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Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.
~3 John 1:11 NIV~

RJA News Corner

by Lee Stahl, Principal



RJA students enjoying a safari ride.

It was a cold windy day on October 17, but that didn't stop the 7-10th grade students at RJA from enjoying a trip to Lake Tobias Wildlife Park near Halifax, PA. While visiting the park the students were able to see a variety of animals from lions, tigers, and bears... to several species of monkeys and birds. A visit to the reptile house gave them a chance to see and hear about snakes, turtles, and alligators. Also, they got to see a two-toed sloth. The highlight of the trip is the safari tour where you are able to get up and close with the animals and feed them as well. One of the new additions to Lake Tobias is three male giraffes. Despite the blustery conditions it was a fun and enjoyable day!

The Faith of a Child submitted by Darlene Peterson

This a beautiful prayer story! It is our practice when we have a test to ask God to help us remember what we have studied. This time before starting to take a math strategies exam, a student prayed for everyone to get 100%. (Oh, me of little faith, I had my inner doubts) Then, the students began to hand in their math tests. I graded them as they came in. The first student earned 100%. Then the next several students earned 100%, also. One child took a just few minutes longer than others. When the last test was turned in that student had earned 100%! We all rejoiced for the answer to prayer. I asked the same student if he would like to pray again thanking God for answering his prayer and also to bless the food. He was very pleased to do so.



RJA Spiritual Focus Week

Ritanelly Matus and Paola Carvajal our nutritionists from Adventist Whole-Health Network. During the week of October 21-25 they along with Joshua Lopez Padilla shared a message of good health habits to encourage our students to properly care for their bodies. Going along with our spiritual theme of letting our light shine, we want to take care of our bodies so that Jesus can always shine through.

Senior Mentors Wanted!

RJA students are still looking to partner with a senior mentor one hour each week to develop a companionship and at the same time help them earn tuition credit at school. The Partnering for Eternity (PFE) program is a grant we receive from Southern Adventist University to assist student with tuition at Adventist schools. Senior mentors are usually retired or near retirement. In the PFE program students accompanied by their parent usually visit at the mentor's home and can share hobbies, play games, read or help with school work, help with household chores, and other activities. If you think you might be interested, please contact Principal Lee Stahl, 610-777-8424.

Grace's Outpost by Ashley Richards

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." – Ephesians 3:14-19, NASB

Did God ever place someone in your life for the sole purpose of loving them?

That thought struck me on the way to work this morning, and instantly I knew I could say yes. God has brought a small handful of little South American kiddos into my life and expanded my heart inside my chest like an inflating balloon. I can honestly say that Jesus has given them to me for the sole purpose of loving them. What blessing they are to me! I am blessed beyond measure.

For those who may not know, I sponsor a few children—one Peruvian, and the others are Brazilian—in South America through Compassion International. I am so in love with what this organization does, and could gush about it all day. This program pays for school fees, gives them a tutor, gives them a safe place to play and grow, teaches them about hygiene, cares for their health, gives them vocational training and help in getting to college as they

grow up, but most of all, introduces them to Jesus. I've grown to love these kiddos as if they were my own. I get the privilege of writing letters to them every month, and I've seen them grow in wisdom and stature and hope. There's very little I can do to protect them all the way from Pennsylvania, but I wage war for their souls and their safety on my knees.

Jesus gave them to me to love them.

What would the world look like if we saw more people like that? Our neighbors, the oblivious boss, the annoying little sister, the homeless visitor, the jerk in traffic that just flipped his middle finger, the struggling single mom, our kid's autistic friend, our pastor? That God gave them to us for the sole purpose of loving them with His love?

I keep thinking about these powerful verses about the power of the love of God, and how little we truly show the powerful, transformative love of God. Do we? The love of God is *transformative*. The love of God *rescues*. The love of God *compels*. The love of God *transcends* time, borders, prejudice, sin, hatred, mental illness, loneliness, self-loathing, every barrier, every obstacle. The love of God *inspires*. It calls us out of lies and into truth. The love of God is *passionate*. I think many people hesitate to focus on the love of God because it's become cliché or trite to talk about the love of God, like a blanket excuse for anything goes, but God's love is a love of *action*, and nothing could be more powerful, redeeming, transformative, or compelling than the love of God. The

love of God does not leave us where He found us, but it transforms us into the very character of God Himself. If the love of God didn't compel, didn't transform, didn't elevate, how could it possibly be God's love?

