only recently that the logo has again regained its own turf as the emblem of the leadership for senior youth—thanks to the introduction of the Ambassadors as a club for senior youth and subsequent development of the manuals for club administration and basic senior youth leadership development.

While the historical details and trivia regarding our logos might be interesting and can even generate some discussion about just exactly when and where each came about or how and why and when each should be used, we must not lose sight of the representation of them through the years: “The Advent Message to all the World in My Generation”; and the sum of all that is youth ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: “Salvation and Service.” Without that focus, logos have no validity at all. 



The AY Story and the Pathfinder Story books are both available online at youth.gc.adventist.org



keeping it real

maria dunchie

IN THIS ISSUE

While we cannot cover all the issues facing our youth in one quarter, we will try to address three very disturbing ones, Suicide, Abortion and Obesity.


Whether it's a son, daughter, parent or friend, nothing is worse than hearing that someone has committed suicide. And for the youth leader, nothing is harder than when that suicide touches their ministry—it leaves an unanswered finality that is completely devastating for those left behind to pick up the pieces.

While a study done by *Lubell, Swahn, Crosby, and Kegler* in 2004 shows that the overall rate of suicide among youth worldwide has declined slowly since 1992, it is still the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 to 24. As a church, and particularly as youth leaders, this should be a very serious cause for concern.

Studies also suggest that from late July to August a lot more youth commit suicide than other times of the year. This seems to be an especially troubling time for many teenagers, as they prepare to return to school, and for some, begin college or embark on career path.

On pages 11-13, Angel Manuel Rodriguez examines what the Bible says about suicide in his article, "Suicide and the Bible." And on pages 36, "Suicide" attempts to give insight into many of the problems faced by young people.

Abortion is one of the "hot" issues for people worldwide, even among Christians. Many conservative Christians say that abortion is murdering an unborn child, while many other people, including Christians, say that a woman should have the right to choose an abortion if she thinks that is what is best for her. On page 8, in "Our Church and Abortion," Dr. Gerald Winslow, Professor of Christian Ethics at Loma Linda University and Vice President for Spiritual Life of Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center, shares the church's viewpoint on abortion.

Obesity. For years the numbers have been steadily rising. Read Robert Holbrook's article (p. 34) on this troubling trend. 



In this issue, Corrado Cozzi answer the question: **Name at least three things that should not be allowed in a youth group?**

UNREALISTIC PROMISES

It destroys the ability of the group to continue to dream.

UNFINISHED PROJECTS

... leaves a sense of weakness and incapacity to get the aims.

UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS

... fosters hypocrisy and encourages cynicism that destroys the unity of the group.

Corrado Cozzi, Youth Director of the Euro-Africa Division, Switzerland

Send your questions on youth leadership to: *Youth Ministry Accent*, General Conference Youth Ministries Department, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 or by e-mail to dunchiem@gc.adventist.org

Valuegenesis Europe is the biggest Adventist youth survey ever organized within the 17 participating European countries. This was a big challenge involving not only the youth departments but the entire church.

The survey examined the youth relationship with the family, the church, and their religious and social ideals.

Armed by these proposals a mission statement that points out the core of the project was created: To understand how European Adventist youth live out their faith, in order to develop a culturally-appropriate strategy for Adventist youth ministry and mission.

The questionnaire covered areas like faith maturity, personal spirituality, relationship with the church, commitment to Adventist doctrines, behavioral standards, and social ethics.

One of the biggest challenges we face with today's youth is their desire to see some changes applied in the society, especially in the domain of the church. For this reason, the slogan we chose for the whole project asks: "Who is changing the church? You are! Your mouse can change it. Be our partner, have your say!"

This idea came from Ana-Lia Grave, a young Portuguese woman, whom we have commissioned to design the graphic

project. The reference to the mouse of your computer as instrument for the mentioned change is not casual. In fact, the survey will be completed online. This is truly a new approach.

This study embraces more than 25,000 young people between 14 and 25 years of age, in more than 25 European countries. It would have been difficult to print questionnaires in 17 different languages. Unimaginable! Manuela Casti, teacher at Collonges Seminary, director of the Center José Figols and director of the project, had the great idea to produce it online.

To be able to participate, youth receive a personal password from their pastor or local youth director. They can open the Web page www.valuegenesis.org, follow the instructions, and have a good time answering the questions.

While the data will be analyzed by a professional company, the whole research network has been supplied by scientific commission composed of teachers from the three division colleges (Collonges, Friedensau, Newbold).

Some youth may wonder: What is the advantage of participating in this project? Honestly, on the qualitative plan the advantages are enor-

mous. We will not stop at only considering the figures that the whole statistical packet of the investigation will disclose.

The young people are not just statistics for us. They are people that shout, that express themselves in various ways. At times it seems that they shout in the desert, and they have become to tired to fight. The voices that we will hear will allow us to support and to initiate the change that the church, as such, requires. We will also find the reason for the great loss of young people that we have been recording in the Valuegenesis Europe survey.


This project has been developed in a joint effort between the Euro-Africa and Trans-European Divisions. Unions involved in this project are (EUD): Austrian Union; Bulgarian Union; Czech Conference; Franco-Belgian Union; North German Union; South German Union; Italian Union; Portuguese Union; Rumanian Union; Slovakian Conference; Spanish Union; Swiss Union; and (TED): Adriatic Union; British Union; Netherlands Union; Swedish Union; Danish Union; Norwegian Union.

The questionnaire has been translated in Bulgarian, Czech, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Spanish, Croatian, Danish,

Dutch, Norwegian, Slovenian, Swedish. Can you imagine the huge work hidden behind this project?

As we support this effort we are aware that the results of the Valuegenesis Europe survey could be useful in many areas:

1. A better comprehension of how youth see the church in all its dimensions;
2. Equip the church to handle the most important challenges of today's youth;
3. A better awareness about responsibilities that youth can accept within the church;
4. To highlight the weak areas in order to empower youth leadership in the church;
5. To have an answer regarding the apparent inactivity of youth and challenge them to be partner of the mission.
6. To help the church establish which changes must be adopted in order to allow the youth to feel they are owners and partners of the mission.

We are getting to the end of this world. Jesus is about to return. It is time to strengthen the potential of the church to complete the mission given to us by Jesus. Every youth of the church has their precise assignment to accomplish. It is our duty to give them this opportunity. 

IDEAPAC

pages 17-26



STREET GANG

Invite the musicians in your youth group to create a “street gang for God” and take the gospel in song to local youth hang-outs in your area. After obtaining permission from the proper authorities, set up on a street corner or outside a popular eatery and let other young people know that you love God. Have the non-musical members of your group pass out literature.

PIXEL POWER

Set up a Web site where your youth can post testimonies, pictures of recent youth activities, and a FAQ (frequently asked questions) section focusing on spiritual matters of interest of young people. Include a health section, with information from experts, showing how to overcome addictions or live a healthier lifestyle. Place that Web address on material distributed to youth in your area.

RENEWING THE CHURCH IN ACTION

Create a section in your church’s worship service each month where your youth can share with their church family what they did during the past four weeks to spread the Good News. Have them reenact in skits or readings what they did for Jesus and explain how that interaction affected their lives.

YOUTH CHURCH

Arrange for a once-a-quarter youth-led worship service at your church. Have the youth prepare and present the entire program. Explain to your group that good marketing (even when you are “selling” Christianity) focuses on the needs of the target audience. Ask the youth to plan a program acceptable to the church members even if it may not be their “style.”

TIPS ON USING THIS SECTION

When properly planned the programs in this section can be a real eye-opener for you and your youth group. Make sure to:

- Prepare ahead. Get all resources well in advance. Be sure to preview all videos well in advance before showing them to the group so you will be prepared to any questions they may have.
- If the topic calls for professional guests, please make your contact well ahead of time. It might be a good idea to involve your pastor and/or church board in these decisions.
- Handouts. Copy and cut out your handouts ahead of time. If it is a subject that includes statistics and information to take home.

Ready-to-use resources **SUICIDE**

PROGRAM TARGET: To help youth understand the issues involving teen suicide so they can be prepared to help others, and seek help themselves if they are in need.

What to do: Show the video “Echo in the Night,” a 30-minute Christian video about teen suicide. After the video, open the floor for discussion. Use the discussion questions below to get things started, but be sensitive to the flow of the discussion and where the group’s thinking is. If anyone in your group has a friend or family member who has committed suicide, this may come out in discussion and need to be handled sensitively. Also, be aware that it’s not unusual for members of your group to have had suicidal thoughts even if they haven’t shared them with anyone. Be sure to communicate the message that it’s OK to talk to someone about thoughts of suicide and that help is available—and most of all, remind them that God cares.

Preparation Time: Obtain the video well in advance and preview it before showing to the group so you’ll be prepared for any questions that might arise.

Resources: “Echo in the Night” is a Gospel Films video and can be ordered online from www.christianvideoetc.com for US\$15.99. Also available at www.faithresourcecenter.com

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the reasons people commit suicide?
2. Why do you think the rates of teen suicide are increasing?
3. What are some of the warning signs of suicide?
4. What would you do if a very good friend constantly threatens suicide, but makes you promise not to tell anyone?
5. What could do to help a friend who is suicidal? Can you think of any Scripture you can share with your friend?

