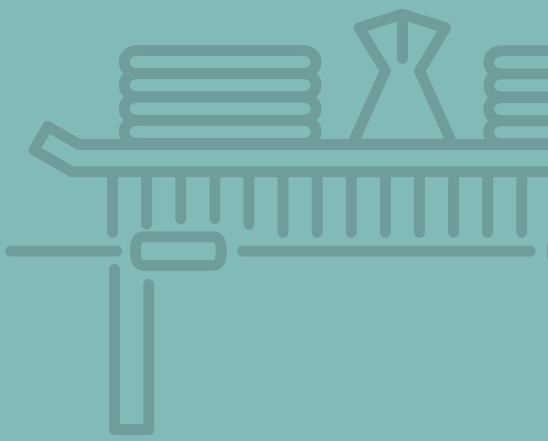
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FEBRUARY 2025: EMPTINESS + A QUESTION AND A CALL + YOU BELONG + WITNESSING FOR CHRIST + IF WE ONLY LOVED ONE ANOTHER





Is God Still With Us?

Lessons from the Sanctuary

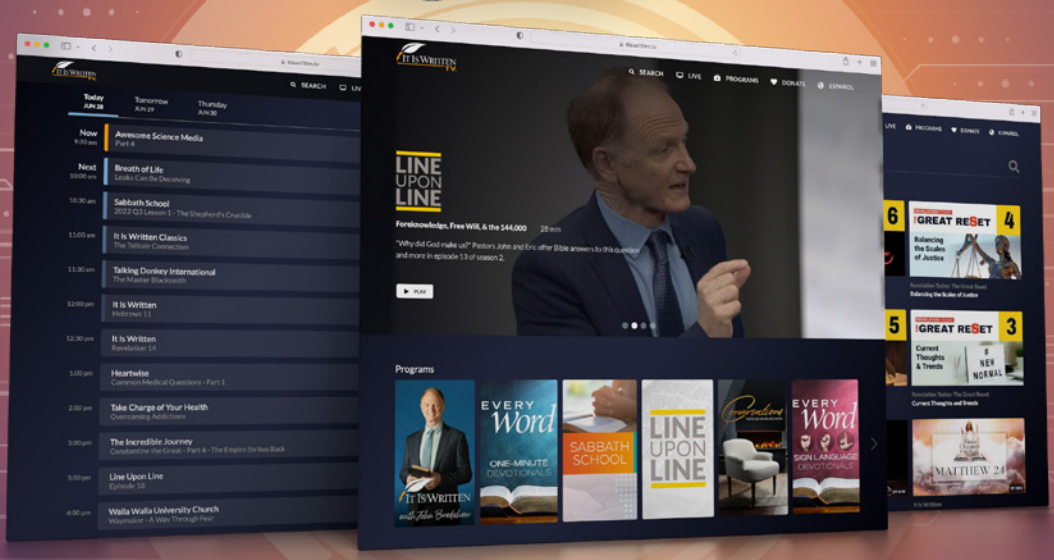






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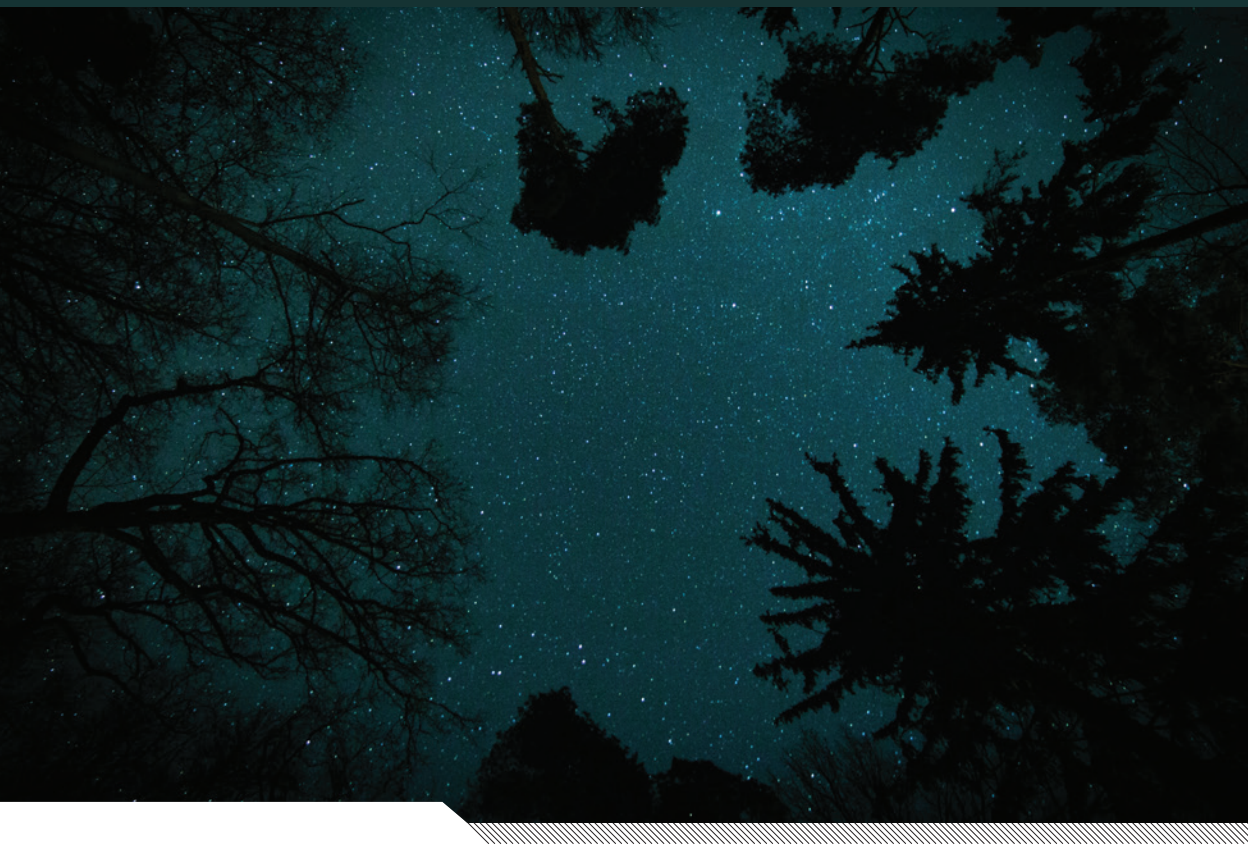
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FOUNDED 1849. PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS®

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The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist® church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US$19.95, plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US$2.00 plus shipping and handling.

To order, visit adventistreview.org/subscribe or send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

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My Adventist Neighbor in Heaven
by Marcos Paseggi

2



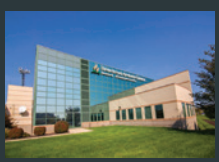
Adventist Members Among Deceased in South Korea Plane Crash
by Korean Union Conference

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Retraction Watch
by Clifford Goldstein

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Adventist Church Releases Statement on South Korea Plane Crash
by Ted N. C. Wilson, president, General Conference

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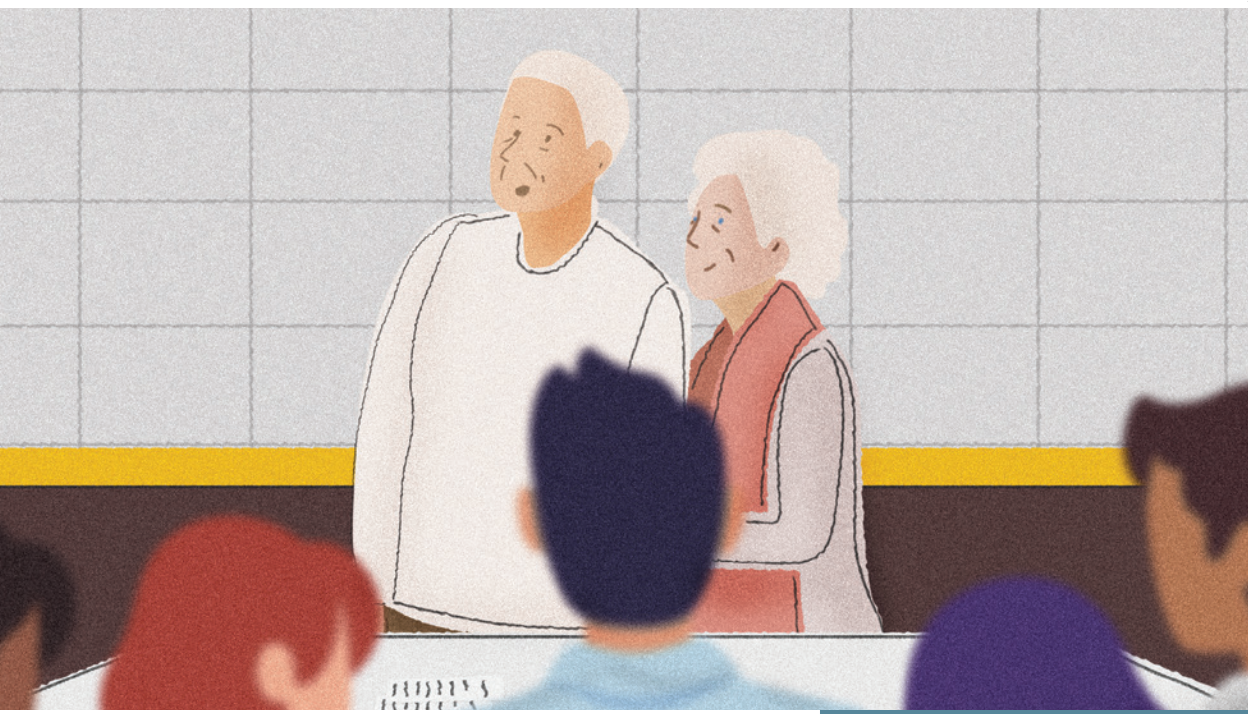
ADRA Local Branch Assists at Airport After Plane Crash in South Korea
by Kim Beom-tae, Korean Union Conference

Jim and Donna

are in good health,

happily retired, and love their community. They want to pass on their legacy of giving to their grandchildren and want them to have a say in how they begin to make donations with their funds each year. They've called a family meeting to explore interests and gauge how to move forward with exciting contributions that all can see the fruit of.

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The level of his zeal was correct, but the locus of it was not.

Zeal Without Knowledge

Paul would know. For years he thought he was serving God while persecuting and even killing Christians in His name. It took a Damascus road intervention by Jesus Himself for Paul to realize that his zeal was misplaced.

Calibrated correctly, zeal can be a powerful tool in the right hands. Some examples of righteous zeal that come to mind are Jesus cleansing the temple (Mark 11:15-17), Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), and Phinehas wielding his javelin for righteousness (Numbers 25). But miscalibrated zeal can result in damage to God's people and His work. Think of the Israelites' zeal for golden calf worship, Uzzah's touch of the ark, and again, Paul's pre-converted inquisitional activity. Interestingly, in four places, Paul speaks about zeal, emphasizing its rightful placement.

Empty Zeal: Romans 12:11 instructs us, "do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord" (ESV). Going beyond being passionate, zeal is not only feeling inspired momentarily but also executing what the emotive momentum points you toward. Too often we seek inspirational values that are initial motivators, but lack the intentional planning, activity, organization, and grit to realize the goal of the zeal we are experiencing.

Misdirected Zeal: Galatians 1:14 warns us that it is possible to be zealous, but in the wrong things. Paul was "extremely zealous . . . for the traditions of [his] fathers" (ESV). The level of his zeal was correct, but the locus of it was not. It was only when Damascus recalibrated Paul's zeal for Jesus Christ and His gospel that his passion was redirected and rectified.

Undirected Zeal: Romans 10:2-4 cautions us against zeal without knowledge. It is Scripture alone that grounds the reality of our spiritual zeal. Without knowledge zeal is mindless, directionless, dangerous, and a temptation to those who are attracted to extreme ideas. Some are zealous for zeal's sake and the lack of knowledge guarantees the danger of this experience.

Full and Proper Zeal: Titus 2:14 showcases the rightful locus of zeal and its product: people who are zealous of good works. Good works do not save us. As the verse states, it is Christ who gave Himself for us, who redeems us from all wickedness, and who purifies us to do that which is good. Because we are saved, we do good works; not, doing good works to be saved. These good works are a passion of His saved people.

Spiritual journeys naturally have their up and down seasons with the corresponding emotions. Sometimes we are on fire and in tune with God; sometimes we have plateaued and feel like we are far from Him. Sometimes we are Laodiceanly indifferent, not caring about our spiritual state. At other times we are fiercely fighting spiritual battles, sometimes on the brink of victory and other times on the brink of defeat. Regardless of where we may be in our journey, we must not look to temporary sugary highs of passionate emotions, but rather cling to the slow burn of spiritual zeal that comes from the Spirit, anchored in Scripture, and manifested in our sanctification.

Today we are enthralled with zeal, passion, and fervor that stem from any source. We replace spiritual knowledge with political values, personalities, and personal agendas to stoke our zeal. We become like the misplaced Zealots of Judea seeking to overthrow the Roman kingdom by force, not realizing that Jesus was already establishing a new one by His spirit. We end up rooting out and persecuting fellow brothers and leaders without knowing the full picture, without knowledge, and without good works.

Simply said, zeal is the desire to please God. Be sure that your zeal is with knowledge unless you prefer to ask for Paul's blindness to see it corrected.

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INBOX

We should encourage vulnerable conversations.
MARYJOY SALONGA DELA ROSA



ARt is a new section of the Adventist Review *featuring various original art created, written, and/or performed by Adventist artists. Here's what some readers thought of our December 2024 feature. —Editors*

This is great!
Robin Hill via Instagram

ARt is an amazing initiative.
Castro Sichalwe via Instagram

UNEDITD is a monthly social media broadcast of an unscripted conversation between the Adventist Review *editors discussing each month's issue. Past episodes are available on Instagram and Facebook. Some followers listened in and gave us their thoughts. —Editors*

I appreciate the UNEDITD series. It's helpful to hear a discussion concerning the articles coming out each month. Watching it in December pointed me to an article I had missed reading.
Joe Kim

Listening to the live broadcast of UNEDITD was interesting as I learned about the thought process behind the articles selected for each issue of *Adventist Review*. It's fascinating to get a sneak peek behind the scenes.
Samantha Okechi

GREAT NUANCE
"Love in Practice," by Luise Schneeweiß (November 2024), is a great article. It is very nuanced. Contrary to the myth we have always been told, God doesn't judge all of us equally. He does have different standards for those who want to lead.
Steve Ferguson

"Love in Practice" was beautifully and thoughtfully written. I'm thankful that the *Review* was brave enough to share it. It gives a lot to think about!
Barbara Woodruff Forss

Luise Schneeweiß rightly points out that LGBTQ+ sins are no more terrible than any other type of sin. We are all sinners, and God offers us forgiveness. When we are in Christ, we will detest every sin in our lives while being loving and forgiving to others. Christ came to save sinners. Unfortunately, many bend over backward to please a movement that demands much more than respect and acceptance. One that demands support and applause.
Ketil Gilje

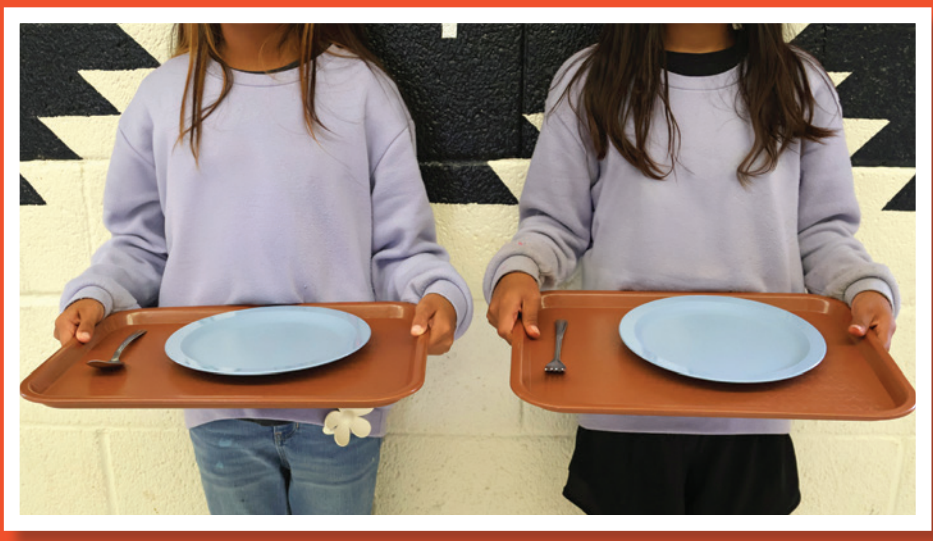
If we truly want to be in heaven, we cannot afford to pronounce judgment over anyone, nor can we tolerate sinful practices under the guise of empathy and love. What I gleaned from "Love in Practice" was that we should encourage vulnerable conversations. My encouragement to those who may find themselves on the receiving end of judgment is that they should recognize that the opinion of people does not hold any water on the day of judgment. What matters is what Jesus will say of us.
MaryJoy Salonga dela Rosa

As Luise Schneeweiß suggests in her article "Love in Practice," we could try loving those who are different than us instead of condemning them. I pray for peace on earth and goodwill to all.
Kay Popelka

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"We are only custodians and servants of the work God has given us to do."
Rick McEdward, p. 13

NEWS



Former Breath of Life speaker/director Carlton P. Byrd receives a legacy award from Gianna and Debleaire Snell at Oakwood University Church, December 6. PHOTO: RONALD POLLARD

BREATH OF LIFE MINISTRIES CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF MEDIA, MUSIC, AND EVANGELISM

EVENT REFLECTED ON THE MINISTRY'S EVOLUTION AND HONORED KEY CONTRIBUTORS.

CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

In the mid-1960s the U.S. faced social and racial unrest, including rioting and violence protesting the inequitable treatment of African Americans by the police. Amid the chaos, Walter Arties, a musician and Seventh-day Adventist pastor, began to dream of creating Christian programming for the Black community.

Arties championed his vision until Breath of Life Ministries finally launched in 1974. Dynamic preacher C. D. Brooks served as its first speaker/director and Arties as program producer, singer, and founder of the Breath of Life Quartet.

On Friday, December 6, Breath of Life Ministries celebrated 50 years with its Legacy Night, held at Oakwood University Church (OUC) in Huntsville, Alabama—its home since 2012. The evening reflected on the ministry's evolution and honored key contributors. It also featured performances by 10-time Grammy winners Take 6 and the current Breath of Life Quartet, as well as a message by former speaker/director Carlton P. Byrd, now president of the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Legacy Night was the culmination of a year of celebration, including a Giving Tuesday Praise-a-Thon and a Mediterranean tour tracing the evangelical path of the apostle Paul.

PLANTING AND WATERING

In his welcome, Debleaire Snell, current speaker/director, acknowledged the legacy of those who came before him—founder Arties and his predecessors Brooks (1974-1997), Walter Pearson (1998-2010), and Byrd (2010-2021). "One man plants,

another man waters, but God gives the increase," he said, referencing 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.

