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JACOB & NATHANIEL
BROTHERS WRESTLING WITH GOD

How to Pay For GRAD SCHOOL
It's easier than you think!

5 Things you must know before saying "I DO"

JUMP START YOUR WORKOUT
No Equipment? No Problem!
The True Story of the Student Missionary Who Gave Her All

Rainey H. Park with Andy Nash

Love, Kirsten

Not every story ends in happily ever after... at least not here on earth. On the morning of November 19, 2009, Kirsten Wolcott was murdered while jogging on the Micronesian Island of Yap, where she served as a student missionary. International headlines testified to the shock and tragedy of Kirsten’s death. As you read Kirsten’s journal entries you’ll fall in love with a gifted 20-year-old who laughed, cooked, jogged, and most of all, loved her Lord.

Often, it’s when we’re riding the wave of sweet relationship with Jesus, or when we’re coming down off the spiritual high of service for Him, that the devil strikes his deadliest blow. But we know that the wound isn’t final, that Christ is the eternal Victor. And we know that God has His eye on the day when He can welcome home Kirsten Wolcott, His energetic, dedicated, winsome daughter, to run to her heart’s content beside the River of Life.

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Love, Kirsten

The True Story of the Student Missionary Who Gave Her All

Rainey H. Park with Andy Nash
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Photo by Jean-Ives Michel  
Model Lonnie Kotanko
Michael Ehm can never forget opening his dorm room door to find the dean standing on the other side in January 1977. “I’m sorry,” the man said. “Your roommate has died.” “What?” Ehm asked. “He committed suicide,” the dean said. Ehm hardly knew the young man, still the news shocked him. It was Ehm’s first weekend at Andrews University. “I thought it was supposed to be this Christian utopia, and it wasn’t like that,” Ehm said.

As the semester wore on, the theology major wondered if he really was in the right place. He was amazed at the cynicism of the supposed believers around him. His classmates jokingly referred to Ellen G. White as “egg white” and challenged the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Ehm faced disciplinary action on multiple occasions for wearing a ring and letting his hair grow long, because he was not supposed to draw unnecessary attention to himself, according to school regulations. Yet, the campus’ standards seemed particularly hypocritical to Ehm when he observed an Andrews administrator driving a Mercedes Benz.

By Christine Lairson
“I just wasn’t feeling my faith,” Ehm recalled. As soon as the semester ended, the disillusioned teenager returned home to Wisconsin and decided to drop out of school. He also turned his back on God.

For the next 30 years, Ehm submerged himself in drugs, rock ‘n’ roll, and the adult entertainment business. Yet, the seeds of God’s love planted by his Christian mother, and a request made shortly before her death, would drive Ehm back into the arms of his loving Creator.

In 1977, however, his main concern centered around his passion for heavy metal rock ‘n’ roll music. “I walked, talked, lived, breathed, and ate rock ‘n’ roll,” he said.

Ehm created his own business contacting bands and helping them get gigs in the United States. He business soon shifted to marketing and promoting the bands.

In 1981, Music Television channel (MTV) took notice of Ehm, who had earned a party-boy reputation. MTV paid him to throw a Club MTV party.

Ehm next accepted a job with media company Rock Bill doing corporate sponsorship and merchandising for heavy metal bands. His career took off, allowing him to work with renowned bands such as Rolling Stones, U2, Hall and Oats, and the artist Ozzy Osbourne of the group “Black Sabbath”. “I was on top of the world, and I couldn’t get any higher,” Ehm said.

Then life got even better for Ehm. While on tour in Madison, Wis., Ehm met a Cristie in a jewelry store. In 1982, a year and a half later, Ehm married Cristie on a beach in Hawaii. The couple lived in Hollywood, Calif., off Sunset Boulevard, enjoying a life of luxury with maid service and designer clothing.

That life didn’t last. Ehm and his wife grew apart due to his constant touring. When his wife asked him what his priorities were, he replied: God, his job, and his wife — repeating a Johnny Carson line. She didn’t find it funny, and the two divorced in 1986.

“I was fashionably married in Hawaii and unfashionably divorced in L.A,” he said.

After his divorce, Ehm attempted to heal his heart with parties, drugs, and women, fully embracing the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle. “I was upside down,” he said. “I was always high.”

Then, when ‘90s rock ‘n’ roll transitioned from heavy metal to grunge, Ehm decided to quit the music scene. He pursued acting, and eventually received a Screen Actors Guild card. He worked doing stand-up comedy, commercials and even landed bit roles in several movies. But he just didn’t feel right. “I became tired of being this shell of a person. I looked in the mirror, and I couldn’t believe it. This was not the way my mom brought me up! How did I get here?” he asked.

God’s campaign on Ehm continued as his mother’s struggle with cancer progressed.

In 2004, she asked Ehm if he was praying for her. “She was very frustrated with the chemotherapy,” Ehm said. “She looked at me and asked, ‘Michael, are you praying?’ He replied that his prayers were not going to work because he was not worthy to come before God. “She reached for her Bible and proceeded to rattle off verse after verse of how I was worthy, how Christ had paid a great price for me,” Ehm said.

His decision to pray came one night in January 2005, on his way home from work. He was managing a Fort Collins, Colo. strip club owned by his father — a man he met for the first time while in his 20s. As he drove, he heard a preacher on the radio. Instead of changing the station, he listened. The preacher was talking about a “Higher Power” but didn’t identify the “higher power.” Frustrated, Ehm shouted at the radio, “Why don’t you come out and say it? It’s God! Just God!”

The outburst made Ehm realize he still must have some convictions about spirituality. He decided to stop, pulling over at a mountain lake. In the moonless night, he walked out onto the frozen, snow-covered lake stumbled through a prayer to God for his mother.

An hour went by as he cried out to God,
tears and mucus frozen in his beard. “What am I doing here?” he asked himself that night. “Listen,” he prayed, “if you think you can do something with me, have at it.”

Ehm still showed up for work at the strip club, but his view of the establishment began to change. As he looked around, Ehm wondered why someone would come and spend his entire paycheck on a girl he did not know? And why would a young woman dance nude for some man she didn’t know? For weeks, “vanity, vanity” played through his mind. He thought everyone in his business was vain, until he began to wonder if he, too, suffered from the sin.

It didn’t take long to realize that he was the vainest one of them all. “I’m the biggest fool putting on this circus,” he thought. “It was sobering,” he said. “I think the Holy Spirit was talking to me.”

One day, as he watched television, beer in hand, a pastor came on preaching from Ecclesiastes; his sermon was on “vanity.” Ehm ran to dig out an old Bible tucked away in boxes and spent the night reading.

From then on, Ehm read the Bible before work. He contemplated his life and realized he had nothing of worth. He wanted to know more of God.

Three weeks later, on Dec. 31, 2005, Ehm walked into his brother’s office at the strip club and handed him the keys. Walking out the door, Ehm felt a heavy burden lift from his shoulders. He felt fresh, renewed.

With newfound faith and mourning the loss of his mother, Ehm moved back to Wisconsin.

Then in May 2006, Ehm decided to visit his mother’s old home. He got lost and ended up at the Green Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church instead. Ehm said he felt compelled to go in. There he met a man behind a table offering videos of evangelist David Asscherick preaching. He cautioned Ehm that Asscherick was radical. Ehm smirked in his leather jacket, chaps, and jewelry. “Radical is what is standing in front of you,” he said.

When Ehm got home, he watched the videos and read some of his mother’s old Ellen G. White books about the Sabbath. He realized he had been blind, dropped to his knees, and prayed for forgiveness. He promised to keep the Sabbath, but he loathed the idea of returning to the Adventist church.

He found every excuse why he didn’t want to return: the people were unfriendly; they were hypocrites; they were gossipy, and so the list went on.

But he continued to pray and ask God to help him deal with his misgivings. “I prayed to God and said, ‘If this is your church, I will go back.’” A good friend, Genelle Cornforth, began praying for him, along with her Bible study group.

God answered their prayers and Ehm joined their group. Between their influence and studying his mother’s religious books, Ehm made the decision to get re-baptized on July 16, 2006.

Ehm then learned about ARISE Institute, which Asscherick co-founded. He applied to the school of ministry, got accepted, attended, and loved it. Upon graduation, he moved to Berrien Springs, Mich., to help market the ministry’s Sabbath School commentaries locally. But why did God lead him back to Berrien Springs more than three decades after he dropped out of school and ran away from God? The answer soon became clear.

While Ehm was having morning devotions, he came across Philippians 1:6, which stated that God would finish the good work He had started in his followers. This compelled him to return to Andrews University and complete his degree.

He made a deal with God: “If you open up the doors, then I will run through like a man on fire.” God did exactly that.

With his tuition paid, Ehm returned to Andrews in the 2009 spring semester as a theology major.

At 53, Michael has been through the ‘school of hard knocks’ and feels blessed to be back—ready to roll up his sleeves (though his arms bear tattoos from his rebel days) and work for the Solid Rock, Jesus Christ.

“I have found that it is not about feeling your faith, but living your faith. If it’s feelings you want, Satan can provide them, but the one thing he cannot provide is the joy and peace that God gives. God works from the inside out; Satan work from the outside in.”

Photos by Dylan Closser & Michele Ryan
Personal photos provided by Michael Ehm
Questions for Michael Ehm?
Talk with him on Facebook.com/EnvisionMagazine.
Check Your Messages

Not too long ago I was walking across campus when I was almost run over by a student on a bicycle. He quickly apologized, and as I watched him disappear into the distance I couldn’t help but remember the bike messengers in New York City.

Bicycle messengers, a natural part of the New York City hustle and bustle, dart through nightmarish traffic to deliver packages. As a pedestrian you learn to look out for these bikers as they risk their lives, zipping around city buses and cutting off vehicles many times their size, just to deliver the message. You dare not get in their way and risk delaying their deliveries. They are that serious about their mission. And apparently their message is that important.

Which brings me to these questions: Are bike messengers the only ones who have urgent messages to deliver? Haven’t we acquired a crucial message too? We face an adversary who wants to keep us off track, and so, the trick becomes discerning what is your message and whom are you delivering it for.

Just leafing through the pages of this issue you’ll meet messengers who, like the New York City bike couriers, burn with the urgency of delivery.

For instance, take Michael Ehm—he’s back at Andrews University after first enrolling 30 years ago. He chased a dream of becoming a music promoter—until the words of Solomon chased him back to God (p. 6). Ehm has a message.

How about Nathaniel Gibbs? Once a pink-haired, head-driven rebel, he and his brother Jacob took a route that was anything but scenic. They each have a message (p. 29).

All these messages are possible because of Isaiah 43:19 where God says, “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

As we go forward this year, let’s not forget that God wants the best for us, and He wants us to share His message with a lost world. Even as you read these pages, your story is still being written and waiting to be dispatched. Hold on to your handlebars and don’t run over any pedestrians.

