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THE



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A publication of the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church



Church Reaches Community Through VBS

Meet New Associate Pastor, Fred Dana



Back-to-School Issue!

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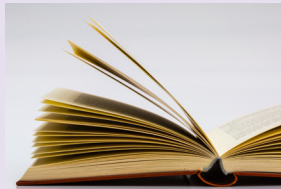
Front Page: Iliana Grey, 19
Major undecided
Photo: Aline Henda

Editorial

She knew she didn't have much time with him. After miraculously being saved by the princess, Jochebed's son was given back to her, so she could raise him until he was weaned – probably at 5 years old, which was common in the Egyptian culture of that time.

Her story up to that point had been of pure faith – hiding her little baby boy from the soldiers for three months; making a basket and putting it in the same river where he was supposed to be drowned, which had been done to many other Hebrew baby boys by the Pharaoh's order; and her daughter suggesting his own mother to nurse the baby for the princess when she found him in the river. Now that she had her miracle baby in her arms again, Jochebed could only continue to exercise her faith and trust that the Lord had a special plan for him. During the little time she had with her son, she would teach him all she could – about their faith, about their God. A short, but well operated, home school.

Moses grew up to be a prince of Egypt. He attended the best universities and had access to all the knowledge the most powerful nation in the world of that time had to offer. But it was



in the very private and quiet mountains of Midian, where he was a shepherd after fleeing Egypt for killing a man, that God taught him the skills he needed, to be used by Him to save His people from slavery.



When I think about Moses' story, I believe he experienced all three forms of schooling – home, with his slave mom, public, as a prince in Egypt and private, taught by God while he was a lonely shepherd in Midian.

This year our son Jason officially starts school – kindergarten. And while considering the pros and cons of each of these three forms of education, I read and talked to several parents about it as well. Home school, public school and private school can be a very debated choice. All of them have advantages and disadvantages, some leaning more to one side than the others. The important thing is that the experience from it shapes our lives, so it's a very significant choice.

This issue's theme is very exciting – back to school! We talk a little about home school, church or private school, and public schools (page 6) and students share some of their school stories (page 13), including one from post WWII (page 5)! Speaking of school, we have an interview with a pastor with a lot of experience in a classroom – our new associate pastor (page 9). And of course, a word of encouragement from pastor Chris: three times may be not enough! See what I'm talking about on page 15.

See you next issue!

Aline Henda
Editor-in-Chief

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Photos: Aline Henda

Plugged Into Power with Vacation Bible School

By Aline Henda
Editor-in-Chief

The worship service at Sacramento Central church on Saturday, July 11, had a different feature during the children's story time. Kids in brightly colored T-shirts, the Vacation Bible School uniform, sang the songs they had learned during the VBS week. With them were the volunteer teenagers that helped make another successful VBS happen at Sacramento Central.

More than 80 kids attended the VBS program from Monday, July 6, through Friday, July 10. Many were visitors, invited by their friends, or were relatives of church members.

This year's VBS theme was "Plugged Into Power," a program from the Adventist source "My Bible First," who also supplies the Sabbath School lessons for kindergarten and primary.

"It's nice because it's an Adventist program, so we don't have to worry about the content," said Shirley Hope, the Children's Division Sabbath School Superintendent.

The curriculum provided the songs, studies, crafts and games. To carry out the plan, the church used the \$2,500.00 budgeted for VBS week, and many volunteers

helped with the cooking, teaching and assisting the kids.

The three and a half hour program began with a meal in the Camellia room, followed by a theme talk in the Chapel with our Youth Pastor Michael Butler, and songs led by his wife Kristine. After that the kids rotated into four different classes – Bible lesson, Body Shop, Nature Talk, and Crafts. For closing, they met the "Tool man," Richard Anger, who would bring a different guest professional worker each night, with his tools.

VBS was coordinated by a team of volunteers, like Robert and Raquel Aguilar, who have done a lot of the behind-the-scenes work for VBS during the last four years.

"It has been an honor and privilege for Robert and me to be part of VBS all these years," shared Raquel Aguilar. "I'm so thankful for our youth pastor and his wife, and their involvement in VBS. Once again, every member of our VBS team worked together to reach these precious children for God. We pray that the children will keep some good, lasting memories from this ministry."

They most certainly will. Just ask Justin Purba, 7 years old:

"I liked learning about the Bible. We



2nd Annual Family Retreat Fun, Fellowship and Blessings for the Whole Family

NEWS

By Tyra Taylor
Staff Writer

From Friday, May 29, 2015 to Sunday, May 30, 2015 Family Life Ministry hosted its second annual retreat. The theme for the retreat this year was "Lord Send Your Rain" and the keynote speaker was Pastor Stephen Bohr. Retreat attendees were also blessed by the other special speakers this year that included Dr. Allen Davis, Keith Dutweiler who presented on behalf of Little Light Studios, and Alice Merrill, the Assistant Director of Family Ministries for the Northern California Conference of Seventh day Adventists.