From the World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/en/>

Suicide prevention (SUPRE)

THE PROBLEM

- In the year 2000, approximately one million people died from suicide: a "global" mortality rate of 16 per 100,000, or one death every 40 seconds.
- In the last 45 years suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide. **Suicide is now among the three leading causes of death among those aged 15-44 years (both sexes); these figures do not include suicide attempts up to 20 times more frequent than completed suicide.**
- Suicide worldwide is estimated to represent 1.8% of the total global burden of disease in 1998, and 2.4% in countries with market and former socialist economies in 2020.
- Although traditionally suicide rates have been highest among the male elderly, **rates among young people have been increasing to such an extent that they are now the group at highest risk** in a third of countries, in both developed and developing countries.
- Mental disorders (particularly depression and substance abuse) are associated with more than 90% of all cases of suicide; however, suicide results from many complex sociocultural factors and is more likely to occur particularly during periods of socioeconomic, family and individual crisis situations (e.g. loss of a loved one, employment, honour).

Ready-to-use resources **AFFIRMATION**

PROGRAM TARGET: To help youth affirm one another and know that God affirms them.

What to do:

PART ONE: Seat your group in a large circle (if you have more than 20 people, divide into two or more groups of less than 20 each, and proceed from there). Give each person an envelope with 20 small slips of paper. Direct each person to write his or her name on the envelope and pass it to the person on their right. When someone gets their neighbor's envelope, they are to write something positive, something they like or admire about that person, on one of the slips of paper and put it back in the envelope, then pass the envelope on. When the envelopes have traveled around the circle back to their owners, each person should have an envelope full of positive statements about him/herself. Give everyone some time to read through their affirmations.

PART TWO: Give each person some poster board and a glue stick and have them create a collage with their affirmations. They should write their names only on the back of the poster. They can also decorate them using markers, etc. Collect the posters, write a number on the front of each one, and put them up around your meeting area. Allow 15-20 minutes for people to go around, look at the posters, and try to guess which numbered poster belongs to each person. Have a prize ready for the person who identifies the most posters correctly.

This activity is valuable on a number of levels. It gives people practice affirming and saying positive things about each other, helps them graciously accept positive things said about themselves, and then allows everyone to view the positive statements people have made about each other.

Preparation Time: This requires only a little preparation time (about an hour) to get envelopes, slips of paper, pens or pencils, poster board, glue and markers ready. However, you may also want to give the activity some thought based on what you know about your group. If your group contains a lot of younger teens, or many people who are very critical of others, you may want to structure the activity so that you get to preview everyone's envelope briefly before giving it back to them, to make sure no one has written anything negative. If this is necessary, you can collect the envelopes, fill the time with some singing while you quickly preview them, and hand them back to their owners after the singing.

Vesper or Closing Thought:

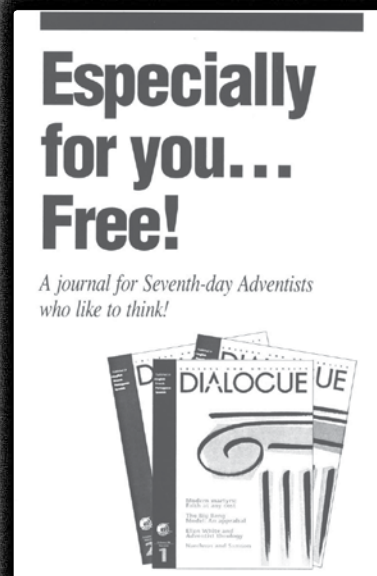
It's important for us to learn to affirm one another, and it's important to learn to accept compliments graciously and learn to think positively about ourselves. But most important is recognizing that we are of great value to God, and He affirms us every day.

Bible Text:

Psalms 8:3-5

Song Service:

"I Am A Promise"



Dialogue is a 36-page journal published three times a year in four parallel language editions (English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish) under the sponsorship of the General Conference Committee on Adventist Ministry to College and University Students (AMICUS). For more information send email to schulzs@gc.adventist.org, or if you are in North America call 301-680-5060/66

LIFE ISSUE: SELF-IDENTITY

Bible Texts: Daniel 6:1-23; Galatians 5:1-6; 1 John 4:7-12

Central Bible Truth: Because your worth and value is based upon the fact that God created and redeemed you, you can forge relationships based upon “whose you are” instead of upon the conditions of acceptance from others.

Teaching Aim: To lead youth to identify inadequate reasons for accepting themselves and to list ways by which they can properly relate to their peers.

1. The Pain of Rejection

(5 min.) As youth arrive, give each person who is wearing something blue a piece of candy and ignore anyone who is not wearing blue. As they are seated, greet and compliment only those who are wearing blue. Ignore anyone who is not wearing blue. When it is time to start, ask youth how they felt about the greeting they received, especially those who were not wearing blue. Ask: Do people at your school sometimes treat you the same way? Why do people treat others that way?

2. Acceptance at School

(5 min.) Ask youth to help you list things people at their school may expect them to do in order to be accepted. (Possible responses: drink alcohol, have sex, experiment with drugs, participate in wild parties, etc.) Call on youth to list the different types of cliques at their schools. As you list these

on a chalkboard or large sheet of paper on the focal wall, ask youth to call out the behaviors or characteristics associated with that group.

3. The Real Test

(5 min.) Write each of the following behaviors on separate sheets of paper and lay them on the floor in chronological order as listed: ignore someone; make fun of somebody; start an untrue rumor; tell a lie; cheat; drink a beer; smoke a cigarette; experiment with drugs; have sexual intercourse; steal something; beat somebody up; shoot somebody.

Ask: *How far would you be willing to go to be accepted? Ask youth to identify a statement and give their reasons for that.*

Ask: *Why would someone want to shoot somebody in order to be accepted?*

4. Modern-Day Examples

(15 min.) Divide youth into teams. Instruct each team to read Daniel 6:1-23 in their Bibles and prepare a five-frame cartoon of a modern-day circumstance similar to the one Daniel faced. (Possible other options: role-play a modern-day example of Daniel’s dilemma; act out the Bible passage using a narrator and characters to represent each person in the passage; prepare a newscast about the events surrounding Daniel as described in the passage.) Ask each team to present their cartoon to the group. Ask: Was Daniel’s value placed upon whose he was or upon what he did?

5. Pressures Exerted on Gentile Christians (5 min.)

Read Galatians 5:1-6 in the Bible, and prepare a short talk about the pressure being placed upon Christian Gentiles to be circumcised and Paul’s rebuttal about the value of circumcision. State that the Scriptures say in Galatians 5:6, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Point out that our value as Christians is not to be based upon any standard or expectation placed upon us by man, but is to be built upon God’s creative and redemptive work for us.

6. Top 10 Characteristics to Look for in a Friend (5 min.)

Ask: *What happens if you refuse to bow down to pressure from friends and stand up for your convictions and they reject you? How will you feel? What will you do? Is acceptance really that important to you? Point out that most risky behavior by youth is that which is done because of a fear of rejection. Be aware that acceptance is paramount to a teenager. Ask youth to be careful not to do something that is against their convictions in order to be accepted.*

Distribute a copy of **Top 10 Characteristics to Look for in a Friend** (handout) to each youth and ask them to list the top 10 characteristics they look for in a friend. Encourage them to share their lists with a neighbor. Call on volunteers to share their top three and tell why these are so important to them.

Ready-to-use resources **HELPING A SUICIDAL FRIEND**

7. God Loves Me!

(5 min.) On a large sheet of paper or poster board write: "God loves you for who He created you to be, not for what someone else expects you to be!" Write this statement on a large sheet of paper or a chalkboard: "You have the awesome potential to be the very best that God created you to be." Instruct youth to repeat the statements aloud. Then have them say them again, replacing the word "you" with the words "I" or "me."

8. What Can You Do? (10 min.)

Emphasize that the best way to gain acceptance by others is to be yourself and be accepting of others. Ask: What can you do to help create an environment that is accepting of all types of people? Ask youth to call out responses. Record each idea and ask them to begin tonight by doing one of the suggestions before they leave. ***(If no good ideas surface, ask them to form a circle and, beginning with you, hug the person to the right.)***

9. Scripture and Prayer (5 min.)

Conclude by reading aloud 1 John 4:7-12 in the Bible as a benediction and lead into prayer.

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Copy and have ready enough copies of this handout for everyone. It might be a good idea to have a professional person there during this session.

HELPING A SUICIDAL FRIEND

What would you do if a close friend constantly threatens suicide, but made you promise not to tell his or her parents?

What would you do if someone you care about refused to talk seriously about feelings of hopelessness that you think might lead to suicide?

Who could you call for help when dealing with someone who might attempt suicide?

Can you think of any additional Scripture that would be helpful in dealing with a person's hopelessness?

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Ready-to-use resources **VIOLENCE**

PROGRAM TARGET: To help youth realize that violence is never the best answer to solving problems.

What to do:

Make a videotape about 10-15 minutes long of several typical short scenes of TV violence-war footage from the news, car chases and crashes from police shows and movies, a fight scene, and a some violent sports (e.g. boxing, fights in hockey games, etc). The scenes should not be graphic but should be vivid enough to get the viewer's attention. As an alternative, clip pictures and headlines about violence from your local newspaper or a national newsmagazine, and scan them into a PowerPoint presentation.

After viewing the scenes on video or PowerPoint, ask three youth to read the following Bible passages aloud:

Matthew 5:9; 5:38-42; Romans 12:17-21

Lead the group in discussion around the questions below. Allow at least 45 minutes for discussion, with some of that time (see question 5) being spent brainstorming in small groups, and then reporting back to the whole group.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do the Bible texts we read mean that God is always opposed to us using violence? Is violence ever an acceptable choice for a Christian?
2. How can we apply Jesus' advice in these passages in practical ways?
3. Did Jesus ever use violence as a solution?
4. Do the stories of God sending the Israelites into battle in the Old Testament mean that it's OK for Christians to fight?