Snell later commented, "Each speaker brought their passion, temperament, and perspective. And I think God customized the gifts to meet the needs in the body of Christ and the larger culture . . . in each era of Breath of Life."

Today the ministry continues to thrive, sharing the gospel through TV and online media programs, books and other resources, public evangelism, and community outreach. Since 1974 the ministry of Breath of Life leaders has resulted in tens of thousands of baptisms and the planting of more than 17 churches globally. "Breath of Life, at its core, is evangelism," Byrd said.

WHAT MAKES BREATH OF LIFE SPECIAL

Byrd noted that from its inception, Breath of Life was unique among media ministries for its emphasis on music and preaching, "encompassing the whole worship experience." Accordingly, Legacy Night showcased both aspects.

Byrd preached a message of thanksgiving based on Psalm 100. He highlighted promises we take for granted—our creation by a loving God and the promise of salvation inherent in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He called for the audience to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord" regardless of circumstances. "Your situation does not eclipse the goodness of God."

He highlighted the night's theme: "We praise God for the Breath of Life ministry. Souls have been won through this ministry. Burdens have been lifted through this ministry. Somebody found Jesus through this ministry." He added, "Breath of Life has been around for 50 years, and guess what? We're not going anywhere. This is God's ministry." He concluded, to an enthusiastic response, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord, and praise God for Breath of Life!"

MINISTRY BUILDERS RECOGNIZED

On Legacy Night several honorees received inscribed plaques for their contributions, including all three former speaker/directors and two associate speaker/directors; former and current Breath of Life quartet members (12 total); former quartet arranger/accompanist; on-air personalities, including a co-host and a former announcer; and a dedicated local fundraiser.

Accepting in person were former speaker/director Byrd; former associate speaker/director Malcolm J. Taylor, who ministered alongside Walter Pearson; and the current Breath of Life quartet. Other awards were mailed to recipients who could not join, and family members of honorees who had passed away received awards on their behalf. Among those, Walter Arties' wife, Beverly, received his award in March, and Deidre Brooks Tramel accepted an award for her father, C. D. Brooks, during the ministry's legacy cruise.

In a video interview with Snell, Tramel noted that even in his final days, Brooks knelt by his bed and prayed in a weak voice, "If there's a way that I can touch just one more soul, give me that chance."

On December 6 Patricia Pearson accepted an award for her husband, Walter, sharing that watching Snell's sermons gave them strength before his passing. Snell, in turn, lauded Walter as one of his ministry heroes as a young convert. Later, reflecting on the evening, Pearson said, "I thought it was such a beautiful snapshot of the 50 years of ministry, not just to our community but globally." She also spoke about the ministry's enduring impact: "It was the same message but different delivery. Times have changed, but the principles and mission did not change."

EXCITING PLANS

G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president and chair of the Adventist Media Ministries board, affirmed Breath of Life, stating, "It's not only been a blessing to the African American community, but it's also been a blessing to the entire church." Bryant shared that the division would donate US$50,000—$1,000 for each year of Breath of Life, "for God to continue to work miracles" through them.

After the event, Snell shared that in 2025 and beyond, Breath of Life will continue pursuing bold, "unrealistic," God-inspired goals. These include participating in the Pentecost 2025 initiative, training ministry leaders, and conducting evangelistic series across diverse communities. They are also launching their first animated show, *Evie's Treehouse*, based on their audio devotional for children. Each episode will include a downloadable Bible study.

He concluded, "We want to see Breath of Life become the nexus of spiritual life for the African American. [When] they're looking for things for health, work, their spiritual life, [their relationships], we want them to be able to come to our website, our YouTube page, our podcast, and find something that speaks to them."



ADRA's SouperVan has been serving hot soup and buns in Wauchope, New South Wales, Australia, for almost three years. PHOTO: ADRA AUSTRALIA

SOUP-AND-BUN MINISTRY SUPPORTS THE MOST VULNERABLE IN AUSTRALIA

SOUPERVAN IS NOW ALSO OFFERING HYGIENE ITEMS AND EVEN A LISTENING EAR.

ADRA AUSTRALIA, FOR *ADVENTIST RECORD*

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Community Connect Wauchope SouperVan has been serving hot soup and buns to the local community for almost three years. What began as a soup-and-bun outreach ministry of the Wauchope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Wauchope, New South Wales, Australia, has evolved to also providing the most vulnerable with access to fresh produce, hygiene items, blankets, pet food, and, crucially, a safe space and a listening ear.

"Over the course of this year our vibrant team has worked tirelessly to share the love of Jesus with our community," said Troy Eggleton, ADRA Community Connect Wauchope activity manager.

Amy's experience with the SouperVan is one story that has stuck with Eggleton and shows how crucial their ministry is, being the hands and feet of Jesus and meeting people where they're at.

When Amy, who is in her 80s, first started coming to SouperVan, she was feeling desperate and depressed. Life had become extremely difficult financially, and because of her living circumstances, she was lonely and wondered how she could possibly keep going.

"Amy quickly became a regular," Eggleton said. "She started to stay back with us for our prayer at the end of our service evenings and expressed that she loved our prayers and being around happy and kind people. Amy then joined us for our church's Depression and Anxiety Recovery Program and followed that up with our social evenings and Forgive to Live programs. Now Amy regularly comes to church, stays for our lunches, and is eagerly awaiting the commencement of her Bible studies to prepare for baptism, expressing that she now sees our church family as her family."

The SouperVan team provides 80 to 120 meals every Wednesday night. During Christmas SouperVan ensures that their volunteers have a much-needed break without leaving their regulars in a tough spot.

"Our team [worked] diligently in a commercial kitchen to prepare 250 meals, which [were] distributed during our final week of service before our break," Eggleton said. The meals, which will be cryo-packed, consist of plant-based chicken and roast vegetables.

While a meal helps to meet physical needs, the team recognizes the importance of bringing joy at Christmastime.

"In addition to this meal, our local IGA [supermarket] generously donated toys for our younger children that attend SouperVan, while members of our local council have offered to provide some special fruit, including mangoes, to add to the meal," Eggleton said. "Our local Wauchope church also put together some nonperishable hampers to be distributed. Hopefully, all of these provisions will help make our two-week absence a little easier to bear."

Eggleton expressed that in every instance in SouperVan's ministry where they identified a need, God provided.

"We are so blessed to serve a God who understands our needs and desires and is willing to provide for us as we serve our local community," he said. "Consequently, our local community is gaining a better understanding of who Seventh-day Adventists are, who Jesus is, and what ADRA does in our communities."



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IS HEALTHY WEIGHT LOSS POSSIBLE IN 2025?

FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN EATING AND EXERCISE

ALYSSA HUNT, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

Roughly 80 percent of Americans who make New Year's resolutions aim to improve their health, often focusing on exercising to achieve a weight-loss goal. While many people believe that losing weight is a direct result of consistent exercise, proper nutrition often plays a larger role in losing weight.

"Nutrition accounts for about 90 percent of weight-loss effort, while exercise accounts for about 10 percent," says Karen Studer, chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Loma Linda University Health. "Weight loss isn't solely about gym workouts. It's about finding the right balance between nutrition and exercise."

While some studies suggest slightly different ratios—80 percent nutrition and 20 percent exercise—the research has found that diet often plays a far more significant role in achieving weight loss than does exercise.

THE IMPACT OF NUTRITION ON WEIGHT LOSS

Many people mistakenly think that exercise alone yields results, but Studer emphasizes that it's impossible to outtrain a poor diet. Instead of emphasizing exercise as the only way to lose weight, start by focusing on cutting down unnecessary calories, including calorie-dense beverages, such as soda, energy drinks, and coffee with sugary creamers. Also cut processed meats, fast food, full-fat dairy products, sugary cereals, white bread, and high-calorie dressings and sauces.

In addition to cutting calories, Studer says to focus on eating nutrient-dense, low-calorie foods, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Even eating high-fiber snacks before a meal, such as an apple, can help you feel fuller, which may reduce your intake of higher-calorie foods.

EFFICIENT EXERCISE FOR WEIGHT LOSS

While exercise plays a smaller role in weight loss, it is crucial for maintaining weight loss and improving overall health. The general recommendation for adults is 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week, alongside two days of strength training to improve bone health and increase muscle mass, which Studer says helps burn more calories even at rest.

However, with approximately 92 percent of adults failing to stick to their New Year's resolutions and 43 percent giving up before the end of January, Studer suggests starting small with exercise, especially if you're just beginning a new workout regime.

When you start small, you can gradually increase intensity and duration to ultimately establish a routine that fits your lifestyle. Remember, exercise routines don't need to be evenly distributed across the week. Listen to your body and plan rest days as needed.

REALISTIC WEIGHT-LOSS EXPECTATIONS

Healthy weight loss averages one to two pounds per week. However, everyone's weight fluctuates as a result of such factors as water retention and digestion, which can make weigh-in day frustrating.

Instead of focusing solely on the numbers on the scale, Studer suggests non-scale-related goals, such as bending down to tie your shoes, walking your block without taking a break, completing a 5K, or achieving other personal milestones.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Sleep is a crucial yet often overlooked factor in weight loss, Studer says. A lack of sleep can increase stress levels and disrupt hormones. For weight loss and general health, aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep per night.

Health and wellness are lifelong journeys. By focusing on small, actionable steps and celebrating progress beyond the scale, you can create a sustainable path to improved health.



Aerial view of the campus of Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon. PHOTO: COURTESY OF ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION HIGHLIGHTS ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PLANS

LEADER THANKS GOD FOR PROTECTION AND THE WORLD CHURCH FOR ITS SUPPORT.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION MISSION, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

Seventh-day Adventist leaders in the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission (MENAUM) recently reported on the church region activities and institutional updates. In a newsletter sent on December 27, MENAUM president Richard E. McEdward shared some of the highlights that encompass 20 countries from Morocco to Iran and from Turkey to Sudan.

"I cannot help butgive thanks to God for the ways that He has guided and blessed His work. We are only custodians and servants of the work He has given us to do," McEdward said. He specifically mentioned the growth of God's work across the region, including baptisms in a country with no Adventist membership until 2024. "Every location I visit in [MENAUM], people share their testimonies of God changing their lives," McEdward said. Also, "media outreach . . . continues to shape people's understanding of God, salvation through Jesus, and His soon return."

McEdward also thanked the world church for its continued support. "We have had the blessing of being backed by the world church to share the three angels' messages with a challenging part of the world," he said. "We praise God for His guidance and safety of our workforce even through challenging times."

GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

In his December 27 newsletter, McEdward highlighted the completion of key projects and celebrated God's many blessings in 2024. "By reflecting on these achievements, the meetings served not only as a fulfillment of the commitments made to God at the beginning of the year but also as an opportunity to share the joyful news of His abundant grace and provision," he explained.

He mentioned the church region's year-end meetings across the Egypt Field and the Gulf Field, a workers' meeting in the East Mediterranean Region, and the 2024 United Arab Emirates Pathfinder Fair with eight clubs and more than 300 participants. "The event covered the different aspects of the Pathfinder ministry: spiritual development, mental development, and physical aptitude," McEdward reported.

CLASSES AT MIDDLE EAST UNIVERSITY

McEdward also reported that Middle East University (MEU) in Beirut, Lebanon, resumed in-person classes on January 13, based upon the November 27 ceasefire agreement. The MEU crisis committee voted for a return of all teachers and students beginning in the spring semester.

"We praise God for His mercy in protecting us during the war and for the peace we have experienced in recent weeks," said Amy McHenry, MEU vice president of academic administration. "We continue to pray for lasting peace and justice to prevail across the world and for God to be glorified in all things."

SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE GUIDES AVAILABLE

Finally, McEdward reported that the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for first quarter 2025 became available for download from Middle East Publishers in Arabic, Turkish, French, and Persian. "This study guide, written by John Peckham, [highlights] God's love and justice, as its title suggests. People can also obtain it as an app on their Android or iOS device," he said.

Based on June 30, 2024, statistics, 7,026 members worship in 64 Adventist churches in the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission.



Bible study on Friday evening during the 2024 Center for Adventist-Jewish Relations Meeting in São Paulo, Brazil. PHOTO: SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

JEWISH-ADVENTIST RELATIONS MEETING BUILDS BRIDGES BETWEEN FAITHS

IN BRAZIL, MORE THAN 120 LEADERS, ADVOCATES MEET FOR DISCUSSION AND PLANNING.

ANDRÉ VASCONCELOS, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

More than 120 people from at least nine countries met November 6-10 for the 2024 Center for Adventist-Jewish Relations (CAJR) Meeting at the Araçoiaba da Serra Adventist Training Center in São Paulo, Brazil.

Under the theme "And You Will Be My Witnesses," the CAJR organization sponsored by the General Conference offered keynote lectures, training, and encouragement to Adventist advocates from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, England, France, Israel, New Zealand, Ukraine, and the United States who support building bridges between the two faiths.

The event sought to promote the exchange of experiences and motivate the leadership of Adventist communities that seek to establish links with the Jewish community in their respective regions, organizers said. "The event provided the unique opportunity to get to know each other better, make decisions together, and make plans, always seeking Jesus' ideal of being one in Him, in the Spirit, and in mission," CAJR director Reinaldo Siqueira said.

During the meeting, the participants had the opportunity to visit the new headquarters of the Feodor Meyer Institute in Higienópolis, São Paulo, and participate in the inauguration of the new temple of the Jewish-Adventist community of Curitiba, Paraná. For Rogel Tavares, director of the institute, the new location "will be a support space for cultural and educational activities, promoting greater integration between the two communities and creating an environment conducive to strengthening common values, as well as mutual understanding and respect."

The new temple in Curitiba, located near the civic center, begins its activities with a bold project: the establishment of a museum dedicated to the memory of the "Righteous Among the Nations," or non-Jewish people who risked their lives to protect and save Jews during the Holocaust. This project, conceived in partnership with the city's Holocaust Museum, will tell the story of Adventist and Brazilian heroes who saved Jews during the Nazi regime.

FIGHTING AGAINST PREJUDICE

This initiative is not only an important voice against growing anti-Semitism but also reaffirms the community's commitment to strengthening ties between Adventists and Jews, organizers said.

A document voted in 1994 states, "It is necessary to look thoughtfully at the present Jewish reality on a global basis. Our friendship with every Jew and Jewish community must be enriched. We need to find proper methods to communicate with them. These methods should be based on their timeless contribution to humanity as a nation since the beginning of their existence, and as God's instruments in the past and in the present while they live in harmony with God's plan."

The document adds:

"We need to reflect on the current reality of the Jewish people in a global way. Our friendship with each individual and community of Jewish origin should be deepened. We need to find appropriate methods of communicating with them. These methods should take into account the immeasurable contribution of this people to humanity. . . . Understanding their true role in the origin of the Western world, as well as their long history of successes and failures, we should find ways to create a mutual connection according to the highest biblical and prophetic ideals for individuals, nations, and humanity as a whole."*

* General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, World Jewish Friendship Committee, Global Mission to MV-ADCOM, Washington, D.C., May 17, 1994, lines 5-17.



Kirt Onthank (right) observes an octopus at the Rosario Beach Marine Laboratory.
PHOTO: CHRIS DRAKE

OCTOPUS RESEARCH FEATURED IN PROMINENT SCIENCE PUBLICATIONS

WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH IS BEING RECOGNIZED IN SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS.

KELSI DOS SANTOS, WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY

Research on the high energetic cost of color change in octopuses, conducted by Kirt Onthank, Walla Walla University (WWU) professor of biology, and Sofie Sonner, WWU graduate, has been published in one of the world's most prestigious and cited scientific journals, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (*PNAS*).

Onthank's and Sonner's findings have sparked interest in the scientific community, and within hours of the initial *PNAS* publication, *Popular Science* and *ScienceAlert* also published stories about the research.

Sonner partnered with Onthank on this research as part of her master's in biology thesis at WWU. Color-changing camouflage in octopuses requires exceptionally high metabolic costs, according to the study. Sonner and Onthank estimated the metabolic demand associated with color-changing chromatophore organs in ruby octopuses (*Octopus rubescens*).

The results, released in an article titled "Hight Energetic Cost of Color Change in Octopuses" in *PNAS* on November 18, 2024, suggested that the energy required to simultaneously activate all of a ruby octopus's chromatophores was almost as high as the resting metabolic rate associated with all other physiological processes. "Though octopuses make color change look effortless, it isn't for them," said Onthank. The high energetic costs associated with the chromatophore system would likely put pressure on octopuses to minimize such costs, potentially contributing to the use of dens or nocturnal lifestyles in some octopus species and reductions in chromatophore systems among deep-sea species.

Onthank, a graduate of WWU himself, has long been fascinated by cephalopods and has published numerous peer-reviewed articles on octopuses' energy budgeting, burrowing activity of octopuses, eye lenses of squid and a deep-sea octopus species, and the impacts of ocean acidification on octopus physiology. He was featured as an octopus expert for NBC National News in April 2024.

Undergraduate and master's students at WWU are invited to join Onthank in his research if they are interested. Much of this research is conducted at WWU's Rosario Beach Marine Laboratory, located near Anacortes, Washington. "I typically have an octopus or two in my lab during the school year that students work with, and I generally have many octopuses at Rosario during the summer that students get to work with and study," he said.

Immediately adjacent to Deception Pass State Park in the northwest corner of Washington State, Rosario Beach Marine Laboratory is a powerhouse biological research center. There students have participated in important research on harmful algae blooms and detecting their presence quickly, seagrass wasting disease, oxygen consumption of nudibranchs, and the development of motion-detecting underwater cameras, as well as hibernation and organ regeneration in sea cucumbers.

Intentional collaboration between professors, students, and academic departments makes exciting discoveries like this possible. In recent years students from WWU's Edward F. Cross School of Engineering have contributed to serious biological research. "Our engineers collaborate with marine biologists to develop tools for ocean research and exploration. This is essential for cutting-edge marine biology."

Cutting-edge research like this not only contributes to the scientific community but also helps to train student scientists interested in a variety of professions. The university's Department of Biological Sciences offers undergraduate degrees in biology, biochemistry, bioengineering, biophysics, and marine biology. In addition, WWU is the only private university in the Pacific Northwest to offer a master's degree in biology.



Althea Thomson (right) with a house parent and two of the children. PHOTO: *ADVENTIST RECORD*

CENTER IN THAILAND SHELTERS ORPHANED, ABANDONED, AND DESTITUTE CHILDREN

FACILITIES HAVE BECOME A HAVEN OF HOPE IN THE REGION, ADVENTIST LEADERS SAY.

TRACEY BRIDCUTT, *ADVENTIST RECORD*

Nestled in the hills near Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, the Kirsten Jade Rescue Centre (KJRC) is a haven for orphaned, abandoned, and destitute children.

Operating for more than 25 years, the center provides a nurturing Christian environment where children can thrive physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Named in memory of Kirsten Jade, a young Australian girl who tragically died in a farming accident, the center operates under the banner of Adventist Rescued Children's Care (ARCC) in Thailand. In Australia ARCC sits under the banner of Projects of Promise (PoP), which is a voluntary organization providing a support network to Adventist charities. ARCC also oversees a children's home at the Berklo refugee camp on the Thailand/Myanmar border. It houses 13 children who attend Eden Valley School, which is run by Helen Hall.