Debbie Michel
Editor
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COME JOIN OUR TEAM!

We’re on the hunt for talented writers, photographers, and graphic designers to help produce the next issue. Contact us at envisionmagazine.com or Facebook.com/EnvisionMagazine.

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SPECIAL THANKS:
SODIUM: Less is More.

Sodium is an essential mineral because it’s necessary for fluid and electrolyte balance in your body. However, consuming too much salt (aka sodium) may lead to high blood pressure, a condition called hypertension. Consistent hypertension over time may increase your risk of congestive heart failure, coronary heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. Although sodium is found naturally in many foods, this only accounts for about twelve percent of total sodium intake by the average American. Here are several steps you can take to reduce or prevent high blood pressure:

1. **Look out for “hidden” sodium** in non-salty foods such as canned soups, canned vegetables, condiments, breads and vegetable juices. You don’t have to worry about this when dining in the Terrace Café or the Gazebo because we make our food from scratch using fresh vegetables and ingredients.

2. **Eating a diet rich in potassium** may counteract the effects of sodium on blood pressure and it may also reduce the risk of developing kidney stones. Potassium-rich foods include fruits, green leafy and root vegetables.

3. **Being overweight can make you two to six times more likely to develop hypertension**. Keeping your weight in a normal range is not only beneficial for your overall health, it may help you maintain normal blood pressure as well.

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  - Supper 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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  - **FRIDAY**
  - 9:00 a.m. – sunset
  - **SABBATH**
  - Sunset – 11:00 p.m.

- **SUNDAY**
  - 11:30 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.
HEALTH & FITNESS

DELICIOUS

Vegan Dishes

Recipes by Taisha Holmes-Bulgin
Stylists Tiffany Evering & Chloema Tait
Photo by Jay Kijal
QUINOA STUFFED ACORN SQUASH

What you need
- 2 acorn squash (cut in half)
- 1 cup quinoa (uncooked)
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 tsp. Bill’s Best Chik’nish powder
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion (diced)
- 1 garlic clove (minced)
- 1 red pepper (diced)
- 1 large carrot (diced)
- 2 celery stalks
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- Nonstick cooking spray

What to do
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. Place washed quinoa in a pot with 2 cups of vegetable broth, cook until broth is evaporated and quinoa is tender.
3. Place the squash cut side down on a baking sheet (use nonstick cooking spray) and place in oven for 45 minutes. After 45 minutes, make sure that the squash is tender.
4. Heat up oil on a large frying pan or wok and add the garlic, onions, celery, red pepper and saute until onions are transparent.
5. Add the quinoa, cranberries, salt and chik’nish powder.
6. Once squash is soft remove it from the oven.
7. Adjust seasonings if needed and then scoop the quinoa mix into each of the squash halves; serve and enjoy.

LEMON COCONUT PUDDING PIE

Filling
- 1 lb. firm tofu
- 2 packets Mori-Nu Tofu vanilla pudding mix
- 1/2 cup cane juice crystals
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 tsp. Frontier lemon extract
- 1/2 tsp. almond extract
- 1/2 cup coconut milk

Topping
- Fresh blueberries and strawberries

Crust
- Arrowhead Mills 9-inch graham cracker crust

Directions:
- Blend all filling ingredients in food processor or Vitamix blender until smooth (about 30 seconds). Pour mixture into crust and put in refrigerator to cool. Let pie set in refrigerator about two hours until chilled and firm. Garnish with fresh fruit.
STRENGTH to KEEP OFF the POUNDS

Most students gain 10-14 pounds between their freshman and senior years in college, according to researchers at Indiana University, Blooming-ton, Ind., and Tufts University, Boston, Mass. Knowing these unhealthy statistics, you might ask yourself, “What can I do to keep off the pounds?”

There is no single answer to this question, but fitness professionals do offer at least one solution: strength training. Though strength training alone can’t keep you from gaining weight, it is an important step towards maintaining and improving a healthy body composition.

What is Strength Training?

Strength training exercises challenge all major muscle groups. Exercisers overload the body (use more resistance than it is used to) in order to build muscular strength and endurance. The results make everyday tasks, such as lifting, carrying, and walking, easier and can even help exercisers improve their athletic ability.

Two of the most common strength training exercises are push-ups and sit-ups. Basically any activities done with weights, machines, resistance bands and medicine balls are also strength builders. Coupled with cardiovascular and flexibility exercises, strength training is the third and final component of a complete exercise program.

Some women falsely believe that strength training will make them look bulky. This could be one reason why more men strength train than women, according to authors from The Physician and Sports Medicine Journal. Fortunately, women who strength train will “not automatically look more ‘male-like,’” said Dominique Wakefield, director of Fitness & Exercise Studies at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Mich. “Women have different hormones than men and will not bulk nearly as much.”

Because of the many physical and mental benefits of strength training, both men and women can enjoy the exercises. According to experts at www.SnapFitness.com, strength training “tightens and tones” the body while also helping exercisers manage weight, strengthen bones, reduce the chance of injury, increase energy and improve self-esteem. Regular strength training also increases metabolic efficiency, making it easier for the body to burn calories more frequently.

Where Can I Strength Train?

Anywhere! Strength training exercises can be done outside, at home or in the gym and don’t always require expensive equipment. In fact, some strength training workouts don’t require equipment at all.

“Muscular strength and endurance exercises are a vital part of achieving overall physical fitness, and there are so many ways to do them!” Wakefield said. “You do not need expensive equipment and you do not necessarily need a health club membership to work on your muscular fitness. What is important is that you address all your major muscle groups two times per week to gain fitness-related health benefits.”

How Do I Get Started?

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that Americans perform 8 to 10 strength training exercises twice a week, doing eight to 12 repetitions of each. Remember, it is important to continually challenge the body in order to avoid exercise plateaus.

Photos by Katelin Mitchell
**The "No Equipment" STRENGTH TRAINING ROUTINE**

By Dominique Wolfefield

- **Chair dips** Sit on the edge of a chair and place hands behind hips. Lift backside off seat and walk feet forward. Slowly lower body downward and extend body back to starting position. Repeat.

- **Leg lifts lying down** [both legs together, single legs] Lie on the back with hands at the side. Lift legs into the air, keeping them as straight as possible, and contract abdominal muscles.

- **Wall push-ups** [or on the floor, standard or modified] Perform normal push-ups or modify the exercise by placing hands against a wall instead of floor.

- **Alternating standing lunges** Begin in regular stance with legs approximately hip-width apart. Step forward with one leg and lower the body down, bending the leg. Do not allow the knee to move beyond the toes while descending. Push up and back and repeat with other leg.

- **Planks** [on hands or elbows] Lie face down on the floor. Raise onto your toes and elbows, trying to keep the back straight. Hold position for 20-60 sec and repeat.

- **Standing calf-raises** Stand with feet several inches apart. Raise the heels and contract calf muscles. Hold this position for several seconds. Slowly return to starting position. Repeat.

- **Abdominal crunches** Lie down with the back against the floor and bend both knees. Place hands behind neck. Flatten the lower back against the floor and slowly contract abdominal muscles, bringing shoulder blades 1-3 inches off the ground. Hold at top for several seconds and slowly back down. Repeat.

This is a 30-minute sample work-out you can do in the gym, or even your dorm room.

Start with one set of 15 repetitions or holding the position for 15 seconds. Gradually work up to three sets of 20. Once that becomes easy, repeat the circuit two to four times.

Warm up by walking in place or doing jumping jacks for three minutes.

Want to add CARDIO to the MIX?

In-between each strength-training element, do 25 jumping jacks or run in place lifting your knees high.

**FINISHED**

- **Cool down** by walking in place for 2-3 minutes
- **Stretch the whole body** (all major joints) and hold each stretch 15-30 seconds. Repeat 2-4 times.

- **Standing leg extensions** [backwards, lateral] Stand with legs hip-width apart. Slowly lift one leg off the floor while stabilizing body weight on the supporting leg without shifting or leaning. Extend the leg as far and comfortably as possible. Slowly return to starting position. Repeat.
The infamous cold, snowy Michigan winter—coupled with short days and long nights—can give the most cheerful person a case of the winter blues. These winter blues, also known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), is a form of depression that usually occurs this time of year. It affects between four and six percent of people in the United States each winter, most of them teenagers and young adults. Symptoms include lack of concentration, fatigue, crying, weight gain, overeating (usually carbohydrates), irritability, and poor sleep. Fortunately there’s a lot you can do to prevent the blues and get yourself back to normal if you’re already there.

Keep Active

Dr. Peter Pribis, assistant professor of nutrition at Andrews University says that one of the most effective ways to beat depression is with cardiovascular exercise. “Physical activity not only prevents depression, but is a wonderful treatment for those who are depressed,” he said. Aerobic exercise increases serotonin levels, a neurotransmitter in the brain and the main chemical that improves mood. Exercising for 30 minutes at an intensity of 70—80 percent of maximum heart rate provides sufficient serotonin uptake to reduce symptoms of depression. Fun winter sports like ice skating, skiing, and sledding, and snowboarding all provide great opportunities to get active and enjoy the snow. Doing sit-ups, push-ups, squats, and rope jumping are all good indoor exercises.

Eat Well

Bananas, tofu, pumpkin seeds, almonds, sesame seeds, and walnuts are all high in tryptophan—an essential amino acid that increases serotonin levels. Another great way to beat depression is by eating more omega fatty acids rich food, says Pribis. He cautions, however, that there are two types of fatty acids: omega 6 and omega 3. It’s better to have more omega 3 fatty acids in your diet, and avoid omega 6 fatty acids that are usually found in meat.

Good sources of omega 3 fatty acids include fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, halibut, and herring), walnuts, flaxseed, and fish oil.

Depression can also be triggered by a deficiency in folic acid—a condition meat-eaters are more likely to experience than vegetarians. Foods high in folic acid are garbanzos, spinach, navy beans, cantaloupe, fortified cold cereal, oatmeal, and asparagus.

Low levels of Vitamin B12 also contribute to depression. Plant sources must be fortified to contain this vitamin. Good sources include trout, beef, skim milk, yogurt, cottage cheese and fortified soy milk.

Talk It Over

Even with these techniques for dealing with seasonal affective disorder, some students may need extra help beating the winter blues. A school psychologist can provide counseling and give additional help and advice to students who are struggling.

And don’t neglect to keep in touch with friends and family to ask for their help or encouragement when you need it. A phone call, chat over tea, or stroll around town with a friend can help brighten your mood. Seeing winter in a positive light with all the fun activities it has to offer and nourishing foods you can enjoy will keep your spirits high.
One of the most revealing stories in the Bible is the story of King David and Bathsheba in II Samuel 11. David had truly experienced the blessings of God in his life. He conquered his enemies and the land of Israel was almost at the point of total peace. But one night, while he should have been with his army, he saw Bathsheba, a married woman, and commanded that she be brought to his home so he could sleep with her. She would subsequently alert David that she was pregnant. To hide his deed, David ordered Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, a soldier in his army, to the front lines of battle to be killed.