5. Brainstorm (in small groups) possible situations in your neighborhood or school that often lead to violence. What are some better ways to handle those situations?
6. Name someone who have been successful in overcoming evil in non-violent ways?
7. Why is violence considered so entertaining in our society? Is it wrong for a Christian to watch violent entertainment?

Preparation Time:

The introductory activity can be fairly time-consuming as you pull together video clips or images of violence. Start well in advance, at least two weeks beforehand. Don't try to do it all the night before your program!

Song Service:

"I'm in the Lord's Army"
"The Battle Belongs to the Lord"

Vesper/Closing Thought:

For the first 300 years after the time of Jesus, Christians were told by their leaders not to serve in the army. Seventh-day Adventists have historically taken a position against serving in combat roles. But there's much more to non-violence than not fighting in a war. Every day we have the opportunity to choose violent or peaceful solutions, to support violent entertainment or boycott it. Let's vow to fight only in God's army, using His weapons. Finish by reading Ephesians 6:10-17.

HANDOUT: copy pass out to your group members

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes such things as: hitting, slapping, punching, shoving, kicking, biting, and hair-pulling. It also includes the use of a weapon against a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Both teenage boys and teenage girls report being victims of physical violence in relationships.¹⁻² Typically, however, teenage boys and teenage girls use physical force for different reasons and with different results. While both tend to report acting violently because they were angry, teenage boys are much more likely to use force in order to control their girlfriends, while girls more often act violently in self-defense.³

Teenage girls suffer more from relationship violence, emotionally and physically.⁴ They are much more likely than teenage boys to have serious injuries and to report being terrified. In contrast, male victims seldom seem to fear violence by their dates or girlfriends, often saying that the attacks did not hurt and that they found the violence amusing.⁵

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1. O'Keefe M. & Treister, L. (1998). Victims of dating violence among high school students. *Violence Against Women*, 4, 193-228.
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5. Molitor C. & Tolman, R.M. (1998). Gender and contextual factors in adolescent dating violence. *Violence Against Women*, 4, 180-194.

source: <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/dating.asp>

Ready-to-use resources **YOUTH and ETHICS**

PROGRAM TARGET: To help youth learn to make ethical decisions.

What to do:

Obtain and show a portion of the video *Making Ethical Decisions*, from the Josephson Institute of Ethics (see “Resources,” below). Challenge your young people to think about how these principles can apply to the decisions they make every day. After viewing a video segment of about 45 minutes, divide your youth into small groups and give them each one of the “Tough Situations” below. Have them discuss how the principles of ethical decision making they have just seen could apply to that situation.

Preparation Time:

You will need to order and obtain a copy of the “Making Ethical Decisions” video in advance. Also, take time to cut-out and copy as many of the “Tough Situations” handout to share with your group.

Bible Text: Psalm 119:1, 2

Song Service: “Living for Jesus” (*SDA Hymnal*)

Vesper or Closing Thought:

Sometimes we don’t stop to realize how many decisions we actually make in the run of an average day—when to speak up, when to be silent, when to agree, when to disagree—and how many of those choices have an ethical component. Challenge the youth to think about the ethical implications of all their choices, and ask God for help in applying the principles of ethical decision making.

Resources:

You can order *Making Ethical Decisions*, and other materials from the Josephson Institute of Ethics, at www.charactercounts.org. *Making Ethical Decisions* is a general overview of the ethical decision-making process for adult viewers, and costs US\$29.95. It’s a 90-minute video, so you may want to do this activity over two meetings. The Web site also has materials specifically aimed at teaching teens about ethical decision making, though the videos for teens are more expensive. If teaching your group about ethics is a priority for you, you may want to explore the resources and ideas on this Web site.

TOUGH SITUATIONS (Copy and cut out as many copies as you need)

1. You and your best friend have a summer job together. You become aware that your best friend is stealing small amounts of money from your employer. What do you do?
2. The college athletics scholarship you’re counting on may very well hang on the outcome of your next competition. A friend tells you about a new performance-enhancing drug guaranteed to improve your results—and it can’t yet be detected by the most drug tests. Do you use it?
3. You really want to be accepted by a particular group of friends at school—especially because the person you’d like to date is a key member of that group. One day you go out with several of them, including the person you’d like to date, and you hear them spreading malicious and untrue stories about another close friend of yours. What do you say?

Theme: Temptation

Biblx: Matthew 4:1-11

Summary: Use this LEARNING GAME to explore feelings of temptation.

Preparation: Gather straws, a paper cup, and a pitcher of water. You'll also need Bibles.

What to do: Form groups of four to six with one adult leader in each group. Give groups each an animal name—wolves, dogs, bears, lambs, or birds. Read aloud Matthew 4:1-11. Then have everyone form a large circle and stand next to people from different groups. Next give each person a straw. Place a small paper cup of water in the center of the circle. Tell the group to circle clockwise.

Say: When I call out an animal name, everyone in that group must run to the center of the circle, sip from the cup with their straws and squirt the water at each other. Everyone must stay in the youth room. Remember to be careful not to slip on the wet floor.

Begin calling out the names. Increase the pace gradually. Call two or three animal names at a time. Sooner or later, someone will use the cup instead of the straw to get others really wet. When this happens, simply say not to do that again. Refill the cup from a pitcher of water. When the cup of water has been thrown a few times, stop the game. Wrap up the experience by asking kids to discuss these questions:

- Where you tempted to throw the cup? Why or why not?
- How did it feel to be tempted?
- How is that feeling like the way Jesus might have felt when He was tempted?
- How did Jesus deal with his temptation?
- How can you deal with temptation in your own life?

Theme: Rescued from sin

Bible Text: Romans 3:23-24; 6:23

Summary: In this DEVOTION, teenagers explore what it means to be rescued from the penalty of sin.

Preparation: You'll need Bibles.

What to do: Form groups of no more than three.

Say: In your trios, describe a time that you were rescued from something. For example, maybe you were saved from drowning, or maybe your parents' advice saved you from making a bad mistake. Have the oldest person in your group go first, then the second oldest, and so on. You have one minute to think about what you'll say, then each trio member will have one minute to share a "rescue experience."

Give kids a minute of "think time", then have group members begin telling about their experiences. After four minutes, have kids pick one rescue story to share with the entire group.

Discuss: When each of the selected rescue stories has been told, **say:** The Bible teaches that all Christians have been rescued by Jesus. Let's read about that now. Have the youngest person in each trio read Romans 3:23-24, and the oldest person read Romans 6:23. **Ask trios:**

- How is the way Jesus rescues us from sin like or unlike the way you were rescued in your stories?
- Why do you think Romans 3:23 can say that everyone has sinned?
- How does it make you feel to read in Romans 6:23 that the penalty for sin is death? Explain.
- How can Jesus rescue us from penalty of sin?

Debriefing: After discussion, have trio members share with the class any insights they gained.

Closing: To close, sing a worship chorus or hymn about how Jesus saves us from the penalty of sin. For example, you might sing "Jesus Is a Wonderful Savior" or "Amazing Grace" (both of these songs are found in Advent Youth Sing, hymns 104 and 4).

After the meeting, you might also offer to talk to anyone who wants to know more about how to accept Jesus' payment for sin.

Ready-to-use resources **ABUSE**

PROGRAM TARGET: To raise awareness about abuse in all its forms.

What to do:

Invite a guest speaker who is knowledgeable about abuse. Ideally, a Christian family counsellor who works with abuse victims and survivors would be an excellent choice, if you have such a resource person in your community to visit your group and give a presentation of about 30 minutes, which should cover:

- different types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, etc
- effects of abuse on children and youth
- how to get help if you're being abused
- how to help a friend who is a victim of abuse
- domestic violence/partner abuse (with a view to helping youth, especially teen girls, make wise choices in relationships to help them avoid being trapped in a relationship with an abuser)
- other topics as the presenter deems appropriate

A few weeks before this meeting, announce that it will be taking place and provide an opportunity for youth to confidentially write and submit anonymous questions they may wish to have the presenter discuss. After the presentation, open the floor for a question-and-answer time. The presenter can also

take questions from those turned in ahead of time.

Preparation Time:

Make sure your guest has been invited at least a month in advance, and begin immediately promoting the meeting in your church and community.

Bible Text: Psalm 27:10

Song Service:

"I Cast All My Care Upon You"
"He Will Carry You"

Closing Thought:

As you present this meeting, you won't know the secrets some group members may be hiding, which may include abuse within the family. Others may finally see an opportunity to help a friend who they know is caught in an abusive situation. Knowing that these thoughts may be running through the minds of some of your audience, close the meeting by sharing the message that God loves and cares for each of His children and it is not His will that they suffer at the hands of an abuser. Help is available and God will give them courage and strength as **they find it.**

HANDOUT: copy pass out to your group members

What You Can Do

Know the early warning signs that you're in a dating situation or relationship that could have the potential to become violent.

- Your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures you, soon after you begin dating, to make the relationship very serious, or presses you to have sex.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend becomes extremely jealous and possessive, and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to control you and to forcefully make all decisions where the two of you are concerned, refusing to take your views or desires seriously. He/she may also try to keep you from spending time with close friends or family.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend verbally and emotionally abuses you by doing such things as yelling at you, swearing at you, manipulating you, spreading false and degrading rumors about you, and trying to make you feel guilty.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend drinks too much or uses drugs and then later blames the alcohol and drugs for his/her behavior.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend threatens physical violence.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend has abused a previous boyfriend or girlfriend or accepts and defends the use of violence by others.