Australian Althea Thomson, KJRC's administrator, first visited the center in 2009 on a medical building trip and fell in love with the children. "By the grace of God, we are still here," she said during a recent visit with members of the South Pacific Division executive committee who attended the 2024 year-end meetings.

Currently home to 42 children, the youngest just eight years old, KJRC cares for those from heartbreaking backgrounds—whether through illness, family breakdown, or abandonment.

The children attend nearby Chiang Mai Adventist Academy and continue to be supported through vocational training, college, and university education. "We sponsor them right through until they join the workforce," Thomson said. "Other orphanages stop at the age of 18, which is when many children are most vulnerable. We choose to sponsor them until they gain employment and can be self-sufficient."

Currently nine former KJRC children are attending university—seven of them are enrolled at Asia-Pacific International University (APIU), an Adventist tertiary institution. "I love our children going to APIU because if they go there, it is so much easier for their Christian growth," Thomson explained. "If they leave here and go out into the big world, there's not much Christianity out there. This is a Buddhist country. It's very difficult to hold on to God—we pray hard for them."

At KJRC, daily life fosters independence and responsibility. Children rise at 5:00 a.m., rotating through such chores as cooking, cleaning, and tending to gardens. "It is lovely to hear the singing, laughter, and chatter as they make chores fun," Thomson said. They also lead out in daily worships.

"Seeing them achieve, knowing where they've come from—that's what keeps us going. We are introducing them to Jesus and are helping to change lives."

Despite ongoing financial challenges, the center remains operational through donations and sponsorships. It costs approximately $1,520 annually per child to cover food, education, and living expenses. That amount is split into four affordable sponsorship opportunities, with each sponsor paying about $380 per year, or about $32 per month.

For those seeking to make a difference, the center welcomes volunteers, including school groups and church groups. "Anyone who comes here to help says they take away more than they bring," Thomson said. "It's rewarding for everyone involved."



THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE AND HYDROTHERAPY TRAINING IN NEPAL. Forty-five church leaders—including pastors, ministry volunteers, and Bible workers—attended a therapeutic massage and hydrotherapy training seminar, November 24-27, in Banepa, central Nepal. The focus of the seminar was training leaders to treat pain and discomfort using simple, natural, and inexpensive remedies that can be applied in home and church settings to bring healing and comfort to their communities. By focusing on affordable, natural remedies, attendees can also become equipped to address health challenges in regions with limited access to advanced medical facilities.



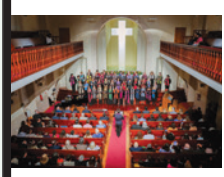
IN TOMSK, SIBERIA, ADVENTIST YOUTH DEVELOP OUTREACH FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS. Adventist youth in Tomsk, Russia, are reaching out to the diverse international young adult population in their region by offering monthly creative worship services in English. The program begins with lunch, as a way for the students to interact with and get to know one another. The Tomsk church team then leads out in Sabbath School classes, singing, and the worship service. As new young people join the ministry, they're quickly assimilated into the church and begin helping with the services.



FILM FESTIVAL IN VENEZUELA. For the third time, a film festival in the East Venezuela Union Mission gathered hundreds of viewers in Caracas on November 30 for an evening of screening audiovisual productions. The 2024 UVOFILMS gala followed the theme "Family." "Just as Jesus declared that when He was lifted up from the earth, He would attract everyone to Him, the goal of our audiovisual productions will always be to exalt Jesus," said Lenny Hernández, regional church communication director. In total, 17 productions were screened in four categories: fiction, video clip, documentary, and podcast.



CHURCH IN CANADA INVESTS IN MORE SUPPORT TO THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC) announced a new three-year contract with Christian Record Services to provide more services to members who are blind and visually impaired. This partnership will enhance the quality of life for many individuals, and funding will ensure that essential resources are available without added costs to the conferences. The services provided include access to an online library and app, various formats of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, and subscriptions to Christian Record magazines.



CHURCH IN PORTUGAL CELEBRATES FAITH, HISTORY, AND ARCHITECTURE. On Saturday, November 23, church members and guests of the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lisbon, Portugal, celebrated the centenary of the church. Built in 1924, the church, designed by the renowned architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, is a historical and architectural landmark in the Portuguese capital. Additionally, to mark the centenary, the National Postal Service launched a commemorative postcard, which celebrates the history and impact of the Adventist church building in Lisbon.



THAILAND'S MUSICIANS MINISTER IN HONG KONG AND MACAO. A group of 40 young musicians from the Asia-Pacific International University (AIU) church in Thailand decided made use of their Christmas break to minister in Hong Kong and Macao. The group traveled to one of the world's most expensive regions which presented challenges, but with prayer, faith, and planning, the ensemble shared their love for Jesus and exchanged cultural values through music at various Adventist churches and schools from December 13 to 17.

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Is God Still With Us?

DOUGLAS JACOBS

As I hurried to class, I saw a note in my college dormitory mailbox. The man at the Adventist Church's world headquarters responsible for missionaries in Southern Asia had called.

While living in East Pakistan, my parents had survived cyclones and a civil war, but the 3-month-old country of Bangladesh was still unstable. Were they OK?

When the General Conference field secretary for Southern Asia answered my call, I asked, "Are my parents all right?"

"It's not your parents," he replied. "Your sister fell from a cliff."

"How is she? How badly was she hurt?"

"I . . . I'm sorry. She didn't make it."

I stood at the dormitory front desk unable to process what he was telling me. My younger sister Lucille, a 16-year-old junior at Far Eastern Academy in Singapore, was dead. She had gone on a girls' club outing to an island off the coast of Malaysia. While walking around the island, she and another girl had tried to climb a cliff to escape a rising tide. Lucille had fallen to the rocks below. She died the next morning of internal injuries as the sun rose over the ocean.

I don't remember the end of my phone conversation. The rest of the afternoon was a blur. As a preacher's kid I was familiar with death, but this was different. We had looked forward



to spending a summer together with my parents in Bangladesh, but what hurt most now was the thought *I'll never be with her again*. I had letters, I had photos, but I did not have her. Never again would we be with each other.

WHERE IS GOD WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES?

If you have had a loved one die unexpectedly, or if you have struggled with a different tragedy—marital issues, financial hardship, or a devastating illness—you've likely asked the questions I asked: "Where is God? Why did He let this happen?"

You may have also asked, "Is God still with us?" And perhaps you felt as if you had lost touch with God. Is God just another story from my childhood? Is God just a comforting tradition from our pre-scientific, predigital, prepandemic past?

The question "Is God still with us?" is not new. It has been asked in every age. It was the question

The question "Is God still with us?" is not new. It has been asked in every age.

Adam and Eve must have asked as they fled from the Garden of Eden.

The descendants of Abraham, enslaved in Egypt, cried out this same question. Oppressed by taskmasters, their sons condemned to death by Pharaoh, their one hero, Moses, exiled to the Arabian Desert for murder, they had reason to wonder, "Is the God of our father Abraham still with us?"

God answered their question by sending Moses to rescue the Hebrews from slavery. Then God asked Moses to build Him a home so He could live in the middle of His people!

"Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (Ex. 25:8, 9).*

God's sanctuary in the wilderness was just a portable tent, but in this small space God tells the story of salvation in three acts:

(1) how God became human to save His people from their sins,

(2) how God is with us today, and

(3) how God will be with us in the future.

ACT ONE: THE SANCTUARY COURTYARD SERVICES

Act one was staged in the sanctuary courtyard. The animals sacrificed on the altar previewed Jesus' future death, when God would experience death in our place.

Gabriel reminded Joseph of the message of the sanctuary courtyard drama in Matthew 1:20-23: "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).'"

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / PHOTOGRANARY



For many Christians the first act in the story of salvation is the whole story. If Jesus became a human being and lived here with us, if Jesus' death paid the complete penalty for our sins, what more do we need to know about the plan of salvation? Why did the sanctuary drama have two more acts?

ACT TWO: THE SANCTUARY HOLY PLACE SERVICES

The location for the second act in the story of salvation moves from the sanctuary's courtyard to its first room: the holy place. Here Christ's work for us is prefigured by the work of the sanctuary's priests. Each morning and evening a priest came into the holy place as the people's representative to plead their case before God. The priest burned incense to symbolize the prayers of the people ascending to God. The priest prefigured Jesus' work today, answering our prayers, forgiving our sins, and defending us against Satan's attacks. But how does this part of the plan of salvation answer the question "Is God still with us today?"

While my wife was managing a hospital unit, one of her best workers was jailed for a probation violation. Lanell wasn't about to lose him, so she went to his court hearing.

When his case came up, the judge asked if anyone wanted to speak on Richard's behalf. To the judge's surprise, my wife walked forward. "I'm here to speak for Richard. I'm his manager at Community Hospital."

"Oh," the judge replied. "Community Hospital? Do you know my brother-in-law, Dr. Lanahan?"

Dr. Lanahan treated patients in my wife's unit; he was my personal physician and helped me conduct stop-smoking plans. Other accused defendants and their lawyers and families waited while my wife and the judge talked about his brother-in-law, Dr. Lanahan.

Finally the judge asked Lanell, "What do you have to say for Richard?"

"He's my best worker. He's changed his life. Please drop his charges and release him from jail so he can get back to work."

With a bang of his gavel, the judge granted my wife's petition!

What Lanell did for Richard (and much more) is what Jesus does for us in heaven. He speaks for us, defending us against the accusations of Satan on the basis of His own righteousness.

Hebrews 4:14-16 teaches: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

That's good news!

But sometimes we still long for Jesus' physical presence, for the intimacy of God's presence that

While Christ is acting as our personal representative in the heavenly sanctuary, He can still be with us through the Holy Spirit.

Adam and Eve enjoyed. We want what John writes about in John 1:14 of Jesus' life on earth: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

While Christ is acting as our personal representative in the heavenly sanctuary, He can still be with us through the Holy Spirit. As Jesus promised His disciples: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16-18).

ACT THREE: THE SANCTUARY SERVICES IN THE MOST HOLY PLACE

In the sanctuary's holy place the light of the candlestick represented the presence of God the Holy Spirit with us today, but in relation to act three of the sanctuary drama, Jesus promises He will again become Immanuel, God with us.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God'" (Rev. 21:3).

In the earthly sanctuary services the Day of Atonement was a once-a-year service symbolizing God's final judgment on both saints and sinners. We seldom want to stand in court in front of a judge, so how do the strange rituals of the Day of Atonement answer the question "Is God still with us?"

On the Day of Atonement the high priest would pick a goat to be slaughtered and would sprinkle that goat's blood before the ark in the most holy place. The goat's blood sprinkled in the most holy place on the Day of Atonement was part of a ritual of the cleansing of the sanctuary, pointing to the eventual eradication of sin itself and God's promise: "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in [the city], and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads" (Rev. 22:3, 4).

The ceremony of choosing a second goat symbolized how God's judgment against sin is part of the eradication of sin—God's judgment against sin and the ultimate instigator and originator of sin, Satan. The second goat was for "Azazel," a Hebrew word representing a demonic enemy fighting against God. This goat was not killed, and was not an atoning sacrifice. Instead, the high priest confessed over it all the sins of Israel accumulated over the year—symbolizing the removal of sin from God's people and the devil being loaded with the refuse of sins that he himself had instigated. The goat was then led into a remote area and was left there to die. The people watching rejoiced. They were clean and free.

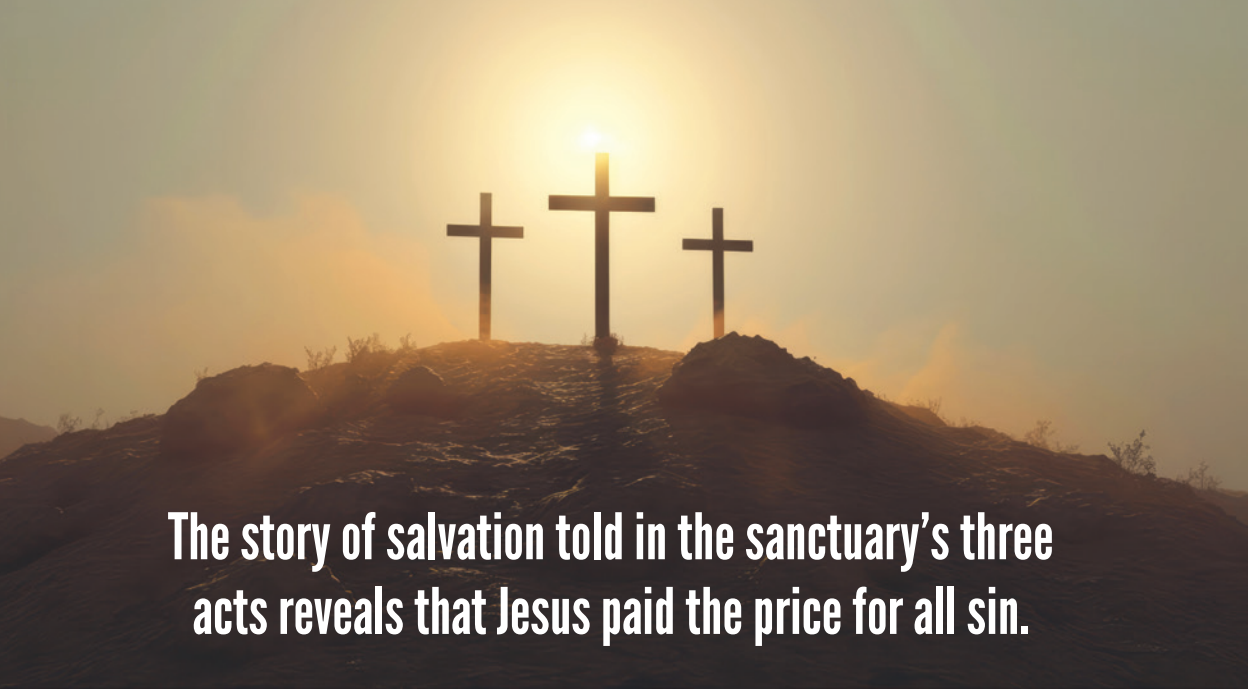
HOW GOD'S JUDGMENT FREES US TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES

A story from an evangelist helped me understand this final act of the sanctuary drama. Anthony felt discouraged when in one of his evangelistic meetings he made a call for his audience to accept Jesus, but no one came forward. But after the meeting, three sisters approached him and said, "There were so many people in our row, we couldn't get out to come forward, but we want to be baptized."

Because two of the girls were underage, Anthony asked, "May I talk with your parents?" They pointed to a couple who were faithful members of the church. Anthony was surprised when the couple explained that they were the girls' guardians, not their parents.

Each sister had been sexually abused by their father and their brothers. When their mother reported the abuse to the police, the father shot

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / HEBREWISH DESIGNS



The story of salvation told in the sanctuary's three acts reveals that Jesus paid the price for all sin.

the mother. After the father was jailed for rape and murder, the Christian couple (attorneys working with abused children) had opened their home to provide the girls a safe place to live. "We've been sharing the gospel with the sisters, so we are glad they are requesting baptism," the couple told Anthony. "Come over next Sabbath for lunch."

The next Sabbath each of the girls had questions, but finally the oldest, a 19-year-old, asked, "How can I be baptized if I hate men, if I can't forgive those who hurt us so much?"

Anthony paused, then replied, "Forgiveness is not excusing what your father did to you. Forgiveness means giving God the job of judging your father. God is a just judge. He won't let this go. Forgiveness is not saying, 'It's my fault,' or saying, 'It's OK.' It's not denying or excusing anything. It's simply saying, 'I'm going to let God take care of this.'"

Then Anthony added, "Even if your father somehow escapes from prison, God will see that he gets justice." The oldest sister replied, "I'm ready to be baptized. I want to give up my hatred."

As Anthony told me his story, I was amazed. "How did you know to give that answer?" I asked.

He replied, "Because I was sexually abused repeatedly as a child. I went into that meeting knowing how those girls felt. And the only way I got through my own abuse was believing the sanctuary's truth that God is my abusers' judge."

"I don't know where my abusers are now. If they have not accepted Jesus' salvation, then He is their judge and can do a far better job than I can of giving them what they deserve. But if they are Christians, then because He died for them, Jesus has forgiven their sin of abuse just as His death forgave my sins. He's justified them. They no longer pose a threat to others. The ultimate justice is turning murderers like Moses, persecutors like Paul, and traitors like Peter into the greatest prophets and preachers of the gospel."

The story of salvation told in the sanctuary's three acts reveals that Jesus paid the price for all sin. Not just our sin, but our worst tormentor's sins as well. Jesus suffers with us and for us. We can lay our burden on Him to forgive and judge.

YES! GOD IS STILL WITH US!

"Is God still with us?" No matter what we face, whether tragedy, injustice, or simply a longing for God's presence, the central truth of the sanctuary says: "Yes, Jesus is still our Immanuel, our God with us!" Jesus was with us on the cross as our substitute dying the death we deserve, He is with us through His Spirit as our personal representative in heaven, and when He has removed every trace of sin from the universe, Jesus will re-create this world and live with us on this earth for eternity.

* Biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version.

Douglas Jacobs is a retired research professor at Southern Adventist University.

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / ONTHEROAD

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THE LOGIC OF ETERNAL LIFE

Does all the purpose and intentionality that suffuses life now end in meaningless oblivion?

Kurt Gödel (1906-1978), considered (perhaps?) the greatest logician since Aristotle (c. 384-322 B.C.), used logic to reveal limits, inconsistencies, and contradictions in mathematics. On another note, when his aging mother asked about whether they would meet in the hereafter, Gödel, not religious in the traditional sense, applied logic here as well.

"If the world is constructed rationally and has a meaning," he wrote in response to her question about an afterlife, "then that must be so. For what kind of a sense would there be in bringing forth a creature (man), who has such a broad field of possibilities of his own development and of relationships, and then not allow him to achieve 1/1000 of it. That would be approximately as if someone laid the foundation for a house with much effort and expenditure of money, then let everything go to ruin again. Does one have a reason to assume that the world is set up rationally? I believe so. For it is certainly not chaotic and arbitrary, but rather, as science shows, the greatest regularity and order reign in everything. . . . So it follows directly that our earthly existence, since it in and of itself has at most a very dubious meaning, can only be a means to an end for another existence."*

Our eyes have a purpose, a rational one too. So do our ears, as do the ears of mice and cattle. The sky has a purpose, as do the dirt and grapefruits and grapes that reach of the dirt and absorb air, which does too. The 100 or so neurotransmitters (acetylcholine, serotonin, dopamine, glutamate) in our brains have a rational purpose, as do our brains. All these rational purposes, and endless others (white blood cells, water, mitochondria, photosynthesis), suffuse life in earth, but then—what? They all culminate into meaninglessness and purposelessness in the cosmic heat death of the universe? That's not rational. And though nothing demands that the cosmos end rationally, all the logic and rationality here and now on earth do seem to point to something more than the "very dubious meaning" (if even that) of our existence if all these rational purposes fizzle into eternal purposelessness.

No wonder, then, that the Word of God talks about eternal life, resurrection, and a new heavens and a new earth. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:42). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1).

And people deride Christianity as irrational or illogical? What's illogical or irrational is for all the in-your-face rationality and purpose that saturates life now to end in eternal oblivion.

