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The Call of Disruption

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The Call of Disruption

If there is one thing about the leaders of the early church, they never left the world as they found it. That is really not surprising in that their mentor, their Savior, brought change and hope wherever He went.

Of course, it took the disciples a long time to understand their responsibilities, to turn them from recipients of Jesus’ blessings, individuals who expected to be part of the glory of the Kingdom Jesus would bring, to become compassionate, caring servants who were givers rather than receivers.

If we just take Peter as an example — while he was very clear that Jesus was the Messiah, he was equally confident that he, Peter, was loyal, would follow Jesus anywhere and would never deny Him. But, of course, he slept when he should have been awake, spoke when he should have been quiet, and denied when he should have affirmed. How different is the Peter of Acts — confident now, not in himself, but the Jesus Who has been resurrected. Much less of the “I” talk and much more of the “Jesus” talk. As he confidently leads his fellow disciples into a new world, one changed forever by the resurrection of Christ, he is able to do so — irresistibly called to do so — in light of his understanding of the commission left him by the ascended Savior. As he and the other disciples, and then later Paul and other apostles, focus on the communities around them, their needs, and particularly their need of that Savior, they disrupt the status quo, challenge the discrimination in their societies, offer hope to those in need and, most of all, create the beginnings of a church that has changed the lives of countless millions. Truly amazing.

I believe that today as Christians, as Seventh-day Adventists, we are still called to disrupt the world with our compassion, our integrity and our faith. I cannot say how that looks for each individual, but I do believe God leads us to find that calling. For some, it may be through bringing healing or preventing illness through a true understanding of the value of our creation in the image of God. For some, it may be creating opportunities for communities and individuals to embrace more fully the gifts God gives us daily in our current world through, for example, plans to alleviate poverty, creating structures to improve equality, growing wealth to give back to mission and community. For others, it may be to educate, sharing a deeper knowledge of the God who impacts every discipline we may study. And it may mean becoming one of those quiet influences in the community who share God’s love through prayer, compassionate conversation and thoughtful acts. But, yes, each in its own way, these callings challenge the world to believe there really is Truth, and it lies in a Person, One that was human and is divine. And belief in that Truth will disrupt the present as well as provide a different narrative for the future.

Awareness of our calling does not come in a vacuum. Just as the disciples spent time understanding the character of God, moving from recipients of God’s blessings to realizing their role in imparting God’s grace on others, so we, too, as we are filled up with God’s blessings, understand increasingly how to give.

At Andrews University we take seriously our responsibility to help our students, our graduates, deepen their understanding of their unique calling.
We have recently added a tagline to identify that accepted responsibility: “World Changers Made Here.” But I want you to know that it is not just me or the faculty and staff who are part of that process of creating an environment for nurturing commitment and calling. It is the students themselves who are already making choices to disrupt the world and their communities through the combination of their faith, their skills and their unique talents. And so, our architecture students build clinics in a container for Congo and Swaziland. Our community and international development students travel to Madagascar to bring hope and opportunity to those less privileged in that society. The seminary students and staff travel to Cuba, resulting in more than 500 baptisms. The engineers work with Engineers Without Borders. More than 1,600 students and employees join forces to bring change in multiple ways to the local community on Change Day. Benton Harbor school district receives more than 100 students over the year, assisting in the classroom with value-based literacy. The list could continue.

Our society, our world, needs change. It needs disruption, and we are asked to be part of that. At its core, the gospel is not about an easier life for ourselves. It is about ministry and service to others so that they, too, may understand the power of the gospel and, in turn, become disrupters of the status quo. Perhaps this in practice is the meaning of Jesus’ statement that He did not come to bring peace to the world but to bring a sword — a sword that would ask for change, demand different priorities, stand on Truth, and center all this in the reality of the living gospel.

What an amazing invitation to be part of that movement of change.

Andrea Luxton, president, Andrews University