If you're in a dating relationship that in any way feels awkward, uncomfortable, tense or even frightening, trust your feelings and get out of it. It could become, or may already be, abusive.

you can educate other teens about dating violence.

Counsel peers, staff a hotline, or speak to classes about the signs of an abusive relationship and where to find help. Encourage your church or school to develop programs to educate teens about dating violence, and work to ensure that there are resources for teens that are being abused in your community.

always remember

you have every right to say no. No boyfriend or girlfriend has the right to tell you what you can or should do, what you can or should wear, or what kind of friends you should have.

Ready-to-use resources **BELONGING**

PROGRAM TARGET: This program will encourage youth to think about what it means to “belong” and how the church family can be a place for them to belong.

What to do:

From the list below, choose five people represented in your church or community. Invite each one to be part of a panel discussion in which each will share for a few minutes about the organization he/she belongs to and how it gives them a sense of “belonging.” After each person has shared their experience, use the discussion questions to get panel members and audience talking about the concept of belonging.

- a. member of the Armed Forces
- b. police officer
- c. Pathfinder or a member of Scouts or Guides
- d. person who plays on a sports team
- e. member of a small-group Bible study or prayer group
- f. member of a service club such as Kiwanis, Shriners, etc.
- g. member of a singing group or band
- h. an adult or older teen who was adopted into a family

Discussion Questions:

1. What kinds of things do different groups and organizations do to make people feel that they belong?
2. What things do we do in the church to make people feel they belong?
3. How could the church do better at giving people a sense of belonging?

4. Can you belong to Jesus but not to the church?

Preparation Time:

To prepare for this program you will need to set aside about an hour, two weeks before the program date, to call your panelists and explain what is required of them. Call again briefly a day or two before to remind them of the date. If they are prepared, you should require little or no preparation time on the day of the program itself.

Bible Text:

“Only those people who are led by God’s Spirit are his children. God’s Spirit doesn’t make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father. God’s Spirit makes us sure that we are his children.” (Romans 8:14-16, CEV).

Song Service:

“I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God”

Vesper or Closing Thought:

As you close this program, remind the youth that although we all feel lonely, left out and isolated at times, we are part of a great family. God is our Father, Jesus our older Brother, and all other Christians are our brothers and sisters. Invite the youth to pledge that they will do all they can to make each other, and others, feel welcome in God’s family.

ANOTHER GOOD IDEA

Helping Hurting Youth is the focus this quarter, so here’s a great idea to get a peek into what’s going on with the youth.

- Have all the members of your youth group write all the things that bothers them the most. Give them 5-7 minutes to do this.
- After they are finished writing discuss the problems briefly for no more than 15 minutes.
- After the meeting group all the questions into categories and then discuss them together (at another meeting).
- If you have a lot of questions you may want to consider adding a special discussion time to your schedule, at least once a quarter.
- At this “discussion” meeting, ask for volunteers to share how they got through some of their problems. This is a good time for them to share and help each other get through problems.
- Pray together in pairs or small groups for each other.

BEFORE I START TO HELP THE HURTING

By A. Allan Martin, PhD

Today, let my ministry for God begin with an offering. The apostle Paul suggests, “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.

Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him” (Romans 12:1, *Message*).

So before I go out to save the world, before I touch hurting lives, rescue sinners, offer healing to youth and young adults for the Kingdom—let me start with an offering, a personal, ordinary offering. With God’s help, let me turn my eyes away from the marvels of ministry and any compulsion to “do.” Let me start with me, turning my attention to God, so that I can “be changed from the inside out” (Romans 12:2, *Message*).

Rushing to action will result in me reeling. Especially with all the hurt that I see in the lives of our youth and young adults, the tendency of valiant ministry leaders is to go into the fight against crisis/hurt/pain leading with one’s chin. This strategy makes it so easy for the devil to simply do a two-punch combo and lay me out on the mat, knocked out of the

match early in the first round. I need to take time to carefully approach ministry crises with solid foundational footwork, trained counter punches—or I’ll end up knocked out by the devil before the bell. So let me focus on some training tips in order to be prepared to help hurting teens or respond to a young adult crisis:

1. **Give up my life as an offering to God (Romans 12:1-3).** Start by making Jesus the source of my energy and power for even the non-glamorous facets of my life.
2. **Rely on a community of believers to mold me and my ministry (Romans 12:4-8).** Whatever I do especially in ministry, do it in the context of support and networking with parents, family, church, and community, letting each play its important role.
3. **Let honest, Christ-centered compassion be the primary motivator for my ministry (Romans 12:9-10).** My

humble authenticity coupled with my connection to Jesus is far more effective than ministry recipes.

4. **Maintain personal boundaries and ethical conduct (Romans 12:10-13).** It’s never helpful for ministry leaders to put themselves in ethical, moral, or emotional jeopardy in order to rescue a hurting teen or young adult. Stay clear of the devil’s traps to compromise my integrity.

5. **Let love be the paradoxical antidote for hatred (Romans 12:14-21).** Empathizing with the hurting can tempt me to see revenge, even passive-aggressive retaliation as useful, but these are poor tools to bring healing. Be wise and use Jesus’ seemingly confounding methods of strong love to overcome hurt, crisis, and evil.

Today, I offer my life, my ministry to You. Fight the good fight through me. Let me be a Your source of healing to hurting teens and young adults. **Q**

Recommended Resources

- Larson, S. (1999). *At risk: Bringing hope to hurting teenagers*. Loveland, CO: Group.
- Penner, M. (2005). *Help! My kids are hurting: A survival guide to working with students in pain*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Van Pelt, R., & Hancock, J. (2005). *The youth worker’s guide to helping teenagers in crisis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

CHANGED

from a city gang to the
Jesus Christ gang

by Carlos Acosta

A deacon from my church, the Central Spanish Church, in Los Angeles, California, came and tapped me on my shoulder as I was getting ready to listen to that Sabbath morning sermon. "Excuse me, someone is looking for you outside" he said. *Who could it be?* I asked myself. *If someone is looking for me, how come they just don't come inside?* As I walked passed 1,500 church members, I walked out one of the three doors of the main entrance. Wondering who it was, I looked to my right, and saw no one. Then I looked to my left, and there was someone that I did not expect to see that day. As I got closer, that individual became more familiar to me, but I was still in doubt. I approached slowly with apprehension, and yes, it was him, a very familiar face I had seen before.

A mean face started to focus on me now. It looked like he could not recognize me. For a moment I hoped he wouldn't. But he did. Standing before me was a young man wearing size 40 black baggy pants, extra large shirt, baldhead, arms full of tattoos and sporting a dark sunglasses. His nickname was "Diablo." Diablo and I had met many times before. I was afraid this would be the last one, at least for me.

"Is that you?" he said standing inches away from my face. "You became a church boy?" he continued. "You are not fooling anyone by hiding behind that shirt and tie. I'm here to kill you, and you know why" he concluded.

The first time I met Diablo was when he drove by the park where I used to hang out and did a drive by shooting trying to kill me. Another time we met in juvenile hall where we had a jail fight. The last time I met him in his home where we hurt him and his family one Friday night. Now, he was seeking revenge and he had all the right reasons to do it.

As I stood there listening to him, joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church three months before, I was faced with a crisis. My past had come back to haunt me. *How did I get myself in all this trouble* I asked myself. As I stood there a movie of all my memories began to play in my mind and I remembered of how it all began.

MY LIFE BEFORE I MET JESUS

Growing as an Adventist teen in Los Angeles, California, I faced the challenges that many teens face today. Physical changes, psychological changes, social changes, spiritual life changes, peer

pressure, coping with emotions, seeking independence, decision making, the search for an identity, creating new friends, falling in love, etc. As any other teen today I had needs—normal needs that needed to be met.

“I’m no longer a child,” I began to tell my parents. In other words, “I want to be responsible for all the changes happening in my life.” As a teen that is where I was, wanting to flex that muscle of independence.

The biggest need I had as a teen was wanting to belong. I had a desperate urge to be part of something that would give me a sense of accomplishment. I wanted to be part of something that would recognize me as a person. I wanted to be part of something that would value my thoughts, my efforts. I wanted to be part of something where I would be appreciated and loved.

Church was part of my teenage years. Unfortunately, I forged stronger ties with a youth gang in Los Angeles.

“If you want to be part of this gang” I was told, “you have to be part of it forever.” You will have to live by its code, you will have to dress to identify yourself with it, and you will also defend it anywhere you go.” I decided to join. But, in order to do that I had to fight two gang members for 13 seconds. I did. Those 13 seconds went by so slowly. By the end of those 13 seconds I was hurt. I was bleeding from my lips, my left eye was bruised. That was my baptism.

I got my nickname and all the gang members came and hugged me. They said “You are part of this family now. You will be part of this gang forever. You cannot get out unless it is by death.” And that was the beginning of a journey that brought me sadness and lots of pain for myself and my family.

Now, as a gang member, I had to walk, talk, dress, and live like one. The first change

began by changing my image. I began to wear size 40 pants. I shaved my head and decided to get tattoos on the back and front of my arms. I now had a mission, to defend my *barrio*, even to the point of death. Since I was just starting, I had to prove to the others that I was worthy of being part of this gang. Robbing and going after the enemies of the gang became my way of gaining respect. Soon I found myself in the highest ranks of the gang. I was part of something, I thought, that finally met my needs. I thought I found happiness and security. I had not. Times only got harder.