None of this makes Christianity true but, simply, logical.

* Stephen Budiansky, *Journey to the Edge of Reason: The Life of Kurt Gödel*, Kindle edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), pp. 267, 268.

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CLIFF'S EDGE
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN



THOUGH NOTHING DEMANDS THAT THE COSMOS END RATIONALLY, ALL THE LOGIC AND RATIONALITY HERE AND NOW ON EARTH DO SEEM TO POINT TO SOMETHING MORE THAN THE "VERY DUBIOUS MEANING" OF OUR EXISTENCE.



EMPTINESS

One choice, eternal consequences

DANIELA GELBRICH

The second chapter of Genesis ends with a sentence that we probably wouldn't end a chapter with today if we were writing a book: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25). The man and the woman stood naked before each other, and there was no shame or fear of being hurt by the other.

In other words, they could be naked before each other on a physical, mental, and spiritual level, presenting themselves as they really are, and not be afraid of being belittled, wounded, used, marginalized, despised, abused, and so on (the list is long). The rest of the chapter further shows that at the beginning of human history, life was indeed meaningful, deep, unclouded, positively complex, and diverse.

Man and woman enjoyed freedom. They could eat from all the trees in the garden in which the Creator had placed them. Evil was confined to only one tree. Evil had not yet spread everywhere in the world, as it has now, like a rapidly spreading virus that wreaks havoc at every turn.

CREATED FOR TRUE LIFE WITH THE CREATOR

God created man and woman as a counterpart and interlocutor. Man and woman met their Creator and conversed with Him face-to-face (cf. Gen. 3:8). When God created man and woman, He blessed them and *spoke* to them. He communicated with them. And God and humans talking together implies that man and woman were designed for being together with God and for communicating with Him. One could say that communication between the Creator and them is the key to life. God presents man and woman with a deeply meaningful purpose for living, wherein true life and growth are possible and can flourish.

Focusing further on the creation of human beings, Genesis 2 highlights that God took dust into His hand, formed man from the dust, shared His breath of life with him, and placed him in a garden that man and woman were invited to cultivate and preserve—a garden in which human freedom, dignity, and togetherness, as well as the principles that guarantee them, were cultivated and preserved. God thus invited man and woman to a great project based on mutual trust, where genuine and fulfilling life was the norm.

Man and woman could experience their full humanity. Life was profound and fulfilling. There was no gnawing sense of emptiness within them. There was no loneliness, no alienation, no indifference. There was no powerlessness in the face of evil that paralyzed and drove them to despair. They were naked, authentic, true to themselves and to their Creator, without any sense or cause of shame.

BROKEN TRUST AND PROFOUND LOSS

It did not stay that way, however. As Scripture explains, the man and the woman broke the Creator's trust by choosing to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree from which God told them not to partake. They took for themselves the fruit that God had purposely withheld from them in love. The result? Evil spread at lightning speed into the human family, becoming the new and pervasive reality. Even worse, evil spread into the human heart. Life became disturbingly ambivalent. Good and evil intermingled, with many seemingly gray areas.

Man and woman lost what was most valuable to them. They lost the garden, the reality for which God had created them, in which God had placed them. Their new world was full of thistles and thorns, among which they worked by the sweat of their brow. Pain penetrated their world. All the nuances of pain—physical, emotional, and so on—became the new normal.

IMAGE: LIGHTSTOCK / D. MAYNE DESIGN

The relationship between man and woman became difficult. Invisible walls separated them. They accused one another rather than take responsibility for themselves and their actions. The balance of power between them shifted. One dominated the other. There was no longer a togetherness between them. Instead, there was a deep rift between them, fostering feelings of utter loneliness previously unknown to them.

Man and woman were now naked in a different way. Loneliness and fear crept into their hearts. And this time they were afraid that the other person would recognize their nakedness and take advantage of it. Man and woman made themselves coverings to hide their shame, their inner selves, their weaknesses, the ambivalence reigning in their inner worlds.

They were vulnerable indeed. They had lost the fullness of their freedom because evil, the unwanted and yet chosen intruder, had enslaved them and robbed them of their integrity. The human strategies they devised to protect themselves, to search for meaning in a now-broken world, or to deal with their deep sense of emptiness, would also enslave them.

THE GREATEST LOSS

But perhaps the greatest loss of all was that they no longer could see their Creator face-to-face. The communication between them and the Creator was no longer as it had been before. Something fundamental was missing, something for which they were designed. Something in man and woman that had allowed them to live deeply fulfilled lives was now broken and lost.

If we reflect on our personal story from the perspective of the Bible, and consider the Creator who Himself reveals our human story, we come to realize that the beginning of our human story was very different than we experience it today. Even if our lives remain too complex for us to



The existential emptiness we struggle with—the deep void within us that constantly demands fulfillment yet remains unsatisfied by anything in this world—has a source outside God's original intention for us.

fully fathom and explain, the existential emptiness we struggle with—the deep void within us that constantly demands fulfillment yet remains unsatisfied by anything in this world—has a source outside God's original intention for us. This emptiness stems from the losses we suffered as humans when we chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus opted for the intrusion of evil into our reality.

Genesis 3 and the rest of the Bible recount the "natural" consequences of this fatal decision. We cope with these consequences every day of our existence, having to deal with them day by day, wittingly or unwittingly. The loss of the garden, of our freedom, of our integrity, of real togetherness, and of the relationships for which God intended us, creates an existential void in us that desperately needs to be filled. This void drives us, and everyone devises ways (wise or unwise) to fill this gnawing existential emptiness, to keep it at bay so that it doesn't completely overwhelm us or make us feel its full horror.

Nevertheless, everyone feels it now and then, when the hustle and bustle that constantly keeps us on our toes stops, and it becomes quiet. It faces us when the busyness of modern life subsides, when there is nothing left to distract us from the feeling of inner emptiness and loneliness.[1]

THIRSTING FOR THE ONE WHO ALONE CAN SATISFY

And often we ourselves don't understand what we really want, what could adequately fill this existential void. As the Jewish philosopher Abraham J. Heschel writes about this existential emptiness, this loneliness that we feel:

"The thirst for companionship, which drives us so often into error and adventure, indicates the intense loneliness from which we suffer. We are alone even with our friends. The smattering of understanding which a human being has to offer is not enough to satisfy our need of sympathy. Human eyes can see the foam, but not the seething at the bottom. In the hour of greatest agony we are alone. It is such a sense of solitude which prompts the heart to seek the companionship of God. He alone can know the motives of our actions; He alone can be truly trusted. Prayer is confidence, unbosoming oneself to God. For man is incapable of being alone. His incurable, inconsolable loneliness forces him to look for things yet unattained, for people yet unknown. He often runs after a sop, but soon retires discontented from all false or feeble companionship. Prayer may follow such retirement."[2]

The Bible speaks of a Creator God who does not leave us alone with this challenge of existential emptiness. He alone can be fully trusted to provide the way for us to cope with feelings of emptiness.

First, despite our brokenness, He does not leave us alone. He continues to communicate with us because we were created for communicating with Him, for being together with Him. He perfectly understands our personal stories and knows exactly what we are missing. He knows what existential emptiness is. And He has paved the way for human beings to find the way back to true life even in the midst of a broken and ambivalent world.

From God's perspective, every human being is destined to be restored to their initial integrity, to their true human dignity and freedom. Every human being is destined to become like a small Garden of Eden, "like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail" because the Creator God continually guides us through the desert of a broken world, satisfying our "soul in drought" (Isa. 58:11).

This Creator God has lovingly reigned over and accompanied human beings throughout human history, unobtrusively caring, loving, and seeing. In relationship with Him, every human being can reach the maturity that allows them to deal with feelings of existential emptiness even as we await the final and full restoration of what was lost in Eden.

As the saying goes (often attributed to French philosopher and physicist Blaise Pascal): "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man." It's an innate need of the human heart, a need that only God can satisfy.

[1] It is not for nothing that we speak today of the "distraction or attention economy."

[2] Abraham J. Heschel, *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (Santa Fe, N.Mex.: Aurora Press, original edition 1954, reprinted 1998), pp. 17, 18.

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PULSE CHECK

How's your heart?

BETH THOMAS

February is American Heart Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about heart health through the American Heart Association's initiatives. It's an opportunity to focus on the physical care of our hearts, but it also invites reflection on our spiritual hearts. Scripture often uses the heart as a metaphor for our inner being—our thoughts, emotions, and relationship with God. Here are some biblical examples to inspire us to care for both.

GUARD YOUR HEART

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (NIV). Just as we guard our physical hearts by eating well and exercising, we must guard our spiritual hearts by filtering what we allow into our lives. Think of it like a gate around a garden: harmful influences are like weeds that choke out healthy growth. Regular prayer, Bible study, and godly friendships serve as the nourishing "water" for our spiritual garden. Let's consider our "spiritual diet" alongside our physical one. Are we consuming media, conversations, or habits that uplift our hearts or harm them?



A CLEAN HEART

Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Heart health involves keeping arteries clean and free of blockages, much like our spiritual lives need cleansing from sin and bitterness. Sin acts like plaque in our spiritual arteries—it builds up, blocking the flow of God's love and joy.

Let's reflect on areas we may need God's forgiveness and grace to cleanse. Just as doctors prescribe lifestyle changes for better heart health, God prescribes confession, repentance, and trust in His mercy.

Just as doctors prescribe lifestyle changes for better heart health, God prescribes confession, repentance, and trust in His mercy.

LOVE WITH ALL YOUR HEART

Jesus taught, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). The American Heart Association encourages us to keep our hearts strong to live vibrant lives. Similarly, God desires that we love Him with hearts that are fully alive and devoted to Him.

An object lesson for children is a flashlight. A flashlight without batteries is like a heart without love—empty and unable to shine. God fills us with His love, enabling us to shine His light to others.

A HEART OF COMPASSION

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (NIV). Just as a healthy physical heart pumps life-giving blood to the body, a spiritually healthy heart overflows with compassion and kindness.

Take Heart Month as a challenge to reach out. Show kindness to a neighbor, forgive someone, or encourage a friend. Small acts of love are like exercise for the heart—they build strength over time.

As we are reminded to care for our hearts physically, let it also be a call to deepen our spiritual health. God's Word offers wisdom for both. As we take steps to strengthen our physical hearts, may we also seek God's transforming power to nurture hearts that are clean, guarded, and overflowing with His love.

This February let's honor God by stewarding both the physical and spiritual hearts He's entrusted to us. After all, everything we do flows from them.

Beth Thomas is an assistant editor of the *Adventist Review.*

PHOTO: AMPARO GARCIA / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS

How my world turned right side up

NESTOR SORIANO



About seven years ago everything changed for me.

In 2017 I was on a mission trip in Hawaii and had several meaningful conversations with a friend. We talked about the Christian faith and how Jesus was the center of our lives. Like the crystal-clear waters of a Hawaiian beach, one thing became undeniably clear: the center of my spiritual universe did not revolve around me.

For more than 30 years of my life, I was shaped by two metastories in my Adventist upbringing and education: "God is so faithful" and "Be more faithful." The "Be more faithful" narrative dominated my spiritual and experiential universe for most of my life, especially in my 20s.

I even wrote a song in my late 20s highlighting this be-more-faithful worldview. Here are a few lines from "Where Are They?"

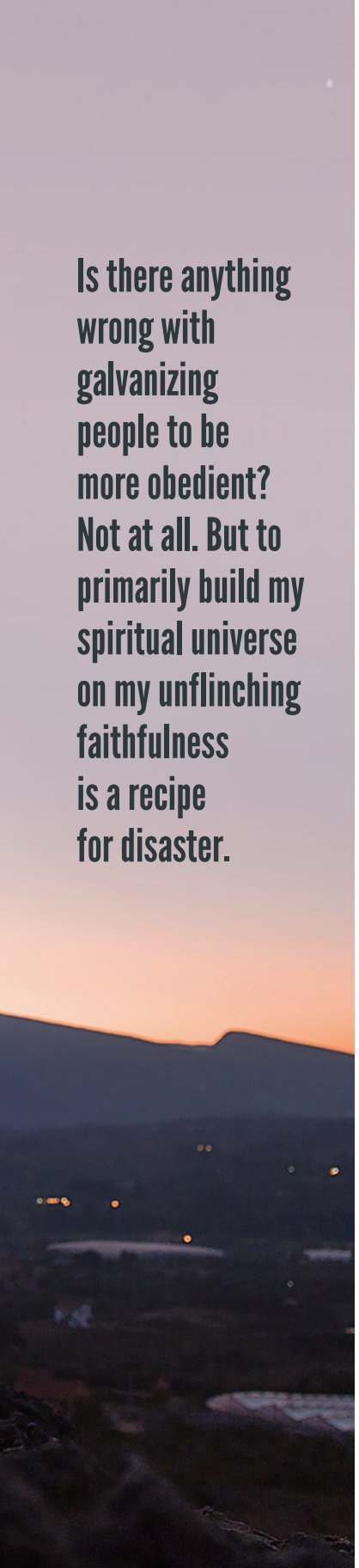
I have often heard the stories of great men,
There was one who gathered stones laid beside the brook,
He placed one in a sling and slung it round and round,
Before you count to 10, Goliath's tumbling down.
Where are the Davids today?
Little did she know, she would rise to the top.
A simple Jewish girl became a nation's queen.
She saved her Jewish race from destruction and death.
We are raised like her for such a time as this.
Where are the Esthers today?
Where are the saints who keep the commandments of our God? Where are the faithful ones who will stand though the heavens fall? Where are they? Those who'll stand before the kings and rulers of this world and fight for Jesus' name.
Though many fall away, I will follow Jesus.
Though many fall away, I will follow Jesus.

Can you sense the depth in the lyrics? "Be more faithful." While this message might sound sweet, urging us to "be faithful at all costs," it often carries a bitterness beneath its surface.

This article was originally published as part of our online Sabbath School Reflection series. Scan the QR code above or visit https://adventistreview.org/category/theology/sabbath-school so not to miss any of the articles in this weekly series.



PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / HUPER



Is there anything wrong with galvanizing people to be more obedient? Not at all. But to primarily build my spiritual universe on my unflinching faithfulness is a recipe for disaster.

Is there anything wrong with galvanizing people to be more obedient? Not at all. But to primarily build my spiritual universe on *my* unflinching faithfulness is a recipe for disaster. The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 illustrates the futility of perfectionism.

THREE WAYS OF LIFE

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) Jesus differentiates between three vastly different ways of living.

1. **Relativism (human unfaithfulness).** The younger brother in the story disrespects his father by asking him for his portion of the inheritance while his father is still alive. He is unfaithful to his father, leaves home, and wastes all his money on reckless living. What is the result of his heedless unfaithfulness? He ends up with no money in his pockets and ends up eating with pigs. He reminds us that there is no lasting joy when we live apart from God. Immorality and relativism ultimately destroy us.

2. **Legalism (human faithfulness).** The younger brother comes home, and his dad throws him a big party. The older brother is upset because his dad never gave him a goat for his *perfect* obedience and faithfulness to his father's commands. Furiously he tells his dad: "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends" (Luke 15:29, NIV).

There's a sad twist in this story: the older brother's careful law keeping caused him to reject his dad. The irony is that even though he lived with his father, the older brother (like his younger brother before he came home) is separated and distant from his dad.[1] While the younger brother was lost in his recklessness, the older brother was lost in his self-righteousness.[2] The story of the older brother teaches us that a hyperfocused obsession with *our* faithfulness (i.e., legalism, perfectionism, behavioralism) can unintentionally and ironically lead us to distance ourselves from God. Thus, like immorality, an overly fixated obsession with our morality can destroy us, too.

We've learned that an immoral way of life is futile, and a life that is primarily focused on *my* faithfulness is also hopeless. Is there a third and better way? Yes. It is called the gospel.

3. **Gospel (God's faithfulness).** The word "gospel," which appears for the first time in the book of Matthew (Matt. 4:23), is the word *euangelion* in the Greek. *Euangelion* means "God's good news to humans" and "good news as proclamation."[3] In the New Testament "the word group *euangelion* (good news), *euangelizo* (proclaim good news), and *euangelistes* (one who proclaims good news) occurs at least 133 times."[4] Since the gospel is God's good news (and not ours), the object of our faith is God, not us. The primary focus of Scripture is never about us; rather, the primary focus is about God and what He has done in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Back to the story of the prodigal *sons*.[5] The gospel appears in two places in the story. First, we see God's unconditional love in the father's love for his younger son. He receives the younger brother back with open arms. (The irony is that there was no celebration for

the older, self-righteous brother.) Second, the gospel is beautifully illustrated at the beginning of the parable. Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them" (Luke 15:11, NIV). The Greek word for property is *bios,* by which we get the word "life." The property was "life" for his family, the financial basis for their livelihood.

Did you catch the significance of the father's sacrifice? "So he divided his property [*bios*] between them." Not only does the father divide his property for the younger son who asks for it, but he "gives his life" to the older brother, who didn't even ask for it. Jesus, sharing this parable with the self-righteous Pharisees, was telling the hyperfocused law keepers (who were scathing law shamers) that He was going to give His life for both immoral and moralistic people. God is so faithful that He gives His life for all—immoral and moralistic people.

GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS (NOT MINE)

From my own experience I can attest that living apart from Jesus or obsessively focusing on following His laws both lead to a form of personal suffering. In fact, a life centered on "obedience first" can be perilous because self-righteousness operates like carbon monoxide—it's a silent killer. I might appear virtuous on the outside by attending church, reading the Bible, returning tithes, serving the community, and sharing my faith, but inside I can be decaying. Self-righteousness is an illusion that deceives me into thinking, *I'm doing all the right things, so I deserve salvation.* Yet this self-righteousness quietly undermines my spiritual well-being and is a source of my demise.

So where is the best place to anchor our faith? Not in our faithfulness, that's for sure. The hymn writer Thomas Chisholm knew where to anchor his faith:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

So here is the best place to anchor our spiritual and experiential universe: Christ's faithfulness as revealed by His death on Calvary.[6] Great is Christ's faithfulness! Not mine. How can my sacrifice compare to Christ's sacrifice?

"And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?'* (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')" (Mark 15:34, NIV).

I might pat myself on the back for my faithfulness, but unlike Jesus, I will never know what it feels like to carry the weight of the world's sin on my shoulders and feel eternally separated from the Father. And because of His unfathomable and unconditional love, Jesus gave His life for all His unrighteous and self-righteous children. I'm thankful that God's unconditional love (demonstrated by the coming, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus) has been the solvent that has freed me from the I-need-to-do-better-so-that-God-can-love-me myth.

Christ's sacrifice, not mine, is the sweet reality that can turn the world right side up. Let's not be like the foolish man who built his house on the sand of his self-righteous certainty. Let's be like the wise man who built his house on the solid Rock.

[1] Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), p. 37. Careful obedience to God's law may serve as a strategy for rebelling against God.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), pp. 207, 208. Ellen White writes about this predicament: "When he should have found an abiding joy in his father's presence, his mind has rested upon the profit to accrue from his circumspect life. His words show that it is for this he has foregone the pleasures of sin." The older brother was trying to find lasting joy in his faithfulness.

[3] Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 402.

[4] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), p. 29.

