



By Paul S. Williams

It's All About Relationships

I recently read that many quantum physicists think the only ultimate reality is relational. If that is true, the health of virtually anything can be determined by the quality of its interactions. I like that idea. On Jesus' last day of public ministry, in answer to His last public question, He seemed to confirm that truth: "Love God. Love your neighbor." It's all about relationships.

The North American Christian Convention offers good music, preaching, workshops, and guest speakers. But I must admit that's not why I attend. I go for the relationships. I always have.

At the 1959 convention in Atlanta, I attended a session or two and squirmed in my seat as all 8-year-olds do, but mostly I played with my cousins at the pool. I remember Mom and Dad meeting lots of old friends and laughing deep into the night. In fact, it seemed just about every year at the convention Mom and Dad met lots of old friends and laughed deep into the night.

In 1969 I was so stirred by the opening session in Detroit's Cobo Hall that I wrote a note to the convention president. I was 18 years old. Outside Kiel Auditorium in 1970, I tried to hold hands with a young woman with whom I had been sitting during the opening session. She pulled her hands away,

dusted them off with a flourish, and said, "It's hot out here." I tried again the closing day with better results. In fact, we still hold hands. We recently celebrated 30 years of marriage.

After the 1979 St. Louis convention, I received a letter from Leonard Wymore that encouraged me greatly. And on the closing evening of the 1989 convention in Louisville, I felt more excited to be a part of this movement than ever before.

I've attended every NACC since 1989, and most years my schedule for the week is filled before I even arrive. As the director of a church-planting organization, many meetings are work-related as we search for staff, raise funds, and thank supporters. But

the most memorable meetings invariably are with friends, laughing deep into the night. For me, just as it was for my parents, the convention is a time to recharge batteries with one of the most potent power sources available—relationships with fellow travelers.

I'm sure I'll enjoy the Indianapolis convention. Bob Russell's sermons are always great, just like Greg Allen's worship leading. And the guest speakers look terrific. But when the week is over, I've got a sneaking suspicion it'll be the spontaneous conversations with friends I'll remember most.

For me, the NACC is a time to recharge batteries through relationship with fellow travelers.

Seen & Heard

Compiled by S. J. Dahlman

America's Christian leaders are generally **strong** in modeling characteristics like sensitivity to sin, morality, a godly demeanor, humility, maturity in faith, and trustworthiness—but **not so strong** in possessing a loving heart, modeling servanthood, and having godly wisdom, the lowest-scoring trait. So says a survey of 1,344 leaders by the Barna Research Group. Differences in leadership strengths and weaknesses followed generational lines. Baby Busters (age 37 or

younger) scored lower than older church leaders on such characteristics as faith maturity, trustworthiness, and wisdom. Baby Boomers (in their late 30s to mid-50s) tended to have more difficulty with having a loving heart toward others. Church leaders in their late 50s and older demonstrated difficulties with servanthood.

—Evangelical Press

Saudi Arabia—the land where Islam began in the seventh cen-

tury A.D.—will never allow churches to be built. So says Prince Sultan, the nation's defense minister. He called those who want to build churches in Saudi Arabia "fanatics," and said "there are no churches—not in the past, the present or the future. Whoever said this must shut up and be ashamed." Muhammad, the founder of Islam, allowed Arabia's Christian churches to continue operating.

—Associated Press