In the tenth grade I dropped out of high school. I began using drugs like marijuana and cocaine. I also went to jail. My first arrest came as a result of committing a robbery with a deadly weapon. When being processed at the police station, we were all asked by the detectives what religion we identified ourselves with. While all my friends said Catholic, I said “Seventh-day Adventist.”

As soon as I said that the detectives looked at me with amazement and asked “What are you doing here? We know many SDA and they sure don’t come to jail very much.” I was discovered. I felt so ashamed of putting my religion down like that.

We were taken to Eastlake Juvenile Hall in East Los Angeles. I spent my first night in a dark cell. There, making sure that no one listened, I began to cry. I began to remember God. I asked myself What happened with all the happiness I had found in the gang? What have I done with my life?

The next day my parents came to visit me in jail. It was very hard for my parents, especially my mother, to see me in a prison suit. With tears in her eyes she reminded me of how she and dad had dedicated me, the first born, to the service of the Lord. With

pain they showed me the building that was next to the juvenile hall. It was the hospital where I was born. My parents showed me the floor I was born 17 years before. And now, here I was in a juvenile hall waiting for a trial with two broken-hearted parents. My parents took me by my hands and, kneeling, they prayed. They prayed to God, asking Him not to abandon me and to fulfill the prayer that they had both lifted 17 years before. The Lord heard my parents prayers that day.

But as soon as I got out of jail I went back to my old ways. I made things worse for me and my family. I witnessed the deaths of many of my friends who were killed for the streets that were not ours. Silent, Spooky, Ghost, Smiley, and many more gang members were killed in the name of the *barrio*. The funerals were a constant reminder that death was knocking at our door. After the killing of one of our friends revenge was always the answer. It was a vicious cycle. Sadness and death were always the end result.

MY LIFE WHEN I MET JESUS

It was very dramatic. On a Friday night, another gang member nicknamed “Joker” and I were in charge of taking care of the *barrio*. I would stand at the beginning of the street with my friend in the middle of it. My job was to spot any suspicious cars or individuals who were our enemies. Standing on a corner late that Friday night a car approached and asked me if I sold drugs; I sent him to my friend who was a seller. When my friend handed him the drugs, this other young man tried to steal them. My friend reacted quickly and began to hit him inside the car with a baseball bat. He drove off and crashed a block away. We thought he had died.

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GANG FACTS

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Myth: Gang killings in Los Angeles County are the result of drug wars.

FACT: Most gang homicides are not random, nor are they only disputes over drugs or some other crime. The vast majority of violent incidents involving gang members continue to result from fights over turf, status, and revenge.

Myth: Gangs are only an inner city problem.

FACT: Different types of cities (urban, suburban, etc) in Los Angeles County have local street gangs. While a majority of the gang related slayings were in the urban core, in the San Fernando Valley, the murder rate spiked 60% in 2001 because of gang related killings. Streetgangs.com, 2002

Myth: Los Angeles is the gang capital of the world and will never again be a place to raise children and live a civilized life.

FACT: Over the last several hundred years, a number of cities in the world have been proclaimed the "gang capital". London, England, was first given this title. Just before our civil war, New York was reported to have approximately 30,000 street gang members. At other times, Philadelphia and Chicago were proclaimed gang capitals. All of these cities, with degrees of success, have dealt with the problem and passed the title on to other cities.

Myth: Youth join gangs to sell drugs, commit crime, and make money.

FACT: Youth join gangs for many reasons. However, while gang members commit more types of crime (and more often) than non-gang youth, many gang members are not heavily involved in crime. Most gang members are not drug dealers and most Los Angeles gangs are not organized drug distribution rings.

Myth: Gangs are tightly organized, cohesive units with stable powerful leadership.

FACT: Most gangs are loosely knit, with several members who fill leadership roles, depending on age and situation. Membership fluctuates and gang members have varying degrees of commitment to the gang. Gang cohesiveness is highest when the gang is challenged by other groups or by outsiders.

Myth: Ever since there have been street gangs there have been drive by shootings. Guns don't kill people; people kill people.

FACT: Shootings by gang members have increased as guns on the streets have proliferated. Drive-by killings are a direct result of the availability of firearms. People injure people; guns kill people.

Myth: Gang violence has increased consistently for the last 15 years.

FACT: This myth is incomplete. Gang violence started to decrease 15 years ago, but in the last seven years, began to increase again in Los Angeles. There were 256 gang homicides in LA City

from January to August 2002. This is a 22% increase from the same time period in 2001, and a 47% increase from the 5-year average for those months. LAPD, Citywide Gang Crime Summary, 2002

Myth: Gang violence is purely a law enforcement problem.

FACT: Most law enforcement officials agree that gangs are a community problem that must be dealt with in a variety of approaches implemented by police, schools, community-based organizations, public health professionals and others in an interactive and cooperative approach to gang prevention and intervention.

OTHER FACTS:

In Los Angeles County, law enforcement officials are aware of more than 1300 street gangs with over 150,000 members. In the City of Los Angeles alone, there are approximately 407 gangs and over 56,000 members. Los Angeles Almanac, 2002

Gangs account for approximately 51% of all homicides in Los Angeles County. Of the 1156 homicides in 2001, 587 were gang-related. The majority of all gang homicides are committed with handguns. Los Angeles County Safe Streets Bureau, 2002

Sources: "Report on the State of Los Angeles Street Gangs", Los Angeles County Interagency Gang Task Force, 1999-2000. Los Angeles Almanac, Gang Populations, 2001

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At 3 a.m. we decided it was time to go home. As I approached home I remembered that it was Sabbath, and soon my parents and my brothers were going to go to church. I remembered that earlier that night my family had “received” the Sabbath. My mother had invited me to sing and to pray with them but I rejected her invitation. I knew they had prayed for me, I knew they were always praying for me. How? Bullets that were intended for me always missed, when death was almost certain a special protection was always on me. I am sure it was the result of my parents prayers. God was after me. But I always hardened my heart.

At 7 a.m. a gang member came and knocked on my window. “Come over man, the enemies have just killed four of us.” I got up and saw what had happened. That same young man who tried to steal the drugs came back and took revenge. He killed four of my friends that morning. As I stood there I thought how their mothers would hug their lifeless bodies crying to God to bring them back to life. The image of a mother being stained by the blood of her child and crying uncontrollable was too much for me. It was at this moment I heard the voice of God telling me, “Carlos, its time. Stop running from me. This is the way you will end up also. Come back to me Carlos.” He had not given up on me all these years. My life was about to take a turn, a 180 degree turn for the best.

I went home that Sabbath morning and found that my parents had gone to church. In my sadness I started to use crystal meth. I found myself overdosing. My heart was palpitating, my vision was blurry, I began to shake. I kept taking more and more but it was useless. I began to feel

lonely. I began to evaluate my life so far. I was 19 years old and what had become of my life? I had dropped out of school, in and out of jail, I was addicted to drugs, someone had been always trying to kill me, and I couldn’t keep a job. I began to feel even more depressed to the point that I decided to take my own life and end my pain and misery. But as I was getting ready to end my life I remembered my parents. I remembered all their prayers and I remembered how many times they had shared with me that God had a special plan for my life. I grabbed a Bible and began to pray out loud “God, please, please help me. I give up Lord. I want to stop running from you. I have lost my way in this life. I made the wrong decisions, Lord. I’m so lonely, so afraid, so sad with my life. Here I am, Lord. Forgive me. Please accept me as I am.” I fell asleep. I slept so much that my parents came back late that Sabbath afternoon and woke me up. I was so happy to see them.

The next day my parents invited me to an evangelistic crusade. For the first time in almost 10 years I finally accepted an invitation to go to church. As I sat there I listened to the preacher talk about Jesus Christ. As a gang member Jesus became very attractive to me. I heard how He came to die for all the sinners of this world. How He left his *barrio* (heaven) to come to our *barrio* (the earth) and how He also formed a gang of 12 disciples who He trained to talk and live for the mission of this gang. There were a lot of similarities with my gang. The thing that mostly impacted me was when Jesus, the leader of this gang, died on that cross. I understood that by His death I was being freed of the power of the devil. That by His death I could receive a new life free of drugs, misery and pain. I was attracted to

Jesus even more after realizing that He had beaten death forever. I was very impressed. When the preacher made a special call to accept Jesus, I stood up and walked past 1,500 church members. There I was like the prodigal son, walking towards the altar with size 40 pants, addicted to drugs, bald headed, arms full of tattoos. I fell on my knees and asked God to forgive me while at the same time accepting the gift of Jesus Christ.

LIFE AFTER MEETING JESUS

I was baptized in October 1994. This time the baptism was different. No one was going to hit me for 13 seconds. This time I was going to make a new pact, a pact with God. I was deciding to live a life in Jesus Christ. I was going to be part of a new *barrio*. His church. That Sabbath morning my parents were there and were crying once again. But this time their tears were of joy and happiness. My mother was screaming so loud “This is my son, God has returned him to us, and He has answered our prayers.” My parents and I hugged for a long time. “Welcome home son,” my parents said. “Welcome home Son,” I also heard the Lord say.

Life was different now. My thoughts were different. My desires were different. I did not need drugs or to hurt others to feel appreciated or significant. Now, all I needed was Jesus who gave me and continues to give me happiness. A new person was born that day. New clothes, new thoughts, new desires. This did not mean I did not have any challenges. Yes, I did!