But one of the most powerful and engaging experiences of the weekend was the "Kids Kingdom"

program that was organized and led by Amy Maldonado. While parents and adults were learning about the importance of preparing for the second advent of Christ, their children were being taught age appropriate messages regarding things they can do to prepare for Christ's return as well. In addition, youth attendees met in small group settings that were facilitated by our youth pastor, Michael Butler. The children and youth seemed to enjoy the retreat even more than the adults!

In addition to the powerful worship services, engaging seminars, and delicious cuisine, retreat attendees were given the opportunity to participate in some awesome extra-curricular activities. While some attendees enjoyed the nature

center, others had a great time on the train ride, and may have learned some great information at the Leoni House. Also you can be certain the one activity that everyone enjoyed were the go-carts. We live in a time where our young people are being tempted to engage in any activity that will draw them away from Christ. Parents and

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Photo: Tyra Taylor

Baptisms

Photos: Aline Henda

- 1- Armando Martinez
- 2- LaDawn White
- 3- Jesus Delacruz
- 4- Jose Isai Pinon
- 5- Nadine Carpio Sarmiento
- 6- Uriel Hernandez, Sr
- 7- Uriel Hernandez, Jr
- 8- Yezel Hernandez
- 9- The new members from the hispanic church and their families



Photo: Esteban Martinez

Continued from page 4

Retreat

adults are competing with television, radio, social media, and video games for the attention of their young people. It was a blessing to see children, youth, and adults enjoy fellowshiping with one another while experiencing good Christian fun. It was also a powerful witnessing tool to our youth in that it showed them they can still have "fun" without having to compromise their beliefs or values.

For those of you who missed out this year, you definitely want to plan to attend next year's retreat. You are sure to be blessed if you do.

Continued from page 3

VBS 2015

learned about monkeys... We did a lot of fun stuff," he said.

Other kids also shared. Enoch Brown, 8, loved to sing. Samaria Carroll, 7 enjoyed the Body shop, where they played all sorts of games. Jason Henda, 5, chose the stories in Bible class and the crafts as his favorites. Oko Gonzalez, 5, liked the dinnertime the most. But for Shirley Hope, seeing the children's enthusiasm for learning about Jesus was the best part.

"I would like to invite anyone who has not been involved in VBS in the past to join us next year. You will be blessed," said Raquel Aguilar.

Public School in Germany After WWII

By Rosie Beavers
Staff Proofreader

It has been many years since the end of World War II, but I have some memories that will always stay with me, especially those of my public school experiences in Berlin, Germany. You see, in those days we were required to attend school six days a week! This is unheard of in America! In Germany there existed no Adventist grade schools or high schools at all - only the college level. So it wasn't easy, since our family were Seventh-day Adventists. We had to explain to my teachers why I would be absent each Saturday, and some of these teachers didn't take to it kindly at all. Since I've always enjoyed school, it was also disappointing to me to be absent from school each Saturday. I would miss some classes, and I would need to make up the home work in order to get good grades. But in the end, with God's help I was able to keep up and get good grades.

One year in junior high school, we had a class that was an introduction to physics, and it was held only on Saturdays! Well, guess what? I never had any physics that year at all, and was never able to make it up. We also had art classes on Saturday, but that did not hurt my education as much as the physics class did.

My mom was one of the children's Sabbath School teachers and quickly noticed that the only son of our pastor as well as the children of the doctor in our church did not come to Sabbath School or church. Apparently their parents felt that their education was more important than attending our church services. We felt that they set a bad example. But it was up to each family and their own conscience whether to choose church or school on the Sabbath day.

As much as I missed going to school for six days, I was glad that my parents had made the decision to follow God's commandments. It was also a witness to my school-mates and teachers, and who knows what an influence we may have

had? Only God knew.

After the occupation by the Allies in Berlin the political situation in the 1950's became somewhat dangerous, so that many people felt if there was another war, or even World War III, it would probably start in Berlin. So when my father's brother decided to immigrate to America, my parents thought it was a good idea and followed the next year. In those days you needed to have a sponsor in order to immigrate to America and God helped us find one, an Adventist family from Oregon who had been sending us care packages.

When we arrived in Southern Oregon, we soon felt at home because we were part of our world-wide Adventist family! We soon learned that no one attends school on Saturdays in America, and that was a real blessing! (In Germany the six-day school week was abandoned circa 1982.) When we heard that our church even had a church school, my mom wanted us to attend. She knew we would make friends quicker with the kids at church, if we attended the church school with them. But my father was not agreeable with that at all!

He thought we should go to public school like we had done in Berlin, because he felt we could not afford the school tuition. But Mom was so determined that we should attend the little church school that she offered to get a

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Rosie Beavers with her classmates and girlfriends of the 9th grade, in her farewell photo in Berlin, 1952.

Education: God's Plan, God's Promise

By Hope Beale
Managing Editor

Another school year is fast approaching. A number of students will be entering school for the very first time, while for others this year will mark the end of a long journey. How exciting! Yet, no matter where students may be on this academic journey, it really began long before they entered a classroom. We are reminded by Ellen White, "It is in the home that the education of the child is to begin. Here is his first school. Here, with his parents as in-

structors, he is to learn the lessons that are to guide him throughout life—lessons of respect, obedience, reverence, self-control" (*Education*, p. 182).

