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## 2017 Proceedings: Exercise Your Faith

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# Reynolds Symposium

2017 PROCEEDINGS

Exercise Your Faith

Proceedings of the  
Reynolds Symposium: September 15-16, 2017

# **Exercise Your Faith**

John W. McCoy, Reynolds Chair and Compiler  
November 2017

Southern Adventist University  
Department of Education and Psychology

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## PREFACE

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The first annual Reynolds Symposium, titled “The Next Generation: Will It Be Adventist? Mining [Qualitative] Data from the Adventist Connection Study” embarked September 21, 2013, on the campus of Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee. The Reynolds Chair hosted and organized the event under the direction of Southern Adventist University’s School of Education and Psychology. The Reynolds Chair is a position established by Maurine Reynolds, in honor of her parents, for providing quality research and instruction in the area of religion and values at Southern Adventist University.

The second annual Reynolds Symposium kicked off September 19-20, 2014, again on the campus of Southern Adventist University. The theme was “Music and Art Instruction: Promotion of Religion and Values or Just an Added Value to Higher Education?”

The third annual Reynolds Symposium commenced September 18-19, 2015 at Southern Adventist University. The theme was “Religious Values: Paving the Way to Global Christian Citizenship.” Featured academic departments were English, History, and Modern Languages. The music department’s very own quartet, Ineffibilis, opened the symposium.

The fourth annual Reynolds Symposium proceeded September 16-17, 2016 in the amphitheater of Hulsey Wellness Center at Southern Adventist University. The theme, “Where is God in the Social Sciences?” was explored by the psychology and social work departments. Scott Ball and Ken Parsons provided music from the music department.

The fifth annual Reynolds Symposium happened September 15-16, 2017 in the amphitheater of Hulsey Wellness Center at Southern Adventist University. Professors from the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness beautifully articulated the theme, “Exercise Your Faith”. An ensemble of mostly freshmen, fronted by Betanzy Ortiz, provided music.

To establish the role and importance of the Reynolds Symposium, local historian and alumnus of Southern, Bert Coolidge, delivered an impassioned presentation on the philanthropic efforts of the Reynolds family and how this led to the development of the Symposium.

The presentations began Friday evening with a presentation from Mike Boyd entitled, “We Were Made to Move”. Boyd’s presentation was an inspiration for those in attendance. He touched on the important points of a healthy lifestyle and provided a platform from which all subsequent speakers then supplemented. Those that followed had a high standard to maintain.

Rick Schwarz stepped up on Sabbath morning to maintain the high standard with “Gym-Masters: More Than a Gymnastics Team”. He recounted the evangelistic results of his team going on the road, and the students whose lives transformed because of his program. This was perhaps the most emotional presentation this Symposium has ever experienced.

We were fortunate to have Rod Bussey present, “Sound Body...Sound Spiritual Mind”. What a heavily researched and documented presentation he gave as he spoke from the heart. His highly spiritual talk was an insightful and motivating approach to keeping our bodies in good condition in order to make that spiritual connection with the Holy Spirit.

The final speaker from the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness was the Dean, Bob Bengé. His presentation, entitled “Interscholastic Sports & Religion, a Promising Combination?” was a soul-bearing opportunity for “Bengé”, a name that he is fondly known by across campus. The struggle many of our schools are going through, relative to competitive sports and competing against other schools was explored. It was thought provoking to all listeners.

Then it was up to Dr. Ruth S. Williams from the School of Education & Psychology to bring all these presentations together in a summary format. As is her custom, she went right to the point and tied the exercise aspects of life to the spiritual aspects. She referenced all of the speakers, bringing out the highlights of their presentations and giving us a succinct account of the importance of “Exercising Our Faith”.

This Symposium would not be possible were it not for the willingness of professors in sharing their research and experiences. It would also not be possible without the students who jumped at the chance to sing praises to God. Lastly, this was also successful with the help of my graduate assistant, Jeanina Mann, who organized the event and gathered all the presentations into a proceedings document. All who attended received blessings by the words of the speakers and the music that praised.

John W. McCoy, Ed.D.

Reynolds Chair

September 2017



# We Were Made To Move

Mike Boyd | Associate Professor of P.E., Health and Wellness | Southern Adventist University

Our bodies were not meant to sit in a chair for eight plus hours per day. We were not meant to be a generation of people dependent on machines to move us around town, or even through the aisles in the grocery store. This was not part of the original plan, but it is what our society has become. We were made to move!

Back in the Garden of Eden, God's original plan was for humans to move, work, and do. That plan included activity: "*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it*" Genesis 2:15. His original plan meant for us as humans to live full, purposeful lives that included work, activity, and movement. Yet, society has changed all of that to make life "easier". We drive our cars even the shortest of distances. We take the elevator even if it is just for a couple of floors. We sit in our offices for hours at a time and go home to do the same thing in front of a television or some other device, and this sedentary lifestyle increases as we get older. As the saying goes, "You don't quit moving because you got old ... you got old because you quit moving."

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that we achieve 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week. However, is that really enough? Is 30 minutes of exercise enough to maintain health, or is more movement required as well? Even with these guidelines in place, too many Americans do not exercise, or simply move, enough.

According to the *State of Obesity*, an annual report from the Trust America's Health Foundation, 46 states had an obesity rate of 25% or higher, with 9 of the top 10 states with the highest rates of obesity located in the South. This is more than enough evidence to suggest that Americans are not only lacking in exercise, we are simply not moving enough.

So what is the difference between exercise and movement? Why does that matter? Exercise is optional, motivated by obligation, planned, and sometimes impractical. Movement is essential, motivated by preference, spontaneous, and applicable to daily life. Many individuals exercise because there is an obligation related to their imminent health. According to the American Council on Exercise (2014), this is called the Health Belief Model. “People will engage in a healthy behavior (e.g. exercise) based on the perceived threat they feel regarding a health problem and the pros and cons of adopting the behavior.” In this case, they exercise because they **have** to. “We only notice our bodies when something goes wrong with them. We have, in effect, betrayed our bodies, ignoring and dishonoring them by using them purely as locomotive devices to transport the head” (Medder 2017). I am not implying that exercise is negative or that a person should not do it. That fact is... We Were Not Made to Exercise, We Were Made to Move!

Take, for example, the Hadza Study published in the *American Journal of Human Biology* in 2016. This was a multi-year study of the Hadza tribe in Tanzania done by researchers from Yale and the University of Arizona. Forty-six members of the tribe were convinced to wear heart rate monitors two or more weeks during multiple times and seasons of the year. They ranged in age from young adult to seventy years. The results of the study were not surprising. On average, they “performed moderate activity for a minimum of 2 ½ hours per day working, hunting, planting ... The tribespeople rarely ran or were otherwise vigorously active.” Simply, they worked and walked everywhere they went. The Hadzas had “enviable heart health, showed low blood pressure and excellent cholesterol profiles across their lifespans.”

Therefore, what can we learn from this? What was so special about the Hadzas that we can learn from? In a word, or acronym, NEAT (Non Exercise Activity Thermogenesis). They

simply did not spend a lot of time sitting. Their whole day was spent working, hunting, planting, or participating in some form of practical activity. When work was not being done they sang, danced, and participated in communal activity. They were rarely standing or sitting still. They were not lifting weights or running a 5K. They were not on an elliptical machine, and were not watching the latest exercise video. They were simply moving throughout their day.

The fact is that spending a half hour to an hour a day exercising and being sedentary the rest is not enough movement to maintain health. “Research suggests that individuals who move throughout the day are more likely to reach or maintain weight-loss goals versus those who are sedentary throughout the day and vigorously move through one exercise session. Therefore, a greater caloric output occurs throughout the day rather than during one vigorous exercise session” (American Council on Exercise, 2014).

What is NEAT and how do we increase it? Non-exercise activity is simply moving more throughout the day. We can all find ways to take more steps throughout the day. Walk to work instead of drive or at least park farther away. Get up from your desk every thirty minutes and walk around the building. Fidget when standing in line or sitting in the car. Squeeze a stress ball. Participate in a sport or activity you enjoy that you can continue to do.