How could a man blessed by God do such a thing? There are three things that led to David’s fall and three preventative measures that could have been taken to avoid this wrongdoing.

1. David avoided his duty and it was in idleness that David fell. During the spring time, David was supposed to go out to war, instead of going off to the battle field, he stayed home. If David had been at war, he would have been busy and never would have seen Bathsheba bathing. One way to fight temptation is to complete tasks that you have at specific times. Keep yourself active. When it’s time to study, study. When it’s time to sleep, sleep. It’s easy not to fall into temptation when you are sleeping.

2. David first saw the woman, and she was very beautiful to behold. There is a difference between seeing and beholding. After seeing Bathsheba bathing, David should have looked away. Instead he lingered in the moment. The eyes are God’s gift to man. I can’t imagine what it would be like if we were created without eyes. The eyes can be used to behold beauty, but they can also be used to behold vice. Jesus made a profound statement about the eyes in Matthew 6:22, 23. He said the light of the body is the eye. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

It is vitally important to guard the eyes. If there is something that you know you shouldn’t be looking at, turn you eyes away. It takes the power of Jesus to keep the mind pure. Let us look to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith and plead mercy and grace to overcome.

3. David did not learn to be content. David had a number of wives —II Samuel 3 lists six wives, not including his first wife Michal, Saul’s daughter. The lesson of contentment is learned in the lesson of trust. Until we really believe that God has our best interest in mind, it will be hard not to want sinful things.

Let’s be honest, we love sin. By nature, we want to sin. When God tells us not to do something, we feel like we have something to lose by obeying God. Psalm 84:11 promises, “… no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we will trust Him. Ask God for power to overcome temptation and He will give it to you.

After chastisement from Nathan the prophet, King David recognized his sin and he plead for the life of his son. But when the baby died, David cleaned himself, went and worshipped God and ate. I’m amazed at the response of David. He didn’t let his sin keep him from God. He knew God was waiting for him to come back to the way of righteousness.

The Bible says, “… If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” So if you feel like you’ve fallen away from the Forgiver, why wait? Come to God with your pains, sorrows, and failures. Let Him heal and forgive you.

By Roy Kim

Photo by Lonica Maae
“You have no idea who I am, but...I know so much about you.” The man’s words unnerved April Grube, especially at 12:30 a.m. She had thought the two empty, adjacent seats on her red-eye flight from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., meant she could sleep the entire trip. After all, she needed rest following her collegiate tour across the country. Tired and irritated, Grube had every intention of shutting her eyes to the world once she boarded the plane.

One Annoying Passenger

The man Grube had watched fumble up the aisle ruined those plans. “Name’s Billy Trist,” he said, “on my way to a conference.” Barely stopping for breath nor wasting a moment, Trist began a monologue. “He was rambling,” she said, “asking me questions without even stopping to hear the answer.” She soon saw the hilarity of the situation, smiling politely as she listened to tale after tale.

“Never did like flying; always too hot or too cold. Babies crying and moms all flustered ‘cause the stewardess is tellin’ her to keep ‘em quiet. And these seats are much too small, don’t ya think? But I can’t complain. Lord knows, I can’t complain. I’m a blessed man and never been more blessed than when I was on an airplane,” she remembered him saying.

Billy’s Struggle

Grube had no idea Trist’s capacity to even mention the “Lord” and His “blessings” was a near impossibility just a year and a half earlier. He had traversed South America for an entire year, only to conclude that faith in a loving God was ridiculous, for in every diverse location he had visited, the scenery offered similar views of heartache and desolation.

He became an atheist. On the plane ride home from South America, Trist dug for headphones in the airline seat pocket in front of him, and his hands landed upon something else ... a book. He took it out and flipped it.
in the airline seat pocket in front of him, and his hands landed upon something else—a book. He took it out and flipped it over to see the title, “Searching for God Knows What.” He opened the worn cover and noticed the margins, filled with notes and questions, and paragraph after paragraph of underlining. He began to read, and by the time the plane descended, he was finished. As he reflected on what he’d read, Trist realized the previous owner was someone who struggled with the same questions he had. His heart resonated as he identified with the person’s fears, doubts, and sincere search for something more. He was reassured that even though he felt uncertain, everything would still be okay; his hunt for truth would be honored. As he closed the book, he noticed a name scribbled on the back page. He wrote his name under it, put the book back in the seat pocket, and exited the plane.

**April’s Confusion**

Grube had had her own struggle with Christianity due to a high school government class. Her growing fascination with politics and world events led her to maintain two distinct stacks of paper; one for articles that highlighted all the good in the world, the other, the bad. It seemed the latter grew taller quickly. “I started getting frustrated when I realized there were so many Christians who weren’t,” she said, “…who do things the exact opposite of the way I’d see Jesus doing it. I was appalled and annoyed.”

She wondered why she was a part of Christianity at all. Soon, Grube decided to simply call herself ‘a follower of Jesus’. The book “Searching for God Knows What” by Donald Miller helped her experience light and hope, and answered key questions she had. She was impressed that the author had found how to become a “follower of Christ” and not a Christian who doesn’t live up to the full meaning of the word. Instead of reflecting on being a Christian in today’s lukewarm sense, she said the book was all about knowing Christ. But she’d lost the book a year and a half earlier on a flight from Chile to Panama.

**God’s Guidance**

“What did you say your name was, again?” Trist asked, continuing his stream of conversation. “April,” she replied, “April Grube.” Trist sat, stunned. “You have no idea who I am,” he said, “but...I know so much about you.” He proceeded to explain to Grube that he had boarded the plane she exited in Panama and found her book. It took him about a year and a half after reading the book to become grounded in the Christian faith. He then began traveling back to South America to do mission work, learned Spanish within a year, and began his ministry there as a translator. I couldn’t believe his story,” Grube said. “I was kind of crying and Trist was almost sobbing at the end of it ... It’s the craziest thing that’s ever happened to me.”

What are the odds of meeting a total stranger whose faith was strengthened by a book you left on a plane more than a year earlier? She concluded because this was so odd, it had to be God.

“You have no idea how God is going to use you. For me, it was through my own forgetfulness!” she said of leaving the book on her flight.

The experience taught her to always be conscious of how her actions may impact others. “I’m a huge fan of displaying Christ’s character by what you do. I love it when I can see people and am able to say, ‘They may not have all the answers, but they’re searching for the truth.’ I have Someone more important that I’m dealing with every day and I hope people are able to see that.”

After one long night, the plane finally landed. The two exchanged e-mail addresses and prayed together before departing. Since that fateful reunion three years ago, they have kept in occasional contact.

Trist is now married with children. Grube is currently at Andrews University pursuing a degree in political science and history. In September, she received a replacement copy of “Searching for God Knows What,” personally signed by Miller himself. Who knows where the original book is now. Perhaps, it has fallen into the hands of other unsuspecting travelers and they, too, have added their names to that back-page list of “followers of Jesus.”

Photos by Bradley Austin

“You have no idea how God is going to use You”
Have you ever wondered why God placed you on this earth? What is His calling on your life? Everyone ponders these questions at one point or another, in hopes of finding the right intersection of their passions, talents, and God’s unique purpose for their life.

The following four stories depict individuals who took the focus off of themselves—and in the process heard God’s calling.

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)

Jonathan Brassington

By Marjorie Etienne

Jonathan Brassington had been teaching as a missionary in the Marshall Islands for two weeks when he began to notice something different about his students.

The cuts and bruises on his 8- to 12-year-old students at Ebeve Seventh-day Adventist school must have come from more than rough playing. One girl’s face particularly caught his attention. “She had a big gash, right below her eye, and in fact, I think not only was it below her eye, but a part of her eye, because a part of her eye was red as well,” he said. When he asked her what happened, she didn’t respond. She was just ashamed,” Brassington said.

The reality that adults were abusing the children shocked Brassington. The experience of that summer of 2009 caused the Andrews University student to change his major from Communication to Elementary Education. As Brassington continued teaching as a missionary for three months, he realized the girl was one of many in abusive homes. Discussing the issue with the school’s principal brought a disappointing truth to light: “There wasn’t really a solution,” he said.

As Brassington formed relationships with his students, he became more and more concerned. “All it takes is one hit too many, or one hit too hard and they’re gone, they’re dead,” Brassington said.

One student, under the guardianship of an abusive stepfather, faced brutal abuse. Even so, she showed Brassington and her fellow classmates, a living example of God’s love by loving the person who hurt her the most. “One thing that she told me was, ‘Jesus Christ died for him too,’” Brassington said. Brassington couldn’t help but love her as a father loves a daughter. But days before his teaching term ended, the child died from an abusive encounter.

It was after experiencing the loss of his student that Brassington realized his passion: connecting with youth.

“I love the genuineness of children and youth,” said Brassington. “That joy that they have, flows into my life, makes me joyful, makes me glad to be living.”

Before switching majors, Brassington’s intention was to work in a media ministry but he now felt compelled to work in the classroom and directly impact lives for Christ.

“I want to be part of a major program that Jesus Christ has set for schools,” he said. “Having teachers that love Him—teach children. ‘Being able to reunite with all those kids, to see all those kids in heaven. With not only me—but with Jesus—for eternity; that is my ultimate dream.”
In August 2008, Krystal Green was a student missionary in Russia when she experienced a strange, recurring dream. A demonic figure was chasing her, trying to grab onto her to cover her mouth.

It was during this time that the sophomore biology major was also feeling uneasy about her career choice of becoming a doctor.

Green had always loved research and being in the lab, but as the days and months went by she was overcome with feelings of sleepiness and being drained. To help ease the strain she decided to take some time off from her studies and become a student missionary. She traveled to Russia to teach Spanish, English and give Bible studies.

Green's dreams while in Russia were troubling her and she thought to herself that there had to be a reason for these annoying dreams. A close friend suggested that maybe the dreams were a sign.

To understand what was going on in her life, Green decided to fast and pray.

A day or two later she heard a voice that "I turned to my colleague and asked him if he said anything," she said. "But he hadn't. The voice was telling her to switch her major to English.

Green came to the conclusion that the hideous monster in her dream was probably a symbol of something holding her back from expressing herself through writing. "I enjoy writing and I feel it's a talent God has given me," she said. "I want to have a career God is pleased with."

Exploring the options of writing and English, she returned to Andrews University in January 2010, and made the decision to switch from Biology to English and Pre-law.

"I feel more purpose-driven," she said. "With biology I had a lot of doubts and dreaded the end of my undergraduate years, but with this degree I see possibilities."

Photo by Katelin Mitchell

When a student is grappling with the choice of a major, one of the people they turn to is Leilani Langdon, of the Counseling and Testing Center at Andrews University. She says the average U.S. college student switches major at least three times and she helps guide undecided students by conducting an initial assessment focusing on areas such as personality and passions.

