



Faith-Ann McGarrell

Come Apart and Rest Awhile

We are now more connected to one another, globally, than at any other time in earth's history, and these connections comprise a significant portion of our already limited 24-hour day. While each 24-hour cycle promises new experiences, the same also brings with it multiple demands on our time and attention.

Excelacom, a consulting and technology solutions company, released 2017 data about what happens on the Internet in one minute (60 seconds):¹

- 854,166 Facebook logins
- 156 million e-mails sent out
- 3.5 million Google search queries
- 350,000 new Tweets
- \$265,273 million in Amazon sales
- 4.1 million video views on YouTube
- 29.2 million messages on What's App

When compared with 2016 numbers, these numbers are staggering! Facebook logins increased by 152,777, e-mail usage by six million, Amazon sales by \$61 million, and WhatsApp messages by eight million (see endnote for detailed comparison). Daily we manage social connections using multiple electronic and digital devices and social media platforms. Add to this everyday home-, church-, and work-related responsibilities and our "to-do" lists begin to accumulate more and more tasks. What does this mean for our ability to focus? Rest? Spend time with our families? Time with God? What does it mean for our ability to inspire our students to do the same?

Increasingly, studies show a relationship between poor sleep patterns and use of digital devices and social media²; failing family dynamics due to overconsumption of media³; and decreased time spent in spiritual renewal and solitude.⁴ What do we do with this information? Do we just turn everything off and retreat? Unfortunately, this is not always possible; however, carving out periods of time to disconnect can be beneficial to our overall sense of well-being and productivity.

Several years ago, a few of my students enrolled in a graduate writing seminar that required three days at The Hermitage,⁵ a retreat center in southwest Michigan nestled amidst 62 acres of lush, undulating hills, trails, and woods. The purpose of this retreat? To take time away from tasks that prevented students enrolled in the class from focusing on their major writing assignments—proposals, theses, and dissertations. Many needed a quiet place to rest, think, recharge, and focus—"a peaceful haven"⁶ far removed from the demands of daily life and the added demands of e-mail, social media, Internet searches, and shopping. The location had no Wi-Fi, (although a central landline was available for emergencies), and talking was encouraged only at mealtimes. The first few hours, and for some, days, were difficult; however, the stillness and silence helped many to focus and complete several pages of their assigned tasks.

Over the past several months, many Adventist educators have had time to regroup after the busyness of the previous school year or semester, partake in restorative activities such as rest and time with family, and rebuild excitement for the upcoming academic year. Indeed, the year ahead is filled with new experiences and opportunities for growth—and we look forward to it with joyful anticipation.

Yet a new academic year also brings many challenges, not only to our time, attention, and focus, but also to our overall sense of well-being. And as this new year or semester bursts onto the horizon, and as we create unit and lesson plans, course outlines, syllabi, and schoolwide initiatives that will impact the lives of countless students, kindergarten through higher education, intentionally taking time to nurture and nourish the spirit is essential. Jesus Himself said: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while" (Mark 6:31, NRSV)⁷ when He felt the need to recharge. Elijah, too, was reminded of the power of silence and retreat as he witnessed the wind, earthquake, fire, and

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26. Jennifer N. Mahdavi and Diane Haager, "Linking Progress Monitoring Results to Interventions," *Perspectives on Language and Literacy* 33:2 (Spring 2007): <http://dyslexiaida.org/perspectives/>.

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abilities, Inc. (September 2016): <http://www.rtinetwork.org/about-us/contributors/deno-stanley>; Jeffrey Henning, "Twelve Types of Non-Probability Sampling," *Jeffrey Henning's Blog* (January 7, 2016): <http://www.researchscape.com/blog/12-types-of-non-probability-sampling>. It should be noted that identical tests have often been used to monitor growth in education and other professions such as health care.

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then the "sound of sheer silence" through which God spoke and asked: "'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (1 Kings 19:11-14, NRSV). In the stillness, God spoke . . . and still speaks. His words encourage renewed focus on mission and promise wisdom to help us (re-)envision effective ways to accomplish the same. As educators, we MUST make time for physical restoration, mental renewal, emotional balance, and renewed focus and zeal for the rendering of faithful and fruitful service to God.

In this issue, Joel Raveloharimisy offers an invitation to step away from the busyness of life and consider spiritual imperatives that will strengthen the Adventist teacher's relationship with Jesus and impact student-educator interactions. Also, Ty-Ron Douglas (available on the JAE App and online) challenges educators to (re-)envision and reclaim the "Big Truths" that guide our practice and help us reaffirm our purpose as Adventist educators.

The remaining articles are written by teachers who currently utilize various best-practice approaches in their classrooms: approaches to teaching writing to English as a Second Language (ESL) students (Laurie Stankavich and Amanda Livanos; and Christian Stuart); specific examples of integrating the Bible when teaching a foreign language (Francisco Burgos); integrating faith education into an academic tour (Daniel Reynaud and Wayne French); how to prepare for an accreditation visit (Grant Leitma); and the impact of a flipped classroom on reading comprehension (Deril Wood and Caroline Lipman). Implementing any of these approaches will take time, planning, and intentional action—as all good practice should.

Purposefully taking time to regroup—finding moments of silence to recharge, reflect, and plan—is a must. Refocusing the future and charting a new course amidst the demands of our hyper-busy lives will not only benefit us as educators, but also our students, many of whom face the same challenges. May these last few moments before a new academic year or semester give us pause to respond to

God's call to "Come and talk with me" (Psalm 27:8, NLT)⁸ and may our response be "The Sovereign LORD has spoken to me, and I have listened . . ." (Isaiah 50:4, NLT).

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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6. Ibid.

7. Quoted from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) of the Bible. *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

8. Quoted from the *New Living Translation* (NLT) of the Bible. *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.