Ellen White states in *Steps to Christ*, page 81 that “activity is the very condition of life.” We cannot spend our days in sedentary habits and lifestyle and expect to maintain health and fitness. Even when we do “workout”, too often we immediately return to sitting on our couches or chairs and wasting the benefit we got from the exercise. That is why consistent movement is so important. It really does not matter the speed at which we move. **JUST KEEP MOVING!**

# Gym Masters: More Than a Gymnastics Team

Rick Schwarz | Associate Professor & Coach | Southern Adventist University

When the opportunity to share how we integrate religious values into our teaching was presented to us at a faculty meeting, I thought back to how God had used physical education teachers and coaches to impact my life. Then, during our colloquium, they stressed telling our story; and so, I felt compelled to tell mine. So today, you will not hear about research from me; you will, however, hear how God used physical education and gymnastics to give direction to my life and to some of my students.

My direction in life started early, as a preschooler. I loved to run, jump, and explore. I was always being told to get down from the highest tree limbs, the counters, and even off the refrigerator. I did not really like school. The exception, however, was recess. I looked forward to recess even if it was raining outside and we had to play inside games such as jump the creek.

One day while in 7<sup>th</sup> grade PE, Miss Ingrid Johnson, a professor in physical education at Andrews University, walked up to me and told me I would make a great physical education teacher. What she saw in me I never asked her, but she gave me a dream that became reality. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I had my first exposure to gymnastics, but it was only for a few weeks. Then circumstances during my junior year lead me to a boarding academy—Cedar Lake Academy. It was there that I began my gymnastic career. Following my academy days, I proceeded to Andrews University for four years. After graduating, I was off to teach and coach. I spent two years at Spencerville Jr. Academy, North of Washington D.C and then twenty-one years at Spring Valley Academy, in Ohio.

While at Spring Valley Academy, I got involved with competitive Sport Acrobatics. I was fortunate enough to get a chance to represent the United States at the World Championships of Sports Acrobatics in 1992. While walking into the stadium, God spoke to me, and I have never been the same since. It was due to this spiritual awakening that God impacted my life, and later, my way of coaching at Southern Adventist University.

In the spring of 2000, I was asked to be the Gym-Masters coach at Southern Adventist University. The Gym-Masters are Southern Adventist University's gymnastic/acrobatic team. They are widely known as America's Anti-Drug acrobatic team, and a recruiting tool to our academies. I had just finished twenty-three years of coaching academy and elementary P.E. and had no idea of how to coach college kids. As I was driving a U-Haul truck down I-75, all sorts of ideas flew around in my head—how to run practice, where and how to get shows, how to get the right students, where to get new uniforms and warm-ups, etc. Then somewhere in the mountains of Tennessee, I realized that the job was way bigger than me. The only way for me to succeed was to ask God to lead me in what would give Him honor and praise.

As I drove along, I gave the Gym-Masters to God. Almost immediately, I was impressed to look at the team as a church. I knew nothing of pastoring; however, I realized my role was more than just a coach. I was to be a spiritual leader to this special group of kids.

The summer before starting my new position quickly ended, and I was soon busy teaching gymnastics and learning how to relate to “almost adults” who thought they were adults. That first year was a blur, and I made plenty of first-year coaching mistakes, but every time I was in a bind and needed help, God saw me through. For example, one key thing that happened that first year was the development of a yearly “theme” which would give us direction for the year. Not only would a theme give us direction for gymnastics, it also would give us direction for spiritual programming. If you have ever stepped into our gym you will see eighteen banners hanging on our walls. Each banner has that year's theme and corresponding Bible verse written on it. I would like to take credit for coming up with the idea, but it happened quite by accident. Alternatively, should I say, it was the first thing that God did to show me He was interested in the Gym-Masters.

Later on, during the year, Gym-Masters were to host a gymnastics clinic in fall for the Southern Union academies. To tie all three days together, I had been trying to come up with a catchy word or

phrase to call our clinic. Because gymnasts are risk takers, I was trying to think of how I could use this idea with the clinic. Then one night, after asking God to HELP! I awoke with “RISK IT” running through my head. As I lay in my bed, I could see how easily RISK IT related to gymnastics, but how would I tie it into the spiritual program? I thought, “We need to risk everything for Jesus”. Then I wondered: how do you “RISK IT” for Jesus? What are the steps? What needs to be done first?

Then in the darkness of my room, it came to me—use RISK IT as an acronym to tell the first step. Well, I still did not know what the first step was. While I was trying to figure out the first step, I remembered a small book from college: *Webster’s New Word Speller*. That book helped me pass my freshman composition classes. These were the days before there were computers and the little red lines under misspelled words. I decided to get it in the morning and look through it to see if I could come up with words that would fit RISK IT, but God had a different plan. I tossed and turned, trying to get back to sleep. I started complaining to God, “Lord, I need my sleep. I have a lot to do tomorrow, and I need my REST!” I almost yelled that last word. It had come to me; this was the R in RISK IT. I jumped out of bed; I had to find the other words. I knew God wanted me to know them right then, and within minutes He led me to the first and second steps, “Rest In the Saving King, Initiate Today”. First, we need to learn to rest in Him—to not do anything on our own power. Then we need to initiate this resting today and not wait until tomorrow.

The clinic was a success, and I quickly forgot about themes and just concentrated on coaching gymnastics. Later that year, we were asked to run a clinic for another one of our Southern Union academies. When we arrived on their campus, there was a girl wearing the “RISK IT” t-shirt we had given out at our clinic. I wanted to see if our theme had made any impact, so I asked her if she remembered what “RISK IT” stood for. Without batting an eye, she

said, “**Rest In the Saving King, Initiate Today.**” I was impressed. Not only because she remembered it, but because I realized that a simple theme could actually impact someone.

On the way home from that clinic, I decided we would use “RISK IT” for our team’s theme for the year. I also decided, if possible, to come up with a theme every year. That sounded easy, but it was harder than I thought—until I remembered how the first theme came to be.

That summer as I planned for the coming year I started praying about two specific needs: the theme for the year and a team spiritual leader. I had tried to get the first year’s team to do a mission trip, but their answer was “No way, you are supposed to take us skiing!” I responded, “No way!” Therefore, we did not go on a mission trip, and I really felt they needed a peer to lead them in what was important.

I tried so hard to come up with a theme, but after thinking for days, asking others, and worrying for weeks, I finally got around to asking God. Taking the last year’s theme to heart, “RISK IT” **Rest In the Saving King, Initiate Today**, I told God my dilemma and promptly quit worrying about it. Sometime after that, my boss asked if I wanted to go to a fundraiser. I am not a big fan of fancy dinners and listening to boring people, but my boss asked me, and since I had only been here for one year, I told him I would love to go.

When the evening came, I reluctantly got dressed in my suit and headed to eat with my boss and people I did not know. The meal was nice, and I was enduring the small talk when the guest speaker got up to talk. He was an accomplished artist and drew a chalk drawing as he talked. His speech was about growing up with extreme dyslexia and failing in school because everyone just thought he was dumb. He felt that he would never amount to anything and there

was no point in trying. Then, he had an art teacher who saw his talent and challenged him to not let other peoples' attitudes determine his success. It had been hard for him. In fact, it took him a whole year to read a book; but he learned that his attitude, not others, determined the height of his success. Although, it took him a year to read a book, he was eventually able to write one.

As I left that evening, I praised God for letting me hear that man's story and for giving me a theme: "Attitude Determines Altitude." When I got home, I quickly looked in the Bible concordance for the word attitude. I found Philippians 2:5 that states, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Moreover, what was that attitude?—to humble Himself to be servant to all.

That summer, I spent a lot of time thinking about that theme and how we could have the attitude of Christ Jesus in our gymnastics team. My second prayer request was soon answered during tryouts when this big guy asked to talk to me after the first night of tryouts. He said he was interested in the team but really wanted more than just being on the Gym-Masters. He wanted to be the team's pastor. He did not need to try out any more. He was on the team. God had just answered my prayer. That student, Benjamin Lundquist, was our team pastor for three years. He helped organize the team's first and second mission trips. He also came up with the name for our church; yes, we had become a church and we met every night in our "blue church". We take our "blue church" with us everywhere we perform. You see, we found out God can use our love of gymnastics to share our love of Him.