Once a child reaches the age where the educational experience must become more formal, parents have options. Some may elect to home school, many will send their children to a private school, and others will enroll them in public school and tertiary institutions. If you are parents who must make a decision about this issue, prayerfully consider your choice. Remember this: God's purpose for your children's lives will never change – and He knows exactly where they should continue their education.

Home School

When parents take full control of their child's education - teaching,

evaluating, planning, organizing, and structuring the day-to-day activities of the educational experience - they have entered into the world of homeschooling. An increasing number of parents are choosing to home school for many reasons. The academic format they use will vary. Some may choose a structured, traditional approach and others may blend structure and flexibility. Regardless of the method chosen to home school, this is a powerful opportunity for



Photo: Alexandra Veatch

God - working directly through the parent(s) as teacher(s) - to continue building, shaping and molding their child/children's character(s). Those who choose this educational option can be encouraged and motivated by the promise in these words: "When the harvest of the earth is reaped, we shall see the result of our toil; for we shall see those for whom we have labored and prayed gathered into the heavenly garner. So shall we enter into the joy of our Lord, when "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isaiah 53:1—Ellen White, *Special Testimonies on Education*, pages 67-72.

Private Christian School

Christian schools are a vital link in continuing the character building process. In the Northern California Conference alone, there are

43 Adventist Church Schools, not including colleges. The mission of these schools can be summed up in the following statement, "To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized - this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life" (Ellen White, *Education*, p. 15, 16).

Public School

If you cannot home school your child/children or place them in a private school, public school can be a viable option. As early as 1852, laws were enacted that required cities and towns to offer children an education. If parents refused, they could be fined. The Educational law today simply states that all children

have the right to a free education. Ensuring the quality of that education is in parental hands. "How so?" you may ask. Ellen White shares the following: "True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information, it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men (*individuals*) of great intellect, as of noble character. It needs men (*individuals*) in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle" (p. 225). *Emphasis supplied.* If your son or daughter attends public school this year, remember that the foundation of their education was established in your home. No matter where it continues, God's purpose for your children's education is still the same – **that they may have the mind of Christ.**



Elicia Birks, 26
Graduated in
Business Administration

Photo: A. Re Henda

That's what we do

Three moms from Sac Central church share their experiences with their kids in Homeschool, Private and Public school.

Homeschool

Yolanda Price



Meet the Price Family

At first my husband and I were sending our eldest child to public school. We would start our day with prayer and Bible study. At the time our son was happy and talkative, but within five months we noticed our son would leave

for school happy and come home a completely different child; dispirited and quiet. My husband and I both came to the conclusion that we were responsible for raising and teaching our own children. Why make the government do our job? We prayed that the Lord would show us another way, and He did, almost immediately. Before the second semester began we took our son out of public school and started homeschooling him, and eventually all of his siblings. We've never looked back!

There are many advantages to homeschooling, but I'll only name a few. First and foremost, our Heavenly Father is asked to join us and help with our studies. Everything is customized to reach each child. The children are being taught with love and patience. I

really think this helps us to be a close-knit family.

I would say the disadvantage of homeschooling is very minimal. We all have bad days and sometimes those bad vibes trickle down to everyone and we'd have to stop and come back to it tomorrow.

Public School

Amapola Francisco

Abby never went to pre-school. I taught her how to read, write, and learn basic math at home prior to attending kindergarten. Alvin and I discussed and prayed about her schooling needs prior to enrolling her in public school. Of course, we primarily wanted her to attend an Adventist school, but at the time

Meet the Francisco Family



we didn't have the financial means to do so. We figured since we lived in Elk Grove, the school district and the families are wonderful in our area. It was convenient and we felt that it would be okay for Abby to attend her primary years in the local public school nearby. We were satisfied with the teaching and her surroundings. The families and teachers are all wonderful, but there was always that one element missing; an important one that guides and rules our daily lives - the presence of God being taught in the classroom.

Nevertheless, we always reminded Abby about the difference of certain lifestyles that she may be exposed to while being in a public school, such as birthday parties/events on Sabbaths, food choices, various beliefs, etc. Abby has always been a very smart and sensible girl and

she loves Jesus! We've told her to use her time with her friends to witness and share her beliefs about Jesus. Abby enjoyed being able to share her faith with her peers, who were nonbelievers, so that was a wonderful thing.

Recently, there have been so many changes in today's laws that are spilling over into the public education system. That truly concerned us. Again, the initial discussion Alvin and I had previously, to provide our children with a Christian education lingered in the back of our minds. On top of those things, there were personal concerns that arose as well, which led us to reevaluate our financial situation and our stance on Christian education. We believe that God has blessed us and has answered our prayers enabling us to send Abby to Orangevale Adventist School and Aidan to Kingdom Kids Christian Preschool. As much as we enjoyed hearing Abby's stories of witnessing to other children, we believe that she will thrive in an environment that will strengthen her faith even more as she grows older and be able to spread the love of Jesus to others as God leads her. We believe in the connection and consistency between the home, church, and school, so we look forward to

having our children start their days at school with prayer, Bible studies, worship time with peers, and so much more!