Langdon then advises students to do their own research to further narrow their choices. The research includes:

**Information Interviews** — Go to a department and speak to someone currently in that field. "Ask questions such as: 'What is a day in the life in your shoes?' 'What classes did you take or not take?' 'What do you like or dislike about your job?'"

**Online Research** — Visit websites such as bls.gov, which is the Bureau of Labor Statistics website. You can type in any occupation. "You get the nature of the work, how much money you'll be making, what the job outlook is, what the environment is like, and what are some related occupations that match that field," Langdon said.

**Job Shadowing** — Take the initiative to spend a day with someone in the field. For instance, if you're thinking about nursing, a student might want to consider visiting a hospital and shadowing a nurse. "We found that students who are deciding a major, make their final decision based on their shadowing because they're able to be there, sense it and know immediately if this is where I'm supposed to be," Langdon said.

Once you've decided on a field, it's not too early to start networking, advises Langdon. Many students fail to network because they're shy or don't know where to look. But Langdon says a good place to start is by becoming active with your department's club or places such as the Honors Program. Also, a good resource is speakers at a chapel or choices program.

For more information on choosing a career field, and other valuable resources such as writing resumes, graduate schools, what to do when you leave college your first year out, and a database with thousands of jobs, Langdon advises visiting the career services website: www.andrews.edu/go/career.

- Marjorie Etienne
As Beatrice Dolce flew toward Haiti, tears fell from her eyes. She was going “home” to a place her parents fled more than 40 years earlier during the brutal François “Papa Doc” Duvalier regime. Although she was born in Miami, Fl., Haiti was an unmistakable part of her identity.

“For me, Haiti is more than just the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere,” Dolce said. “Haiti is my mother’s smile, my father’s scowl, my sister’s laughter, my brother’s strength, my family’s heritage, all a piece of the puzzle that is my being.”

Dolce always had a heart for helping the less fortunate and it perhaps fueled her desire to pursue at Andrews University a master of science in degree in administration with a focus on community and international development. She wasn’t sure what she wanted to do when she graduates — until her calling was made crystal clear last May.

She visited Haiti as part of a study tour trip arranged by the university. The trip came just four months after the devastating earthquake that ravaged the country in January 2010—killing over 200,000 people and leaving more than a million homeless.

She had seen the heart-breaking scenes on television but nothing prepared her for what she witnessed.

“All around were just broken buildings, there was a big tent city, trash on the ground, and the conditions were sad.” Dolce said. “People were living like animals.”

“I felt embarrassed and stunned around my colleagues,” she said. “It’s as if my mother was unclothed and people gawked at her, as an estranged child, I wanted to clothe her but had no clothes to give.”

The study tour allowed Dolce to assist the Université Nationale Adventiste d’Haiti—a school that was now a refugee camp of 20,000 people—with a needs assessment in psycho-social support, vocational training, and emergency preparation. Dolce, who spoke the native language Creole, helped assess the needs of the community. She helped write building codes, gathered information for architectural planning, and conducted earthquake drills with children.

Haiti is no longer just a place Dolce has heard about. “It’s like your mother: the more she suffers, the more you care about her, the stronger your commitment is,” she said, repeating a quote from the president of Université Nationale Adventiste d’Haiti.

Dolce said, “I have a burning desire and interest for Haiti,” and she feels God is calling her to help fix a place that has suffered too much. “I believe this desire is beyond me, it is divine.”
Pastor Walter Rogers faces a particular challenge at Harbor of Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benton Harbor, Mich. He's the senior pastor of a congregation of mainly young people in a poor, inner-city neighborhood. Rogers views it this way: "God favors the poor and children and so in a way I'm playing the same favorites God does."

Realizing that playing the same favorites as God, would be his life's calling didn't come right away. As a freshman entering Canadian University College in fall 1997, Rogers hadn't planned on becoming a children's ministries pastor. He was seeking a pre-med degree. A job at a summer camp after his freshman year detailed Rogers' plans. He realized he had a passion for children and for the first time, wondered if he really wanted to go into medicine.

By his junior year, Rogers — over the objections of his parents and teachers — decided to major in theology. He had completed his pre-med courses but he wanted to see God work out His will.

In 2001, the year before graduation, interviews for pastorates weighed on his heart heavier than med school applications. He had taken the Medical College Admission Test and scored in the top two percentile.

Still, "I didn't want to take the chance to be a rich, comfortable doctor and not like it," he said.

While children's ministry beckoned, there was a problem: The job he wanted simply did not exist. In Canada, there were no children's ministry pastors.

A semester before graduation he went to meet with Daniel R. Jackson, then president of the British Columbia conference. Jackson supported Rogers' vision and went on to tell him that "the problem with youth ministry is that it is too late. We need to start with the kids and win them over early."

Then, in January 2002, a miracle happened: The job that didn't exist was created for him. He was offered a job in the British Columbia Conference as Canada's first children's ministry pastor. Rogers took that as a strong signal that God was leading him toward this calling. "God was telling me, 'Stop worrying, you silly boy.'"

In August 2005, the conference sent Rogers to continue his education at the Seventh-day Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

A year before graduation he was offered a plum assignment ministering in a church near a ski resort in Canada. But Rogers felt God calling him to help children and the poor.

He has no regrets about heeding the call to children's ministry in Benton Harbor. "God does not call you to make a living — he calls you to make a difference."
Weather ALERT!

Photos by Jean-Ires Michel
Model: Taciana Behrmann
Styling: Tiffany Evering and Chioma Tait
Makeup: Alexia Roach
IT’S ACADEMIC

“When school is in, dressing for it is all ACADEMIC”
DORM ROOM MAKEOVER

What happens when Envision stylist Tiffany Evering takes a drab dorm room and revamps it?

“I really like it a lot. It looks like my room at home. [The dorm room is] sort of like a jail cell [and now it’s a] home away from home. I like the vintage feel.”

Gerocea Ornopia, Junior, psychology major

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I can feel the secrets swimming
up my neck and through my cheek’s
capillaries
the same way I imagine
microscopic threats in thousands
on any handle or cup
Dust
if I think about it long enough
in my carpet piling up
on my covers hanging just
by threads ’til in exhaustion
they let go and I inhale them
in my sleep
these things
These things if I thought them
could prevent me all too often
from cleaning, breathing if I let them
cause I’m out numbered
and blind
and busy

I am speaking constantly
but its not really explaining
and its not useful when
its not entertaining
at least not to them
I am talking
cause my mouth
hasn’t quite figured out
how to say two things at once

there has been an elephant
in the room so long
I draped him with a woven cloth
and he seems to belong

and no one asks, anymore
if anything is wrong
no longer look at him half-nervous
they look past him like he’s gone

and when he first arrived
in his huge,
black wet eyes
was a silent anger daring
you to recognize him
but you tip toed without touching
his thick dusty skin
and stretch-climbed over the couches arm
avoiding him

and all the people and possessions
that he smashed just with his size
when I hauled them down the stairs, I swore
I saw him start to cry
and the people who were afraid
now they just don’t come inside

he’s too big to hold
and I’m too small to try
so I taught him to stand still
ignoring screams and stomps
and rewarding him humming
circus-y songs
And my favorite thing he does
is sway along
dragging his trunk tracing
bashful and withdrawn

and now he’s been there longer
than anyone that promised
with their arms or their ears
or their smell or wallets

and when I laid in the living room
staring at the ceiling
I realized no one
is waiting or willing
to pet him or feed him or ask him why
cause at some point he’ll either
leave or die
but I don’t think so

and its just a hair harder than they’re willing to try
but I think I understand and I cant say that I
would want to feel like I could’ve
made it better and didn’t either.

and as the secrets in single file squeeze their way to fill my lips
my head drops to my hands
cause I’m just so sick of it
and no one is around cause there wasn’t any room
the elephants on his side
dreaming of the zoo
and I lay on the couch
and breathe it out loud.
I’m sorry I could never
Explain myself

And I’m looking at this massive thing
asleep on my floor
and half asleep I’m looking,
at the light switch by the door

And he lifts one giant leg,
as if he’s trying to stand
stretches out his trunk,
and presses it to my hand,
and out his hairy nostrils
he sighs his own goodnight

I press closed, stinging eyes
as his trunk turns out the light

Illustration by Jacob Gibbs
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Across from the Fairgrounds
Nathaniel Gibbs thought it would be cool to be the devil. At age 20 and high on 12 times the normal dose of LSD, a hallucinogenic drug, Nate sat on a bench in New Orleans amongst the Mardi Gras revelers in 2000 pondering the idea. He had been visiting the city for the festivities.

Then “I started seeing a spiral, like a tunnel, and I started floating into it, like an out-of-body experience,” he said.

It felt incredible, but then his conscience spoke. “You don’t want to do that,” he heard.

“Why wouldn’t I want this?” Nathaniel argued.
FEATURE

Everything went black; then Nathaniel realized he was riding a monster at a parade. Fire came down from heaven and then he ducked out of the way of a trolley.

Nathaniel woke up strapped to a hospital bed with temporary amnesia. He was released after a few hours and went back home to Grand Rapids a few days later.

To this day, Nathaniel isn’t sure what was real and what was a vision in the experience. But it was a catalyst for his renewed belief in a higher power. Eventually God used the experience to save Nathaniel, his parents and his brother.

“I thought I was in a normal family,” he said. “But when I was young, I found out that my dad was a drug dealer, and that my parents were going to get a divorce. So then, I realized my life wasn’t normal.

Until the New Orleans trip in 2000, Nathaniel had stopped believing in God and Satan altogether.

He had been doing drugs and partying since he was 16. It was triggered when his mother, Debbie Gibbs, was in a car accident.

“I was raised Catholic,” said Nathaniel. “But when my mom was in this car accident when I was 16, in a complete coma and brain injured, I said, ‘God, if You’re going to do this to my mother, I’m just not going to believe in you, and I became an atheist.’”

His views on Satan, however, began to change as flashbacks to the drug-induced vision — brought on by stress, anger, and smoking marijuana — plagued his mind. For four months, he struggled with the effects of the LSD overdose, feeling depressed and viewing evil in visions. In one vision, he was the devil and felt condemned.

It made him think, “If the devil’s true and he’s messing with me, then God might be real.”

So, he decided to attend church with his mother one Sunday night. Nathaniel could hear the priest’s words, but couldn’t make sense of them. He sat on the back of a kneeler, crying and praying, “God, if you exist, show me the way.”

Two days later, as he watched television at home two girls and a guy knocked on his door. They invited him to a Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic series. Nate wasn’t interested.

“I have my own church,” he said and began to close the door.

“What’s it going to hurt?” the young man said, grabbing a flyer and forcing it into Nathaniel’s hand.

The words stuck with Nathaniel as he closed the door and tried to return to his television program. But glancing at the flyer, Nathaniel liked seeing the different ethnicities depicted in the collage. The diversity seemed to scream love and acceptance, but then he threw the flyer down.