So how do gymnasts who perform on blue mats witness for Him? Well, a couple of stories come to mind. The first story happened on one of our mission trips. We were on a beach in the

Dominican Republic doing what gymnasts do after they get tired of the sand and sea—throw girls in the air! As they were doing their thing, a couple came up to me and asked if the students were Christian. I said yes, but I was interested in how they knew. They said, “As we were walking by and watching, we were impressed by how the kids interacted with one another. We just knew by the way they acted that they must be Christians.”

The second story happened at a performance. The Gym-Masters were known for doing NBA halftimes and since I have been here, we have done some. I have a hard time rationalizing the amount of time and money it takes for a 5-minute half time performance. Is it really worth it? How can you make an impact on anyone? Are we just entertainment? Yet, this story shows how God can even use an NBA halftime for His glory.

We had done a halftime for the New York Knicks the past year; but it was summer, and I was not thinking at all about it or the upcoming year when I got a phone call from a young lady. She asked if I had a team member named Kyle Littell. I told her we did and she asked if I had his contact info. I reluctantly gave her his telephone number, but that was all. I waited for the year to start and I asked Kyle if he had gotten a phone call from a young lady this summer. He said he had and he told me this story. He was on a flight back from Alaska and was sitting next to this young lady. They started talking and she asked him what he did for fun. He shared that he was on a college gymnastic team that did NBA halftimes and mission trips. She said she had seen a gymnastics team perform at the Knicks game that past year. After comparing dates, they decided it was the Gym-Masters. She was impressed though by the mission trips that Kyle had shared. I told Kyle, “Wow that’s cool,” thinking that that was all to the story, but Kyle said that was not the end of the story. She was a women’s underwear designer and after returning from

Alaska and talking with Kyle, she wanted to do something with her life that would actually help people. She was calling Kyle to let him know she had quit her job, had joined the Peace Corps, and was leaving soon to make a difference.

I could go on and on about how God has used us to meet people and witness to them. I could tell of how we threw the actress Glenn Close in the air, or how we met the head of the D.N.C.D. in the Dominican Republic and how the team was able to have prayer for him in his office, but those stories are for another time.

Though we travel to many of our academies, I have never been an overly ecstatic, jumping-for-joy type of recruiter. If questions are asked, however, I will talk about the best school to go to for college, but let me tell you of four cool ways God used the Gym-Masters to recruit for Southern.

The first story is one of my favorites. It was sometime in late April and someone on our team had asked me if I had recruited a little girl from GCA. I said, "What little girl?" You know coach, she was at Acrofest, and she really stood out. Well, to be honest, I do not watch too much gymnastics at Acrofest. I have pretty much seen enough gymnastic routines, but I felt impressed to call the coach and see if I could come down. I did not even know her name. After getting ahold of the coach, I found out that they were going to have their last practice that afternoon. Therefore, I jumped in my car and headed down. It did not take long to pick her out and I knew right away I wanted her on the team. Therefore, after talking to her and encouraging her to come to Southern, I left and just hoped she would come. I found out later she had no plans on coming to Southern until that afternoon because she really did not know much about Southern. She spent four years on our team. The cool thing was to watch this little

girl, dressed only in black Goth, go from a shy introvert to a powerful leader on and off the team.

Another story happened at Ozark Academy. We were just finishing our program and getting things loaded in the trailer for the 12-hour trip back, when I had a student come up and ask a question. I was already looking him over to see if he looked strong enough for the team, but his question surprised me. He asked me if all the other programs at Southern were as good as the gymnastics program. You see, he did not do gymnastics, but he was interested in quality. I assured him all programs at Southern were quality programs.

On a similar note, a couple of years back I had a student at Southern come up to me and say, "You are the reason I am at Southern." I did not ever remember seeing her in my life. I asked how that was possible. She said she was from the Dominican Republic and had never heard of Southern until she saw us perform at her church. She was impressed by the kids she talked to and decided Southern was where she wanted to go to school.

Additionally, we have traveled to California for three spring breaks, and performed at a few of our schools, but one time we performed for a public school. After our program, the cheer coach brought up one of his girls to talk to me about how to become a Gym-Master. This girl had never left the L.A. area, but she wanted to continue doing gymnastics, and was interested in our school. Well, she came, and was on the team two years, then went to school aboard in Italy, and recently finished her degree back at Southern. She was the first in her family to pursue higher education. I got a chance to meet her mom at graduation, and she was so proud of her daughter.

We have always had worship every night with the team, but a few years ago, it seemed the devil was attacking. We were having injury after injury. Nothing bad, but it seemed to be about every day. While running laps, someone sprained their ankle. Another sprained her ankle just dismounting a two-high. Another broke a thumb playing football. One dislocated her ankle just jumping about a foot high on the trampoline. That one was bad! The injuries were getting so bad I had asked some friends to come to practice and just pray for us while we practiced. While coming to the Lord with this, I was impressed to move our worship time to the beginning of practice and to tithe our practice time. Since then we have spent the first 12-15 minutes of practice in worship and growth in our relationship with each other and God. The injuries have become less, but the most important thing that came of this is a statement to our team that God comes first in what we do.

In addition to the impact worship made to the team, our worship time before practice specifically made an impact on one of our team members. At the end of a year, I was talking to one of the girls, trying to find out if she would be interested in a leadership role on the team. While talking to her, I asked her why she kept coming to tryouts that year, as she had a very heavy load with dreams of being a physical therapist. Her answer totally caught me off guard. She said, "That first day you had worship and then the next day you did it again, and I really liked having time to think and worship God." You see, she had never experience this daily worship and it was something she needed demonstrated to her in order to start her own worship time.

So, does a gymnastic team really make a difference to the students on the team? Well I got that answer at the end of my first year coaching here. We had a year-end party where we

shared stories of things that happened over the year. Well, as we sat around a fire pit sharing the funniest things that we did or the fond memories of traveling all night, one of the guys spoke up. He was the biggest Gym-Master on the team. He started the year at 360 pounds. He shared how during the first week of tryouts Kevin had seen him on the promenade and invited him to tryouts. I had told everyone the night before to bring in some big guys since we did not have many trying out. So, Kevin saw the biggest guy on campus and asked him to come to tryouts. Well, he made the team, became a solid team member, and lost 60 pounds over the year. However, what he shared caught us all by surprise. You see, this was a guy that was always laughing and was a friend to everyone. Everyone loved his “hugs.” It went very quiet as he shared back to that day when Kevin asked him to come to tryouts. He said that that morning he had decided to end his life; he had come to tryouts not to tryout, but just because he had been asked by Kevin. He said he went home that night and thought he would try this gym-masters thing. I am so glad I put him on. He called me a few years back to let me know that he had been able to shop at Walmart for clothes and did not have to go to the big boy store anymore.

Another example happened at a halftime show. We do local basketball halftimes and one of our favorite crowds is at Lee University. Nine years ago, after one of these halftimes, this big strong guy came up to me and asked how he could be a Gym-Master. I just said he would need to try out and take some classes at Southern. We stayed in contact and he ended up staying at my house and being on Gym-Masters. Now, he was not a Seventh-day Adventist, but he was really into Jesus. During many trips on the bus, I would hear him asking other team members about some of our beliefs. Some would struggle to find answers. Then many nights

after practice, we would spend until early morning going over questions he had about our religion. It made me become stronger in my faith as I saw someone ask questions I had taken for granted. After that year, he left to go be a missionary in Mexico for a non-denominational church. While there one day, a discussion came up about what the Sabbath was. Though he was not a Seventh-day Adventist, he told them about Sabbath and that true worship happened on Saturday. After some scary persecution with the Mexican Mafia, he returned to my home to figure out where God would lead him. Well, it led him to become a Seventh-day Adventist and right now, he is a missionary to the Buddhists in the Philippines.

