

## Prescription for Peace

### In memory of Carl Wessman

Relationships, friendships, whatever you call them, they're tricky things, aren't they?

I received an email this week from a longtime friend who, for one reason or another, has pretty well lost all ties to the past and essentially indicts the church in the process. Another friend told me the other day that if it weren't for the Sabbath, she wouldn't be an Adventist anymore, essentially explaining that there is much more acceptance and support from other friends than from within the Adventist circle.

Now I know that these things were spoken in moments of frustration, but the fact is this is not the first time I have heard these things over the years and by my own observation as well, I've seen plenty that would fail to pass muster when it comes to treating our friends in the church with even the most basic courtesy.

I'm sure there are many factors that contribute to this. I know that life becomes more and more complex as time passes, I know that certain issues become more and more clouded, I realize that uncertainty and fear and pressure can combine with any number of other things to make us less civilized, but I think that while these may all be legitimate reasons, they are not excuses for the pettiness that becomes more pronounced even as we should be becoming more gracious.

The Bible tells us that as the end approaches, the love of many will grow cold. Surely we see that in myriad examples in the world, but we ought to see the opposite within the church. As things get worse and worse around us, we ought to stand out more and more as beacons of grace, Christian love, and courtesy that shine in stark contrast to the darkness around us. Each of us ought to, and by God's grace can, treat others more and more like Christ treated others, rather than becoming more petty and rude as is too often the case.

So here's my prescription for this month. Read I Corinthians 13 every day. As you read the various components of love contained therein, compare your life and your practice to those elements. Compare every interaction you have with others with that brief list of characteristics and see how you measure up. Do not compare others with the list until you have mastered every quality therein and can honestly say before God that this is your practice in every circumstance. Your first work is not to change the world, your mate, your children, or your pastor; your first work is to see that you are changed by focusing on God and His character of love and becoming like Him in your heart and your treatment of others.

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Saint Francis of Assisi