CHALLENGES

One of my first challenges was dealing with my enemies. One day I found myself

approached by my enemies. “How am I supposed to react?” I asked myself. Before I met Jesus I would fight back, but now? One day a gun was pointed at me by them. I decided to share with them: “Listen, I now belong to a new gang, the Jesus Christ gang, that is who I am now.” They laughed at me and let me go.

The other challenge I faced was how to tell my gang that I no longer wanted to be part of it. I remembered the oath I took when I joined—that I would never get out of it, only by death. Still, I decided to face them. When I arrived at the park where my gang used to hang out I told them how I had become a Christian and that I no longer was going to be part of the gang. Many laughed at me, others were angry; one of them hit me in my face. They said, “Come back tomorrow, maybe you will make up your mind.” I left that day crying and sad. But I had made a promise to God. I had promised Him that I would share Jesus with my gang and my enemies. I went back to my gang and preached to them. Many listened to me and they decided to take an action. They said that I could not get out of the gang but instead they would be willing for me to help them find a better way. They made me agree to keep visiting them and their families especially whenever they had difficult times.

Today, I still continue to visit and write to them in prison. I have shared with them the love of Christ. Many have become Christians behind the prison walls, and sadly, many others have been killed.

MY JOURNEY WITH JESUS

It’s now been 12 years since my encounter with Jesus. In these 12 years I have been living on a wonderful journey

with Jesus. One year after my baptism in 1994, I was sent to seminary to study theology in our University, Montemorelos in Mexico. I graduated from the seminary in 2000. That same year I was assigned my first pastoral duty as a chaplain in South Mexico. Also, that very same year the Lord blessed me with a wonderful wife, Alma.

In 2001 I was given a scholarship to pursue a master’s degree program in family relations. I graduated in 2003, and from 2003–2005, God gave me the opportunity to work as a marriage/family and drug addiction counselor in Colorado. Two years ago, in June 2005, the Lord added another blessing to my life by allowing me to work as an intern for the North American Division’s Youth Ministries Department as an assistant to the Youth Director, Elder James Black Sr. Finally, about a year ago the Lord blessed my wife and I with a beautiful daughter, Karla-Michelle. God has been wonderful to me.


As I close my testimony I give praise to the Lord Almighty. If anyone is to receive praise, it is Him. I also want to appeal to all the youth leaders out there. Please practice an “incarnation youth ministry,” which means to leave the pulpits behind and begin to preach in the middle of the prisons, ghettos, and *barrios*. Leave the comforts of the church office and begin to search for the sheep where they are lost. That is what Jesus did.

Incarnation youth ministry means to step outside your comfort zones. It means to get your hands dirty by cleaning up the wounds the street causes on these young people. It means to go to the dark corners where they are and not just wait for them to come to your church where you are. It means to pick them up and carry them after their wild

parties. It means to go with them to the courts, to their probation officers, to their drug addiction treatments. It means to live a practical theology, not just words that don’t have actions behind them. Above all it means to fight the enemy of their souls on their behalf. There are thousands of young people in the inner cities who are slaves to drugs, sex, money, gangs, etc., who need this type of ministry. I’m glad my family did this type of incarnation ministry as well as the two youth pastors who were willing to risk it all for me.

Also, if you are a young person reading this, and you are still in gangs, drugs, etc., I want to let you know that Jesus is there by your side. He has not given up on you. Stop running from Him and turn to Jesus. Like you, I was seeking happiness in places that only brought pain and sadness. Let Him fill that emptiness with peace, let Him take your broken dreams and make your life a dream come true.

ANOTHER MIRACLE

Now, back to that young man I began my testimony with, the one that wanted to kill me; he and I are friends today. That day when I thought he was going to kill me, God helped me to speak to his heart and his anger turned into sadness as he also found out that his life was empty and meaningless without Christ. His family was also Adventist and he decided that it was time to live a new life; he and I still keep in close contact. Life is so amazing if we only live it with Jesus. 

Carlos Acosta is a youth pastor and the youth director for the Hispanic region of the Southern California Conference

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Obesity and Youth Ministry

by Robert Holbrook

A few years ago one of my sons (Hans—age 24 at the time) who is just under 6 feet tall and weighed in at a modest 135 pounds tackled hiking the Appalachian Trail—all 2,200 miles of it in one summer—actually six months to the day. After the accomplishment he proudly sewed his 2000-miler patch onto his pack.

Everyone who hikes the “AT” takes on a handle (nickname) or is given one. His was “H Monster.” He planned carefully, packed his gear carefully, charted his course carefully, and set up food drops along the way carefully. We became “trail angels” for the six months, visiting him and whomever was hiking with him at any given point every two weeks. His backpack, with state-of-the-art gear and backpacker knowledge weighed in at 75 pounds. In the first 10 days of hiking he demolished a pair of boots and nearly blew out his knees, but he gritted his teeth and hung in there. By the end of the trip, he had gained 10 pounds of body weight and discarded 37 pounds from his pack. He has several hours’ worth of stories to tell if you want to take the time to get enthralled by them.

One of his trail friends, “EZE,” age 18 with a similar weighing backpack, began

the trip with a body weight of around 220. At the start he wondered if he would even survive the first few days. Every night he thought he was going to die. By the end of the trip, EZE had dropped his body weight to 145 pounds and his pack weight as well. And he’s grateful for what the trail did to his body, as well as being full of stories to tell. Why do I tell this? It seems to have little to do with the title of this article.

Well...notice what I said happened during the first few days of H Monster’s trip—he nearly destroyed himself. Yet he had the good fortune of being able to remove his 75 pounds each night and at will during the day—and reduce it to a manageable weight as the trip progressed. You can do that quite easily with backpacks! But not so with excess body weight.

As I travel to Pathfinder staff training weekends, camporees, and other Seventh-day Adventist youth-related events, I am seeing as I have never seen before serious overweight issues among kids and staff alike. Huge “backpacks” being hauled around day and night. It disturbed me so much that I knew I needed to do some investigating. In the box on the next page is a small sampling

of what I found on the Internet for the good ol’ USA.

I have not seen direct statistics for Seventh-day Adventist’s, I only can go by what I am experiencing and when I see a large number or even a majority at a gathering of people that are definitely not “just a little chubby.” I’ve begun to worry and wonder.

FIRST: We are leaders and mentors of our youth. What is our message? “Practice what I preach not what I do?” “God can help you with your problem but He can’t help me with mine?” A doctor did tell me that there are extremely rare cases of obesity that are out of our control, cause by malfunctioning thyroid glands etc. but the emphasis was on the *extremely rare*.


SECOND: We are mostly vegetarians (or even vegans); everyone knows Seventh-day Adventist’s live longer because of it. All our officially sponsored meals are vegetarian, for good health reasons...as we wheeze and huff while tackling a short flight of stairs or can’t make it to a seminar “because it’s too far down the hall.” The truth is that no matter the diet, “calories in, weight on”—unless we can get calories back out. When exercise calories burned

exceeds calories taken in, then we lose weight no matter the diet.

THIRD: A major component of our youth curriculum focuses on health—no alcohol, tobacco, drugs, caffeine; and many would include meat as well. Lots of fresh air, exercise, fruits and veggies, etc. We have the Silver Award and Gold Award for senior youth; we have a health and fitness component for each of the six Pathfinder classes; we have a Physical Fitness and a Nutrition Honor. (Yes, I see them on our sashes once in a while.)

Yet, we are strapping on 75 pound backpacks under our clothes (some packs are more like 120-150 pounds or more!), locking them on 24/7 and trying to be role models for our youth. Mentors we are called. Is not our set of beliefs supposed to make a difference in our life *and* lifestyle?

Please understand, I am not advocating that every overweight person working with youth drop out—quite the opposite. Youth gain much by understanding our struggle and actually being a part of it—encouraging each other is a big welder of lives. When a young person can be a part of one's good times and one's struggles, they will also learn and avoid the pitfalls we took. In the end, leader and follower grows and gains strength from adversity.

Like EZE and H Monster, we can reduce the pack's weight, we *can* finish the course, and we can proudly wear the "2000-miler patch." Or might we be like that man in the song Peter, Paul and Mary used to sing? "He Had a Long Chain On" and when the host who had kindly offered him a meal then offered to cut off the chain, the man's response was "I'd guess we had just let it be." Sad song, sad scene, sad ending. Remember, the Pathfinder Law is for me to...Care for My Body. 

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Since the mid-seventies, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased sharply for both adults and children. Data from two NHANES surveys show that among adults aged 20–74 years the prevalence of obesity increased from 15.0% (in the 1976–1980 survey) to 32.9% (in the 2003–2004 survey).

The two surveys also show increases in overweight among children and teens. For children aged 2–5 years, the prevalence of overweight increased from 5.0% to 13.9%; for those aged 6–11 years, prevalence increased from 6.5% to 18.8%, and for those aged 12–19 years, prevalence increased from 5.0% to 17.4%.

These increasing rates raise concern because of their implications for Americans' health. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions, including the following:

- Hypertension
- Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon)

Although one of the national health objectives for the year 2010 is to reduce the prevalence of obesity among adults to less than 15%, current data indicate that the situation is worsening rather than improving. This site (<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/>) provides a variety of information designed to help people understand this serious health issue and the efforts being made to address it.

SOURCE: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/>

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- **Smallstep for Kids** (<http://www.smallstep.gov/kids/flash/index.html>)

A child-focused site offering nutritional advice, games and activity suggestions for children and parents as part of the obesity prevention campaign. The computer-animated character Shrek encourages kids to go out and play.