Private School

Kalin Pacheco

As working parents we knew our choices were limited to a public or private school. After a visit to the kindergarten class at two area Seventh-day Adventist schools, we decided that we wanted our children to attend an Adventist school. The Christian environment and caring, compassionate staff at Sacramento Adventist Academy (SAA) have been a blessing for our family. SAA has provided our children with a strong academic and music program that focuses on the core Seventh Day Adventist beliefs.



Meet the Pacheco Family

Continued from page 5

School Post War

job to pay for it! So she did housework and babysitting for other people so that we could attend the church school, even though she had never worked outside of our home before. We three children were very happy about it, because now we could be with the same friends at school as at church and at Pathfinders! My mom had made the right choice, and we never regretted it. From then on we attended the Adventist academies as well. When I went to boarding school I was glad to earn part of my tuition and I was so happy there.

In our public school system there are usually extra-curricular activities that take place on Friday nights, which make it difficult to be an Adventist Christian. For this and other reasons I would just like to urge as many parents as can possibly do it to send their children to our Christian schools. During the formative years of childhood I believe the influence in our schools can make a positive difference in the life of each child. And I believe that God blesses us when we sacrifice to send our children to a Christian school.



Rosie Beavers

CONNECTION INTERVIEW

The new Associate Pastor of Sacramento Central talks about his family, ministry, and how God changed him, even after he had a degree on Religion.

By Aline Henda
Editor-in-Chief

He is soft-spoken, has a contagious smile and a passion for teaching about God.

His 27 years of ministry, pastoring and teaching, have taken him “all over the place.” Now, for the first time they have bought a house, sensing that Sacramento is definitely where God wants them to be and they plan to “stay a while.” The Central Connection caught up with him on his first Sabbath in his new church.

Pastor Fred Dana



Photos: Aline Henda

THE CENTRAL CONNECTION: Pastor Fred, we would like to know a little more about you. Tell me about yourself, your family, your background.

PR. FRED DANA: I'm a fourth generation Adventist. My great-grandfather was a conference president in 1914. My mother was converted when she was a teenager. She didn't understand the Adventist lifestyle very well, and my father grew up in a strict family. So my parents were not together very well on how to raise us. I grew up in a dysfunctional family. Out of seven kids, four of us were boys. My oldest brother was a rebel and kept getting into trouble with the police; the next brother had a foul mouth and he and my mother often clashed. Sometimes my father would come home, hear what happened, and beat my brother badly. I saw enough that I learned to be more evasive rather than confrontational.

My youngest brother observed this scenario and learned that rather than being punished, I would just disappear. I could tell when trouble was coming. So my little brother would notice me leave and follow me. When we were out walking in the woods and hearing our siblings getting beaten, my youngest brother would say, “we are the only Adventist family in this neighborhood.” We would sit on this rock wondering why our family was so messed up.

CONNECTION: Was your father a pastor?

PR. DANA: No, just my great-grandfather. As a matter of fact, he resigned from his position as president because he had a conflict with the pastors and lost his temper. Instead of apologizing and trying to make things right, he resigned. No one in my family worked for the church again until I did, four generations later. So the Devil always hated me because I broke the trend of what he was able to do in my family, causing my family to be very marginal Adventists – mostly informed but not really knowing the power of God. Bad temper has run in my family all these years.

CONNECTION: Did you have a conversion experience?

PR. DANA: Losing our temper is one of our inherited traits and that is an important part of my conversion. When I had a conversion experience for the first time in my life, I knew the power of God not to yield to inner anger and rage. My brothers and I would fight all the time, really beat on each other. When I was in the Academy I got into fights. I was always a happy-go-lucky kind of guy, so people were surprised when I ended up in a serious fight as a teenager. When I had my conversion experience I was already done with college. I had a degree in Religion but I had no idea of

how it worked in the personal life

CONNECTION: Was Religion always your choice of career?

PR. DANA: I liked studying the Bible, I liked Bible history, but at that time I really didn't do devotions. When I left college and went to teach I started doing devotions because I knew I needed a closer walk with God in order to be patient with the school kids, and I was afraid of my temper. I had been trying to not have incidents losing my temper, trying really hard! I had no comprehension of what a relationship with God really was – but I knew how to talk about it. After I had my conversion experience, God changed me.

CONNECTION: How did that happen?

PR. DANA: It's impossible to explain without a very long story but I'll probably share it in a sermon. Basically I always assumed that because I was interested in God and knew a lot about the Bible, I was already saved. It wasn't until I came to grips with the fact that I was lost, that I had a conversion experience.

CONNECTION: Your story regarding having a bad temper reminds me of Ben Carson's experience when he was a kid and almost killed his friend with a knife because of his temper, and how he was converted...