His conscience and the young man’s words kept pressing him.

After some minutes, he picked up the flyer and examined it again. The second time, he glanced at the speaker’s biography. It said the speaker, Pastor David Asscherick, had once been a punk rocker and an atheist like himself.

“I had prayed for the way, and here was obviously somebody who found God, with my similar background. So, it really impressed me that I should go,” Nathaniel said.

Still, he threw the flyer down again. A few more minutes passed and he was again pressed by his conscience to read it. Inside, he saw that the speaker would preach on some of the very questions he had about God.

But he didn’t want to go to the series alone. Nathaniel went out to sit on his porch, praying that the young man who had knocked on his door would come back past his house.

He waited and waited, then decided to give up and go back inside. Just as he opened the door, he looked back and saw the young man walking toward his home. Nathaniel asked him to take him to the meetings that evening and the young man agreed.

Two weeks later, Nathaniel was baptized in August of 2000. The seminars had answered some of his deepest questions about God’s character. They explained why a good God would have allowed the bad things to happen in his life; the prophecies of Daniel proved that God was all knowing and could predict the future.

Nathaniel realized, “This was someone that I’d like to serve, this was someone true, someone who can help me. And as soon as I made my decision to be baptized, all the flashbacks, depression, the things that drugs caused, everything, just gone.”

After that, all Nathaniel wanted to do was to share the gospel with his family and others. During the next year, he attended Black Hills Bible College and trained in pastoral ministry.

Nate’s brother Jacob Gibbs was on a canoe trip when Nathaniel made his decision for Christ. Jacob had watched Nathaniel’s condition worsen before he left for the trip. While away, Jacob — who also didn’t truly believe in God — prayed for his older brother. His prayer was simple: ‘Help Nate.”

“God, if you exist, show me the way.”
“When I came back from the canoe trip, I realized Nathaniel was changed,” Jacob said.

He watched Nathaniel’s changing lifestyle with a critical eye for two years.

“I realized that what he had was something I didn’t have: a true abiding peace that lasted,” Jacob said.

Still, Jacob told his brother, “You know you’re probably going to win Mom, you might even win me, but you’re never going to win Dad.”

When the brothers’ parents, Dan and Debbie Gibbs, were baptized together in August 2001, it broke down some of the walls Jacob had put up.

Nathaniel began teaching Jacob the prophecies in Daniel 2.

“If God can predict the future, then that means, he’s the king of the future, said Jacob of the lessons. “And if He’s king of the future, then that means I can trust Him.”

But Jacob didn’t trust Him, though he knew God was calling him.

He had been left in a coma for a week by the same accident that injured his mother. He had the same questions as Nathaniel about a good God letting his mother suffer. He’d built up walls against God.

Then God allowed his mother to get well, his parents to remarry and even his father — once a drug dealer — to get baptized. He could no longer use the old defenses.

“It was like God was making it easier for me to be a Christian,” Jake said.

“I could either accept it, or run faster away, and I chose to run faster away.”

Jacob, then 18, used more drugs. He too began having visions and supernatural experiences. Once, while driving to his senior party, he saw the clouds form a heavenly scene. A voice said, “You’re choosing this earthly party over what you could have in eternal glory?”

Another time, when Jacob was sitting with his girlfriend in the car outside his house, they tried to talk about spiritual things, but were interrupted.

“All of a sudden, we see this black shadow thing hit the soda and it kind of fell over. And she said, ‘What was that?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know.’”

A year later, Jacob was high on LSD attending another party, when he began to feel as if he were the devil himself.

“I believe that at this moment it was either go forward into demon possession … or follow Jesus,” he said.

He prayed, “God if you can help me with my drug problem, I’ll follow you.”

God answered it immediately, taking the desire for drugs away instantaneously.

“I realized how powerful that first prayer was and prayed a second prayer,” Jacob said. “I said, ‘God, if you’ll help me get home, this is what I need. I can’t be in this environment anymore.’”

God did. A girl he barely knew thought he looked pretty sick and took him home.

Jacob called Nathaniel the next day and they prayed. At the time, Nathaniel was in Florida, but about to head for Columbus, Ohio to do door-to-door evangelism for a “Youth For Jesus” seminar. Jacob decided to join Nathaniel — inviting others to a faith he had only just embraced. Two weeks into the seminar, Jacob was baptized. Nathaniel stood with him in the baptismal pool.

“I was particularly impressed because I had seen them grow up and they used to fight, but here they were in this most wonderful hug,” said their mother, Debbie, of the scene at the baptism.

Both Nathaniel, 31, and Jacob, 28, are currently pursing Bachelor of Arts degrees in theology at Andrews University. Jacob is also studying for an art degree.

The two go all over the U.S. and other countries sharing the story of how youth doing door-to-door ministry and personal evangelism helped them find a Savior who freed them from drugs and alcohol.

“Youth need to be brought into the mission of the church,” said Jacob. “That’s what won our family. To win youth, you need to give them the vigilant mission.”
CHRISTIAN CONCERTS

2011

Jan 23 | Naturally7 in Berrien Springs
Jan 28 | The Newsboys in University Park
Jan 29 | Barlow Girl in Berrien Springs
Feb 20 | Blake Bolerjack in Garland
Feb 26 | Shane and Shane in Lincoln
Feb 27 | Mercy Me/Jars of Clay in Colorado Springs
Mar 11 | Casting Crowns with Flame in Muncie
Mar 26 | Ginny Owens in Huntsville
Apr 01 | Britt Nicole with Chad Eastham in Hartford
Apr 08 | Leeland with Jimmy Needham in Sacramento
Apr 29 | Jeremy Camp with John Waller in Lexington
In Nov. 2010, the movie, “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1” opened to a jaw-dropping $330 million in global ticket sales. And in the previous year, three other movies dealing with the occult made the top-ten list of the highest grossing movies at the box offices.

There’s no question millions of people are clamoring to watch movies wherein characters delve into the paranormal, and most common is the theme of communicating with the dead or the spirit world.

The movies, some of which are spinoffs from the phenomenal bestselling “Harry Potter” series, are what Dwight Nelson, Senior Pastor of the Pioneer Memorial Church, Berrien Springs, Mich., calls “spiritualism diluted in catchy children’s metaphor, with rampant life, death, spirits and wizards.”

But is this harmless entertainment as many Christians think?

Pastor Nelson believes, “There is a subculture of music, overt or covert communication with Satan comes from demonic forces who are fallen angels, Lucifer’s angels—and their intention is to overthrow God.”

Nelson said writer and Christian apologetic C.S. Lewis calls this a ‘civil war’ because Satan is rebelling against God and it’s playing out not only in movies but also popular music—notably the rapper, Jay-Z. “A study of his persona was done and it revealed that he is into a Masonic order of ‘elevated light’—his persona is a front for a dark occult lifestyle.”

Nelson said, “This whole occult of music and literature is a slick cover of spiritualism.”

The rising cultural phenomenon of communicating with “spirits” through a medium is of great concern to leaders in the Adventist church as it begins to trickle into the church and gain traction among some youth.

Eric Eskildsen, a Junior English major at Andrews University, believes that novels like the Potter series have an irresistible allure, “because it gets kids reading.” Eskildsen admits to having read all seven of the books in the series and thereafter purchasing a book on Wicca and an anthology of pagan works, a move he claims was spurred from a curiosity he acquired from reading the Potter novels, books that whetted his appetite for more he could learn.

According to Dilyse Brooks, associate chaplain of Loma Linda University in Calif., “A lot of young people drink and party. These behaviors show that you can take care of yourself. [You] don’t need God. Young people practicing this spiritualistic belief’ don’t even realize it.”

But while the burgeoning fascination with spiritualism seems like a daunting challenge for the church, there is still hope.

“We should be aware of sinfulness and know Christ and that He can save,” said Brooks.

Eskildsen is no longer a “Potter” fan and believes that “that the whole focus of the book is witchcraft, no matter how its sugar coated or fun, happy it is, or how much camaraderie the friends have, the whole focus is witchcraft and magic, which has nothing to do with Christianity.”

Photo by Raquel Tenorio
By Christine Lairson

Hawaiian musician BeeJay Crisostomo says he walked away from a chance to make up to $50,000 a night with his island reggae band, All Natro, after his conversion. To him, the money doesn’t matter. He knows God’s plan is better.

What were your early years like?
I'm a third-generation Adventist. My family went to church off and on. Growing up as a young kid, my parents were pretty spiritual. I kind of rebelled against the whole idea of church. I couldn’t find myself sitting down in a place and listening to someone talk. I needed to be up and doing something. I kind of fell away from the church at an early age.

You left the church at the beginning of your teen years. Can you describe what that time in your life was like?
I left the church when I was 10 or 11 and got into a lot of trouble as a young teen and wasn’t able to go to any public schools. I got kicked out of most of the public schools in Hawaii. I was a real troublemaker kid, you know? Then my parents sent me to the Adventist academy on the island. ... I went there and found the Lord. I just took the good of what I had been learning. I was there for my sophomore and junior years of high school and left to play football for a public school because the academy didn’t have a football team. ... football didn’t work out, so I started All Natro.

What kind of music does All Natro play?
All Natro is a reggae group. Reggae music in Hawaii is mainstream music. It is like hip-hop in New York or country in the South.

How successful was the band?
All Natro did a battle of the bands in high school, and we placed second in that competition. Every competition we went into afterwards, we got first place. We were sought out by a recording company in Hawaii and across international waters, but we decided not to record an album at that time. We focused on the underground music scene. We found a niche. In order for us to play at all the big venues, we knew we had to attract crowds. How we did that is, I started throwing big house parties. They were massive. They would house 2,500 to 5,500 people. Drinks were free all night long. The only band that would play at the party was All Natro. We were known as the band that played at all the big parties, and we drew huge crowds. ... We were approached by Fox TV Network to do a special on Hawaii reggae music. ... January 2009, we decided to record an album.
What made All Natro wait so long to record an album?

Artists don’t make money off of album sales; they make money off of concerts and events. The more popularity we got in, the more our albums would sell. It was kind of our market strategy, and it ended up working really well.

How many people were involved in the band?

We had seven members in our group. I was the lead vocalist for the group, and I composed the music.

Did you feel like you were fully using your talents at that time?

Absolutely. I knew at a younger age that God had given me a talent. How I used it for God was by writing Christian lyrics to reggae music instrumentals that we composed ourselves. That was my idea of serving Christ. But, to be honest with you, I knew I wasn’t following Christ.

What brought you back to God?