[5] Really, there are two prodigal sons. The word "prodigal" means "reckless." The younger brother was reckless in his unrighteousness, but the older brother was reckless with his self-righteousness.

[6] Ellen G. White manuscript 31, 1890, in *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, p. 297, retrieved from https://egwwritings.org/book/b14056. "There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of the Scriptures: Christ and Him crucified. Every other truth is invested with influence and power corresponding to its relation to this theme."

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FOY AND FOSS

Reluctant and Rebellious

ADAM RAMDIN

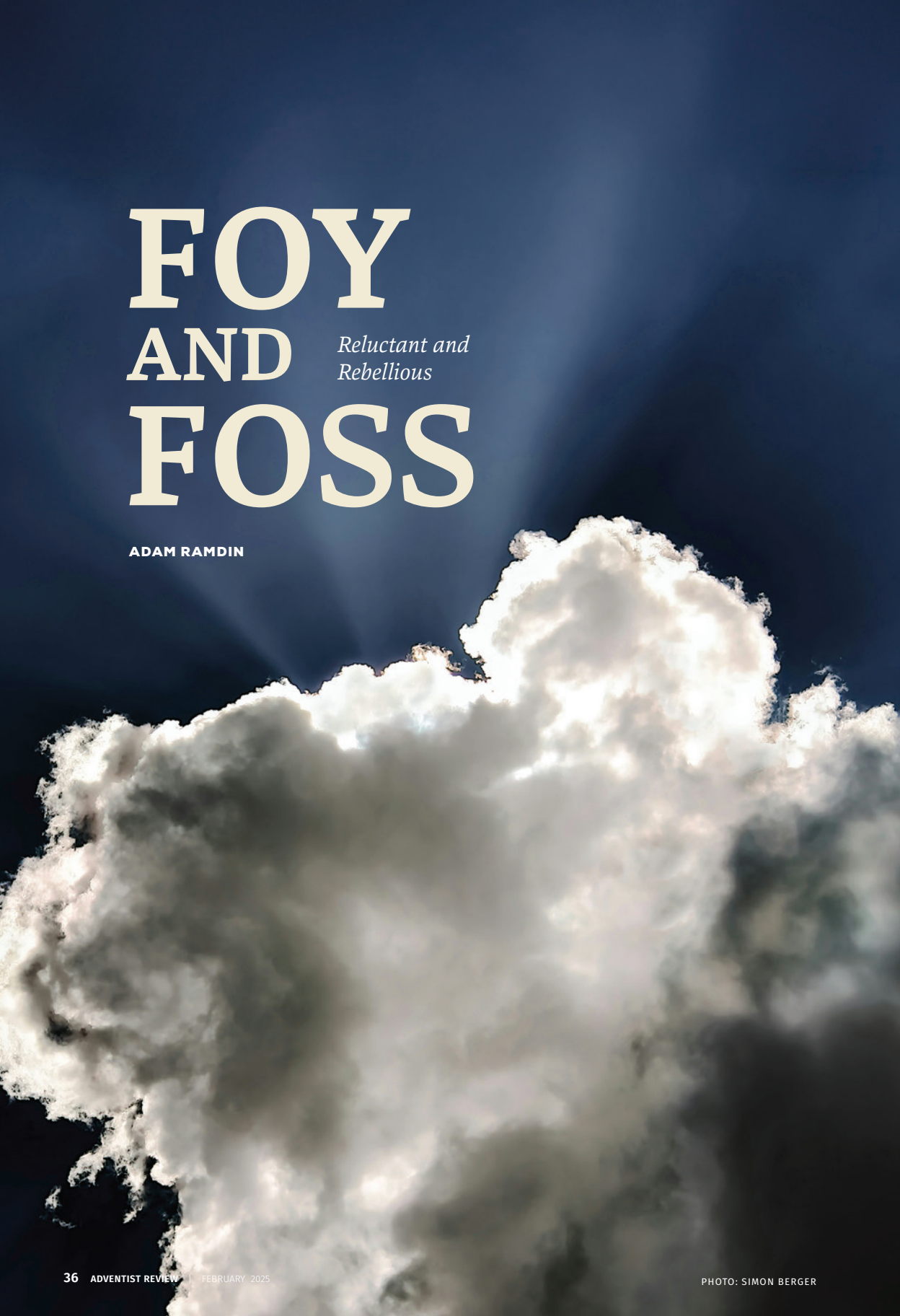


PHOTO: SIMON BERGER

When learning about Ellen White and how she received visions as a last-day prophet, I remember hearing anecdotally that God had previously called two men, but they had both rejected the prophetic gift. After some investigation, however, I learned this was not true. While it is true that two other men were called, it is not true that they both rejected the prophetic gift—one did, and one did not. Hazen Foss rejected it, but William Foy accepted it. Who were these two men, what do we know about them, and where do they fit into Adventist history?

A TALE OF TWO PROPHETS

William Foy was a free Black man living in Maine, then Boston, in the early 1800s. He was converted in 1835 under the preaching of Silas Curtis[1] and became involved in the Advent movement anticipating the return of Jesus in the early 1840s.

Foy received four visions before 1844 and faithfully shared what the Lord had shown him. We have his written accounts of the first two visions, but rely on secondary sources, namely J. N. Loughborough, for the third one. The visions follow a logical order, starting out general and becoming more detailed. The first vision covers the final victorious experience of the faithful believers. The second deals mainly with the theme of the judgment and our readiness for it, while the third one highlights events on earth prior to the Second Coming. The fourth vision Ellen White spoke of in a 1906 interview with D. E. Robinson.[2]

Hazen Foss and William Foy are often confused in person and experience, but they were distinctly different.

Foy was acutely aware of the personal challenges he faced with sharing the visions God gave him, wondering why God did not use someone more educated or from a different social status than he was. Despite the enormous issues of his day, the slavery and racial prejudice that impacted him directly, he put those aside and shared with the Advent believers what God had shown him. With a close relationship between the Millerite movement and the abolition movement, the Advent movement was as friendly a place as could be for a Black American in North America at the time.[3]

Hazen Foss's story is a sad one, with lessons that we ought to be mindful of. After God called him, he received his first vision in September or October 1844. The vision had similarities to William Foy's vision, with "three steps by which the people of God were to come fully upon the pathway to the Holy City."[4] Partly because he was unable to explain it himself and because he had a naturally proud spirit, he refused to share it.

Foss was indirectly related to Ellen White (his brother married Ellen's sister Mary), and in a letter to her sister dated December 22, 1890, she wrote, "You know Hazen Foss had visions once. He was firm in the faith that Christ would come in 1844. . . . After the time [the Great Disappointment] passed, he was told by the Lord to relate the visions to others. But he was too proud-spirited to do this. He had a severe conflict, and then decided that he would not relate the visions."[5]

The vision was repeated a second time with the additional instruction that if he refused to share the vision, the burden would be taken from him and given to someone else. Nevertheless, he refused, and a third vision was given to let him know he was released and someone who was the weakest of the weak would do the Lord's bidding. Now startled into action, he tried to make a belated attempt to relate what he had been shown. A crowd was gathered, and he shared how he had received a vision with a warning that it must be shared. When he got to the point of sharing the actual vision, he stood as dumb as a statue. "When he attempted to relate the vision, his mind could



ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

Hazen Foss

not grasp it. He tried and tried to relate it, but he said, 'It is gone from me; I can say nothing, and the Spirit of the Lord has left me.' Those who gave a description of that meeting said it was the most terrible meeting they were ever in."[6] Foss warned Ellen White to be faithful to what God had called her to do, saying, "Do not refuse to obey God, for it will be at the peril of your soul. I am a lost man. You are chosen of God; be faithful in doing your work, and the crown I might have had, you will receive." He lived about another 50 years after this incident, but never again did he show any interest in spiritual things.

Hazen Foss and William Foy are often confused in person and experience, but they were distinctly different. Foy related the visions shown him; Foss didn't. Foy retained his Adventist beliefs; Foss didn't. Foy maintained his religious interest and church connections; Foss didn't. After the Great Disappointment, William Foy moved east to Sullivan, Maine, and there is no account that he knew about or rejected some of the later major doctrines discovered, such as the Sabbath. He continued faithfully ministering in the Freewill Baptist Church until his death.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT ROLES

A question of comparison is also raised when looking at the ministry of William Foy and Ellen White, but it is important to remember that different people and prophets play different roles and functions in history. Foy was used by God as a spokesman, largely to the Advent movement in the pre-Disappointment time period. If he was correctly understood, then God's people could have been spared the Great Disappointment or at least prepared for it.

Foy never suggested that his prophetic role would continue after 1844, and this is where a misleading generalization is often made—that if William Foy is accepted as a prophet to the Advent movement, having received legitimate visions from God, then he must also be a prophet to the Seventh-day Adventist movement as well. This thought process, while understandable, is not supported when looking at the broad swath of history.

Different people have different roles. In his book *The Unknown Prophet* Delbert Baker states, "Peter was an early church leader, but he was not the missionary and theologian that Paul was. James was an apostle and early church administrator, but he didn't receive the revelations that John did. . . . William Miller preached God's message to the remnant—he was a burning and central light to the Advent movement—but he certainly didn't fill the foundational and organizational role that James White occupied in the early days of Seventh-day Adventism."[7]

Foy served for just two years before the Great Disappointment, while Ellen White served for 70 years after the Great Disappointment. Foy's ministry was measured, Ellen White's was prolific; yet they both felt blessed in their final days of life, having done their best and looking forward to the resurrection.

[1] William E. Foy, *The Christian Experience of William E. Foy Together With the Two Visions He Received in the Months of January and February 1842* (Portland, Maine: J and C. H. Pearson, 1845), p. 7, accessed at https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/WFoy1845.pdf. No photograph of William E. Foy has yet been discovered.

[2] Ellen G. White manuscript 131, 1906, in *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), vol. 17, pp. 95-97; J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 145-147.

[3] This is highlighted in Delbert Baker,"The Millerite Connection," *The Unknown Prophet* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987).

[4] Loughborough, p. 182.

[5] Ellen G. White letter 37, 1890, in T. H. Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), p. 488.

[6] Ibid., p. 489.

[7] Baker, p. 148.

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BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE . . .

Understanding and presenting our beliefs through the lens of God's love

REIMAGINING FAITH

SHAWN BRACE



DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS I'VE COME TO BELIEVE THAT THERE'S SOMETHING THAT GIVES ADVENTIST THEOLOGY AN EVEN GREATER UNIQUENESS.

I'm sure, like me, you've been in plenty of situations in which someone outside of Adventism has asked you what it is that we believe, or what are the peculiar teachings that separate Adventists from other Christians. In the past I'd mention such things as the Sabbath, the Second Coming, the state of the dead, or the sanctuary.

These distinctions are largely true, of course, even while recognizing that there are other Christians who believe some of those particular teachings as well. And I think they're critically important ideas that need to be emphasized and understood.

During the past few years, however, I've come to believe that there's something that gives Adventist theology an even greater uniqueness, and this conviction is reflected in the way I often answer the question now. I say this: "What makes Seventh-day Adventists unique is that we believe that God is love."

That's it!

That's what makes Adventism "Adventism."

It's no secret, after all, that Ellen White, in her great Conflict of the Ages series, begins and ends with those three words. They're the opening words of her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, which covers the beginning scenes of the universe's history, and they're the closing words of her book *The Great Controversy*, which describes the beginning scenes of the universe's eternal future.

Not that Ellen White is the sole arbiter of our theology. We believe Scripture is our primary source of revelation, setting the framework for our convictions and beliefs. But even just as a *theologian*, leaving aside the question of her prophetic gift, she has historically set our theological trajectory as Adventists. And that trajectory is based upon, points to, and is wrapped up in the love of God.

Of course, this "God is love" idea has many different facets, and, like a diamond, continuously reveals greater insights when examined from various angles. That's why I talk about such ideas as the Sabbath, Christ's soon return, and the judgment. But I present these only in the context of God's love—as different insights that have power only insofar as they're presented in the context of that love.

I'll say something like this: "Because God is love and desires our ultimate good, He gives us the Sabbath, granting us permission to take a weekly break for the sake of rest and restoration." Or I might say something like "Because God is love, He wants to make sure the universe will be eternally safe, and thus goes about a work of judgment to assure us that there will be no 'unsafe' people in the new earth—people who claim to follow Jesus with their lips but who haven't embraced the ways of His love in their lives."

I could go through a whole list and explain the different articulations, but I trust you get it.

The point is that I believe we need to understand our theological system through the lens of God's love—maintaining that none of our beliefs make sense or have motivational power apart from that love. This isn't simply a theological "sleight of hand," of course—or an attempt to put "lipstick on a pig." This is what I'm about as an Adventist and what I hope you'll be about too.

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A QUESTION AND A CALL

My journey to Christ and with Him

JAMES L. REID

Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience."*

"Did you know the first day is not a sacred day?" The question, though unsettling to one who worshipped on Sunday, came from within a broader conversation gift-wrapped in the calming voice of a friend. The soft-spoken delivery disarmed my usual instinct to retort at what seemed like an insult, and so I settled (at least for now) on a simple "Oh, yeah?"

I didn't know much about Seventh-day Adventists. I'd attended public high school with some, but all I vaguely remembered was a rumor that they attended church on Saturday. Now recently discharged from the military and attending college in Colorado, I'd befriended an Adventist and had the opportunity to confirm or dispel the rumor of Saturday worship that I remembered from my childhood. Whenever I was present at sundown on a Friday, I'd receive an invitation to join the family for something they called "Opening the Sabbath." Occasionally I would accept, but only as an observer, somewhat skeptical of the ritual—and yet it left an ever-so-slight impression on me. I recall the song "Holy day, Jehovah's rest, of Creation's week the best . . ." or something like that.

Over time and after mostly aloof observations, I became more accepting of the religion. Now with a human face attached, the strangeness had diminished. So, I reasoned, everybody has their own way of worshipping God. Yet that unanswered question still lingered in my mind: "Did you know the first day is not a sacred day?"

SEARCHING

It had been a couple of years since I had first heard the question, and my defusing response had been "Oh, yeah?" Now I needed to look further into the matter through my own investigation, and I knew just where to start: the college library. Since just about everyone I knew thought Sunday was sacred, I figured I'd begin my research by looking into why the Adventists think otherwise.

IMAGE: CDD20

The year was 1981. No Google. No laptops. No iPads. Just the good old library card catalog and the cutting-edge technology called microfiche. After perusing several secular books from the shelves, I encountered the terms "Great Disappointment" and "Millerite movement." The next time I saw my friend I queried, "I looked up Adventists at the library. Are you familiar with the Millerites?"

Sensing that I was on a spiritual search, my friend responded, "If you want to know more about Adventists, a Bible study would help. Would you like for me to set one up for you?"

"Yes! That will be OK." I'd never had a Bible study.

A few days later there was a knock at my apartment door. I opened it to a pleasant-looking gentleman. He was Caucasian. "Hello. I'm Pastor Sidney English of the Colorado Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church, and I received a call that James would like to receive Bible studies."

"Yes, I'm James. Please come in, and thanks for coming."

At that time I was a Black American of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, and this was my first sit-down with a White pastor. Since my friend had contacted him for me, I wanted to see what he had to say. He spoke with confidence and expounded upon each topic in the study guides with authority, using only the Bible as a reference. Day after day he answered my questions and shared even more Bible truths. God used His manservant to bring me out of darkness into His marvelous light. I looked forward to each study: salvation, the second coming of Jesus, God's law, health, and the Sabbath—they were such eye-openers. By the time I completed the series of Bible studies and the question "Would you like to join God's remnant church through baptism?" came, I was eager to reply, "Oh, yes!" I loved Jesus and desired to live my life in obedience to Him.

One snowy Sabbath I stood before the congregation to affirm the baptismal vows with other candidates. It was apparent that I was journeying a long way from the AME Church of my birth. When God sent truth to my apartment, I wasn't concerned with the skin color of the messenger, but, being a child of the Jim Crow era South, I do admit to experiencing a little rejection anxiety. I had much to learn about my newfound faith, and I had confidence in the One who had led me to it.

God used His manservant to bring me out of darkness into His marvelous light.

SERVING

Having completed my degree, I returned home to the Atlanta area for further studies. The Lord led me to a small congregation, not far from the Atlanta Airport, where I could develop my God-given spiritual gifts. Over the years, as I was ready to receive them, I was offered varying church office opportunities until I was eventually voted head elder. Elder certification and even a few theology semesters in the Southwestern Adventist University Distance Learning Program were very helpful in my spiritual development.

Ultimately, I had the opportunity to serve as the National Service Organization director for the conference beginning in 2001, a mere three months before the deadly attacks of September 11. I held the position for more than 21 years, through two conference presidents, preaching the gospel, and counseling young people throughout Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, stepping down only after the U.S. government declared an official end to the Global War on Terror (GWOT) in 2022.

I am both indebted to my friend for asking a profound question and making a vital call, and appreciative of the pastor who showed no interest in the color of the package but in the value of its content, a soul for whom Christ gave His life.

"Did you know the first day is not a sacred day?"

"Oh, yeah?" For me it took two years for that spark to become a flame, but I thank God for His loving patience. Now I rejoice to sing that song I heard so long ago as I "open the Sabbath." "Holy Day, Jehovah's rest, of Creation's week *the best*!"

* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 100.

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"COME"

Turning ordinary acts into opportunities

One of the most conclusive invitations in all the Bible is given in its final chapter: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). This text shares a loving invitation from the Spirit of God to receive the water of life. But if you read and study this carefully, this is more than just a simple invitation!

The Holy Spirit and the bride give an open invitation to come. But those who hear the invitation are not only to "come," but also to "say, 'Come!'" In other words, those who respond to the invitation are called to extend the same invitation to others. Ellen White clearly points out this responsibility: "The charge to give this invitation includes the entire church. Everyone who has heard the invitation is to echo the message from hill and valley, saying, 'Come.'"[1]

The job of inviting people to hear and receive the gospel belongs to everyone who has heard the gospel. We are to sow invitations everywhere, and we are to sow generously! As a result of doing our job in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, the whole world will be warned, and Jesus will come back to this earth. "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

SHARING CREATIVELY

We have each been called to be missionaries. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we each have a responsibility to share the good news that we've been given. We've been called to seek and save those who are lost. But missionary work does not have to look the same for each of us. We don't each have to preach like a pastor or give Bible studies like a Bible worker. These are critical roles, but 1 Peter 4:10 says, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace

AMY AUSTIN

PHOTO: JULIA M. CAMERON

of God." Ellen White shares, "Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability."[2]

Imagine how exciting it would be if every lay member in our churches were using his or her gifts, abilities, and resources to be involved in sharing the gospel, meeting the needs of people in our communities, sharing literature, giving Bible studies, blessing others, sharing a testimony, and preaching God's Word in word and deed.

Imagine if we were willing to be stretched and grown by God through our willingness to do more for the salvation of others. We would see God doing great things through us because the hand of the Lord would be with us, just as it was with those in Acts 8 who were scattered abroad preaching the Word! And a great number would believe and turn to the Lord.

In Matthew 9:37, 38 Jesus says to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." We need to be those laborers! We are called to be those laborers. And we need to teach others to do the same.