PR. DANA: When I read Ben Carson's book, "Gifted Hands," and how he changed, I knew God really did it because He did the same for me. I really identified with Ben Carson's book. I loved that book and all of my student kids read it.

CONNECTION: I mention that because, as he said in his book, he is so soft-spoken now that people have a hard time believing he used to have a bad temper. Now I'm talking to you and I see the same thing. Is that how people react, like, "really?"

PR. DANA: In 2000 I went to an alumni reunion and I had not been to anything in sixteen years. When I went there and people asked me what I do now and I replied that I was a pastor, everybody was acting like, "that can't be possible!" They were all amazed! When I was in academy I did get into fights... I had been changed for so long that I had forgotten. And at that reunion, watching people's reaction to me being a pastor, made me think, "Wow, God has really done something."

CONNECTION: You were a teacher in an academy, elementary school and college. Did you have

"At that reunion, watching people's reaction to me being a pastor, made me think, 'Wow, God has really done something.'"

any remarkable experience during this time?

PR. DANA: I was Dean of Men in College and Chris Buttery was one of the guys. While I was there I did three trips to Africa. In one of those trips, to Nigeria, we had 8 Sunday-keeping pastors coming to our presentations. All of the pastors accepted the Sabbath when I presented it. I remember going to my room and thanking God for that opportunity to share. It was one of my most thrilling experiences. And then I started to think more about pastoring.

CONNECTION: Did you have other plans for your life before the call to ministry?

PR. DANA: For me it always has been to either teach or be a pastor. I have always felt that teaching is a ministry. Even when I taught elementary school, my goal was to help the kids to know Christ. I always considered learning Math, Science, Social Studies and English as personal developments to be ready to do whatever God calls you to do.

CONNECTION: Tell us about your wife, Lorrie?

PR. DANA: She is very, very smart. She worked as a chemist when we first got married. She basically gave up her career to be a stay-at-home mom for about 10 years. Homeschooling was a big part of life for our family. As the children got older, Lorrie did various part time jobs teaching, proof reading, copy editing and working as a conference office secretary for several ministries. She also worked full time for the county government in New York. She is an organizer type of person with good practical common sense. She's been a blessing to me especially in those two areas.

CONNECTION: How did you two meet?

PR. DANA: We met at church. She was the church pianist and our church had a prison ministry. The youth director worked with her to get people to do things and he told her to ask me to sing at the prison. I told her I would be happy to but I didn't have a pianist, and I had seen her play. She said, "I can do that." So she played for me in prison. The next month he told her to ask me to preach in prison. I had only preached three times in my life. I was not a speaker, really. So I preached in the prison. But she wasn't the easiest girl to get to know! We have been married for 33 years and we have two kids - Jared, who has two small kids and Emily, who is pregnant.

CONNECTION: I already know you love to read. What are your favorite authors, besides Ellen White?

PR. DANA: One of my favorite authors is Lynn



Pastor Fred Dana and his wife, Lorrie

Austin. She has written 5 books on the reigns of king Ahaz, king Hezekiah and king Manasseh. It's like Bible historical fiction. It's all based on Scriptures and she is an outstanding writer. She also did a trilogy on the civil war. For that type of writing she is my favorite author.

For serious writing, of course I like Ellen White because you don't have to worry about something that is not quite right. Another favorite is Lewis Were. He was an Australian evangelist in the 1920s and wrote books on prophecy. He brings out so many insights from the Scriptures that I had never seen before. I'm reading a book right now called "The God Shaped Brain," written by a psychiatrist. In every chapter I learn something I never knew before. It's just a phenomenal book.

CONNECTION: What would you say is your passion or your gift in ministry?

PR. DANA: Teaching. I know how to make complicated things simple. I taught elementary kids how to have an experience with God. It doesn't have to be complicated.

CONNECTION: What is your biggest challenge as a pastor?

PR. DANA: Evangelism is my biggest challenge because there are so many people, and their attention is given to so many other interests. How do we get their attention? How do we get past the multitude of diversions, prejudices, presuppositions and wrong ideas? And we are supposed to reach everyone! It's overwhelming. I need God's vision for this in a more personal way. I guess that really makes a deeper conversion, a more powerful walk with God, as my greatest challenge.

Secondly, how do I get church members to also have a greater burden for souls and to see and embrace God's vision for them as His disciples today.

CONNECTION: What is your favorite sermon topic?

PR. DANA: Conversion and victory in Christ – and how that actually works.

CONNECTION: Your years working as pastor and teacher are almost even. Which do you like better, pastoring or teaching?

PR. DANA: I love teaching. I taught every grade and every subject in elementary school, then in Academy three different times, and once in College, as well as 14 years of pastoring. I like to do both, but I like helping people learn. When someone is actually excited about learning, I feel the meaning of my life has just happened.

CONNECTION: What can church members do to help the work of a pastor?