I definitely knew I was falling away from Christ, but I didn’t mind at all because I adopted new gods. I even got a medical card that allowed me to smoke marijuana freely amongst the public. But in June 2009 my good friend Keoki had just come down with a prophetic evangelist team called Revelation of Hope Seminars. Keoki invited me to the meetings on our island. He would call me about 20 times a day for two weeks straight, but I ignored his calls. ... One day, I woke up and was like, ‘You know what, if Keoki calls, I’m going to answer. I don’t know if he is hurt or what.’ So when he called, he said, ‘BeeJay, don’t come to listen to the message, come listen to the music.’ So I went because I love music. I walked into the church and sat down in the sixth pew. I started listening to these people, and it was amazing! Christ was speaking to me directly. He shot me into a vision of the second coming of Christ. I know people are always waiting for signs to come back to Christ, and this was so clear of a sign to me about what I needed to do. I wanted to sing for the Lord. ... From that day on, I gave my life to Christ.

What was your first step on this new journey?

I continued going to the meetings, and I was rebaptized on July 11, 2009, at the end of the seminar. I asked God, ‘What do You want me to do?’ He told me through reading the Scriptures and listening to sermons and prayers that I needed to leave All Natro. I didn’t want to do that. It was what I had always wanted to do, and I didn’t want to give it up. But after thinking about it, I said, ‘Lord I will leave the group, but You gotta take care of me.’ The next day I told the group, and they were shocked. I left the band, and from that time, God put me from one situation into another situation. It led me to the Revelation of Hope Singers, who I have been travelling with all over the world now.

When you told All Natro you were leaving, what was their response?

Since the day I told them, they no longer talk to me. I have tried every means of contacting them, but they don’t want to talk to me. That’s OK, you know. I know the Lord is going to do something in their lives.

Do you have any words of encouragement?

I challenge people, if people are balancing a career or a dream like I have and following Christ, I encourage these people to follow Christ. Psalm 37:5 talks about how God knows the desires of our heart. And in Mark 10:29-30 (God) says because He knows those things He wants to give us 100 fold. Imagine your desires and timesing it by 100. That’s what Christ wants to do. □

Photography by Raquel Tenorio
Personal Photos supplied by BeeJay Crisostomo
5

THINGS YOU MUST KNOW BEFORE SAYING "I DO"

By Samantha Blake

The wedding date was set. The bride bought her gown and invitations were sent out to family and friends. Yet, two months before the wedding, uneasy feelings about the engagement tugged at the bride’s heart and she began to pray. After heeding to God’s voice, the wedding was called off.

“I was engaged once to a man that I was madly in love with, and that I had chosen, but God had not chosen for me,” says Heather Thompson, one of the many brides-to-be that God called away from the wedding altar.

Most people go into relationships with good intentions, but without taking proper precautions the end result may be a failure. So before you say, “I do,” Pastor Dilyn Brooks, associate chaplain at Loma Linda University has some advice that may save your marriage and your life.

Run a Background Check

You need to know the type of person he or she is. Who did he or she date previously? Did the breakups end well? If possible, find out from the person’s ex the reason behind the breakup. Be mindful that if the relationship ended bitterly, the ex will be biased. Find out as much as you can about the person from people who are reliable.

Observe the Person

Before you agree to be in a relationship, observe the person discreetly. Let the person watch you and see how you flow. You should not pretend. Give the person a chance to see who you really are and what activities you enjoy.

Talk About Boundaries

The boundaries of a relationship should be discussed. Boundaries should be respected. Being physical with someone clouds intimacy. Intimacy is not touch but talk.

Consult the people whose word you value because they love you. Once they get to know the person, they will be able to tell you whether or not the person is a good fit for you. Make sure you listen.

Pray and Read God’s Word

Ask God every day to reveal the true character of this person. Read Scripture and see if that person meets the characteristics of a good husband or wife. Read Ephesians 5:22-33. Realize that if you’re looking at someone for dating purposes, you are looking at a potential mate. You need to see if this person is someone you would consider marrying. Is this someone who knows how to cherish you? Is this person someone who pays attention to you? Is this person caring all the time? Can they tolerate your imperfections? Most importantly, you should make sure that the person is someone who can understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. The person must have a relationship with God that he nurtures and sustains and that is separate and apart from your relationship with God.

Now, here’s the trick: Follow these steps before you fall in love, because once you fall in love, and Jesus says no, you begin to feel as though you can change the person. It’s better to do this kind of work before you start developing a relationship.
I’m Addicted to Porn

I am addicted to pornography—and don’t tell me it’s as simple as staying away from it, because to be honest, pornography is everywhere. Even while doing research for my class paper, some of the search results came up with pornographic images. And with top entertainers like Nicki Minaj making the statement that a sexual fantasy plays through her mind every 30 seconds—what hope is there for someone like me?

You’re absolutely right. Staying away from something addictive, like pornography, is no simple task; if it were, you wouldn’t be writing us. The world surrounds us with temptation, particularly the media. Realize that what is portrayed on TV and on the internet is not necessarily reality. It may also seem like everyone participates in unhealthy sexual behavior, but this is not the case.

There are others who practice healthy sexual attitudes and behavior, and surrounding yourself with healthy people is crucial. But certainly, you are not alone. There are lots of people dealing with pornography addiction. Like drug or alcohol addiction, pornography addiction is a compulsive, obsessive relationship with an object or substance. Notice we’ve said ‘object’, because porn involves objectifying another human being – treating them as a “thing”.

Chances are you feel guilty and ashamed about your behavior. That’s common too, but in order to work through your addiction, you must talk honestly about what you are going through.

Begin this process by praying about what need pornography is meeting for you. II Corinthians 12:9 tells us, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest upon me.”

Then examine your life. The Sexual Recovery Institute states that typically, individuals who are addicted to porn tend to replace important relationships and commitments with sexual imagery.

Self-honesty begins by talking to a person who is knowledgeable in breaking pornography addiction and requires that you admit the entire problem to them. This also means not omitting the embarrassing or humiliating parts.

Working through any addiction is a process, one that requires an active commitment. It is challenging, and at times discouraging.

Freedom, however, is possible. These tips can help:

1. You needn’t struggle alone. Finding someone you can trust to talk with (a pastor, trusted friends, family, a sexual addiction counselor) can help you separate fantasy from reality and can help to keep you accountable.

2. Everyone experiences sexual fantasies. The key is the way that we deal with those fantasies and the thoughts and feelings that they stir up within us.

3. Avoid situations that will likely tempt you to act on your addictive impulses. Set the content filter on your Internet search engine to block inappropriate content when you must use the Internet. If you’re watching TV or listening to the radio for example, and you’re confronted with suggestive material, change the channel, turn it off, go elsewhere. Do something to remove yourself from the stimulus.

4. Create a list of activities to do when you are tempted, like talk to your supports, write in your journal/log book, and pray. This will help you to replace your addiction with positive ways of coping.

5. Keep a printout of your favorite texts and scriptures handy. Remember you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

6. Participate in counseling with a therapist or pastor who has specialized training in sexual addiction. Or, join a 60-day interactive online course titled “Setting Captives Free”. This course was reported to help some individuals overcome their Internet addiction. There are also 12-step groups that can provide support and keep you accountable.

7. Don’t give up. Change will not happen overnight, it’s a process. Stick with it!

Answers provided by the following Educational and Counseling Psychology Ph.D students: Carmen Bieske, Jessica Dettmann, Rachael Hooley, Carlton Martin, Stacey Nicely, Quentin Stubbins, Helen Rolle.

The leading characters are even Hollywood ready. Beccai — an ebony-skinned gentleman, with a charming English accent — is the kind of guy women would flock to the box office to see. Nonon — a beautiful, sophisticated New Yorker who seems to float by like a breeze and illuminate everything with sunshine — has the glamour and radiance of a movie star.

But neither one of them wanted the roles. Beccai wanted nothing to do with relationships after a difficult break up. Nonon longed to lie in the arms of Jesus, not be swept away by Prince Charming.

But God, the Executive Producer and Master Director, had different plans.

By Latoya Wolfe

The love story of Cassandre Nonon and Andreas Beccai wouldn’t make a great romantic drama.

But theirs is not a Hollywood script but a story orchestrated by the Master Director, God. In the summer of 2009, Nonon decided to colporteur, hoping the experience would help her draw closer to God.

Nonon, a Master of Divinity student in Andrews University’s Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, in Berrien Springs, Mich., then consulted the director the Master of Divinity program, Pastor J. Michael Harris. “He said, honestly, if I were you, I’d stay here,” Nonon recalled.

A friend gave her similar advice. She told Nonon that she too had been seeking answers from God after making a mistake. God’s response: A tree grows by staying still and taking nourish-
ment from its surroundings. The friend said God told her: “Why don’t you just be like this tree? Why don’t you just stay still, and allow me to let you grow? All you have to do is stay still.”

Realizing the message in the story, Nonon had an emotional melt down.

“Man! Are you kidding me God? I want to leave! I want to leave,” she remembered crying to God.

Despite her pleading, the Holy Spirit led Nonon to stay for the second summer and third summer sessions.

In mid July, Cassandre Nonon, with her hot-pink Mac computer, took refuge in the last row of the Church History III class. She was slumped over in her seat with a body posture that looked like “someone who wasn’t serious about life,” Beccai recalled.

He arrived for the third intensive session, after a brutal summer in Reading, United Kingdom. There he had been putting all of his efforts into making a relationship work. He arrived in Berrien Springs emotionally drained; the last thing on his mind was dating.

“I was pitifully miserable. So when I came out of it, I wasn’t looking to be in another relationship,” Beccai said.

On the second day of class, Nonon changed seats, and sat directly in front of Beccai. It wasn’t until a few hours into class that Beccai really noticed her.

“I saw her talking to people, and I was struck by how friendly she was,” he said. “She had a really good spirit about her.

“By the end of the third week, I was on the phone with people in England, and I was like, I met this girl, and her face glows! I was already completely blown away.”

A friendship bloomed, as they began to exchange e-mails.

Beccai noticed he and Nonon had a similar worldview, lifestyle, and goals. He was taken aback, but he wouldn’t pray about a relationship with Nonon.

He held true to his original plan: “I’m not going to be in a relationship,” he said.

Nonon, still aching for transformation, and even daydreaming about being in God’s arms, was praying. She asked God to tell Beccai a relationship wouldn’t work out; she only wanted God.

Her fervor for the Lord affected Beccai.

“When I was speaking to Cassandre I would approach her with holy trepidation, because when I spoke to her my life was radically challenged as a man, as a Christian, everything,” he said. “Like literally, God was her man! Her boyfriend. It got to the stage where I wouldn’t even initiate going to see her if I hadn’t been praying, and in the Word.”

As both realized a growing attraction and each hesitated to make the first move, God moved for them.

He gave Beccai a peaceful spirit, a cure for the damage of his broken relationship in Reading. He gave Nonon a dream.

In the dream, she walked into a hospital operating room, lay on the table and looked up to see three doctors, each identical in appearance. One held a scalpel.

“At that moment I knew that I was in for a heart transplant,” she said. “That’s how the dream ended.”