In answer to the question previously addressed, I have learned that coaching the Gym-Masters is more than just the type of gymnastics we do. It lends itself to becoming a family where trust is developed and where forever friendships are made. For example, over 25 couples have become man and wife in the 17 years I have been coaching here. Additionally, I have found that during practices and trips spiritual lessons are taught and learned. Majors and career paths are changed because of mission trips.

In conclusion, I will leave you with one more story. It is about a boy who tried Southern three different times, but the schoolwork just was not for him. He was on the team for two years. One of those years, I gave out to the team the book "*Messiah*" which is the condensed version of the *Desire of Ages*. Well, this kid was an exceptional gymnast and got a job in Las Vegas for Cirque de Soleil. He was living the dream, making money, and making connections with the right people so he could continue his dream of becoming a stunt man in Hollywood. However, he was not happy and he became desperate. He cried out to God and remembered that book he was given as a Gym-Master. He started reading it and soon fell in love with Jesus.

He walked away from fame and fortune, went to an evangelism school, and is now a pastor of three churches in Canada. If it were not for the mission of Gym-Masters, my son would not be making a difference for the kingdom of God. He told me recently, when I was questioning if what I was doing was what God wanted me to do, “Dad, you are an evangelist who uses gymnastics as your cover to reach people for Him” and I have found this to be true.

# SOUND BODY, SOUND SPIRITUAL MIND

Rodney Bussey | Professor of P.E., Health and Wellness | Southern Adventist University

The mission of a Seventh-day Adventist health and physical educator is abundantly supported by the Bible, E. G. White, and research. Through the exercising of our bodies, we significantly increase the capacity and power of our brain for both mental and spiritual health. If the Christian body is first and foremost meant to glorify God (1 Corinthians 6:20), then Seventh-day Adventists, and especially educators, must pursue holistic development and its interconnectivity.

Thirty years ago, I was in a class taught by the late Dr. Cyril Dean at what is now Burman University. He introduced the class to a book titled, *Education* by Ellen G. White.

In her book *Education* White states,

Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come (p. 9).

A key word being “harmonious”. Suggesting that if one was greater than another there would be imbalance and therefore an area of ignorance. Hippocrates, the classical Greek physician, supported this perspective with, “Everything in excess is opposed to nature.”

Coming from a public school physical education program, this was a paradigm shift. Is not mental and spiritual development greater than physical development and therefore without bounds in their pursuit? Should not the pursuit of intellectual and spiritual development be the primary focus of Christian educational institutions? Was not exercise just to improve sports performance, maintain good physical health, and look good? How was the care and exercising of my body benefiting my mental and spiritual health?

White was not alone in her appreciation of physical development and its overall value to holistic health. Ancient philosophers and physicians such as Plato and Hippocrates wrote openly regarding their beliefs in the correlation between physical activity and health, and the lack of physical activity and disease. Plato wrote, "Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it."

Almost 2500 years ago in classical Greece, Plato debated the meaning of *sophrosyne*, a difficult Greek concept to define, in his dialogue *Charmides* (North, 1966). The editors of *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* in introducing *Charmides* write:

The truth is that this quality, this *sophrosyne*, which to the Greeks was an ideal second to none in importance, is not among our ideals. We have lost the conception of it. Enough is said about it in Greek literature for us to be able to describe it in some fashion, but we cannot give it a name. It was the spirit behind the two great Delphic sayings, "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess." Arrogance, insolent self-assertion, was the quality most despised by the Greeks. *Sophrosyne* was the exact opposite. It meant accepting the bounds which excellence lays down for human nature, restraining impulses to unrestricted freedom, to all excess, obeying the inner laws of harmony and proportion (Hamilton & Cairns, 1961).

Helen North (1966), a scholar in Greek literature, wrote,

*Sophrosyne* ... embodies the traditional Greek instinct for moderation, restraint of impulse, and measure in all things and ..., reflects the Greek demand for fitness and propriety in speech and action ... *sophrosyne* and its cognate forms were so closely identified with the feeling for harmony and restraint, which governed every phase of Greek life (p. 16).

The concept of harmony is a common thread throughout the writings of Greek scholars as well as those of Ellen White. Grigsby (2004), another literature scholar, wrote:

Greco-Roman doctors believed in a humoral system where an individual could maintain health through the practice of sophrosyne or moderation. Sophrosyne was both a mental and physical regimen that was believed to keep the humors balanced. Eventually, the concept of sophrosyne was Christianized and immoderation became sin. The relationship between sin and health provided the foundation and the means of interpretation for many authors in the Middle ages (p. 15).

Obviously, advances in cellular pathology and chemistry provided the overwhelming evidence to dispute the ancient humoral system, but the idea of balance and harmony within the body still holds true.

In our society today, there is an increasing amount of research supporting the connection and necessity of exercise and physical activity for overall health and well-being. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has determined that the role of physical activity and exercise is so vital to the public health of not only Americans; but to all the citizens of the world, that it has joined forces with the American Medical Association and Office of the Surgeon General. Their goal is to launch a global initiative with the purpose to marshal physicians, healthcare professionals and providers, and educators to integrate exercise in their practices with humans, to control, or ameliorate chronic diseases that impact health and the quality of human life (Tipton, 2014).

From the inception of the initiative called Exercise is Medicine (EIM) on November 5, 2007 to September 5, 2017, the list of research on PubMed, under the EIM heading, has grown to 88509 citations (NCBI, Retrieved September 5, 2017). The remarkable amount of research on this particular subject has validated the interest and direction of ACSM's mandate.

We tend to consider that our bodies and minds operate and function independently of one another. However, we are quickly mindful of the connection in everyday life occurrences. For instance, the mornings that we wake up realizing the number of hours slept has not been sufficient for clear,

logical thinking to occur, nor the energy for graceful physical movement to occur. Another example to ponder might be the last time we arrived to a job interview. Minds racing, we attempted to appear calm and collected, yet the feeling of self-consciousness was betraying us through our physical reactions to the stress. These physical reactions included sweating, tense muscles, restlessness, and maybe even the clumsiness with words that often accompanies stressful job interviews. It is in these moments we are reminded of the great connection between our body and mind.

We are not beings of separate and distinctively different components, but a whole person. In Paul's letter to the Christians living in Thessalonica, he prays for their wholeness: "Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, New Living Translation). To be whole and complete, each component of our being must be maintained and nurtured. The connections are inextricably interwoven throughout our system.

Hippocrates wrote,

All parts of the body which have a function if used in moderation and exercised in labors in which each is accustomed, become thereby healthy, well developed and age more slowly; but if unused and left idle they become liable to disease, defective in growth and age quickly (Simopoulos, 1989).

To describe the human brain as an awesome, incredible, and unbelievable organ is still lacking in superlatives to describe God's creation. The human brain weighs in at 3-4lbs. and is approximately the size of two fists placed together. Although it only accounts for 2-3% of a body's total weight, it consumes 20% of the body's oxygen and 20% of its glucose. For optional functioning, eight gallons of blood is required per hour. The brain has approximately 100 billion

brain cells. A rough estimate is that a neuron can fire about once every five milliseconds or about 200 times a second. It is estimated that the number of cells each neuron is connected to is around 1000 other neurons. Therefore, every time a neuron fires, about 1000 other neurons get information about that firing. If we take these numbers and do the math, we get 100 billion neurons multiplied by 200 firings per second multiplied by 1000 connections per firing which would equal 20 million billion calculations per second (Westbury, 2014).

In the last ten to fifteen years, that research has recently proven the phenomenon called neurogenesis, defined as the process by which cells proliferate, survive, and differentiate into neurons. Up until then, it was thought that the creation of new brain cells in adults was not possible. Previously, scientists, health educators, and every mother warned of the various activities that would destroy brain cells that could never be replaced. One of several important brain chemicals involved in this process is called BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor).