PR. DANA: The church members need to make friends with non-members. They don't have to convert their friends; they just need to connect with them. Some people may not come to church but they may come to your home, or another member's home. As they get to know people and see they have a purpose in their life, and that they find happiness in their relationship with God – that draws people.

CONNECTION: Sacramento Central church has a very active media ministry. How do you feel about being a pastor here, knowing that the Word of God is reaching so many people?

PR. DANA: That excites me! I can't wait for the first time to teach the Sabbath School lesson. When Kula says, "that song was requested from so-and-so from South Arabia, or so-and-so from Argentina," that's exciting because you know there are people watching from other places. I just view that as an opportunity to teach truths and help people that we don't even know, elsewhere.

CONNECTION: You were supposed to come last year to interview for a pastor position here. What happened?

PR. DANA: I canceled and felt terrible, but felt that I had no choice. A close friend was pleading with me to be the boys' dean and help get the school on track. I thought that being the boys' dean would work out OK, but I was wrong. God said to me in January that I made my decision prematurely.

CONNECTION: So that didn't work out as expected and now...

PR. DANA: I just can't believe I got a second chance! I can't believe I'm here, but I am! I look forward to working with this church.

I've learned that no matter where you go, no matter what you anticipate, there is always something different from what you expect. I don't know how it's going to be here yet, but I'll just do my best and trust God.



Ask the Pastor

Pastor Mike Thompson

Why did God command the Israelites to destroy certain Canaanite nations if He has commanded us not to kill?



The original Hebrew in Exodus 20:13 should actually be translated as "Murder" rather than "Kill." The new King James Version employs the correct interpretation of "Murder" whereas the older King James Bible uses the term "Kill" in respect to the 6th commandment. While God condemns the sin of murder, we should not assume that he condemns the civil authority when they put to death one who is found guilty of shedding innocent blood. While God is always willing to forgive the repentant murderer and grant them eternal life, He has still ordained the judicial process through which justice may be exercised against the offender. Speaking of the civil justice system in Romans 13:4, the Apostle Paul states, "for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil."

In much the same way, God did not command the Israelites to "murder" certain Canaanite tribes. Rather, He used them as His instrument to execute justice upon a violent and cruel people who thought nothing of sacrificing their own children to pagan deities.

God is very patient and merciful and is loathe to destroy human life. He bore long with the idolatrous

Canaanites in the hope that they might desist from their evil ways. While still a sojourner in Canaan, God told Abraham that his descendants would not inherit the promised land for another 400 years "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Genesis 15:16. As with individuals, so with nations, God in His mercy grants a season of probationary time in which they ultimately confirm themselves in righteousness or evil. When the character of a person or a nation becomes set in impenitence and permanent opposition to God, Divine mercy is reluctantly withdrawn and they are left to finally suffer the just retribution of God. This is what happened to the Canaanite nations, after they had filled their cup of iniquity, through the invasion of the Hebrews when Divine mercy pled with them no more. In all of this we see a picture of how soon Divine justice will be poured out upon all those who reject God's last message of mercy to this world. We must pray and work for the salvation of souls while the opportunity still exists. "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9.

Would you like to have Pastor Mike answer your questions? Send it to connection@saccentral.org. Subject line: Ask the pastor

We asked How does God help you in school?

Photos: Nash Carlisle



At the beginning of finals week I had a big test to determine whether I would pass my class or not. After I did my studying I started taking my math final. Midway through the test I realized that I was not remembering what I had studied. So I stopped in the middle of the test to pray asking God to help me remember what I had reviewed. Then I continued with my test and the answers kept coming to my memory. After the test was over I realized that I had increased confidence about how I did. Later I learned that I got the second highest score in my class. I knew that without God's help I would not have been so successful.

Marcus Colmenares, 15
Sophomore



Honestly, for a person who loves school, I get awfully stressed out about it. Many times when I've been completely done with trying, I just sit down and think about how Christ has given me the ability to learn so I could help others, and that's what keeps me going.

Kaya Maldonado, 14
High School Freshman



When I decided to start keeping Sabbath again I had to cancel my Saturday morning study group. I was anxious about quitting a commitment, and was struggling to return to church. After prayer I told the group I needed to change the day or cancel the session. They asked why and I was surprised to find they all supported me even to the point of saying "yes, Saturday is the true Sabbath." Since then I have been attending church regularly!

Abbey Guyett, 28
Junior



The project was to make up a math game about decimals that students could use to play and learn about decimals. We talked about doing our best and how it pleased God when we did that. Instead of the index cards I had handwritten decimal problems on, I used computer file cards and typed my 50 problems onto them. My grandma covered a box from another game and I pasted the name of my game "Decimals Make Cents" on the top of it. I typed up game rules, added pencils, play money, a timer, and notebooks. I stayed up after my bedtime the day before it was due to finish it.

The next week when I got my score back I had received a 100%. God showed me it is better to do my best.

Solomon Garrison, 11
Junior SS Class



End Times Saga!