As she pondered the meaning of the dream the next morning, she realized the three doctors were none other than God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

“... God was speaking directly to me about my concern for my heart. He was saying, don’t worry about that anymore, I gave you a new heart.”

With heavenly relationship concerns eased, Nonon began to pray for God to speak to Beccai about their relationship.

Abour four weeks later, Andreas came to her with God’s response. “God has told me that I can move forward,” he told her.

Though Nonon was open to dating, Beccai’ wasn’t sure his mother would agree.

“I learned from my previous relationship to listen to my mother,” he said. “I believe the fifth commandment about honoring your parents. God doesn’t give us the commandment without giving them wisdom.”

Since Beccai had been in the U.S. for only a few months, calling home in England for the blessing of his family seemed like a waste of time. But when he spoke to his mother, she agreed that he should date Nonon.

It wasn’t long after they began dating that Beccai “just knew that he was going to marry” Nonon, he said.

While permission to date Nonon was granted, Beccai was sure his mother would not approve of a marriage while he was still in school.

He was right. She suggested they wait. That was until she met Nonon at a cousin’s wedding. Beccai’ mom and family liked Nonon and she gave her consent.

God had answered their prayers; his mom and her dad had given their consent. Now the only question left was when would Beccai propose.

Beccai, behaving like a prince who does

“A tree grows by staying still and taking nourishment from its surroundings.”

RELATIONSHIPS
RELATIONSHIPS

charming things, took six months to plan the perfect way to “pop the question”.

While waiting, Nonon became anxious. The night before she became Beccai’s fiancée, she decided to surrender her feelings to God.

“I said, ‘God, You know what’s best,”’ she said. “I went to bed feeling peaceful, I woke up peaceful. No longer was I thinking ‘any moment now.’”

Then, on Aug. 27, a campus security guard came to Nonon as she returned to work in the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology.

“I have to speak to you outside,” he told her. Afraid, concerned and wondering if Beccai was okay, she followed him outside. He handed her a letter and a bag.

The letter from Beccai gave her directions for a scavenger hunt and told her not to worry about work. Everyone at work already knew about the hunt, Nonon said.

A guide picked her up and took her to the Lake Union Conference headquarters, near the Andrews University campus. There she met Rodney Grove, the conference’s executive secretary. He prayed for her, and gave her another scavenger hunt clue: It sent her to Andrews University Airpark.

At the airport, a pilot walked her to a plane and they soared above cornfields, and eventually, Lake Michigan.

“It was just absolutely gorgeous. I had never experienced anything like that in my life,” Nonon said.

When they landed, the pilot gave Nonon a clue: It sent her to a lighthouse in St. Joseph, Mich., to meet a friend. There she didn’t find Andreas Beccai but instead a girlfriend, Everette Samuel. They ate lunch and the friend passed her a clue, which directed Nonon to the Howard Performing Arts Center on Andrews’ campus. The clue also stated she should be dressed in her Sabbath best.

Once inside, Nonon burst through the doors looking for Beccai. He wasn’t there. In the auditorium, a guitarist and a pianist played “When I Say I Do” by Matthew West.

“As the song ended, I got excited, thinking, I’m going to see my love!” Nonon said.

Beccai didn’t appear. Instead, the pianist handed her another clue. It took her to the seminary classroom, where they met.

“I sit in my original seat, and there is a slideshow playing of us!” Nonon said.

A crossword puzzle on the table in the room told her the final destination. There, behind the Honors House on campus, she found a picnic table set up with rose petals, and finally, Beccai.

He asked for the puzzle pieces, which made a collage, but there were a few pieces missing. He asked her to close her eyes and then added the last pieces.

They formed the words, “Will you marry me?” “Yes!” she said, after opening her eyes to see the message.

Then Beccai explained why he created each section of the scavenger hunt. He said the security guard came because he wanted her to feel safe and know that in their marriage he would protect her.

“I had you go to the conference office and had the official pray for you because I want to be a man of God,” he said. “I had you fly today because I wanted you to know how you make me feel when I’m with you. I had you meet your good friend for lunch because I want to be your best friend when we’re married. I had you hear that song because I want our lives to be a song when we’re together. Those memories played because I want to make more memories.”

The day wasn’t over after Beccai proposed. A surprise engagement party awaited Nonon when she reached home.

The proposal showed Nonon just how much God loved her, even though he didn’t let her leave Berrien Springs and school when she pleaded.

“If Andreas is a mere human being, going out of his way for me, how much more does God work for his children?” Nonon said.

Photos by Bradley Austin
Chalkboard photos by Paula Leme and Renata Marques
Jill has been dating Kyle for a couple months now, and she feels the relationship is serious. She starts calling him “Honey”, but, for Kyle, it’s a little awkward. He doesn’t call her any romantic nicknames in return. Now Jill is confused. Does he feel that they are serious, and if so, why doesn’t he call her anything sweet?

What Jill doesn’t realize is, just because someone feels awkward about using nicknames doesn’t mean the relationship is dying. It’s not important by itself. What is important is having the five-to-one ratio of positive to negative communications per day in a relationship, Jamie Turndorf, Ph.D., a New York City-based relationship therapist says. Nicknames can certainly count as one of the five positive actions, but only if it is meant in the right way.

“The key is whether the nickname expresses affection,”
Turndorf said.

If they aren’t affectionate or loving, then it might actually be hiding the true feelings of the person using them, such as aggression or anger.

Nicknames are sometimes a very easy way to have that positive communication in the relationship, but if you’re not comfortable saying “honey”, “sweetie”, etc., then there are other ways to get that positive. One way could just be a hug, or say, “I’m thinking of you”, just little things to help build each other up during the day.

If you are comfortable using nicknames, you might want to think about the meanings behind them before using them, to make sure that they fit the relationship you have with your significant other. For example, using “kitten” means that you are protective of the person you are calling that, and they are tiny, little, or defenseless. “Baby” is more generic nowadays, not meaning that you see the person as an infant, but is more like “honey” or “sweetie”. Also, take into consideration the person’s background, such as ethnicity or religion, because the word you use might mean one thing to you but something totally different to them!

Nicknames are not only a good way to bring a couple closer, but also help make it exclusive. A nickname might even help in a fight! For example, Jill and Kyle are arguing, and Jill looks at Kyle’s face, and the face he is making reminds her of the time she was trying to teach him how to blow bubbles, and she called him “pufferfish”. She starts giggling, and when he asks what she is laughing at, she shares the joke. He starts laughing and the situation is diffused!

If you decide you want to try out a nickname, there are different ways you could start using it. Turndorf uses an analogy of an ocean. Some people just jump in, while others ease in, testing the waters first. Turndorf suggests making a joke about a nickname first to ease into its use. For example, “I want to start using a nickname for you; how about schnookums?” Just use something ridiculous and off the wall. Then tell him or her what you really want to use. Whatever is decided, just go for it. “Nobody dies from discomfort!” Turndorf said.

Just remember, as Turndorf said, “Words have meaning!” Keep that in mind, and you can’t go wrong, so go get ‘em Tiger!
DEALING WITH TOXIC PARENTS

By Lavem Ramdatt

Dealing with a toxic parent can be difficult. Kathleen Beagles, assistant professor of religious education at Andrews University’s Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, in Berrien Springs, Mich., knows this firsthand. Beagles thinks her mother was sexually abused as a child and this impacted her mother’s relationship with her. Her mother was hugely protective of her and her siblings and it affected the relationship with her father.

“She wouldn’t let us sit on his lap after a certain age, and all these kinds of things that just kept us apart,” Beagles said.

Beagles believes the distorted relationship with her parents caused the failure of her own marriage.

“I believe when I married, it was someone very similar to my mother, but I thought it would be more fun to have it be a husband acting this way with me than a mother,” said Beagles, “So I ended up maybe not choosing wisely, maybe, I don’t know.”

Beagles explained that the same dysfunctional issues faced by a child with a parent often show up in that child’s future relationship with a spouse if that issue is not resolved.

“They will marry someone with a similar set of circumstances that they are still trying to resolve and then they try to resolve it with their spouses instead of their parents,” Beagles said.

Christian parents who are toxic may also distort a child’s view of God by using their religious beliefs to correct behavior or punish behavior, said Harvey Burnett, assistant professor of psychology at Andrews University.

“You want to discuss things with your parents and they throw the Bible at you, smack you with Ellen G. White,” he said.

Although there is nothing wrong with a spiritual approach to a problem when a child makes a mistake, the manner in which you use this method can adversely shape a child’s view of God, he said.

It is not always easy for the child to realize a relationship is toxic, simply because he or she has grown up with the behavior, Burnett said.

However, “depending on your own social network, … as you grow up you may be able to identify some things you don’t feel comfortable with,” he said.

Burnett said people need to ask themselves such questions as:

“Do I feel safe to be myself?”

“Can I walk away from a dialogue with my parents without feeling belittled or criticized?”

“Do I feel free to open up and express my thoughts?”

He also suggested gauging one’s self-worth by asking:

“Do I feel like my self-worth is broken down?”

“Do I find it easier to share important issues with individuals other than my parents?”

Taking ownership and control for one’s own behavior is the beginning of a successful delivery from a toxic relationship, Beagles said.

“Children from a dysfunctional home need to learn some of those
principles, because they can’t change their parents,” she said. “The only one they can change is themselves and in any dysfunctional situation even if the parents caused it, there are two people keeping it going – the child and the parent.”

Beagles stressed the Bible principle that God made us to control ourselves and our own circumstances. Drawing reference from the book “How People Grow” by Henry Cloud and John Townsend, she explained that it is important for a child to get outside objective help within a healthy community when dealing with a toxic relationship with their parents.

“Because you get dysfunctional in a community, you have to get functional again in a community,” Beagles said. “You don’t change by yourself.”

Beagles said that victims of toxic parent-child relationships should get involved in small groups or 12-step programs to deal with the poison from their relationships and learn effective ways in becoming healthy and whole.

Pray about the situation, Burnett said. Children should let their parents know how their behavior is affecting them or pushing them away. Place boundaries by limiting contact with them or limiting what they can share. Be more objective, open and understanding – parents may be reacting to what the children are doing.

Both Beagles and Burnett agreed that though the parent’s behavior is out of a child’s control, there is something the child can do: forgive.

How can a young adult stay in a relationship with toxic parents without becoming toxic?

Recognize that there is toxicity in the relationship.

Understand that on your own, you don’t have the ability to protect yourself from your parent’s toxicity.

Reach out to people who understand healthy relationships. For example: A counselor, 12-step community.

Learn good boundaries. For example: I don’t necessarily agree with you; this is mom or dad’s opinion and not mine. Learn to use emotion and physical reactions to address the toxicity in the relationship. For example: If you feel a burning sensation in your stomach or you feel tension in your neck when talking to your parents, then your emotions are communicating to you that there is something wrong. Learning to listen to your emotions can help you set proper boundaries. For example: Mom or Dad, when you talk to me like that, it hurts.