In early research with BDNF, researchers would sprinkle it onto neurons and observe the cells sprouting new branches. This new branch growth within brain cells is what is necessary for learning to occur. John Ratey, a Harvard psychiatrist, refers to BDNF as “Miracle-Gro for the brain” (Ratey, 2008, p. 40). BDNF has been found to improve the function and growth of neurons as well as to strengthen and protect them against the natural process of cell death. In his book, *Spark* (2008), Ratey adamantly makes the case that BDNF is a critical biological link between thoughts, emotions, and movement. Neurogenesis has been studied most often occurring in the hippocampus.

The brain has two hippocampi, one on each side of the brain within the brain’s medial temporal lobe that forms an important role of regulating emotions. The hippocampus is a critical

organ for the consolidation of information from short-term to long-term memory and is influential in spatial navigation (Amaral & Lavenex, 2007).

The key to the discovery of neurogenesis is directly linked to the development of technology, specifically, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Imaging (NMRI). With this technology in 2007, researchers at Columbia University were able to observe a high correlation between exercise and neurogenesis in the dentate gyrus sub region of the hippocampus in a living brain (Periera, et al.). It was found that exercise generated increased blood flow to the affected region, and the more fit the study participants became the more blood flow the MRI detected. With the increased blood flow, there was increased neurogenesis. Previously, neurogenesis could only be proven in a postmortem exam in studies conducted on animals. The participants in the Columbia study performed an exercise routine that lasted approximately an hour. The aerobic exercise regimen included: Five minutes of low intensity warm-up on a treadmill or stationary bike, five minutes of stretching, forty minutes of aerobic training, and ten minutes for cool down and stretching. The results were collected over a three-month time-period. The participant's volume of oxygen consumption (VO2 Max) was measured both before and after exercise. Cognitive performance was also assessed, and the study found an exclusive correlation between exercise and improved cognition.

A German research team discovered that vocabulary learning was 20% faster after intense physical exercise as compared to a low impact exercise group and a sedentary group. Not surprisingly, it was also discovered that BDNF levels strongly increased with intense physical exercise (Bernward, Breitenstein, Mooren, et. al, 2007).

With the bolstering of infrastructure brought on by the increase of BDNF via exercise the potential for neuroplasticity is great. However, just as good nutrition and sleep does not naturally

build muscle without the body being taxed, so must the brain be utilized for neuroplasticity to occur. As our muscles in the body are only developed and maintained through activity so it is with our brain. For neuroplasticity to occur, we must make good use of the “Miracle-Gro” that is BDNF and stimulate it with learning. “Exercise spawns neurons, and the stimulation of environmental enrichment helps those cells survive” (Ratey, 2008, p. 49). The ubiquitous phrase, ‘use it or lose it’, applies to not only physical muscle tissue but also to newly birthed neurons.

This is the crossroads of where a physically fit person must choose to develop their new brain cells for the further blessings of growth in their spiritual health. The choice chosen is paramount to a person’s longevity of valuable contributions in service to Christ.

A physically fit person is not automatically whole without harmonizing the advancement of their whole being. A life filled with devotion to physical fitness alone is a life spent in vain, missing the potential that the Creator meant for each of us to reach. Likewise, an individual pursuing only academic or intellectual enrichment without concern for augmenting physical health is planning the detriment of their overall well-being.

No matter who you are ... the Lord has blessed you with intellectual faculties capable of vast improvement. Cultivate your talents with persevering earnestness. Train and discipline the mind by study, by observation, by reflection. You cannot meet the mind of God unless you put to use every power. The mental faculties will strengthen and develop if you will go to work in the fear of God, in humility, and with earnest prayer. A resolute purpose will accomplish wonders (White, 1915, p.275).

White is explicit that we must use every power that we have available to meet the mind of God. To reach the mind of God, our minds must be at their best. For excellence to occur, our whole being must be balanced and in harmony. Our minds have not reached their best if we neglect the health of our most complicated organ, the brain. With the integration of physical exercise into our lives, we are

developing potential neurons that can be used to meditate and absorb the wisdom that our creator meant for us. Our creator designed us in His image that we would have the intelligence to make the wise choices regarding our physical, social, and mental areas of life that lead to happiness. With this happiness and clarity of God's plan for us, our spiritual connection grows. Our creator wants nothing more than for us to tune our hearts and minds to Him. With a sound body, a stronger and more powerful spiritual mind becomes attainable.

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# Interscholastic Sports and Religion: A Promising Combination?

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The purpose of this presentation is to examine the connections between religion and sports. In particular, to examine the position of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church on interscholastic sports competition. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, church leaders have approved of interscholastic sports competition and, at times, even sponsored them. Leaders in the church have combined sports participation with their religious beliefs, and publicly proclaimed the personal importance of this combination.

To this writer the combination can be problematic, as beliefs about sports are viewed in diverse ways, depending on the experiences, relationships, and interests of individuals and groups. For the purpose of clarity, references to “sports” in this paper, for the most part, are referring to “interscholastic sports competition.”

When the author taught the university class “Psychology and Sociology of Sports,” he would begin the chapter on Sports and Religion by asking students to take out a piece of paper, and write out as many words as they can think of in 2 minutes when they hear the word “sports.” When the time was up, students were asked to read their lists. Never, in the multiple times this introductory activity was done, did students write any words that suggested any connection to religion. Yet, somehow, when sports are introduced in parochial schools, the two are portrayed as going hand-in-hand.

Nevertheless, the objectives of this paper are:

1. What are the similarities and differences between sports and religions?
2. Why have people combined sports and religious beliefs?

3. What are the issues and controversies associated with combining religious beliefs and sports participation?
4. Three resolutions in dealing with interscholastic sports in religious institutions.
5. Exploring what the SDA church leaders do not tell you.
6. Exercising our Faith----Who is really doing it?

### **Similarities between Sports and Religion**

In his book, "Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies," Jay Coakley (2009) listed several similarities between sports and religion. A few are presented below.

1. Both have places or buildings for communal gatherings and special events-----sports have gyms and stadiums/fields; and religion has churches and cathedrals.
2. Both have procedures and dramas linked to personal betterment.
3. Both advocate a quest for perfection of mind, body and soul----sports emphasizes perfection of performance; and religion emphasizes perfection of moral character.
4. Both have special events to celebrate festivals and festive occasions----sports have homecomings, playoffs, championships, tournaments, super bowls; and religion has Easter, Christmas and Thanksgiving programs, camp meetings, baptisms, alumni weekends, evangelistic meetings.
5. Both are controlled through structured organizations with hierarchical systems of authority---- sports has commissioners, athletic directors, and coaches; and religion has presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, superintendents, pastors, elders, teachers.

6. Both have rituals before, during and after services ----sports has national anthems, halftime talks and shows, hand slapping, and bands; and religion has opening hymns, prayer, sermons, offering collection, joining of hands, and ceremonial processions.
7. Both have heroes and legends----sports heroes are elected to hall of fames, reported on by print media, television and their stories are told repeatedly; and religion heroes come from personalities in the Bible, current and former ministers, and religious writers.
8. Both are used to celebrate and reproduce the values of particular groups in society---- sports inspire players to achieve new heights; and religion inspires people to prepare for Christ's second coming.
9. Both can be sources of existential experiences involving the temporary suspension of boundaries between self and the real world----sports becomes a respite from daily worries and cares; and religion focuses on a personal relationship with the supernatural.
10. Both can evoke intense excitement and emotional commitment from individuals and groups.
11. Both can give deep personal meaning to people's lives and many of their activities (page 519).

### **Differences between Sports and Religion**

After citing similarities between sports and religion, Coakley (2009) list differences between sports and religion.

"1. Religious beliefs are sacred and sport beliefs are secular. One is divinely inspired and the other is grounded in the profane

2. The purpose of religion is to transcend the material world in the pursuit of eternal life, whereas the purpose of sport is to embrace the material.
3. Religion is fundamentally rooted in faith, whereas sport is fundamentally rooted in concrete, factual rules and relationships.
4. Religion places an emphasis on humility and love, whereas sport emphasizes personal achievement and defeat of others.
5. Religion involves cooperation among believers, whereas sport involves competition between opponents.
6. Religious services highlight acknowledging the sacred and supernatural, whereas sport events highlight outcomes with secular significance.
7. Religious rituals are essentially expressive and process-oriented, whereas sport rituals are essentially instrumental and goal-oriented (520).