- **Achieving a Balance: Reaching and Maintaining a Healthy Weight**
(<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition>)

Whether you want to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, it's important to understand the connection between the energy your body takes in (through the foods you eat and the beverages you drink) and the energy your body uses (through the activities you do).

REAL LIFE, PART ONE

“Hey, did you notice Janelle’s been acting weird ever since Rob broke up with her?” Shelagh asked her friend Kristen.

“Yeah, she seems really depressed. She’s not interested in anything anymore—she just wants to go home and lie down in her room and play depressing music. Did you know she even dropped off the gymnastics team?”

“Really? She’s not in choir anymore either, is she?” Shelagh said, suddenly worried.

“It’s like she’s just given up on life. I knew she was upset about the breakup, but that was months ago, and she hasn’t gotten over it,” Kristen said.

“I was at her house the other day, and she did something weird. She gave me a whole bunch of her tapes and CDs. Just told me to keep them. She said she didn’t want them anymore. I wonder why she’d do that.”

“I don’t know,” Kristen admitted, “but I know Janelle’s been saying things like ‘I don’t even want to be alive anymore,’ and ‘This world would be a better place without me.’ You don’t think she’s thinking of—well, of killing herself, do you?”

Shelagh frowned. “Oh, I’m sure she’d never do anything like that. And besides, don’t they say that if people talk about suicide, that means they’re not going to do it?”

“I’m not sure that’s true,” Kristen said. “Do you think we should talk to her? Or tell one of our parents or a teacher?”

Janelle sat at her desk, lining up the pretty rows of pills. It had taken her a long time to get together this many sleeping pills, but she wanted to make sure she really had enough to do the job—not just end up in

hospital. She’d been depressed for months. Praying didn’t seem to help. If even God didn’t care anymore, then it was time to check out.

She looked in the mirror and made a face. She was so ugly, so boring. Rob did not want her. No-one would ever want her. No-one cared.

“God, I know this is the wrong thing to do,” she said, “I mean, I know it’s a sin, but it seems like my only way out. You’ll forgive me, won’t you, God? But whether you do or not, I’m going ahead with this.”

Janelle swept the pills back into their bottle and hid it in her desk drawer. She went down the hall to the kitchen to get a drink of water.

What’s the Problem

Do you think suicide is something that only happens to teenagers in books or movies, not to anyone you know? In fact, suicide among young people is a more serious problem than you may realize.

- In the United States, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people 15 to 24 years old.¹ What that means is that about 5,000 youth and young adults take their own lives each year.
- In Britain, which has the highest suicide rate in Europe, it’s estimated that there about 19,000 suicide attempts by teenagers each year, with about a thousand actual teen suicides.²
- What makes these statistics even more frightening is that many suicides go unreported. Many apparent accidents, especially those involving cars or guns, may actually be suicides disguised to look like accidents.
- While the rate of suicide in the general population is going down in many countries (such as the U.S.), the rate of youth suicide continues to increase.
- In one study, 60% of youth said they had thought about killing themselves, and 9% had actually attempted suicide.³

What does this mean for you? It’s quite possible that someone you know—maybe even a good friend—may be thinking suicidal thoughts or may even attempt suicide. You need to be informed, so that you can help.

Suicide



And if you've been thinking of suicide yourself, these statistics should tell you that you're not alone. You're not weird. Other young people struggle with the same problems, thoughts, and feelings. And there is hope. There are better solutions than ending your life.

What you Need to Know

One major misconception people have about suicide is that those who actually intend to kill themselves never talk about it, so if someone talks about suicide, they won't really do it.

In fact, this is the exact opposite of the truth. Four out of five young people who commit suicide talk about killing themselves before they actually do it. It's never safe to ignore suicide threats. You could save a friend's life by taking him or her seriously.

How can you know if someone is suicidal?

A teenager who is considering suicide may

- change his/her eating and sleeping habits
- withdraw from friends, family, and regular activities
- act violent and rebellious, or run away
- abuse drugs and alcohol
- neglect his or her personal appearance
- show marked personality change

- feel constantly bored, have difficulty concentrating, or do more poorly than usual in school
- frequently complain about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- lose interest in activities he/she normally enjoys
- not want anyone to praise or reward him/her
- complain of being a bad person or feeling "rotten inside"
- give verbal hints with statements such as: "I won't be a problem for you much longer," "Nothing matters," "It's no use," and "I won't see you again"
- put his or her affairs in order—for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw away important belongings, etc.
- become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression
- have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts) ⁴

What the Bible Says

Nowhere in the Bible is suicide specifically mentioned as a sin. However, the sixth commandment, which says, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13 NIV), makes it clear that it is a sin to take human life—including our own lives. God is the Author of life. He is our Creator, and we all are valuable to Him.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them....God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:27, 31, NIV).

"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NKJV).

God has a plan for your life. He does not want you to interrupt that plan and destroy His creation by taking your own life, anymore than He would want you to destroy another person's life by committing murder.

THE BURDEN OF SUICIDE

The psychological and social impact on the family and society is immeasurable. On average, single suicide intimately affects six other people. If a suicide occurs in a workplace it has an impact on hundreds.

The burden of suicide can be estimated in terms of DALYs (disability-adjusted life years). According to this indicator, in 1998 suicide was responsible for 1.8% of the total burden worldwide, varying between 2.3% in high-income countries and 1.7% in low-income countries. This burden is equal to the burden due to wars and homicide, roughly twice the burden of diabetes, and three times the burden of birth asphyxia and trauma.

One misunderstanding should be cleared up: suicide is an act of murder and therefore a sin. However, many people mistakenly believe that the Bible calls suicide “the unpardonable sin.” They reason that because you are dead, you cannot ask forgiveness; thus, God cannot forgive this sin. In fact, the Bible calls “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” the only sin that cannot be forgiven (Matthew 12:31); suicide is never referred to in this way. Samson, who committed suicide by toppling a building that killed himself along with many of his Philistine enemies, is listed as one of God’s heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. Only God knows the secrets of a person’s heart and mind and the mental, emotional or spiritual pain that may have driven them to commit suicide.

Only God knows whether the person was able to be accountable for his or her actions—many people commit suicide while suffering from mental illness, which impairs their judgment. If you are grieving for a friend who has committed suicide, do not torture yourself with the thought that he or she is lost for all eternity. You cannot know what God knows, nor can you love your friend as much as God loves him or her.

The Bible does assure us, though, that suicide is *never* God’s will for your life.

What the Church Says

The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have an official “doctrine” about suicide; we believe that suicide is a sin, just as murder is, forbidden by the Ten Commandments. Some of Mrs. Ellen G. White’s statements make it clear that she regarded suicide as a sin.

[Speaking of the death of King Saul by suicide] Thus the first king of Israel perished, with the guilt of self-murder upon his soul.⁵

Every day testifies to the increase of insanity, murder, and suicide. Who can doubt that satanic agencies are at work among men with increasing activity to distract and corrupt the mind, and defile and destroy the body?⁶

Mrs. White recognized that depression and discouragement, which so often lead to suicide, are real problems that God cares about. She wrote to one person struggling with depression:

“Do not give way to depression, but let the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit be welcomed into your heart, to give you comfort and peace....I am praying that the Lord will reveal Himself to you as a personal Comforter. The eyes of the soul must be kept open, in order to recognize the great mercies of our heavenly Father. Jesus is a bright and shining light. Let Him reflect His bright beams into the heart and mind....Look to Him, and lay before Him all your necessities. Is anything too hard for the Lord? He is the Great Physician. He can heal soul and body, and He would have you take hold of Him in faith. He fully

understands the needs of your case. He is a very present help in every time of need....Let the light of His peace shine into your soul....Let not one cloud of despondency or dissatisfaction hide from you the sunshine of His presence”⁷

What the World Says

Suicide is one of those issues where our world sends us conflicting messages. Everyone is concerned about the rise of suicide among young people; suicide “hot-lines” and counsellors are in place to help prevent teens from killing themselves. Yet our popular culture continues to produce music, movies and books that suggest suicide can be a “cool” or attractive or brave choice. Heavy-metal and rap musicians who sing about suicide and murder argue that their songs don’t really affect listeners’ behavior, but the Bible tells us that we can be changed by the things we look at and listen to—bad as well as good (see 1 Corinthians 3:18).

Another “hot topic” today is that of assisted suicide, the right-to-die or euthanasia. Many people believe that those who are terminally ill should have the right to kill themselves or ask others to kill them so they will not suffer too much. Even Christians debate this issue. The position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that it is all right for a person who is terminally ill to refuse treatment that might prolong but not save his or her life, but that no-one has the right to actively take life, except God.

While this is a controversial topic of debate, most teenagers who wrestle with the problem of suicide are considering it not because of a physical illness, but because they are spiritually and emotionally sick, unhappy and alone.

What I Can Do

If you have a friend or family member who seems depressed and who may be suicidal—especially if he or she is demonstrating several of the typical signs of suicide listed above—please don't keep quiet. You may feel you are interfering or being nosy, but your friend's life is more important than the possibility that either of you might have your feelings hurt. Talk to your friend, and talk to a trusted adult—parent, teacher, pastor or counsellor. It's better to do something than to do nothing.

If you have lost a friend to suicide, you may need help dealing with your grief. You may also suffer from guilt; you may feel that if only you had done something to help, things might have been different. The fact is that you have no way of knowing what "might have" happened. The devil loves to tempt us with thoughts of how things "might have been different," but God calls us to live in the present. Your grief for your lost friend is a real and serious problem, but your life continues on and God has a plan for you.