Learn to vent. There is therapeutic and healing value in whining, moaning, and complaining. This can be done through writing letters that are never mailed or that are burnt. Verbal vomiting, or venting, helps “the individual to sort through an interaction they just had, and identify what part is theirs and take ownership and not take ownership for stuff that is their parent’s.”

Do not be toxic towards your parents. Just because they are toxic does not mean that you need to be too.

Be appropriate and respectful at all times. The way you feel may be just for the moment, blurt them out may not be appropriate and may be unkind and sometimes untrue.

Give yourself a good belly laugh. A lot of negative emotion and tension is felt in the stomach. For example: An empty feeling inside or a burning sensation. “Laughter literally giggles the internal organs, and helps to break up tension.”

A relationship with God through daily meditation. Inviting God into your life and allowing Him to control your circumstances will help in understanding that there are things beyond your control and that there are things that only God can do.

Tips provided by Rawly Glass – Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Clinical Director at The Bridge to Recovery in Bowling Green, Ky. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Pacific University and a master’s in Social Work from Walla Walla University.

The Bridge to Recovery is a residential treatment center which among other specialties also helps individuals overcome the effects of toxic relationships with their parents.
Paying for Graduate School

It’s Not As Hard As You Think

By Carolyn Davis

The cost of a master’s degree has gone up 37 percent in the last 10 years according to the latest figures from the U.S. Department of Education, and so it is essential to know the steps to take to get the most out of the available financial aid outlets.

Scholarships and Grants

Scholarships may require high scores on the GRE or GMAT. However, an individual’s school of choice may offer scholarships in the form of money or discounts. For instance, at Andrews University, students interested in specific master’s programs such as Special Education or Counseling and Psychology can apply for a 50 percent discount, according to Cindy Gannum, assistant director of the university’s Financial Aid department.

There are also many websites dedicated to finding scholarships for students. FastWeb.com is one such website. You simply answer some key questions when you join, and the website matches your profile with eligibility checkpoints. The Princeton Review also has a scholarship search engine that only requires a short, free registration before use.

The U.S. government does offer scholarship of sorts. “Pell grants are the federal ‘scholarships,’” said Jane Glickman of the U.S. Department of Education. Pell grants are need-based scholarships in that there is no expectation of being paid back and they are available to graduate, as well as undergraduate students.

Loans

Many people think of loans and are staggered by how much debt they will have when they graduate. However, there are different types of loans.

The Stafford loan is a federal loan, and it is the one of the lowest cost. Graduate students may receive a fixed-rate student loan of up to $20,500, and the loan can be subsidized or unsubsidized. It is important to know which one you are getting.

The subsidized loan is awarded based on financial need, and interest is not charged until repayment is started. The unsubsidized loan is not based on financial need, so any student who meets the standards can borrow money. However, it is important to note that unlike the subsidized loan, interest is charged from the first disbursement of funds.

The Perkins Loan is another federal loan, and eligibility is determined by the information provided in the FAFSA, or Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This is also a low-interest student loan, and an application is available in most schools’ financial aid departments.

Filling out the FAFSA early is the best way to get the most out of a federal loan, according to Glickman.

I will tell you that many states and schools put their aid package together for a student only after the student has exhausted their aid available from the federal government. So while a student can fill out the FAFSA over an 18-month period for an award year, it behooves him or her to fill it out early to increase his or her chances of getting institutional aid.”

The most important thing to remember when taking out a loan is that you will need to begin repaying it soon after graduating. Some jobs, such as military duty or teaching in low-income areas, can result in forgiveness of the loan.

However, forgetting to pay your bills can lead to unsavory circumstances. “Defaulting on a federal loan will result in serious consequences — including a poor credit rating, we can garnish your wages, take tax refunds, take someone to court, and prevent someone from getting another student loan in the future,” Glickman said.

Even though navigating the rules of the various financial aid resources might seem daunting, the possibilities that success brings far outweigh the anxiety of understanding the tricks that can save you time and money.

Photo by Bradley Austin
CARBUCKS
By Ryan St. Hilaire

Car repairs can be costly — and for college students on a tight budget, this can be a major problem.

Ndumisi Maseko, a Berrien Springs, Mich. AutoZone employee, often hears the horror stories, including an Andrews University student who found herself constantly pouring money into her ’88 Chevy Celebrity. “One day the fuel pump went out, and then next week the spark plugs needed to change, the next day the [exhaust] manifold cracked,” said Maseko.

Fortunately there are steps you can take to avoid costly car repairs and in the long run save lots of money.

FINANCE

Tom Taylor, owner and operator of T&T Auto Repair, in Berrien Springs, has been fixing cars for more than 40 years. According to Taylor, the biggest savings come from doing everything possible to keep a healthy, happy car — and not just finding the cheap way to fix it when it breaks down.

“Routine maintenance is the cheapest and best way to keep a car running,” said Taylor.

The major expenses happen because “people are putting the maintenance off, and we’re seeing engine failure left and right,” he said.

Routine maintenance involves checking and looking for potential issues in your fluid levels, brakes, wheels, and tires.

“You can save money by doing that kind of stuff yourself.”

“[On a] majority of cars, most people can change their own filters ... do their own spark plug checks,” Taylor said.

Vehicle manufacturers usually give intervals for swapping out items such as spark plugs, fluids, filters, belts, etc. Knowing these intervals is a great first step toward keeping a healthy, money-saving car.

Once you know what should routinely be done, parts shops like AutoZone are a great resource in several ways.

AutoZone offers free in-store services like battery, starter, and alternator testing, engine-light diagnostics, and battery charging. Some workers are qualified to answer your everyday questions.

Taylor cautioned, however, that it’s always a good idea to first check with a professional before attempting any do-it-yourself job. He said that most reputable shops do this as a courtesy to their customers.

Talk with “someone who knows everything and can tell you what the pitfalls are before you get into a mess,” he said.

Photo by Courtney Straub

BUILDING CREDIT
By Gesimal Dalya

It’s no secret that it’s harder for students to get a credit card. In the wake of the federal Credit CARD Act that started rolling out last summer banks cannot issue credit cards to anyone under 21, unless a parent, legal guardian or spouse is the primary cardholder. And to make matters worse, the recession has caused banks to cut back on issuing credit.

But there’s still a glimmer of hope for students trying to get a credit card, according to Joe Ridout, spokesman for Consumer Action, the San Francisco-based consumer advocacy group. Ridout recommended the following steps toward building a stellar credit history and eventually snagging your own credit card:

■ If you have no income you’ll need a cosigner. “If you have parents who have a good credit history you might want them to consider adding you as an authorized user to your parents’ card. You’d be an authorized user on paper without receiving a card but it’s helping build credit,” Students under 21 with their own income can submit proof and ask for an exception to the co-signer requirement.

■ If you have a bad credit history, you might want to consider a “secured credit card” which entails putting up a certain amount of cash, such as $300 to $500. Then in about a year, the bank converts the secured credit card into an ordinary credit card.

■ Once you have built up a credit history, Ridout suggested shopping around for the best credit cards. He recommended the citi mvU Platinum Select Visa card. It’s an unsecured card that requires proof of income or having a cosigner but “it has a nice rewards system,” said Ridout.

“For example, you get up to 5% back on monies spent on books. You also get rewards for getting good grades. So, you’re not rewarded for just spending,” he said.

It’s wise to use this card for minimal spending and pay off the balances at the end of the month. If you are going to carry a balance this card is not a good option.

Credit cards are not a license to go overboard with your spending. Ridout said that a good credit history involves: Paying your bills on time, and also not using up too much of your credit.

Illustration by Boeun Kim

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It is only imperfection that complains of what is imperfect. The more perfect we are the more gentle and quiet we become towards the defects of others.”

~Joseph Addison

A couple years ago I made my very first New Year’s Resolution. I decided it was time that I start trying to eat healthy. It was a necessary change in my life, considering up until then my body had been trained to be able to survive solely off of Cheetos and M&Ms.

It was on this path to healthful living that I became aware of a pretty intense discovery of myself. I was on my way to class one day later that spring, and wearing my athletic-looking capri jogging sweats. My hair was in a tightly fitted ponytail and topped off with a black headband. I had a bottle of water in my purse and in my hand was a half eaten apple. I took my seat in class and noticed the kid next to me look me over. It hit me that I must appear very healthy to him. I looked pretty fit. I was wearing the right clothes and in my hand was the proof: an apple, half eaten.

For a few seconds I reveled in this perception I thought he must have of me. For a moment, even if it was just to him, and even if it was just in my imagination, I felt like one of ‘those people’. You know, ‘those people’ who don’t hit the snooze on their alarms when it comes on, and instead jump out of bed, forego their cars and run to the gym.

I looked healthy, and so I felt healthy, and so for just a minute, I was able to become whoever I wanted to be, and I chose to be one of ‘those people’. I finished the remnants of my apple and then cracked open my cold bottle of water and felt like I was a walking advertisement for fitness as I put it to my lips. I half wanted to do some jumping jacks or bust into a sit-up as I toyed with this counterfeit vision of the new me.

When I got home, I did what I normally did at the time. I sat down next to my laptop, opened a package of Twinkies and fiddled with some homework (and by homework I actually mean Facebook).

I didn’t even realize it while I did it, but when I was finished, I noticed the empty water bottle beside my now empty Twinkies package and I realized I wasn’t healthy at all. I sat there stunned for a moment, imagining my stomach mixing the contents together to form me — half healthy, half unhealthy, just depends on the day.

The good news is that I don’t have to be perfect, or even healthy for God to notice me. He’ll find a way to use me and change me just as I am, as long as my heart is willing.

A friend told me that people are like drinking glasses, and sin is like rocks. Whether you are tossing pebbles at the glass and cracking it slightly, or smashing them with huge boulders that leave nothing but dust, damaged is damaged, and no one wants to drink out of a cracked glass.

I disagree with him, however. No matter how big the mistake that ruptured you in two, or how damaging the blows were to your reputation or past, it’s a new day, and a new year, filled with new chances.

I think if God had a cupboard, it would be filled to the brim with cracked glasses. Millions and billions of cups with jagged lines and obvious glue marks from where He pressed the pieces back together. I think He not only drinks out of them, but has them lining His table. They would be on display, and He’d be proud to have them there. Proud to comment to anyone who happened to look how much He loves His precious, cracked, beautifully handmade china.

“...Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience…”

~Colossians 3:12

Photo by Courtney Straub
Spend a little... protect a lot.

You've worked really hard for that new laptop, flat-screen TV or digital camera — why risk them? While your landlord likely has insurance to protect his or her building, that policy will not protect your belongings.

After a theft or apartment fire, you could spend thousands of dollars to replace your prized possessions.

For more information please contact your local Liberty Mutual Sales Representative, Dennis Zant or Neil Boff at 269-327-2006

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