### **Why Have People Combined Sports and Religion?**

Why have Christian organizations and beliefs, in particular, been combined directly and explicitly with sports? The rationale is varied, but a few reasons are offered below (Coakley, 2009).

1. Protestant/Capitalist Work Ethic - Organized competitive sports are oriented around work and achievement. Sports are work-like and require sacrifice and the endurance of pain.
2. God wants people to be the best they can be in sports, even if it involves the physical domination of others.

3. Christian athletes can define sports participation as a valuable form of religious witness and then link it with the Christian goals of individual salvation and evangelism.
4. To promote spiritual growth. Moral character is associated with physical conditioning.
5. Belief that sports participation develops moral character.
6. To attract and recruit boys/girls and men/women to churches.
7. Church-affiliated colleges and universities in the U.S. have used sports as an organizational recruiting and public relations tool.
8. To cope with uncertainty.
9. To stay out of trouble.
10. To put sport participation in a balanced perspective.
11. To establish team solidarity and unity.
12. To reaffirm expectations, rules, and social control on teams.
13. To achieve personal and competitive success (pages 535-536).

**What are the issues and controversies of combining religious beliefs and sports participation?**

Sports that are considered power and performance sports (i.e., basketball & soccer) seem to have built in conflicts between ones religious beliefs and participation in the game. They emphasize winning, final scores and records over caring for others. Power and performance sports create doubts about the suitability of certain forms of sport participation.

Ethical Dilemma...

1. Use of violence and intimidation plus...
2. Self-promotion and the aggressive pursuit of personal success cast...

3. Doubt on some (Leaders, administrators, etc.) as to the suitability of competitive sports.

This concern was pointed out by Ron Du Preez (2002) when he wrote, “Essentially, competitive sports “is a gladiatorial model, inherently anti-biblical and anti-Christian, for it idealizes an adversarial view of, and relationship to, other human beings---God’s children.” He goes on to point out seven basic problems he perceives with these activities. “They...

1. Promote vengeance: They foster a selfish, “pay-back” attitude.
2. Glorify violence: They encourage aggression and a “killer instinct.”
3. Normalize overreaction: They portray uncontrolled reactions as normal.
4. Displace perception of spiritual need: An empty soul finds a pseudo-fulfillment in sports.
5. Promote adoration of victors: Sports stars achieve a god-like status, and hero-worship abounds.
6. Foster pride: The successful easily become self-centered and proud.
7. Replace positive values: Biblical norms, such as love and truthfulness, are ignored, while hatred and deception are promoted as positive virtues.”

### **Three resolutions in dealing with interscholastic sports in religious institutions**

In this author’s view, there are three resolutions that religious denominations have adopted in dealing with the issue of sports and religion.

Resolution 1—Play interscholastic sports and focus on ascetic aspects of sports (the discipline, exercise, fitness, working out, self-denial, and sacrifice); define conformity to the sport ethic as the basis of self-worth. In our country today, 70 percent of adults are consider overweight or

obese (NHANES, 2014). One way to promote physical activity to our youth is by promoting participation in sports games. A recent report by the Center for Disease Control reported that 4 in 10 adults in the U.S. are obese and 20 percent of children ages 6-19 are obese (CDC.Gov, 2017). The dedication to practice and fitness is seen as a deterrent to lack of movement and sedentary lifestyle. The promotion of daily step count of 10,000 steps can be achieved in part by participating in sports practice or game play. In addition to engaging in physical activity and exercise, youth can be admonished to partake in eating a more healthy and nutritious diet. But this is a non-issue. Intramural sports amply care for these imperative physical activity needs. The big question is, “Why is it necessary to go off campus to play games?”

Resolution 2—Use interscholastic sports to promote spiritual growth. This second resolution has four parts: play interscholastic sports to develop character, provide a platform for evangelism, provide for community service initiatives, and keep kids out of trouble.

Walt Hammersloug (2011) in an article he published in the Adventist Review believed sports could be used to develop character. “With regard to moral reasoning in sport, the church says little, except to advise that we not engage in it. In my mind, this is an unrealistic stance to take in the modern world...” He continues, “To say that we should be celibate with regard to sport is unrealistic.” Again, Hammersloug posits “The greatest value of sport can be its ability to enhance the character and elevate the ethics of participants and spectators.” Lastly he ends his article by stating, “It is my prayer that coaches will provide leadership in the task of helping the church reflect Christ and to reveal His love through our athletic programs.”

1. The problem with this position is that one only needs to pick up the sports page from a newspaper or turn on the cable sports network and daily one can be exposed to ethical and

moral dilemmas in sports. ESPN, a major sports news network, daily airs a show entitled “Outside the Lines” which chronicles the misdeeds carried on by players, coaches, athletic directors in professional and collegiate. While the depth of the infractions in secular sports society can be dark and troubling, figuring out the penalties to assess for misdeeds is even more problematic. Look at the recent cases of the University of Louisville Basketball and the University of North Carolina Football. And do not be naive to think that there isn’t drama of various sorts in Adventist schools interscholastic sports programs. It conveniently goes unreported!

2. Use sports as a platform for giving witness and evangelizing. Alex Bryan (2001) in an article explains, “Sports evangelism is my number one avenue for connection with unbelievers. I played softball for a couple seasons on a team with only two Christians and developed good friendships with men who were far from God. Now I play golf with friends who are unchurched. This time gives positive connections with people who would never enter into a religious atmosphere. I pray my golfing buddies Pete, Kevin, and Shawn will one day end up worshipping Jesus at my church. And when they do, I will know that God used sports to lead them into an eternal relationship with Him.”

Within the schools, varsity sports is touted as an acceptable vehicle for Christian witnessing to other sports minded youth who wouldn’t be reached by the churches normal evangelist initiatives. However, it is highly debatable whether the interscholastic sports arena with its self-glorification, rivalry, and killer instinct requirement is within the spirit of the gospel. Strange setting for sharing sacred truths!

3. Focus on good works and service off the field. When my boys played on a church/school basketball team in high school, they were required to do a certain amount of community service. The coach would get the team together on Sundays and go to someone's home where general yard clean up took place.

Gladys Neigel (2017) in an article in the Southern Tidings entitled "Love God, Love Basketball," reports on community service activities engaged in by basketball team members in the Florida Conference. The article ends with a quote from one of the coaches "We were pleased to represent the basketball ministry in the community and share the love of Christ with others."

4. Another reason given to participate in interscholastic sports is to help kids stay out of trouble. The players are admonished to be good citizens in school and in the community. In fact, the interscholastic sports team is used as a way to gain control over students who possess unruly behavior. By requiring good behavior in school, students are allowed to participate on the school team. Certainly, interschool sports are a positive alternative to drugs, pornography, rock music, illicit sex, etc. We cannot say no to everything. So let us approve whatever we can that is innocuous. But participation in interscholastic sports represents a shift from Bible-based spiritual sensitivity, compassionate and self-less service, work, and Christian character development, to a sports culture on campus.

Resolution 3—Do not play interscholastic sports, and give priority to religious beliefs and change behavior, or play pleasure and participation sports (intramurals), or withdraw from sports. George Akers (1990) while Director, Education Department General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist stated, "Varsity League play is serious business---no longer "play,"

really.” This business of winning for alma mater’s sake is work now, and intense, pressureful work at that, for both students and physical education teachers - far from “innocent sports.” He goes on to say, “Secular schools are under the gun these days to justify this outlay of faculty/student energy and school funds; therefore, shouldn’t we apply the same self-scrutiny? Putting a team on the road represents big money. With the financial crunch that is hitting us too, and our parents and conferences sacrificing to make Christian education possible, how can we justify this institutional vanity?”