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another... We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world... We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." – 1 John 4:7-11, 16-17, 19-21, NASB

God's love is not passive, or lackadaisical, or selfish, but forceful, mesmerizing, awesome, invasive, tender. Like a superhero diving in on His cape a split second before you are consumed by aliens.

Like a force of nature. Like a summer thunderstorm in South Dakota that appears out of nowhere and leaves you in awe of its power. Like a campfire whose warmth slips around you and cradles you from a cold night. Like a flight on a mighty bird to dizzying heights. Like coming home to warm, gooey chocolate chip cookies and cuddles with mama. And then Jesus commands us to go love the lost, our neighbors, our brothers and sisters, the strangers within our gates, our mortal enemies, *just like that*.

Going Deeper by Barbara Snyder

Jesus-and-Christians

This past week I've been reading the book of Hebrews. I've always loved Hebrews but this time I felt lost. I felt lost until I started paying attention to the chapter headings and the titles of different chapter sections. I discovered scripture anew and here is what I've heard and can apply to my everyday life. I've included some pertinent quotes, all from anecdotes from "The Message" by Eugene Peterson.

It seems odd to have to say so, but too much religion is a bad thing. We can't get too much of God, can't get too much faith and obedience, can't get too much love and worship. But religion--the well-intentioned efforts we make to "get it all together" for God--can very well get in the way of what God is doing for us. The main and central action is everywhere and always what God has done, is doing, and will do for us. Jesus is the revelation of that action. Our main and central task is to live in responsive obedience to God's action revealed in Jesus. Our part in the action is the act of faith.

I struggle with my own faith in that I am reminded daily (by both failure and success) that the Lord wants all of me. I asked Him that in frustration once, "Lord, what do you want from me?" Again, as always..."All of you." And then, "Total dependence upon Me." The answer is not "All of you-and-good works." Not all of you-and-a pleasant

personality." Not "All of you-and-church membership, or you-and-good works to make up for bad deeds, or good connections or success." etc. etc. It would be easier for me to give "me-and-good works" (or anything else for that matter!) than for me to give all of me!

Conversely Jesus wants to take all of me by giving all of Himself. He sends each of us a wedding garment and all who allow Jesus to put it on are separated from their filthy rags and nakedness. Show up in your altogether and He encloses you with "garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Isa 51:3. He can't dress you up until you allow Him to cast off your rags and your riches. Both have to go.

But what He wants of me and what He wants to do for me is a tough one. Sometimes I am a Jesus-and-Christian. There are a lot of Jesus-and-people in the world. Cain was a Jehovah-and-"I want to do it my way" kind of guy. He's known as the first murderer. Judas was a Jesus-and-money man, and the most famous traitor in the world. We are tempted to "become self-important and try to improve matters with our two cent's worth. We add on, we supplement, we embellish. But in doing so we dilute the purity and clutter the simplicity. We become fussily religious, or anxiously religious. We get in the way."

So, when we, in our everyday world, become Jesus-and-kind of people, reconsider where we are putting our time and energy, our heart and soul. If it is Jesus-and-politics, turn off the news and open to the book of Hebrews. If it is Jesus-and-last day events and the current interpretation thereof, perhaps it is time to put time into the Sermon on the Mount. (I know that's a hard one for some people.) If you are a Jesus-and-the law, or Jesus-and-works, go back to the Sermon on the Mount again, and/or John 14 - 17, then onto Gethsemane and the Crucifixion. Jesus has to be the beginning and the end of our thoughts and our energies, the Alpha and the Omega. He has to be a fulcrum that moves us from growth to growth, from knowledge to obedience, from showing up, to sowing, to harvesting. Nothing of our own we bring.

The book of Hebrews starts with how important God the Son is to God the Father, how important man is to the Godhead and how Jesus honors man in becoming one. It says that Jesus is the centerpiece of all we believe, that Jesus is the builder of this house that we call Salvation and that if we could keep a firm grip on this confidence then we are the house! We will live this salvation forever. But "make sure there's no evil unbelieving around that will trip you up and throw you off course, diverting you from the living God!" Hebrews 3:12.

Hebrews 4:14-16 says "Now that we know what we have-- Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God--let's not let it slip through our fingers. We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all, all but the sin. So, let's walk right up to Him and get what He is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help." We cannot do a bit of it ourselves. This is what Hebrews refers to in the Sabbath rest...rest from our labors, from our ego, from our self-righteousness. Make "Jesus-and-" into "Jesus" only.