Following are some creative, out-of-the-box ways that you can use to be a laborer for Jesus and to share His love with others. Being a missionary can be fun, creative, and rewarding!

- Take a "welcome to the neighborhood" gift to those who move into your neighborhood. We love to take fresh baked bread with a welcome note. We also include our contact information in case they want to reach us again.
- Celebrate your birthday by giving small gifts to others or by doing acts of service.
- Make up some goodie bags and store them in your car for the next time you see a homeless person. You can include pop-top canned soup, crackers, nuts, granola bars, socks, toiletries, and a sharing tract.
- Help protect families in your neighborhood from potentially fatal fires by collecting smoke detector batteries to share with them.
- Use your skills or profession to help someone—change oil for a single mom, offer tutoring sessions to students of low-income families, organize fundraising events for charities, or conduct workshops on personal finance, parenting, marriage, or other areas.

Being a missionary can be fun, creative, and rewarding!

- Adopt a local homeless shelter or women's shelter in your area and take them gifts and homemade treats.
- Stop by a nursing home and visit someone who doesn't receive many visitors. Sing with them. And thank the staff while you're there!
- Fill door hanger bags with a sharing book, a packaged treat, and a note of thanks. Share them with those who work in your community and tell them how much you appreciate the goods or services they provide.
- Think of others during the holidays. Invite them over to share your Thanksgiving meal. Take treats and gifts to those who work on Christmas morning.
- Celebrate Random Acts of Kindness Day on February 17 by sharing a grocery gift card with someone at the store, paying for the car behind you in the drive-through, or paying it forward some other way.
- Donate new pajamas for children in foster care.
- Go door-to-door in your neighborhood offering to pray for people and sharing literature with them.
- Randomly send flowers to someone to brighten their day.
- Contact your local hospital to see how you can bring cheer to the patients.
- Ask God to show you how to use your talents to serve Him!

Let us each respond to the invitation to "come." And let us each consider how we can also extend the invitation to others. Let's let our lights "so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works and glorify [our] Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 110.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

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HOW IS ADVENTISM MOST RELEVANT TO SOCIETY TODAY?

DAWSON STEPHENS

At the 2024 Generation. Youth. Christ. (GYC) convention Adventist Review *held a writing contest. Attendees were invited to answer this question: "How is Adventism most relevant to society today?" Word count was limited to 500 words and no use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was permitted.* Review *editors assessed the submissions and selected this article as the winner. —Editors*

When I was growing up, it was self-help books. For my parents, it was pop music. As time progresses, the ebb and flow of society brings waves of interest in and out of relevance. Many say we need to keep up with the times; but how should this impact our faith? After nearly 200 years since the first proclamation of our distinct message, does Adventism still hold the relevance it once held? In a society in which people are fast losing their identity, in which escapism is rampant and suicide is on the rise, in which pleasure, ease, and materialism are the chief pursuits, in which truth is relative and relationships are unstable, in which everyone is busy, stressed, and distracted, what does Adventism have to offer that is unique?

Well, some might say that we have the Sabbath, the sanctuary, or any other of our distinctive doctrines to offer. Others might say that we have the health message and the writings of Ellen G. White. Still others might say that we have the right understanding of the 1260-day prophecy. And these are all true and crucial. But we have more to offer than mere doctrines, reforms, and prophecies. We have more to offer than a clearer understanding, a better lifestyle, or a friendly church meeting on the right day. Adventism has substance to offer, the *only* thing of real substance. To a society that is full of broken people, empty promises, and unfulfilled ideals, Adventism offers a truly biblical worldview and a fuller picture of Christ. To



the atheist steeped in error, we offer Christ as the truth made manifest; to the college student struggling with depression and purpose, we offer Christ as the purpose of our existence; to the broken family, we offer Christ, the loving friend to heal the wounded hearts of humanity; to the millions struggling with addictions, we offer Christ, the one who sets the captives free; to the people looking forward to the future with fear and despair, we offer Christ, the Rock of refuge; to the weary and heavy-laden, we offer Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath; to every trembling sinner, we offer Christ, their personal Savior. We offer help for the helpless, rest for the restless, hope for the hopeless, power for the powerless. Adventism is so relevant because our distinctive doctrines, our reforms, and our prophecies all point to Christ, and uplift Him not only as the one who died for us, but as the one who ever lives to make intercession for us; not only as the one who offers us forgiveness from sin's penalty, but as the one who provides lasting freedom from its power.

When seen in this light, what could be more relevant than Adventism? Yet we are relevant to the world only to the proportion that we offer them the message of Christ. If we seem to be becoming irrelevant in our society, it is not because society is changing—it is because we are. While everything else we have is important, we cannot afford to separate our distinctive truths from the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We cannot lose sight of the Sum and Substance of our faith: "Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul's contemplation."[*]

[*] Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), pp. 70, 71.

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YOU BELONG

Creating a church culture of inclusivity and accessibility for individuals with special needs

KATIE FLORES

As the opening hymn is being sung, a young mother slips quietly into a back pew, grasping two small boys by the hand. One of the boys has apparent special needs, and members glance quickly at the child and then avert their eyes so as to not be caught staring. The mother spends the first half of the service attempting to entertain and quiet her little charges. The pastor has just launched into his sermon when suddenly the hush of the sanctuary is broken by the wails of the child with special needs in the back pew.

TRYING CHURCH

Some members of the church try to act as if nothing is happening and paste a smile on their faces as they keep their eyes glued on the pastor, who has increased the volume of his voice in order to be heard over the wailing child. Other members openly stare at the poor

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK.COM / PRIXEL CREATIVE



There are several key principles that can be applied to ensure that all who attend our churches feel loved, seen, appreciated, and valued as the children of God that they are.

mother whose face has flushed a deep crimson and is attempting to wrangle the tantruming child out of the pew while prompting the other child to follow her. The mother finally succeeds in reaching the lobby of the church, from where the faint cries of the distraught child can still be heard through the double doors of the sanctuary.

The members of the church turn their attention back to the sermon and soon forget the uncomfortable scene. Meanwhile the young mother is in the mothers' room having no success in consoling her distraught child. The other child is beginning to get bored and hungry and soon joins his voice with that of his brother. The exhausted mother admits defeat and with slumped shoulders exits the church. She vows never to put herself or her boys through such an experience again. Going to church is too much work, and why would she want to attend a church where not even one member made a move to assist in her moment of crisis?

An adult woman with special needs attends her local church with her parents. She loves going to church and eagerly looks forward to Sabbath mornings all week long. During the adult Sabbath School program she eagerly raises her hand to participate, but when she talks, she is difficult to understand. The other members shift uncomfortably in their chairs, having sudden interest in that spot on the far wall that has never been repainted since the water leak last fall.

After the service the woman with special needs has a habit of wanting to shake the hand of whoever is within striking distance. In an effort to avoid an uncomfortable encounter, most members choose to exit the sanctuary from the far door, so that they are well out of handshaking range. This woman simply makes them a bit uncomfortable with her different appearance, unusual noises, and uninhibited behavior. As a result, this family often feels isolated and spends the bare minimum amount of time at church.

A young man with significant hearing loss, whose primary language is American Sign Language, faithfully attends a small church. He smiles pleasantly at all the members and tries his best to communicate with them through gestures and writing. This labor-intensive mode of communi-

Numerous accounts throughout the Gospels provide evidence of the deep-seated concern and love that Jesus had for those that were sick or had some form of disability.

cating is frustrating for all. Additionally, this mode of attempted communication limits the amount of engagement and quality interaction from all parties, which results in surface-level relationships. When the service starts, the young man sits up front and does his best to follow along with a service that he cannot hear. After several years of this, he attends in-person church less and less. It is easier for him to stay home and follow along with the service online, where he can access subtitles.

A new family begins to attend a large and active church. They are eager to have their four children participate in all the excellent programming that is available. One day after potluck the mother of the family is speaking with a church leader's wife. The mother mentions that she would like to enroll her tween daughter, who has special needs, in the Pathfinder program. The church leader's wife makes an offhanded comment about how Pathfinders would not be accessible because of the child's special needs. The conversation moves on, but the mother mourns inwardly and opts to enroll her child in programs outside the church that are willing to accommodate for special needs.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

Sadly, none of these stories are fictional. Interacting with, as well as accommodating for, individuals with special needs in our churches can be an overlooked and overwhelming topic to address. The example that Jesus set for us, however, leaves no room for doubt that every person, special needs or not, is of incredible value and is a vital member of the family of God (see 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Throughout Christ's ministry on earth He demonstrated a relational approach in which He modeled how to meet individuals where they are, whether that means kneeling in the dirt with a prostitute or having dinner with a rich tax collector. Numerous accounts throughout the Gospels provide evidence of the deep-seated concern and love that Jesus had for those who were sick or had some form of disability. As we strive in our respective lives and as a collective church to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, how can we do anything but lovingly embrace each and every person who walks through our church doors?

Although one article can only scratch the surface of such a complex and multifaceted subject, there are several key principles that can be applied to ensure that all who attend our churches feel loved, seen, appreciated, and valued as the children of God they are.

1. Use Special-Needs-Friendly Language

Unsure of where to begin in creating an atmosphere of love and inclusion for those with special needs? Small (or no) budget? If so, implementing the one simple step of using person-first language can not only create a climate of inclusion and respect, but generate momentum for subsequent positive changes. When we intentionally refer to those with special needs by always putting the person first and the diagnosis second, a message of respect is communicated. This simple switch in our language can provide a subtle but impactful shift in our perspective of those with special needs.

Here are some examples to get you started. Instead of saying, "There is that Down syndrome girl," person-first language would be "There is that girl *with* Down syndrome." Another example of this would be "We want to create an atmosphere of respect for individuals *with* special needs" versus "We want to create an atmosphere of respect for special-needs individuals." Those with special needs are people before they are a diagnosis, so let's refer to them as such.

It should go without saying, but is worth a mention, that all the terms we use to refer to those with special needs must be appropriate and nonderogatory. The most prudent manner in which to refer to a individual with special needs is by their name, but if the special-need status must be communicated, then it should be done utilizing the correct medical diagnosis

or the all-encompassing term "special needs." At all costs, we must avoid implying that the individual with special needs is "less than" because of their diagnosis.

2. Foster Relationships and Ask Questions

One of the crucial steps to creating a special-needs-friendly church environment is for members to seek to foster relationships with the families of and individuals with special needs. Only through developing such relationships can we truly learn how best to meet the distinctive needs of these persons. It is perfectly acceptable not to have all the answers on how to best serve individuals with special needs. Asking questions and starting dialogue is the key to forging the relationships necessary to understand how the needs of this population can best be met. When we take the time to truly acquaint ourselves with the individual with special needs, we begin to see them as a person, not just the differences that their special needs may cause. This relational approach allows us to develop empathy and react to differences with grace and love.

3. Adapting for Inclusivity

When we strive to have churches that incorporate each member into the body of Christ, there will be the opportunity to assess our current programming and perhaps even our facilities to make changes that will allow each member access to the services and activities of the church. Adapting for the intention of inclusivity may look like making physical changes to the building, providing interpreting services, or perhaps modifying curricula. Regardless, our role as the church body is to assist in breaking down the barriers that prevent the accessibility of our church and what it offers to a select few.

Creating an inclusive church is most likely going to require some form of sacrifice and use of resources. This might be in the form of monetary investments, time, or personal comfort and preferences. What a perfect opportunity for us, as a church, to lean on the endless wisdom and resources of our heavenly Father, who has called us to make disciples of all with no exclusionary terms provided.

TRYING AGAIN

Let's return to the four true scenarios that we covered in the beginning. What if a church member had taken note of the young mother's distress and offered a helping hand? It could have been as simple as saying, "Can I help you with anything?" Perhaps this mother would have felt loved and supported in her trial, and opted to give church another try.

How would the family of the adult woman with special needs have felt if members had made an effort to seek out a handshake after services or asked questions in order to determine the best opportunities for her to use her unique God-given talents in the church?

What kind of message would the church have sent to the young man with hearing loss if possible methods had been explored for enabling his access to church services and functions? Perhaps they could have utilized technology or interpreting services. Regardless, the young man would have felt that he was wanted, loved, and an important member of the church body.

Imagine the mother's reaction, and the positive impact on the child, had the church leader's wife asked her to sit down and brainstorm how the Pathfinder program could be adapted to meet the needs of the child. This conversation could have resulted in an incredible opportunity not only for the child with special needs, but the other members of the Pathfinder club as well.

The referenced situations did not necessarily require advanced technology or expensive or time-consuming interventions. Rather, what was needed were church members who responded to the quiet nudge of the Holy Spirit. Church members who were willing to step outside their comfort zones. Church members who longed to live lives that are true imitations of the example that Jesus left for us. Church members who wanted all to understand that it is by God's grace that each of us walks through the doors of our churches.

Creating a church culture that is inclusive and accessible to those with special needs is not going to be a seamless process. It will require a willingness to make mistakes, to perhaps even be uncomfortable. Most important, it requires a desire to learn and grow together. Creating such a culture, though, will open our hearts and churches to profound and numerous blessings, while having a unmeasurable eternal impact.

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SEEKING RIGHTEOUSNESS RIGHTLY

Five steps for advocacy, according to Isaiah

NATHAN BROWN



IMAGE: JACOB WACKERHAUSEN / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

As people of faith, there are a couple of ways—perhaps more than a couple—that we get righteousness wrong. These are the peculiar holy vices of "good" people.

The first is that we think righteousness is about "going to church" or other various religious rituals and forms. According to the Hebrew prophets, their God did not seem so interested in such things: "As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath and your special days for fasting—they are all sinful and false. I want no more of your pious meetings" (Isa. 1:13).* Consider also Isaiah 58:1-5 or Amos 5:21-24, and try them out as a call to worship or invocatory reading at the next worship service you are invited to contribute to.

The second wrong understanding of righteousness is that it is simply a ceasing from wrongdoing, if that were possible. Of course, this is an important place to begin. "Wash yourselves and be clean!" Isaiah continued delivering the message of God to the would-be righteous people of his day. "Give up your evil ways" (Isa. 1:16).

We should seek to choose against evil, to remove it from us and remove ourselves from it as far as is possible. But this can be a thin kind of righteousness—seeking merely the absence of evil—which is neither satisfying nor sustainable. At times people of faith have withdrawn from the world around them and important aspects of their own lives for fear of evil, only to find a kind of emptiness that is not righteousness in any meaningful way (consider Matthew 12:43-45).

Unsurprisingly, Isaiah's opening monologue has higher expectations for righteousness and demands more of us—offering a practical outline for doing good that is readily adaptable as a guide to the work of advocacy in our world today. It is neatly summarized in five steps in Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows."

LEARN TO DO GOOD

Good work begins with listening and learning. Much harm has been done at times by well-intentioned people with limited understanding or simply an unwillingness to listen. This does not mean that we need a doctorate in social work or international development before we can do good, but our responses to the evil and injustice we see around us will be better shaped by listening and learning, in whatever form that study might make sense to you and the situation you are confronting. Listen to those you are seeking to help; learn from those who are already working in that context or issue; read books; engage in workshops, conferences, and seminars; sometimes even just begin with searching around an issue online. Do not use this as an excuse not to act, but use your impulse to act as an impulse to learn.

SEEK JUSTICE

Sometimes they do, but good things only rarely happen by accident. They also rarely happen quickly. Seeking to do good, to work for justice, to be an advocate requires intention, attention, energy, and time. For people of faith, seeking becomes an enactment of our faithfulness. This must be shaped by listening and learning about the society and world around us, but we resist the inertia of ever-learning without resulting action. As incomplete as our knowledge and understanding will inevitably be and as imperfect as our responses might be, we seek to do right and to act humbly for the flourishing of others. We also act with perseverance, knowing that the work toward justice will be long and that the larger the issues we confront, the more powerful will be the systems and forces that benefit from and defend the status quo. We will seek justice nonetheless.

Use your impulse to act as an impulse to learn.

HELP THE OPPRESSED

Isaiah 1:17 includes a kind of triage of the people with whom we will seek to stand as those who seek justice and advocate for those who are hurt by injustice. The highest priority will be for those who are presently suffering, whose lives are being diminished or destroyed by oppression or exploitation. While we must listen and learn, these are people for whom justice cannot wait and for whom "justice too long delayed is justice denied"—to quote Martin Luther King, who adapted it from a common legal maxim. Injustice is always a crisis, but its most immediate victims, "those being crushed" (see Prov. 31:8, 9), must be the first priority, the first to whom we listen and the first for whom we speak and act.

DEFEND THE CAUSE OF ORPHANS

The second priority will be those who are vulnerable to injustice, those whose lives and well-being are tenuous, and whose potential is limited by unjust systems around them. The good work of advocacy includes learning about these systems and the opportunities for using the power of people, persuasion, and policies to lift others. So often the impoverished and disempowered are blamed for poor choices they might have made in their lives when they had only poor or limited options from which to choose. By working against unjust systems, we seek to offer broader and better choices. As Jesus did, we seek to set free the chronically impoverished, incarcerated, and infirm (see Luke 4:18, 19).

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF WIDOWS

The third tranche in this model is that of fighting for the respect and rights of all people. It is a principle of human rights that they are not only universal but indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated. If we are truly to champion rights for one group of people or in one circumstance of injustice or oppression, we must be concerned about all other rights and situations. At times Seventh-day Adventists have been defenders of religious freedom for not only ourselves but also others with whom we might not necessarily agree—but we need to expand still further on this. A society that better understands, affirms, and embraces justice and the rights of all people will be more likely to protect specific individual rights. We will partner with seemingly unlikely people, groups, and causes for the freedom and flourishing of all.

A society that better understands, affirms, and embraces justice and the rights of all people will be more likely to protect specific individual rights.

And if all this sounds like a lot of work, it is. It is a righteous orientation of all our lives. It will shape the choices we make in our education, our careers, our finances, our families, and more. It should even change the shape of our church and our churches. And in this there is an additional dynamic and resource: We do this together.

Many are familiar with Hebrews 10:25 and its injunction to "not neglect our meeting together." It seems God is not against churchgoing, in principle. And He does insist that He can wash us clean of the evil of our lives and the world around us (see verse 22). But the heart of the call of righteousness to us comes in verses 23 and 24: "Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works."

In the hope and promises of God, let us work together for practical righteousness—"love and good works"—in our lives, our churches, our communities, and our world. We will always get righteousness wrong, and God will love us nonetheless. But in working and advocating for justice and with those who are hurt by injustice and oppression, we can do righteousness better and seek to do that with God's love for all people.

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ARt, a new, regular section of the *Adventist Review*, features various original art created, written, and/or performed by Adventist artists.

BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

Human love in its ideal expression reflects the love of God. It is other-centered, selfless, relational commitment and faithfulness. Humanity is completely dependent on the revelation of God's love to even realize that such commitment is possible, and in turn accept it for ourselves. This enables us to share it with those in our spheres of influence. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NIV).