### **Southern Adventist University Statement on Interscholastic Sports**

The position of Southern Adventist University is expressed in a position paper authored by the dean of its School of Physical Education, Health and Wellness (PEHW). It reads, “The position of Southern Adventist University is that competitive and financial aspects of interscholastic sports are not in harmony with the mission statement and core values of our university. In addition, interscholastic sports are not in harmony with the mission statement for the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness (PEHW). Therefore, the PEHW faculty do not promote interscholastic sports or allow interscholastic sports competition on or in any of the facilities under its jurisdiction.

Faculty in the School of PEHW are sensitive to the crisis of adult sedentary lifestyle, weight, and obesity in our country. This crisis has trickled down into the college-age population. Facilitating an intramural sports program can provide an opportunity for physical activity to a greater proportion of the student body than can be provided for by an interscholastic sports program.

The university has adopted the theme “Living in Balance: Physical Activity” as part of a core initiative (called the Quality Enhancement plan (QEP)) for meeting accreditation requirements. The focus of the initiative is to enhance student learning in the psychomotor domain, and to increase 1) physical fitness; 2) physical activity planning skills; and 3) knowledge of Seventh-day Adventist teachings that promote an active lifestyle. Intramural sports encompass the entire university population that compliments the requirements of the whole-campus QEP initiative (Position Statement School of PEHW, 2013).”

### **Athletics-Undergrad Student Handbook and Planner (2017-18)**

Southern’s undergraduate handbook contains a similar statement to that of the School of PEHW, “Southern provides organized sports activities through the intramural program administered by the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness. The program is committed to excellence and offers activities that foster a positive, safe, and active social and moral environment. The goal of the intramural recreation program is to provide a wide variety of positive experiences for as many students as possible” (Undergraduate Student Handbook, 2017).

You may not realize it, but Southern Adventist University’s Intramural program was ranked in the top 10 in the nation by Best Colleges. During the summer of 2013, a report was released by Best Colleges regarding the top intramural recreation programs provided by colleges and universities in the United States. Best Colleges, an academic review website, placed the university on a short list of colleges that they deem will provide the best intramural sports program in the country for the 2013-14 academic year. Through a combination of the number of intramural sports on their roster, the comprehensive qualities of team management

and coaching, and survey sent out to current students, Best Colleges determined that Southern Adventist program was one of the top in the nation (Southern ranked 10<sup>th</sup>). Between 1,400-1,500 students participate in at least one sport each year.

In 2015, the North American Society for Sports Management listed Southern Adventist University's Sport Management degree 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally from a list of 20 great small colleges for a bachelor's degree in sports management. An interesting accomplishment when you consider the fact that Southern does not participate in interscholastic sports!

With respects to the Quality Enhancement Program, or QEP, mentioned above, a report was released in the month of July in 2016 by the American Kinesiology Association ranking Southern Adventist University first on the National Collegiate Fitness Index (NCFI) rankings. Penn State University, Lyndon State University and Southern Adventist University were ranked as the top collegiate campuses.

The NCFI is modeled after the American Fitness Index (AFI) program, which assesses the health and wellness of the 50 largest cities in the United States. The NCFI is a collaborative project between the National Academy of Kinesiology, the American College of Sports Medicine, and the American Kinesiology Association.

### **What the church leaders don't tell you**

One thing that is not discussed anymore is Ellen White's counsel about sports as presented in the spirit of prophecy writings. Granted, when she wrote, interscholastic sports did not exist in our schools. However, the principles she presented would have an obvious application even in today's culture. Perhaps, even more application today than when she wrote

it. Two quotes of hers are presented below that are worth considering. In the first taken from *The Adventist Home*, Mrs. White's gave what she called "Basic Guiding Principles for Games with a ball."

"I do not condemn the simple exercise of playing ball; but this, even in its simplicity, may be overdone... I shrink always from the almost sure result which follows in the wake of these amusements. It leads to an outlay of means that should be expended in bringing the light of truth to souls that are perishing out of Christ. The amusements and expenditures of means for self-pleasing, which lead on step by step to self-glorifying, and the educating in these games for pleasure produce a love and passion for such things that is not favorable to the perfection of Christian character." In the next paragraph, she goes on to say that, "The way that they have been conducted at the college does not bear the impress of heaven (page 499)."

In the book *Education*, Ellen White (1903) wrote, "Some of the most popular amusements, such as football and boxing, have become schools of brutality. They are developing the same characteristics, as did the games of ancient Rome. The love of domination, the pride in mere brute force, the reckless disregard of life, are exerting upon the youth a power to demoralize that is appalling.

Other athletic games, though not so brutalizing, are scarcely less objectionable because of the excess to which they are carried. They stimulate the love of pleasure and excitement, thus fostering a distaste for useful labor, a disposition to shun practical duties and responsibilities. They tend to destroy a relish for life's sober realities and its tranquil enjoyments. Thus, the door is opened to dissipation and lawlessness with their terrible results (p. 210-211).

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Executive Committee at the Annual council session in Nairobi, Kenya, October 7, 1988, drafted the document entitled “Activities with elements of competition: Perspective and analysis.” On the topic of “Interschool Sports” the following was pinned, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church is opposed to interschool league play (commonly known as varsity athletics) in its educational system. The major rationale for this is:

1. The inherent hazards of competitive rivalry have the potential to be exaggerated in inter-organizational events; and
2. The commitments of time, personnel, and finances are usually disproportionate to the number of individuals able to participate.

The above position is currently included in the General Educational Working Policies of the North American Division of Education 1996-1997!

The “Activities with elements of competition: Perspective and analysis” document includes counsel on intramural and recreational activities. Below is an excerpt from the paper.

“Intramural means “within the walls,” and such activities are confined to and among individuals of each specific church, school, or institution. When properly conducted, they will develop character, physical fitness, and wholesome group interaction. To ensure the wholesome benefits that may be derived from an organized program of intramural and recreational activities, the following objectives are recommended:

1. A committee or representative leaders and participants should be established to plan and control organized recreational activities in any church, school, or institution.

2. Directors of physical activities should be aware of the participants' need for a balanced program which should include recreation from sources other than organized sports.
3. Appropriate classification of participants should be established on such factors as physical size, age, and skills and provision should be made to include all who want to participate.
4. Care should be taken to provide adequate equipment and facilities in the interest of health and safety.
5. Participant and spectator orientation to the philosophy and objectives stated in this statement should be requisite to organized physical activities.
6. Excesses in team and crowd reaction should be avoided and qualified officials should be in charge to ensure a wholesome spirit of participation.
7. Team participants should be rotated periodically to de-emphasize rivalry."

Despite the following working policies presented above, it is interesting to note that the Seventh-day Adventist Health and Physical Education Recreation Association in 2003 published and posted "Guidelines for Athletics in Seventh-day Adventist Institutions." The introduction reads as follows: "Perhaps no phenomenon, except politics, war, or religion, is as ubiquitous as sport. All forms of the news media give copious space to this topic. Although Ellen G. White cautioned against games and recreation, we must not ignore sport. It is too entrenched in our society. Rather, we should educate our membership on how to relate to sport with a Seventh-day Adventist Christian focus.....There is a Christian model of sport, and we have not totally

fulfilled the mission of Seventh-day Adventist education unless we teach this model to administrators, players, parents, and spectators.”

Another example of this surfaced in the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Education Code PreK-12 in 2009, when Supplement G “Guidelines for Interscholastic Sports and Competition” was posted on their website. The introduction states, “This document is not designed to approve or disapprove interscholastic sports. It is to provide guidelines for schools to follow that already have sports programs in place. Interscholastic sports programs have become an increasingly significant part of the Seventh-day Adventist academy culture, in spite of resistance within the church structure and the inherent danger that exists in competitive team sports. Driven by parents and students who have expressed a strong desire, an increasing number of schools are participating in interscholastic sports.

The rationale given in the two examples above sounds like the same rationale given for legalizing recreational marijuana in Colorado, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Maine and Massachusetts, “Since everyone is doing it, it can’t be a bad thing.” Then there is performance enhancing drug use in sports, where those caught using them have said in their defense, “if everyone is using them, then it’s not cheating.”