TAKEN TO THE WORLD

As a little kid, Ben Times always dreamed of going to places exotic and strange, places filled with adventure, but he never dreamed of being tied to a tree somewhere on the Southeast Asia island of Penang, Malaysia, surrounded by heavily armed domestic terrorists. He was in Malaysia because his parents and Uncle John were Seventh-day Adventist missionaries there. Well, to put it accurately - illegal missionaries. They were wanted by the Malaysian government. Malaysia had tightened their laws about foreign religions and now domestic terrorists; these very men that had Ben tied to a tree, were also allowed to terrorize any foreign missionary. His parents wanted him to take over the mission work that they were doing should the opportunity arise, but, at that moment, staring down the barrel of the rifle pointed near his head, Ben seriously wondered if he would be able to do that.

"In the name of our leader Ime A. Terror, we demand that you come with us to our hideout," snarled one of the terrorists. Ben was panicking until sudden inspiration came to him. He had the bright idea of using a language these men didn't know. Even though he knew Malay, he said in English, "What?"

The men looked confused. The guy who had spoken repeated what he had said again in Malay, and again Ben responded in English. Now the men were really baffled. "What should we do with him?" asked one of the other men.

"Just leave him," the leader said. "If he can't speak Malay, Ime can't get anything out of him." The men turned and walked away, leaving Ben tied to the tree.

"Thank you, God", Ben prayed. "And please help me." Since he was still tied to the tree, he couldn't go anywhere.

"Ben!!!" he heard someone shout.

"Over here!!" he yelled back. A few minutes later, after much yelling back and forth, Ben's dad strode into the clearing and started

cutting the ropes.

"I heard from a contact, son; I'm glad you're safe."

"Thanks, Dad, I'm fine. God helped me out. But I want to know something. After today, I realized that our missionary trip comes with a lot of risks. Why did you and Mom come out here, even though you knew there might be trouble?"

"Son," Dad said. "Your mother and I wanted to help spread the gospel. We felt God was calling us to Malaysia, so we came; despite the dangers, the risks, and the troubles. We know Jesus is coming soon, and part of the end times is spreading the gospel. 'And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matt. 24:14'"

"Thanks, Dad. Now I know why spreading the gospel is so urgent. And I will do my part to the best of my ability, by the grace of God."

Suddenly Dad stopped in mid-step. "Ben," he said. "Your mother and I have gotten a call back to the U.S. We're going to accept. You're 16 now, so you could stay here if you want with your Uncle John, but it's up to you."

Stay tuned for the next issue of The Central Connection to read more of Ben's adventures.



Aaron Buttery is 15 years old and a Sacramento Central Media Team member.

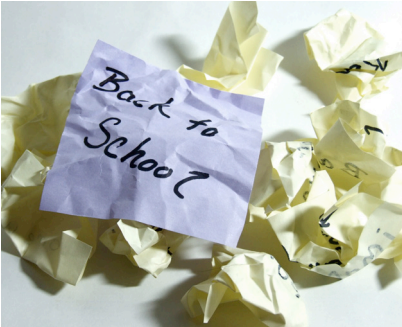


or thinking Elisha was overreacting. God was trying to help the king, but the king was not inclined to help himself, and as a result he was going to fail in achieving complete victory.

This is a powerful life lesson for all of us, but I especially want to speak to those going back to school this fall.

When God opens the way for something to be done, or asks you to obey Him in a certain area of your life, and He gives assurance of success, you need to do all you can to bring about the expected results. God will do, but you must do also, realizing that success will be given only in proportion to the enthusiasm and perseverance put into the task.

There are only two ingredients needed to achieve success: *divine power + human effort*. It's an eternal truth that you need to remember in your spiritual life, as well as in your everyday activities. It's not always neat and tidy as described above, but success in any line will never be the result of chance. It comes only when you pray as if the results depended entirely on God and then work as if the results depended entirely on you. So how many times do you plan to strike the ground this coming school year?



In 2 Kings 13:18, 19, we have these enigmatic words: *"Then he said, 'Take the arrows', so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, 'Strike the ground', so he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, 'You should have struck five or six times'..."* Who were the characters in the story, and what warranted anger

from the man of God?

It was the time of Elisha the prophet. His ministry and influence had become widespread. Israel's present king, Joash, was an idolater, and found himself challenged by a foreign foe. In this present crisis he valued Elisha above his formidable army, and Elisha, who had played the part of a wise and sympathetic father to many, refused to turn from this rebellious king in his moment of difficulty.

The transaction that follows the king's desperate plea for assistance is intriguing. The aged prophet tells Joash to take up a bow and arrow. So he does. Joash is then told to put his hands on the bow. He does, and Elisha puts his hands on Joash's hands. He then tells the king to open the window eastward – in the direction of the enemy army – and so he does.

Having opened the window the prophet tells him to shoot. He shoots. As the arrow flies out the window, Elisha, under inspiration, declares Joash's victory over Israel's enemy, Syria.