When it is Jesus only, we are free for the act of faith, the one "action in which we don't get in the way but on the Way." It is so easy to lose your first love and become lukewarm by adding the word "and" to Jesus. Resist the temptation and hang onto Jesus only with your every morning devotion, your all-day mini prayers, your strongest passions and your weakest being. That is the "all of me" He wants of me. I must never forget that. Never.

Amen

The Crow's Nest by Bob Kondracki

A Sin, or Not a Sin

That is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of truthful consequence, or to take up a convenient lie and avoid a sea of troubles. And, by lying, end them? (Please forgive me Shakespeare)

A question that is not so conveniently cut and dried as many would like, or many would have you believe. Please do not be confused, however. I am not referring to the act of deliberately doing something you know is outright wrong. No, I'm talking about things that might be a sin for one person but not another. How can that be possible, you ask? Well, let's take a look at some examples.

Before going to an important event with your wife, she asks you if she looks good in a particular dress. You look at your watch, realizing that you're already running late. What do you say? Do you rationalize a little white lie and say, "yes dear, you look fine." Or do you tell her the truth, and inform her she looks hideous, like a bag lady in that outfit? Yes, yes, I know we can be more subtle and kinder than that, but with some wives (and husbands) you take your life into your own hands by saying anything your spouse doesn't want to hear.

We have all been in that situation, or something similar. Is your lie, to prevent hurting someone's feelings justified, and is it even considered that serious a sin by God? It's a difficult question to answer. If you pay close attention to how Christ handled difficult questions,

He often answered with a question of His own, a clever tactic to diffuse the question asked of Him. In a much more serious example, we may refer to a Bible story in the book of Joshua chapter 2, when Rahab deliberately lies to the king of Jericho about the Israelite spies she's hiding in order to save their lives. And the spies even rewarded her for her deceptiveness by promising protection, going to the extreme of swearing on their own lives, presumably with the Lord's blessing.

Obviously, there was more at stake there than just hurt feelings and an evening of the silent treatment from a spouse. Was Rahab's lie justified? It was still a lie, no matter how you spin it. After all, doesn't the 9th commandment say, "Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor?" In a quick review, I found literally over 100 texts in the Bible that condemn lying.

According to Titus 1:2, God never lies, so is it ever OK for us then? Even more bluntly, Proverbs 12:22 states, "The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in people who are trustworthy." And if that isn't enough for you, for a truly frightening picture, read Revelation 21:8.

Actually, my objective here is not to come to a definitive conclusion on lying. I really can't answer that. You'll have to take it up with God yourself. But I use the topic of lying, which we can all identify with, as an example and also a segue for addressing other ambiguous situations regarding sin.

In attempting to determine when a sin is not a sin, and

conversely, when a non-sin is actually a sin, it can be quite tricky for us at times. One of the most obvious reasons is that we don't have access to the heart. We can never be completely sure what somebody is thinking, or what their motivation is. Therefore, something that appears quite evident to us, convincing, no debate, according to the standards we personally adhere to, or proposed by a church or religious body, can actually be far more nuanced than we realize.

Keeping the Sabbath for instance, is a fertile example for discussion. If I like to go fishing on the Sabbath, is it a sin? Some would say yes. Isaiah 58:13 says, "Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day." But yet there are many who have no problem going for a hike, or a picnic, or bird-watching, whatever. If I'm fishing, not for profit, just for enjoying nature, how, in a narrow-minded, linear perspective, is what I'm doing a sin, and what you're doing perfectly OK? Do you see my point?

Let's use another Sabbath example. Suppose I start pledging allegiance to Sunday worship instead of Sabbath, knowing full well at this point where the Bible stands. Does this constitute sin for me? On the other hand, if I truly believe that Sunday is the holy day of worship, because I've been brought up and erroneously taught that, or even concluded it on my own (it's not just going to be people with high IQs or unerring ability to discern truth going to heaven) does that mean it's still a sin for me?

Here is an interesting question for you. Suppose you believe something is a sin, when in fact it really isn't. If you engage in it, thinking it is a sin even though it isn't, is it a sin for you? Does God hold us accountable for doing something we actually believe is sin, when it may truly not be? Alcohol, jewelry, the Sabbath, etc, are difficult topics in the Bible. There are many genuinely sincere Christians that have arrived at different conclusions on these and other subjects.