STORY BEHIND THE SONG:
"I wrote *Forever* for my wife not long before we were married. Ironically, I ended up singing a different original song at the ceremony—one that, while heartfelt, I no longer perform and never even recorded. Meanwhile, I've sung "Forever" on many occasions, including at other people's weddings. It's hard to predict the journey of a song—what will resonate and for how long. I'm just grateful that these words ring even truer to me today than when I first wrote them." – Nicholas Zork

Nicholas Zork serves as minister for worship and the arts with Church of the Advent Hope in Manhattan and teaches Christian worship, music, and songwriting at Andrews University. He lives with his family in New York City, where he also works as a music director and songwriter. Learn more at nicholaszork.com

MUSIC

FOREVER

By Nicholas Zork © 2013

I don't know where the river runs
And I'll admit that it is scary
It might be headin' for some stormy open seas
Or through some quiet tributary
And I can't slow down these currents
Even if I wanted to
Father time says I'll be going anyway
But I'd like to go with you

And they say forever is a long time
I suppose eternity is, too
But to me it sounds like barely long enough
As long as I can spend that time with you

I can't promise you the future
You know well I'm only human
But I will offer all I really have to give
Every ounce of all that I am

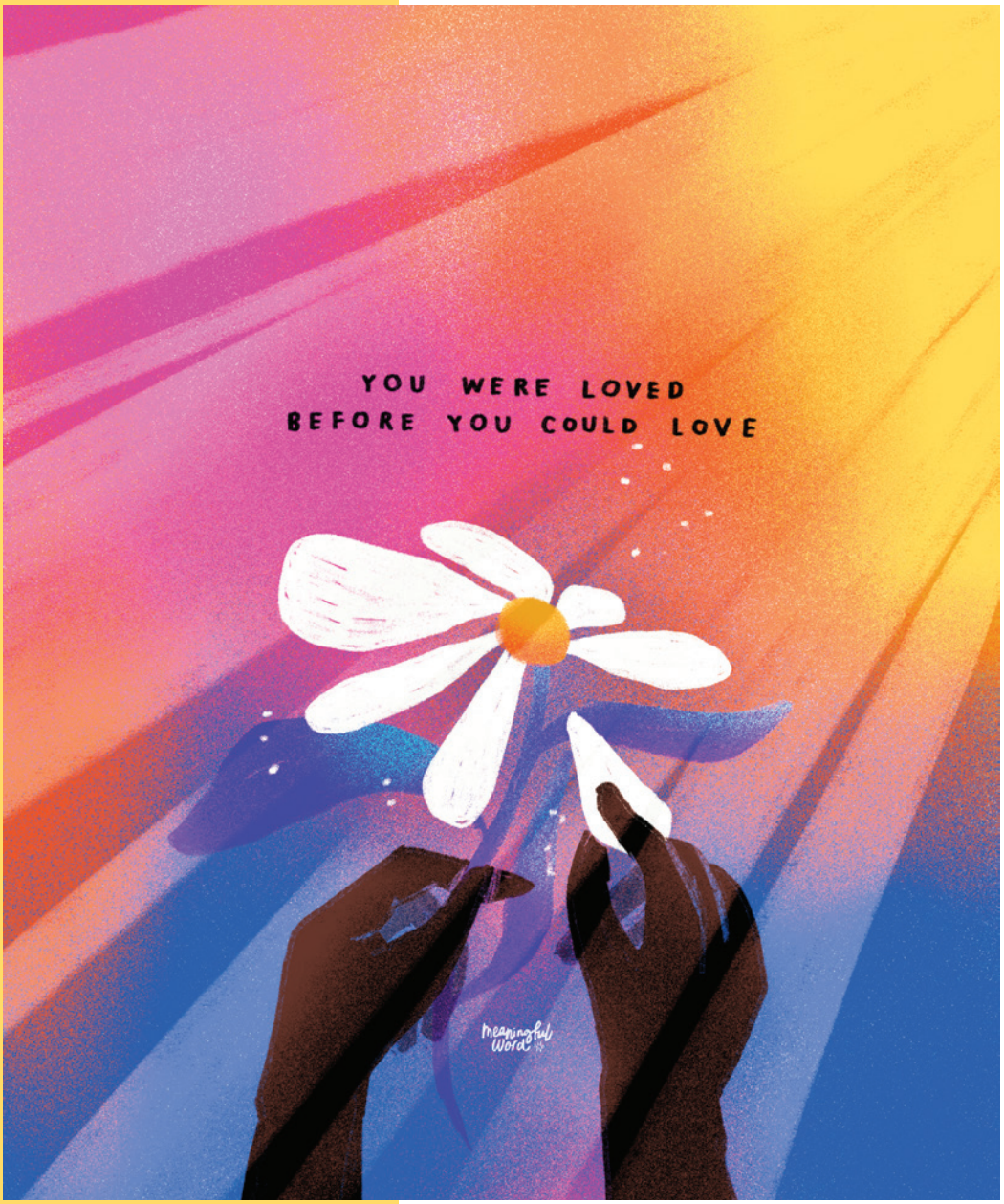
And they say forever is a long time
I suppose eternity is, too
But to me it sounds like barely long enough
As long as I can spend that time with you

I don't know where the river runs
But I don't really care
There's only one place that I really wanna be
And I'm already there

Scan the QR code to listen to a live performance of this song.

DIGITAL DRAWING

'You were loved before you could love.' — Meaningful Word.
By Naida Quiapon © 2024



Naida Quiapon is the creative behind @meaningful_word (Instagram). As a senior designer based in Australia working for one of Melbourne's largest performance spaces, she uses her specialized knowledge of design and illustration to serve and connect with others through digital art.

Art featured in the **ARt** section is curated by Jonathan Walter, assistant editor of the *Adventist Review*. Creative works showcased do not imply an endorsement of all works by featured artists. To submit any type of Adventist original art, please contact **art@adventistreview.org**. Submission does not guarantee publication.

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THE REASONABLE ONES

Why we all think we've got it right

I've been thinking about blind spots lately. Have you ever wondered why it's so easy to spot other people's blind spots but so hard to see our own? Our lives and beliefs are nuanced and complex (or so we tell ourselves), while others need to "get it together already."

This shows up in today's political climate. Each group is convinced they've found that sweet spot of sound reasoning and clear thinking. Conservatives believe they're taking a reasonable stand against moral decay, while liberals feel they're fighting for justice and equality. Even those claiming the middle ground (guilty!) are certain they've struck the perfect balance. This certainty shows up just as strongly within the church. Whether debating policy or doctrine, we're convinced our stance is the most sensible. If only others had our insight, they'd surely see things our way!

Picture three passengers on a boat in choppy waters. Each stands in their spot, convinced they've found the perfect stance. One at the front leans heavily right, certain this compensates for the boat's tilt. Another at the back leans left, just as confident. A third stands straight up in the middle, believing they've found the true center. Each watches the others with concern—"If only they knew to stand like me!"

But here's what's interesting: if you took the time to walk to different positions on the boat, you'd understand why each person leans the way they do. The front pitches more dramatically with each wave. The back sways with its own unique motion. That person leaning hard to the right? They're responding to real forces you might not feel in your position.

The wisdom isn't in judging their stance from afar, but in understanding why they stand as they do. What if our humility opened the door to genuine curiosity about others? When we're curious, we draw closer. When we're closer, we begin to truly empathize. And when we empathize, we connect. Isn't this how Jesus ministered—drawing near, understanding people's real struggles, and meeting their deepest needs with love and truth?

Look back at yourself five, 10, or 20 years ago. Feel that twinge of embarrassment at the positions you held with such certainty? If you've grown this much in such a short time, shouldn't that humble you about your firmly held views?

Yet this doesn't mean we should waver in uncertainty. We can stand firmly in our convictions because we trust in God's leading through His Word. He promises to guide us into all truth (John 16:13) as we are willing. The key is holding this confidence while recognizing that many who disagree with us may be just as sincere in their own journey with God.

Our Adventist heritage beautifully demonstrates this balance. Early believers stood firmly on biblical truth while remaining open to deeper understanding. The Sabbath, for example, was an ancient truth waiting to be rediscovered by those willing to be taught. Like them, we can hold fast to truth while maintaining a learner's heart before God. As we trust His leading, may our conviction inspire curiosity about others' journeys, for through these connections God may reveal even more of His light. Perhaps then, in our polarized world, the most powerful testimony isn't our unwavering stance on issues, but our unwavering love for those who see them differently (John 13:35).

BETWEEN WORLDS DAVID BURUCHARA



WE CAN HOLD FAST TO TRUTH WHILE MAINTAINING A LEARNER'S HEART BEFORE GOD.

David Buruchara, M.Ed., LPC-R, is a clinical mental health therapist living in Virginia, United States. He and his wife, Callie, host the *Down to Earth With the Burucharas* podcast.



WITNESSING FOR CHRIST

Experience the joy and fulfillment the act of witnessing brings to our lives.

ELLEN G. WHITE

God's glory renders us speechless.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Isaiah not only beheld the glory of Christ, but he also spake of Him. While David mused, the fire burned; then spake he with his tongue. While he mused upon the wondrous love of God, he could not but speak of that which he saw and felt. Who can by faith behold the wonderful plan of redemption, the glory of the only begotten Son of God, and not speak of it? Who can contemplate that unfathomable love expressed in dying upon the cross of Calvary, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life, and have no words to utter to extol the Saviour's glory? Who can become partakers of His love, and not admire and reverence and adore?

WORDS OF ADORATION

As they behold Christ, those who love and fear the Lord will be led to assemble together and speak to one another in words that are full of fervour. "Yea, he is altogether lovely." He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." "In his temple doth every one speak of his glory." The sweet singer of Israel praised Him upon the harp: "I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works." "And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. . . . They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his

PHOTO: AARON BLANCO TEJEDOR

kingdom." Such will be the conversation of those who are specified in the scripture, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And God is represented as listening to their words and writing them in a book.

The testimony of John the beloved disciple is, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you ,that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

WITNESSING ENCOURAGES UNITY

Surely, those who speak to one another of the goodness of the Lord are highly privileged. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." We have rich themes for thought and conversation, themes that it will interest and encourage and uplift the soul to dwell upon; and if God's witnesses, those who are the subjects of His grace, upon whom the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness are shining, should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. God will be glorified.

If the members of the church are one with Christ, they will be in union with one another. And this unity of believers will be a living testimony to the world of the power of the Gospel. United in one, they receive bright beams of light from the Sun of Righteousness, and diffuse this light to a world in darkness. Oh, why cannot we see from the lessons and especially from the prayer of Christ, how Christians may be perfect in one, and thus represent the glory of their Redeemer? If those who believe the truth would bring the prayer of Christ into their practical life, they would grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. They would grow up unto the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. As believers in Christ, they "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

LOVE, THE SPECIAL INGREDIENT

The believer in Christ needs to understand the working of the powers of darkness to bring dissension and division into the church, that its members may not present the oneness for which Christ prayed. God's people have greatly dishonoured His name, and misrepresented the truth by their alienation, their lack of love for one another. As love for God has grown cold, they have lost the childlike simplicity that knit heart to heart in love and tenderness. Hardheartedness has come in. There is a drawing away from one another. Many are saying by their actions I care not for the prayer of Christ. They feel under no special obligation to love one another as Christ has loved them. Jesus can do little for these souls; for His words and Spirit are not permitted to enter into the heart.

Many are in darkness, and know not the cause. They are not at peace with God, they are not one with Christ, nor in unity with one another. They seem to think they are at liberty to act out the natural feelings of the heart. Words and actions testify that they do not desire to be in union with those who do not exactly meet their minds, even among believers. Now all who entertain these ideas and cherish these feelings need to be converted. They need to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The religion of Christ is not to be controlled by impulse.

Love for one another is not to be manifested in praise and flattery, but in true fidelity. If we see one in danger, we should tell him plainly, kindly, even at the risk of his displeasure. We must lean wholly upon God; we need to pray much. We should hold the truth with firmness, but we are to hold it in righteousness. While we speak the truth with fidelity, we should speak it in love.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt is taken from *The Present Truth*, Jan. 12, 1893.





IF WE ONLY LOVED ONE ANOTHER

WINTLEY PHIPPS

The following article is based on a sermon preached by the author at the Palm Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church. The full sermon may be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOeiEJUt5Js. Elements of the oral presentation have been preserved.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, had come to the last *mile* of His earthly sojourn, and He took His disciples with Him to an upper room to break bread (see Luke 22:7-19). After all the chatter of greetings had died down, Jesus told them, "My end is approaching, so I brought you here to eat the last meal we will share in this manner. And I will not eat with you again like this until we eat together in the kingdom of heaven at the marriage supper of the Lamb."

As I read the Scriptures it becomes clear to me that Jesus gathered His disciples together, not only for one last meal. I see that Jesus brought His disciples together to teach them, us, and the world the most important spiritual relational lesson we need to learn. It is found in John 13:34, 35. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

How poignant! And dare I say that never was a truth needed more by this broken world as this spiritual truth: Love one another.

PHOTO: KAMPUS

THE REALITY

In my spiritual imagination I see Jesus looking down through the corridors of time to the world as it is today. I believe Jesus saw, throughout history, rampaging ominous powers threatening to break apart the brittle structures of our imperfect societies. I believe He saw all the sinister Machiavellian influences that rule the earth, such as greed and lust; all the corrupt philosophies and sinful ideas that crowd the doorways of our minds. I believe Jesus saw exactly where we are today in the world, in the home, in the church.

Jesus saw the divisions; the tendency in our human nature to build walls of separation instead of bridges of communication and understanding. I believe Jesus saw the polarization that has become the new normal in America and in the world. I believe He saw us drawing lines in the sand, replacing unity with division. And He saw that rather than dialogue with each other, we would retreat into ideological camps that serve the narrow self-interests of ethnicity and race.

I believe Jesus saw all this.

He saw that change, the eternal accomplice of time, would create among men fear and fragmentation. Jesus saw that empathy would be the first casualty of hate and that prejudice would leave the human race adrift in a sea of doubt and mistrust.

I believe Jesus saw all of this. He saw that the seeds of hopelessness and despair would find root in the fertile soil of ignorance and discontent. And yes, that right here in America, home-grown violence and extremism would become in vogue . . . right here in America, people who at one time were reasonable people would be unable to reason. And that fear and ignorance would poison the bloodstream of our body politic. I believe Jesus saw that extremism would become a servant to dogma and doctrine and that this world would be visited by a perennial plague of inequality and injustice for many.

Yes, church, I believe Jesus saw that in every nation and in every land, poverty would lead to stigmatization, which would then lead to isolation and exclusion, making opportunity a gift reserved for only the privileged few. I believe Jesus looked down through time and history and saw that our world would descend into factions and camps of the haves and the have nots . . . that we would descend into socioeconomic tribalism.

Jesus saw what we call identity politics, and that it would become a battle-ax for ethnic factions vying for ascendancy and dominance . . . that people would use identity politics to pillory and ridicule their fellow man rather than promote racial harmony and healing, and celebrate the diversity of all the children of men made in God's image.

Yes, I even believe Jesus saw that in our time nationalism would be on a collision course with what I call "resource migration." What is resource migration? That's desperate people scarred by scarcity pulling up roots and seeking for a better life where they can find more resources to build brighter futures. I believe Jesus saw that these waves of arriving immigrants would unleash in the hearts of many in developed countries emotions of fear and uncertainty. And in some, even bring out rage-fueled violence in those who fear they are being displaced or replaced.

And so Jesus, there in the upper room, before He left the earth, left us a word and a new commandment. One He prayed would echo across the divides and across the ages. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another" (John 13:34).

THE COMMAND

This command to love one another has echoed through the ages, transcending the bounds of time and space. It is among the final formal teachings from Jesus—a divine directive whispered from eternity: love one another.

It is the only solution for every spiritual condition that threatens to destroy peace among men and peace in the earth: love one another.

This sacred ancient refrain still guides the followers of Christ as we travel this earthly pilgrimage: love one another. It is a call to live out, here on earth, an affection born in heaven.

This command to love one another is a fervent exhortation. It is not a call to sentimentalism. In truth, it is the highest spiritual duty of man to love one another. And it is a divine precept, one without which this earth would be uninhabitable.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8). These words flow from the very heart of God. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (verse 11). This is indeed a reciprocal covenant. If

God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

This commandment binds us together as one humanity in kindness and affection. It is the embrace of a love divine. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

If there is one place this truth ought to be lived out on the earth, it ought to be in the church. For God's church, "love one another" is a divine calling and a spiritual duty.

One day a man was picking up his wife at church. When he arrived, he noticed the sign outside, which listed the Scripture text for that day's sermon: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." At the church door the man asked, "Is the service over?" An usher, who apparently had listened carefully to the pastor's sermon, responded, "The worship is over, but the service is only beginning!" Brothers and sisters, when church is over, the call from God to love one another has just begun. The worship may be over, but the service of love toward our fellow man is only just beginning.

And how do we live it out in the church?

When we show respect for one another; through service and self-sacrifice. And if love is not the badge of distinctive competence for the Christian church, the church has failed in living out its true essence and character.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies" (Matt. 5:43, 44).

The love born of heaven chooses forgiveness over revenge. Instead of a *get even* spirit and planning revenge, you show love to those who curse you; you show love to those who hate you; you show love to those who use you and those who persecute you.

To love one another is the most noble act of the human heart. And when you love God fervently and love one another completely, you fulfill and satisfy all the requirements of the law and the Ten Commandments. "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).

Let this maxim rule your thoughts, your decisions, and your actions. When you are not sure what to do, ask yourself which path shows the greatest love and care.

There in the upper room Jesus was trying to teach us that we cannot have unity in the church without loving one another. "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:10). And "let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1).

If love is not the badge of distinctive competence for the Christian church, the church has failed in living out its true essence and character.

In God's eyes a person's value has no relationship to their wealth or position on the social ladder. I believe Jesus wanted us to tell the world that no matter where we originally came from, God expects us to love one another because we are all His children. Without the outstretched hand of love and brotherhood there will be no peace.

Jesus left us this word—a word He prayed would stir us to the depths of our souls; a word He prayed would carry us soaring high above the dark clouds of fear and mistrust; a word He prayed would remind us of our common humanity and remind us that all our destinies are intertwined; a word that would help humanity combat the societal chaos He knew we would see in our day.

WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE

When Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you," He did not mean that He was adding an eleventh commandment to the 10.

No. When Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment," Jesus was saying, "I want to leave you with a fresh new understanding of a heaven-born law."

The servant of the Lord tells us that "self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven."[1] So this commandment was not new in the sense that it never existed. It was just new to us. Today we would call it a "paradigm shift" in thinking. Jesus was saying, "I want to show you the best way to live in harmony in the earth. Love one another. And as I have loved you, you must love one another."

At first glance we might say that Jesus is asking the impossible of us, for how can we truly love others the way Jesus loves us. The Bible says that while we were still sinners Jesus loved us and died for us. He loved us so much He was willing to give His life to save us.

Here's what the servant of the Lord says: "To love as Christ loved means that [1] we must practice self-control [meaning we don't speak inadvisably, and we don't act precipitously]. [2] It means that we must show unselfishness at all times and in all places. [3] It means that we must scatter round us kind words and pleasant looks. These cost the giver nothing, but they leave behind a precious fragrance. Their influence for good can not be estimated. . . . Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others."[2]

"But," the servant of the Lord continues, "while we are ever to be kind and tender, no words should be spoken that will lead a wrongdoer to think that his [wrongful] way is not objectionable to God. . . . Wrongdoers need counsel and reproof, and they must sometimes be sharply rebuked."[3]

In other words, loving one another doesn't mean that you run from the responsibility to tell the people who have been criminal and unethical, "You are wrong." Yes, you may have to tell them, in a kind and loving way. The feeling that loving others means you can't hold them accountable and chastise them kindly in love is, says Ellen White, a feeling of "sympathy [that] is earthly and deceiving."[4]

You can't feel so sorry for someone that you can't tell them when they're wrong. You don't love them if you refuse to tell them they are wrong.