Since suicides among young people often lead to depression and further suicide attempts among their friends, you and other close friends should con-

sider getting professional counselling if the suicide victim was someone close to you.

It's my Problem

If you are struggling with feelings of depression and despair and have considered killing yourself, please remember that suicide is a *permanent* solution to a *temporary* problem. Although it may feel like the bad times you are having now will last forever, they won't. Sometimes it's hard for young people to realize that situations and people do change, and that things can and will get better.

If you're considering suicide:

- Don't be ashamed of your feelings. Many youth and adults feel this way. You are not "weird" or "sick" because you have these feelings.
- Share your feelings with someone. Tell a friend how you feel.
- Talk to a trusted adult—a parent, teacher, pastor, or your family doctor. If you feel so alone that there is no-one who can help you, call a suicide-prevention hotline or a kids' helpline number. (Most communities have a local number in the phone book. If you can't find anything like that in your community, you can find help on the World Wide Web through suicide prevention sites such as www.yellowribbon.org). There you can talk anonymously to someone who

is trained to help with problems like yours. This can be a great help in the short term. In the long term, try to find a trusted adult counsellor who can help you work through the problems that led to this crisis.

- Make the effort to get involved in activities again, especially those that involve helping others. If you've been focusing on your own problems for a long time, a change in perspective may be refreshing.
- Remember that God loves you. You may not *feel* His love right now—one of the things depression does is make us unable to feel positive emotions. But God's love is still there. Look outside yourself to God's eternal promises in the Bible. Check out verses such as Deuteronomy 31:8; Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 43:1, 2; Isaiah 41:10; John 3:16; Romans 5:4-8; 1 Peter 5:7.

Remember, you are valuable and precious to God. He created you, and your life matters to Him. Ending your life is not part of His plan for you. Reach out in faith even when you don't feel His presence. God loves you; family and friends care what happens to you. Find someone to talk to.

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5. White, Ellen G., *Conflict and Courage*, p. 174.
6. White, Ellen G., *Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.
7. White, Ellen G., *This Day With God*, p. 305.



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REAL LIFE, PART TWO

As Janelle left her room, the doorbell rang. Her older brother answered it. "Hey, Janelle, it's Kristen and Shelagh," he called.

Janelle really didn't want to see anyone right now. But her friends were already inside the house, and she didn't want to be rude, so she invited them into her room.

Kristen got right to the point. "Janelle, we're worried about you. We know you're depressed, and we're afraid—well, we're afraid you might try to do something stupid, like hurt yourself in some way." Janelle was silent. She knew they wanted her to say, "Oh, I'd never do that," but the words wouldn't come. Instead, tears started rolling down her cheeks.

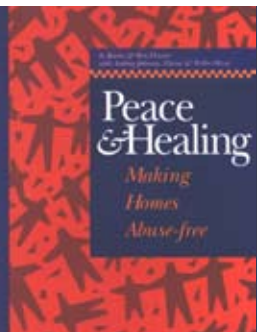
Shelagh reached out a hand. "You've been thinking about it, haven't you?"

After a short silence, Kristen said, "Janelle, I know you might be mad, but I told my mom I was worried about you. Now, I know you don't get along very well with your mom right now, and you probably wouldn't be comfortable talking to her, but my mom and I called Pastor Harris. He'd like to see you—tonight. He's not going to lecture you or anything, just listen. My mom's in the car outside; she'll drive us there. Will you come?"

"No!" Janelle said automatically. She was about to tell her friends to butt out; it was none of their business—but the words wouldn't come. Tears came instead. She had been on the point of killing herself—how could things get any worse? At least Kristen and Shelagh cared enough to try and help.

Finally, Janelle nodded. "I don't know if it'll do any good, but I'll come with you. Just let me grab my jacket." 📺

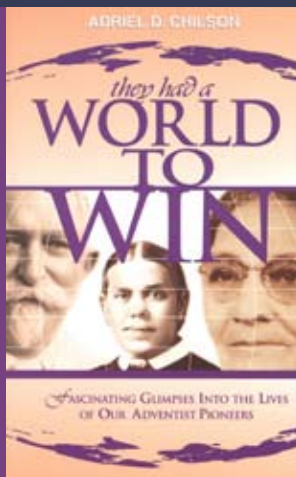
http://www.adventsource.org/



Eighty percent of all victims of domestic violence look to a pastor, priest, rabbi or other religious leader for help first. Yet clergy are some of the least informed and most ill-prepared for abuse counseling.

At the 1995 General Conference Session a list of six major social issues were presented to delegates to rank in importance. Almost 30 percent chose domestic violence as the number one issue to address.

Crisis calls for response. An appropriate church response can start right here—with *Peace & Healing*.



Adriel D. Chilson, author of this book, was married to the late Winifred White, great-granddaughter of Ellen G. White, and combined anecdotes collected at family reunions with careful research to give us this collection of biographies.

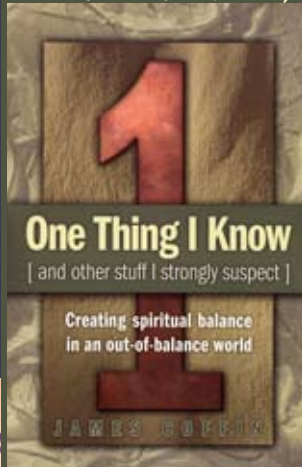
Each chapter of this volume portrays one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Joseph Bates was kidnapped and forced to serve five years in the British navy. Uriah Smith invented the famous school desk with folding chair, and an improved wooden leg—to replace the one he had sawed off without anesthesia. Anna Knight and Kate Lindsay carried pistols. There was the time E. G. White's son Willie got kicked out of school for insulting his teacher.

Willie would win the hand of Mary Kelsey away from John Harvey Kellogg, whose electrical health contraptions would grace the royal palaces at Buckingham and Windsor.

God used such fallible people to fashion a movement to win the world with the message of a soon-coming Saviour. Read their remarkable stories.

A collection of short essays, originally written as editorials,



One Thing I Know address aspects of spiritual life from the perspective of a Seventh-day Adventist. James Coffin brings order out of the chaos of changing ideas, theology, and Adventist mores.

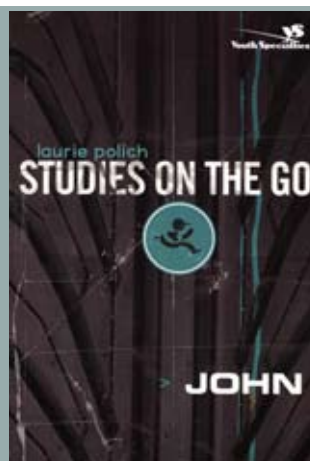
How, he asks, can we avoid becoming inoculated against Christianity? What about formal dress in a changing culture? Music? Loyalty to our fundamental beliefs?

Do you spend way too much time tweaking Bible studies to suit your group? Do you read questions that are either way over their heads or just plain insulting to their intelligence?

No more.

Studies on the Go is an exciting new Bible study series from Youth Specialties. It is a quick, pick-up-and-use-it set of 30 studies that don't skimp on depth.

Whether you are a full-time youth pastor or a busy volunteer, you'll appreciate *Studies on the Go: John*.



The Dynamics of Religious Conversion



Many regard religious conversion primarily, or even solely, as leaving one faith group and adopting another. In *The Dynamics of Religious Conversion*, V. Bailey Gillespie shows persuasively that religious conversion is far deeper and more personal than just a switch of confessional allegiances. This book gives the reader:

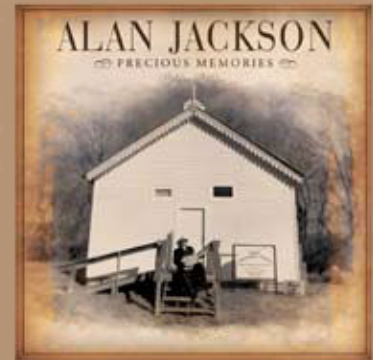
- An overall interdisciplinary understanding of the basic transformational structure and dynamic process of religious conversion
- The practical implications of this interdisciplinary understanding for the successful facilitation of religious conversion in others
- A set of special chapters on how to effectively facilitate religious conversion through general pastoral ministry and through two highly influential particular ministries: pastoral counseling and religious education.



Worship with the VeggieTales gang! Bob, Larry and the rest of the Veggies will have your little sprouts singing along to some of today's most popular praise and worship songs. The songs on this CD were carefully chosen to provide families with a meaningful and memorable way to learn worship favorites. They'll get a praiseworthy head start with songs including "Better Is One Day" (with Matt Redman), "Thy Word," "Seek Ye First," "I Am a Promise," "Forever," "You Are Holy," and more.



From the Dove Award Winning Group that brought you the powerful hit, 'You Raise Me Up' comes a masterful 15 track collection of Greatest Hymns. Selah's Greatest Hymns feature the recorded single, 'Be Thou My Vision'.



In this album every song is deliberately calm and consciously tasteful, which may make for perfect music for church, but hardly makes for a dynamic record. As the album rolls on, the similarity in tempo and arrangements gives the album a monotonous, sleepy quality; each individual track is well crafted and sincere, but taken as a whole, it all blurs together and winds up seeming twice as long as its 37 minutes. But even if Precious Memories winds up as something slightly underwhelming, there's no denying that this is precisely the album Jackson wanted to make, one that's consistent in tone and exact in its vision. It may not make for everyday listening, even an album that would be played every week, yet it would make a good soundtrack for a reflective, reverent Saturday afternoon.

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