A while ago I wrote an article on Absolute Truth. I still believe there is absolutely Absolute Truth in this world, and in God's Word. Admittedly I am a person that sees 90% of things in black and white. I value logic over emotion and rationalization every time. But what I don't believe is that we are always in a position to judge absolutely. I can't even begin to presume how God is going to look at things far too confusing and difficult for my finite mind to figure out.

Inevitably, somebody is going to come back with Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." There is no arguing here on what the Bible says. But I've also seen people use this text to attempt to force *their* particular beliefs or agenda on others. In Acts 17:30, it also says, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." In other words, we are going to make mistakes. We are going to arrive at incorrect conclusions. Are these two scripture verses in conflict with each other then?

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Question of the Month by Ashley Richards

If you got to pick three people to be your neighbors in heaven, who would they be?

"It would be fun to have Samson as my neighbor, so he could help me move. And Peter would be my #1 choice. And Enoch, too." – Teresa de Peña

"Joseph and his family. I would want my family, too, and Daniel." – Delilah Romyn

"Andrew, Barnabas, and Timothy." – David Beard

"My family, my church family, and probably Ellen White." – Stacey McLean

"I would say my family, Gladys Aylward, and Moses." – Karen Richards

"My children, my grandchildren, and my friends." – Carol Rey

"The apostle Paul, Philip Yancey, and Nebuchadnezzar." – Toni Wlasniewski

"My wife, my son, and my daughter—my family." – Jack Romyn

"Definitely my family, Moses (because he was given the Ten Commandments, he had patience, and he was definitely a man of God), and my church family." – Emily McLean

"Family, for sure! I'd like to live next to friends, too. And Mary and Martha! I would love to sit at the feet of Jesus, and be hospitable like Martha. What an honor that would be!" – Cheryl Cherington

Recipe of the Month by Arleen Johns

Arleen's Favorite Lentil Soup

Ingredients

2 ½ C dry lentils (1#)
1 onion
2 carrots
1 medium potato
4 celery

12 C water
3 garlic cloves
1 veggie bouillon
1 TBS McKay's chicken seasoning
½ tsp thyme
1 quart tomatoes
1 TBS salt
2-4 c spinach or kale

Instructions

Cut all veggies; add everything together in large pot.
Simmer for 1 hour till lentils are done.
If you have an Instant pot cut water to 6 cups and set timer for 30 minutes

Notable Quotes selected by Bob Kondracki

Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants.
~Frederick Douglass~

A smooth sea never made a skilled mariner
~English proverb~

If God doesn't soon bring judgment upon America, He'll have to go back and apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.
~Ruth Graham~

A lie told often enough becomes the truth.
~Vladimir Lenin~

Time is the only critic without ambition.
~John Steinbeck~

Don't let your failures and mistakes define you, let them refine you.
~Unknown~

Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud.
~Sophocles~

"Caution: Cape does not enable user to fly."
~Batman costume warning label~

There is no place in a fanatic's head where reason can enter.
~Napoleon Bonaparte~

The Funny Bone selected by Bob Kondracki

King Solomon's Protege

We were reading The Wisdom of King Solomon in my Sabbath school class. An illustration showed King Solomon ordering a child to be cut in half, as one woman sobbed and another watched uncaringly.

Pointing to the heartless woman, a young boy said, "I hope she ends up with the part that has the butt on it."

A Tibetan Phone Call

So, I called up the spiritual leader of Tibet, and he sent me a large goat with a long neck. Turns out I phoned dial-a-llama.

House Call

When our minister and his wife visited our neighbor, her four-year-old daughter answered the door. "Mom!" she yelled toward the living room. "God's here, and he brought his girlfriend."

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The Children's Page by Ashley Richards

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which* is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” – 1 Peter 1:3-5, NASB

Oh no! I wrote you a very exciting story I was very excited for you to read, but somebody took out a bunch of the letters! Can you help me figure out what the story is?!

On_e u_on a ti_e, the_e w_re t_o f_iends. T_ese _wo frien_s re_lly l_ved Jes_s, an_ wer_ mis_i_o_n_ri_es i_ve_y m_ny coun_ri_es to pr_ach the _ood ne_s th_t Je_us di_d f_r ou_ si_s a_d i_pr_paring a mans_on fo_u_ in h_aven! On_ay, thes_ _wo frien_s _ere in a p_ace cal_ed Lystra, an_ t_ey _ame a_ross a _an s_tting i_t_e s_reet. He w_s cri_pled, a_d h_c_uld no_w_lk! H_h_d _een li_e t_is sinc_ he _as bo_n.