Then Joash's faith in the promise of success is tested, and we now arrive at those interesting verses quoted earlier. Joash strikes the ground only three times, declaring his uncertainty of victory. It was this lack of faith in the promise of God that made the prophet angry, leading him to declare, *"You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you shall strike Syria only three times."* (v. 19)

There's no room for feeling sorry for Joash,



Image: Prophets and Kings

August 2015

BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

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|---|--|----|---|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | John Altzman Donna Champion Isabel Colon Eny Dossantos Marvelle Owen Steve Rosenthal | 7 | Nicholas Ognissanti Phyllis Roehs Timoei Sorovakaca Corliss Vander Mei Angela Wiant | | Laura Devine Maria del Carmen Montiel | | Ronda Smith Jeysi Velazquez |
| 2 | Janet Henry Maria Landeros Elizabeth Mendoza Gabriela Moritch Aneil Punian Luann Serafine Edith Ueyama John Warkentin | 8 | Kathi Kuhlman Shelley | 16 | Delica Ballenger Louise Hooks Sharon Kennedy | 25 | Joan Harvey Gunter Young Won Kim |
| 3 | Kathleen Hodges Peter Teope Gilbert Tirop | 9 | Brittany Clifford Ruth Collins | 17 | Lynette Adams Martin Leyva Catherine Rosales | 26 | Marily Barba Antonio Ceballos Saacha Hake Randy Hayton Daniel Jebelean |
| 4 | Aubrey Miller-Kemp Emma Faith Kliever Keanu Russo | 10 | Andrea Alexander William Infalt Veaceslav Inozemtev Cynthia Yee Rick Zimmerman | 18 | Joyce Jenkins | 27 | Beatriz Cardenas Byron Hall Tim Karn Armando Mendoza |
| 5 | Tania Arreygue Jennifer Buttery Ana Demarchi Lona Diggins Joe Garza Niculae Ionita Steve Wellington | 11 | Linda Flood Verica Markovic Julie Merrill Jose Rodriguez | 19 | Milos Kuraica Artemidor Stefan | 28 | Darrell Armstrong Joyce L. Banford Christopher Ognissanti Mary Potter |
| 6 | Jack Kendall Robert Luna Anita Washington | 12 | Edgar Altamirano Andre Capraru Gregory Guzman M.E. Holman Bud Riley | 20 | Eman Collins Jennifer Koo Hoa Moore Clara Sharp | 29 | Hector Marroquin Jarad Rosh Mauricio Tablas Chris Wieland |
| | | 13 | Jose Alfaro Tosca Henry Amorsolo Tangonan | 22 | David Cossentine Maria Cress Kenny Golden Tajia Hall Ray Rengifo | 30 | Suzanne Cantu Sherrie Carambot |
| | | 14 | Hope Beale Ashley Brostrom Tim Hampton | 23 | Ronald Dobrydnia Ildiko Nagy | 31 | Mieczyslaw Babij Araceli (Cano) Baez Dina Nasui Alexander Rossoshanskiy Shery Taylor |
| | | 15 | Donna Brazil Sarah Gotham | 24 | Kim Geisinger Curtis Marriott Aileen Newell | | |

September 2015

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|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | Leonard Carpenter Esteban Carrillo Glenda Croom Dennis Mitchell Ahlimonte Yates | | James Mitchell Meryssa Tenthorey Alfredo Valdivia | 15 | Gheorghe Maghiari | 24 | James Smitham Hugo Blomquist Jorge Maranon Jessica Steiner Anna Zellitti |
| 2 | Esteban Martinez Brian Morikone Hao Nguyen | 8 | Reggie Franks James Hofstad Francisco Valdivia | 18 | Celeste Dumitru Cyndi Looc Priscilla Talmadge Sharon Tarrance | 25 | Riza Arciaga Letitia Barsan Gerald Rodriguez Zondra Rodriguez |
| 3 | Tricia Heinrich Shauna Rodriguez John Stanko | 9 | Bryan Aquino Gregory Powell Sandi Smith Olga Torres (Angulo) Teresa Whitwell-Thomas | 19 | MerriLou Johnson Livi Lazureanu | 26 | Cynthia Badders Juanita Chew |
| 4 | Sylvia Clifford Genevieve Hightower Elvia Karn-Lopez | 10 | Anna Arrington Erik Jon Larson II Eduardo Martinez | 20 | Ann Adams Eloise Diebel Rosario Miller Ruben Unzueta | 27 | Amanda Garcia Carlos Velasquez James Wade |
| 5 | Monalisa Haugen Saveta Maghiari Ruby Tangonan | 11 | Monica Goins Cherry Gomez Maria Laur | 22 | Ralph Callendar Dennis Davenport Donna Huckleby | 28 | Dale Sorel |
| 6 | Cornelia Jebelean | 12 | Connie Franks Wilean Ruff | 23 | Raquel Carty Mattie Chism Aaron Earnest John Ondiek Nay Saechao | 29 | Frank Fabian Norma Jaco John London Ester Marpaung Yanina Nerdinskaya Maca Ratabua Miguel Rodriguez |
| 7 | Pat Burritt Jeanne Hart | 13 | Joshua Lindenberg | | | 30 | Janice Bernier William Stroud |