And one other thing: To love others the way Christ loves us also means you focus your love and attention on those who need it most. You focus your loving attention on "the least of these." The servant of the Lord says, "God desires His children to remember that in order to glorify Him, they must bestow their affection on those who need it most."[5] And that's why I believe it is a mistake to neglect the inner-city communities of our nation, because God expects us to give love to them that need it most: the most unfortunate and the disadvantaged.

The servant of the Lord says, "Those who have the most disagreeable temperament, those who try our patience most, need our love, our tenderness, our compassion."[6] And she says, "None with whom we come in contact are to be neglected. No selfishness, in look, word, or deed, is to be manifested to our fellow beings, whatever their position, whether they be high or low, rich or poor. The love that gives kind words to only a few, while others are treated with coldness and indifference, is not love, but selfishness."[7] Moreover, to shower your affection only on your friends is "selfishness, which has no place in the life of Christ. . . . Our love is not to be sealed up for special ones. Break the bottle, and the fragrance will fill the house."[8]

Love one another.

THE WITNESS

To love as Jesus loved is a new vision of love for us because in Christ we have a new example of how to love. That's why Jesus said, "Love one another; as I have loved you." That means Jesus is not asking us to do something that He has not done Himself. As I have loved you means we need to look at how Jesus loved us and love each other like that.

Jesus loved the publicans and the sinners. He loved Nicodemus, who would meet with Him only privately at night (John 3:1-21). He loved Jerusalem. He loved the multitudes. He loved the soldiers who led Him out to Calvary. He loved those who nailed Him to the cross. He loved Judas, who betrayed Him. And He loves you, too: unfaithful, erratic, unpredictable you. You who cannot be counted on to always do what's right—He loves you, too. And He said, "Love one another; as I have loved you."

This is the badge by which the true followers of Christ will be recognized; they will love one another. And this is what would distinguish the followers of Christ from the world. That's why Ellen White says, "There is nothing that can so weaken the influence of the church as the lack of love."[9]

A friend of mine once told me that so many times we who are Christians forget that it's more important to be nice than it is to be right. And when we are right, it's even more important to be nice. And

it is more important to love than be loved.

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

We have mistakenly concluded that as followers of Christ we ought to be known by our dress, by our denominational language and God talk, and by the strength of our organization. But Jesus says, "No! I want you to be known as My children by the way you love one another."

The best sermon we can present in this selfish world is loving one another. When selfishness, pride, gossip, hypocrisy, intolerance, and strife are found among those who call themselves Christians, it brings disgrace on the church and draws the derision of the world. But show me a church where there is love, and I will show you a church that is a power in the community.

One day while strolling through the park, a preacher struck up a conversation with a soap salesman. They soon began to talk about faith and religion. The soap salesman said, "The gospel you preach doesn't seem to have done much good after 2,000 years. There is still a lot of evil and wickedness in the world."

The preacher pointed to a little boy making mud pies. He was grungy and dirty. And so the preacher said, "Well, I can see that that soap you sell hasn't done much good either. And even though it's been around for a long time, there are still a lot of dirty hands and faces."

"That's true," said the soap salesman. "But soap is effective only when it's used and when it is applied."

To which the clergyman replied, "So it is with the command to love one another. It is of no use if it is not applied."

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 19.
[2] Ellen G. White, in *The Youth's Instructor*, Apr. 12, 1900.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Ellen G. White, in *The Gospel Herald*, July 1, 1898.
[7] E. G. White, in *The Youth's Instructor*, Apr. 12, 1900.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1964), p. 153.

Wintley Phipps serves as pastor of the Palm Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florida. He is an internationally renowned vocal artist, and founder of the U.S. Dream Academy.

Show me a church where there is love, and I will show you a church that is a power in the community.



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ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL PETER N. LANDLESS

YOU'RE AWARE . . .

Now, prepare!

Q: My family is becoming concerned about the risk of another pandemic or worldwide crisis. How and when should we prepare?

A: Being aware of the risk, already offers an advantage. We are glad to help with the next step, which should start now. Preparing for a worldwide disaster is multifaceted and involves a combination of personal and community health measures. Your community includes your family, neighbors, church, workplace, or school, and the governmental jurisdictions where you live. Obviously none of us knows the nature of the next crisis, but we can take our cues from Matthew 24 to tell us what to expect. Moreover, we can't control all aspects of any of the possibilities. Still, our personal, family, and close-lying communities' health and well-being can be positively and proactively influenced regardless of the crisis.

First and foremost, seek the kingdom of God and practice a life of faithfulness. Crises often challenge us, but God *is* a pillar of strength and has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7).

STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH PRACTICES

- Daily dedicate time for prayer, Bible study, and family worship.
- Volunteer or donate to help others and reflect Christ's love.
- Learn and teach encouraging verses to hold on to during tough times (e.g., Ps. 91:1, 2; Phil. 4:6, 7).
- Create or strengthen your spiritual community to maintain fellowship even if in-person gatherings are restricted. Offer spiritual support by praying for and with others.
- Remember God's past faithfulness and trust Him during crises. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7, NIV).

STRENGTHEN PERSONAL/FAMILY PHYSICAL HEALTH (OPTIMIZE IMMUNE FUNCTION)

- Eat a balanced diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats to support your immune system.
- Regularly engage in physical activity (e.g., walking, jogging) for at least 150 minutes/week.
- Ensure seven to eight hours of sleep per night
- Drink plenty of water daily.
- Manage stress, using prayer, relaxation techniques, exercise, and companionship.
- Keep handy prescriptions and medical supplies (e.g., thermometer, common remedies, herbal and natural health products).
- Keep handy personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, N95 masks, and hand sanitizer [>60 percent alcohol]).
- Keep hygiene supplies: soap, disinfectants, tissues, and surface cleaning wipes.
- Stock nonperishable foods and water, about a two-week supply of essentials. (Opt for long-shelf-life items, such as rice, beans, canned goods, and freeze-dried foods.)
- Keep a first-aid emergency supply kit with batteries, flashlights, radio, bandages, etc.
- Get first aid and first responder training.
- Learn basic gardening skills to cultivate fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

FINANCIAL READINESS

- Emergency fund: If possible, save at least three to six months of living expenses to weather economic disruptions.

There is much more than the above to a comprehensive plan. Please consult your Adventist Community Services (ACS) team, and your state and national disaster preparedness agencies' websites. Your concern is warranted. We are living in perilous times; God wants us to be prepared and help others prepare too. Maranatha!

Zeno L. Charles-Marcel, a board-certified internist, is the director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Peter N. Landless,** a board-certified nuclear cardiologist and General Conference Adventist Health Ministries director emeritus, is also a board-certified internist.

EDITORS' PICKS



The *Daily Dose of Greek* is a resource that provides a day-by-day reminder to inspire and prod Bible students on their exegetical journeys.

Daily Dose of Greek

DailyDoseofGreek.com; platforms: Android and Apple; developer: Robert Plummer; version: free; size: 2.7MB; languages: English; Apple and Google play stores. Reviewed by Justin Kim, editor, *Adventist Review.*

Developed by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor of New Testament Robert Plummer, the *Daily Dose of Greek* in its app and website formats provides two-minute videos parsing out one verse at a time. If you are a layperson, there is a full course on biblical Greek for free, comprised of more than 20 videos of varying length. If you are someone who has some familiarity with biblical Greek, this is a great refresher tool during which the videos remind former seminary students of biblical Greek 101 and 102 course material. Since the videos are short, they are great for daily consumption, hence the name.

Plummer's videos are also available on YouTube, but the app does a better job organizing the videos by latest release, by New Testament book, and as lessons by chapter. He is careful to discuss grammar, syntax, and translation for both novices and those needing further instruction beyond the basic level. This is not a full exegesis of the verse, but discussion topics are curated from day to day to ensure that the most relevant lessons in Greek are covered.

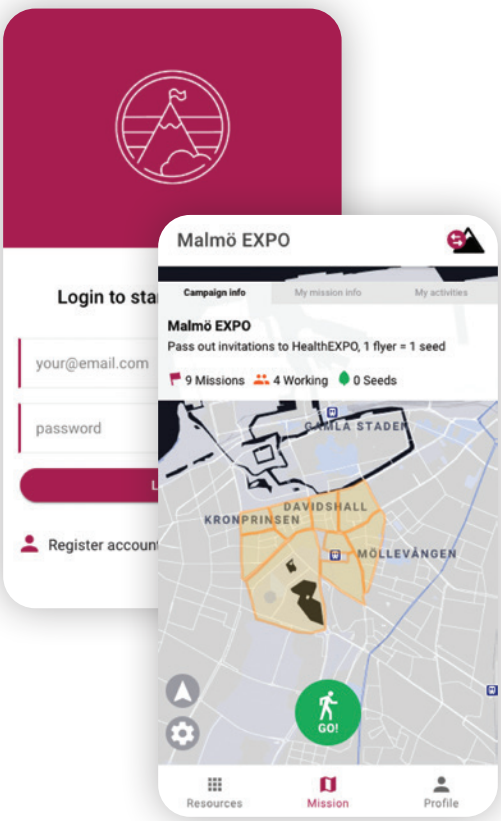
One can watch either the newest videos that are released every weekday or past completed books of the New Testament. Saturday videos typically address advanced themes or the more obscure verses. One inconvenience is that the books of the New Testament are not completed yet. Second, though most instruction is on a grammatical level, there are times evangelical commentary is provided. Most of the time there are good Christological insights and appeals, but in some instances Adventist eyebrows would be raised.

This app is not for everyone, seeing that the content is from both an evangelical and a heavily academic background. But for those who seek an advanced understanding of the original Greek New Testament, it is beneficial—especially for those who have been short on dedicated time and energy. Understanding the Scriptures in their original languages is not a calling for all. But those who attempt to do so will find great treasures along the way. The *Daily Dose of Greek* is a resource that provides a day-by-day reminder to inspire and prod Bible students on their exegetical journeys.

Mission App

MissionApp.org; platforms: Android and Apple; developer: WebbTrim; version: free; size: 29.7 MB; languages: English; Apple and Google play stores. Reviewed by Justin Kim, editor, *Adventist Review*.

The Mission app is a resource created by Seventh-day Adventists, with origins in Scandinavia. It is a platform on which outreach on a personal and community level can be organized and streamlined. The app purports that 165,000 seeds have already been sewn and that nearly 50,000 hours of evangelism have been conducted through the platform. Evidently the benefit of this app is to have tangible metrics to community outreach efforts.



Having been showcased at ASI-Scandinavia, the app coordinated various campaigns ranging from choir teams, door-to-door activity, prayer groups, children's ministries, and their health expo. The app purports to provide reports and statistics, allowing results to be measured, tracked, and improved upon.

Some other useful features are the inclusion of outreach surveys on the app itself. There are options to connect materials for a particular evangelistic activity with a campaign for multiple users to access. This provides instant distribution to those witnessing, and forgoes the inconveniences of estimating handouts and the carrying of additional resources in the field. There is also a live tracking feature to view direct progress updates. Additionally, prayer teams can pray for groups in the field in real time, even sending live messages of encouragement while workers are in neighborhoods. Pickups can be arranged by location, networking can continue with friends, and can be done through the data, all in the app.

The user creates mission campaigns, then invites other users to join the campaigns through codes. The interface style is simple and minimalistic. The minimalism, however, points to the app's potential to mature fully. When used with large-scale campaigns such as at ASI-Scandinavia, the app makes for great efficiencies. But the app is not as useful when used by an individual for personal ministry, since creating mission campaigns by individuals and local churches has yet to be realized. Users will see the evangelistic prospects of the app, perhaps being indispensable for local church outreach efforts in the future. One looks forward to potential international collaborations, more visual representations of data, and further pragmatic applications in personal ministry and event evangelism.


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CONTINUED FROM P. 72

asked. She then showed me the kit and the ingeniously designed washable sanitary napkins.

When she and her Days for Girls helpers arrived, I marveled at the spectrum of needs her message addressed: emotional, mental, physical, and even spiritual needs. With passion she assured the women of their value as she built trust and imparted confidence. Tears threatened as I helped to pass out the kits as women with hope-filled eyes eagerly reached out for one.

Thus began regular visits from CJ and her assistants. Her ministry expanded to include schools, where she also advocated for separate bathrooms to guard girls from abuse.

Then in a serious tone she asked, "Susen, why didn't you tell me that you were a Seventh-day Adventist?"

PRECIOUS SEED

Through the months CJ and I got better acquainted. Raised in a family that embraced Hinduism and Buddhism, she had always sought a deeper purpose in life, especially during her teenage years.

"My quest for meaning took a significant turn when a missionary handed me a Gideon Bible while I was in medical school," she explained. "Intrigued, I began reading it and was moved to sign my name on the last page, declaring Jesus Christ as my Savior. Through the Bible I discovered that God is a living God, which led me to stop worshipping idols." A smile brightened her expression. "I fell in love with the God of the Bible."

After forming a ministry with some friends from the hospital who were part of her home Bible study group to help children from marginalized communities, CJ quit her job as a hospital administrator to serve the children full-time. Concurrently, she volunteered as a country ambassador for the United Nations.

Though we were members of different Christian denominations, CJ and I worked together seamlessly. Our theological differences did not prevent us from finding common ground as we worked for the relief of the suffering.

At the end of our assignment, Dale and I returned home to the United States, where we picked up the retirement plans that we had put on hold for the six years we were in Nepal. At times we reflected on the many baffling, unresolved issues we had left behind in Nepal. My mind struggled to see even one person in whose life we had made a difference. It weighed heavily on my heart.

One day as I was unpacking in our new home, my phone rang. I debated whether to respond to the unknown caller.

"Hello," I said cautiously.

"Susen! It's CJ!" She sounded excited.

I gasped in surprise, "How did you get my number?"

We chattered on for a few minutes, catching up.

Then in a serious tone she asked, "Susen, why didn't you tell me that you were a Seventh-day Adventist?"

Before I could answer, I listened in amazement as CJ told me of her marriage to an American, Randall, her emigration to the United States, and their continued search for Bible truth. It had finally led them to an Adventist church, where the pastor had studied the Bible with them. They accepted all the new truths they saw in the Bible, and were baptized.

"We praise God for His love and kindness, guiding us on this incredible journey to truth and service," CJ said as we came to the end of our phone visit.

As I reflected later on this surprising outcome in CJ's life, the psalmist's words took on a sharper significance for me.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:6, KJV).

Susen Mattison Molé spent six years serving with her husband, Dale, at Scheer Memorial Adventist Hospital in Nepal. **Cathlynn Doré Law** is a mother and grandmother who writes from Idaho, USA.



SUSEN MOLÉ WITH CATHLYNN DORÉ LAW

BEARING PRECIOUS SEED

We may not always see the fruit.

I hurried in the door of our bungalow in Banepa, Nepal, with my hands full of bags of potatoes, kale, carrots, and mangosteens. As I lowered my load onto the counter, an onion spilled out and rolled across the floor. Suddenly the visual touched me with meaning. It was a fitting illustration of God's blessings poured into our lives so abundantly that sometimes they spill out.

My husband, Dale, a retired Navy doctor, had accepted an administrator position at Scheer Memorial Adventist Hospital in Nepal. Having grown up in nearby India as a "missionary kid," I felt as though I was *coming home.* The joy of serving God in this place was still vivid, and my desire to help intensified with every exposure to the suffering all around me.

MY MIND STRUGGLED TO SEE EVEN ONE PERSON IN WHOSE LIFE WE HAD MADE A DIFFERENCE.

Regularly a new situation would become the focus of my prayer as I struck out on my early-morning walk. Leaving behind the smoke of the neighbors' huts and the sounds of barking dogs in our village, I would open my heart to God.

"Lord, I know You brought us here," I would affirm. "How can we improve the struggle of the poor in this situation?" Then I would plead for Him to move the mountains of difficulty. I would return to the hospital compound with a renewed strength of purpose. Over time it became apparent that the most effective means of sharing my faith was to live the truth as it was embodied in Christ.

COLLABORATION

Early one morning I received a message that a Nepali woman had asked for an interview with me. The voice message simply identified her as CJ. I met her later that week.

"Ms. Susen, the director of nurses said you could help me," CJ said after introductions. Coming right to the point of her visit, she explained that she had heard of a terrible difficulty facing women during their menstrual cycle.

While working at a camp for female refugees, a missionary had found a woman weeping. When the weeping woman confided the reason for her grief, it struck a blow at the very integrity of their humanitarian work.

On the day of her menstrual cycle, the refugee had been told that no sanitary napkins were available. Her plight had made her a victim of a guard who offered to supply her need in exchange for sexual favors. It was a cruel irony that one who was supposed to be ensuring the woman's safety had become her self-serving taskmaster. Indignation flooded the missionary.

After comforting the refugee with the promise of a rescue from this degrading circumstance, the missionary lost no time. That very night she gathered scraps of clean material and spent hours sewing a stack of washable sanitary napkins. As she had guessed, this was not a solitary case, and her act of kindness quickly spread.

CJ, upon hearing about this tragic reality, caught a vision for an intervention. She designed kits with items for feminine hygiene and began to visit schools with her gifts. "Days for Girls Ministry" was born.

"May we come and speak to women in your hospital about Days for Girls?" CJ

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71

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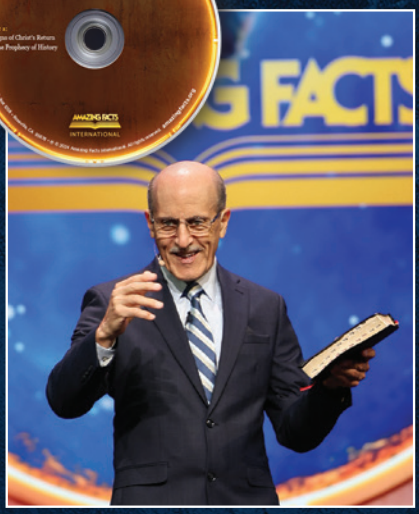


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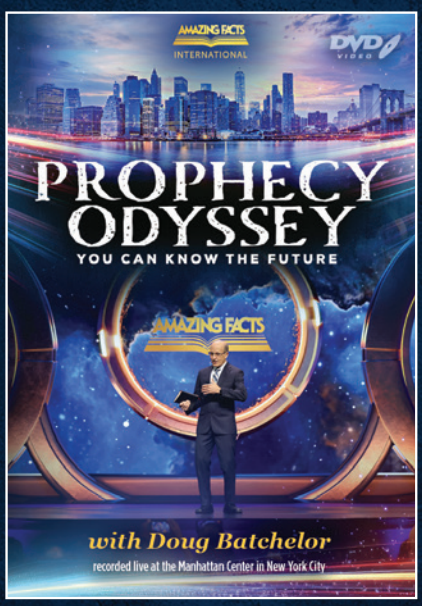
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