The_, _ne of t_em (hi_nam_ is P_ul) lo_ked a_t_e ma_, and h_cou_d S_E tha_t is _an bel_eved tha_ G_d wa_mi_h_t_y to sa_e _im. He w_s rea_y f_r G_d to _o a m_gh_t_y wo_k in _im! So Pau_sh_uted, so ever_one cou_d he_r, “S_and up!” an_ t_e ma_ju_ped to _is f_et! He w_lked a_d jump_d li_e he h_d be_n d_ing it hi_e_tire li_e.

W_en th_pe_ple of _ystra sa_w_at P_ul h_d do_e to th_s hand_capped ma_, the_w_re ama_ed! The_wen_cra_y! T_ey sc_eamed, “Th_y_re go_s! The_ods hav_c_me_ow_n to u_!” Beca_se t_ey di_ _ot belie_e in _he o_e tr_e G_d, bu_god_t_at w_re not_eal, fr_m Gre_ce. T_ey ca_led Pau_’s frie_d, Barna_as, “Zeus,” an_ t_ey cal_ed P_ul “Hermes” beca_se _aul spo_e mo_e tha_B_rnabas, an_Her_es w_s the _essenger of the G_reek go_Zeus.

The _riest of t_e t_mple of Z_us in L_stra gat_ered a p_rade to ho_or Pau_ and Bar_abas—the_gathe_d the p_ople, ani_als f_r s_crifices, and _anners—y_u_ame it!

Whe_t_e _wo frie_ds r_alized wha_ _as _oing on, th_y we_e hor_ified. T_ey wav_d t_eir ar_s a_d screa_ed, st_pping t_at pa_ade ri_ht in i_s_racks! “No, no, no!” the_screa_ed. “We a_e no _ods! _e hav_co_e to te_ch y_u of th_on_tr_e G_d, the livi_g G_d! He ha_m_de a_l livi_g th_ngs—the s_y, the eart_, the _ea, and eve_ything in th_m! Yo_m_st_ive up th_se sup_rstitions and f_llow the O_e who ca_sa_e you! F_r yea_s, He h_s _een mer_iful to y_ur fath_rs, ev_n th_ugh you h_ve not fo_lowed Hi_, beca_se He l_ves you! He h_s ble_sed yo_ with r_in an_ fo_d a_d t_e s_nshine. An_w_en you_h_arts ar_ha_py a_d y_ur sto_achs a_e fu_l, t_is is ev_dence of _ood bey_nd you_d_ing—it is the lo_e of G_d!”

_ecause the_w_re so ad_mant an_ spo_e up so qu_ckly, they st_pped the_fro_sa_rificing anim_ls th_t w_uld ha_e hono_ed th_m as g_ds. Bu_t_en so_e of P_ul’s an_ Barna_as’s enem_es cam_to to_n, an_con_iced the crow_s (in on_y a mo_ent!) to ha_e t_em, an_t_ey e_en atta_ked Paul, thr_wing gre_t sto_es at h_m u_til he w_s unc_nscious!

Bu_ _or Pa_l, it _as a_l w_rth it. Do y_u kno_ why? Be_ause eve_t_ough m_ny peo_le ha_ed Pau_, the_e w_re so_e tha_ca_e to b_lieve in J_sus, an_ the_wil_go to heav_n w_en Jesu_come_ba_k aga_n, an_ _hen w_get to heaven, we ca_m_et them, t_o!

The Crow's Nest (continued from page 4)

I don't think so. God forgives our ignorance. But that *does not mean* we are no longer responsible for continuing to seek the truth. Even as Adventists, we must be willing to listen to others, before rejecting things with the truth

of the Bible, not our own opinions. And even as Adventists, I don't believe we have everything figured out. We must always be open to changing our beliefs if somebody definitively and conclusively proves us wrong.

There is no shame in being wrong. We are all wrong on occasion. But if you're proven wrong, and you still stubbornly resist, now you're not only wrong, excuse me for saying this, but you can now add stupid to your repertoire.

Ultimately, it's God's job to judge what's sin, and He will do it accordingly. Where we make mistakes, He is infallible. I really believe God sees things in black and white. But He knows ALL the layers and integral aspects. We don't.