### **Exercising our Faith---Who is really doing it?**

So, how shall we perceive this discrepancy between what the church corporate mandates and church leaders in our institutions who are displaying an outright disregard for the church’s counsel? George Ackers (1990) called it “mutiny!” Harvey Steck (2004) in his article entitled **Winning and losing in the courts** called it “apostasy.” This author calls it “hypocrisy!”

When I read my Bible, I can find multiple stories of how Israel failed to obey the commands of God and heed the warning of the prophets and were taken into captivity. Two places that come to mind are first, 2 Kings 17:13-15 states “13 Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. **14** Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. **15** And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them.”

In Daniel 9:10 we read Daniel’s prayer for Jerusalem .... “**10** Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.”

So to tie in this presentation to the theme of this symposium, let us ask the following questions: “Who is faithfully exercising their faith? The educational institutions that shun the statutes of the corporate church or the educational institutions that faithfully follow the church’s counsel?” My definition of obedience is loving faith in action! John 14:15 “**15** If you love me keep my commandments.” Romans 3:31 “**31** Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

We are being held captive too. By the devil, here on this earth. Maybe part of the reason Christ has not returned is we have become shamefully negligent in our pursuit of

reflecting the character of Christ and spreading his message of salvation to the world. We have rejected the statutes of the church and succumbed to vanity and self-centeredness.

The self-proclaimed justification for interscholastic sports on the basis of youth to youth witnessing, evangelism, and character building seems mostly suspect! As Romans 3:31 states, we do not make void the law through faith, but rather we establish the law by obedience which is loving faith in action.

I am proud to have played a part as intramural director, faculty member and Dean of the School of PEHW that has followed unwaveringly the counsel spelled out by the church and not participated in interscholastic sports. Our only hope of salvation is to choose to follow God's leading with unwavering faith. We need to pray for our leaders and urge them to make decisions that God can approve. Someday you are going to be the church leaders! May we all choose for ourselves those forms of physical activities that will be uplifting and aid us in our heavenly journey.

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# SUMMARY OF 2017 REYNOLDS SYMPOSIUM

Ruth S. Williams | Professor of Psychology | Southern Adventist University

The theme for this year's symposium was appealing, challenging, engaging, and thought-provoking, with a playful seriousness engendered by the metaphor of movement. *Exercising Your Faith*, the theme proclaimed, and with an audience primed and motivated to obey the edict, the presentations did not disappoint over the two sessions probing the depths and plumbing the bases of the importance of movement, the importance of physical exercise, the importance living up to the intelligent design of a Creator who was intentional that activity, movement, and growth would be the foundational basis of humans in being. To be is to move, to be is to act, to be is to intentionally engage the physical being as we glorify God with our spiritual, intellectual, and emotional selves.

I would be remiss if I did not state that I thoroughly enjoyed all the presentations. Each unique and adapted to the personality, passion, experience, expertise, and style of the presenter, and thus, "at the end of the day", I distilled four major points that seemed to run as a golden thread through the weekend:

1. We are what we are, who we are, and whose we are on purpose. That purpose is to be whole and that wholeness involves movement. The purpose was made explicit by the Lord God, Creator of Heaven and Earth.
2. Design, both Intelligent and Loving, proclaims that physical movement is essential to spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.
3. Physical exercise and taking care of our physical being can be considered a way to worship, a modality for witness, and a wealth of positive outcomes to be enjoyed by self and others. Movement is a way of "keeping one's faith."

4. There is a right and a wrong way for Adventist institutions of higher education to demonstrate and illustrate God's plan for movement in the academic curricular.

In this brief paper, I will recall summary statements on each aspect of the events that transpired September 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of the year 2017. It is imperative to state that there is and will be, in the foreseeable future, a need for this kind of discourse and intellectual activity. This burgeoning tradition of making explicit the necessity of continual exploration of religion and values at Southern Adventist University must be protected, supported, and even expanded upon. A popular, but appropriate Bible verse crowned the outline of the two events that Sabbath: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7.

#### **Friday Evening, September 15, 2017**

A song service that included some familiar songs, *How Great is our God*, *Wonderful Sabbath Day*, and *Bless the Lord, O my soul* set the atmosphere for the events to follow. Dr. John McCoy, Dean of the School of Education and Psychology and the current Reynolds' Chair, welcomed the audience made up of students, faculty, staff and individuals from the community. Dr. Bert Coolidge, executor of the will of Maureen Reynolds who made possible the endowment that bears her parents' names at Southern Adventist University, gave a brief, but humor filled history of how the Reynolds' chair came to be, noting with conviction and aplomb that "Getting a degree and getting an education—the two are radically different." The Reynolds' family literally put their "money where their mouths were" on creating a financial legacy for Christian education that would never forget its Biblical roots and God-ordained mandate.

After a vocal musical special by Sheann Brandon, Professor Mike Boyd delivered his presentation *We Were Made to Move*.

## **Take-Away Points**

1. “God made us a certain way and that is not to sit on our keister.”
2. The original plan entailed taking care of Eden, working to take care of it.
3. “You don’t quit moving because you got old. You got old because you quit moving.”
4. “We were not made to exercise; we were made to move.” Exercise is optional and planned; movement is essential and spontaneous and applies to all of us, all of the time, every day.
5. “We will get good at whatever we allow our bodies to do. Just by moving around, you can get exercise.”
6. “If you are doing something that you love to do, it is moving not exercise.”
7. The “best thing you can do to move is to walk. “Walking is the best exercise.”

## **Sabbath, September 16, 2017.**

Song Service Sabbath morning included these rich favorites, *“My Hope is Built on Nothing Less Than Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness, How Deep is the Father’s Love, and Jesus at the Center of it All.* After Ms. Brandon’s special music that showcased a struggling heart being mended by a powerful but living God, Professor Rick Schwarz took the stage.

## **Gym-Masters: More Than a Gymnastics Team**

### **Take-Away Points**

1. The Gym-Masters represents a ministry. Eighteen years of God’s direction, eighteen years of seeing God working through the team members to change lives. Eighteen years of seeing God change team members and to Him the glory.
2. The importance of “tithing” the practice. Give God the first minutes of each session and He blesses with amazing abundance the rest of the practice time.

3. Rick Schwarz is an “Evangelist”. He leads by example. He talks about a God that he obviously knows personally. He is emphatic that spiritual lessons are caught not necessarily best taught.
4. The power is in the story. The evidence of this gymnastic team is in the stories of changed lives.
5. “How God can use our love for gymnastics to show our love for Him.”

***Sound Body...Sound Spiritual Mind, Dr. Rod Bussey***

**Take-Away Points**

1. Movement, moving increases the capacity and power of our brains.
2. “Exercise is medicine; critical in the control of chronic diseases.”
3. The mind-body connection is imperative to understanding how we can be “whole.”
4. In order to truly experience and achieve a sound spiritual mind, there must be the necessary effort to having a sound mind born of a sound body.
5. Harmony is what makes the connection possible. It is not ‘either/or’; it is not a choice. God calls us to integration.
6. “Find things you enjoy and keep doing it.”

***Interscholastic Sports and Religion: A Promising Combination, Dr. Robert Bengé***

**Take-Away Points**

1. Sports and religion share many similarities, such as buildings, procedures, rituals, and special events.
2. To play or not to play interscholastic sports is a question that begs resolution.

3. There are three resolutions among which Adventist institutions have to choose:
  - a. Play because discipline promotes fitness.
  - b. Ignore the moral question and strive to be the best that you can be: moral development, character enrichment, a platform for evangelizing, doing good works and a model for service. In other words, the ends justify the means.
  - c. Do not play interscholastic sports at all. Do **intramural** sports instead.

Intramural sports get all the students involved. It provides the best of all worlds in the sense the benefits of play, exercise, teamwork and physical development all have the chance to be developed without compromising the moral position of abstaining from competitive sports. The basic guiding principles espoused by Ellen G. White should still stand, and still stands with the intentional program of intramural sports successfully showcased at Southern and standing firm on the anti-interscholastic rock.

The reason? The following quote, *Education*, p. 13, that was displayed on the back page of the symposium's program said it all:

True education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that how it. It has to do with the whole being, land with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.

In addition, having done all, move!



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