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A SPIRITUAL DIET + THE LAST 153 DAYS +
FROM ALIENS TO SONS + WHAT NOW?

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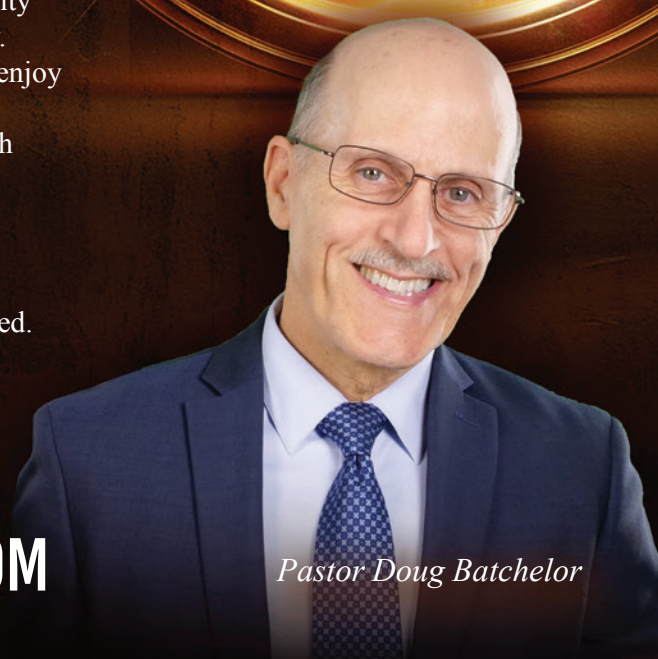
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FOUNDED 1849. PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS®

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TO WRITERS: Writer's guidelines are available at the *Adventist Review* Website: www.adventistreview.org and click "About the Review." For a printed copy, send a self-addressed envelope to: Writer's Guidelines, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

E-mail: revieweditor@gc.adventist.org.

Web site: www.adventistreview.org.

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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/subscriptions 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:

1



A Stolen Bible Raises a Church,
by David Fletcher, *Adventist Record*

2



When I Consider the Stars,
by Clifford Goldstein

3



The Tension of an Anniversary,
by Justin Kim

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What Is the Gospel?
by Ted N. C. Wilson

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Self-killing in Scripture,
by Angel Manuel Rodríguez

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SIKHULULEKILE DACO



It required effort. It was worth it!

The Editorial I Hadn't Planned

I had a different editorial planned. It was about how Adventist families are founded on a covenant that has God at its center and that, as such, worshipping together in the family circle is imperative. Then my brother died.

He was only 44 years old. He had a young family with four children aged 10 and under. He died suddenly. We are all in shock.

I was the only one of my three other siblings to make it to his bedside before they turned off his ventilator. He was our only brother. My parents could not arrange for the required travel documents in time. They all watched over Zoom.

During the pandemic, as social isolation wreaked havoc on mental health worldwide, my extended family took to gathering every Friday for family worship. Because we were in the U.S., it was in the afternoon, and our family was busy with preparation while the rest of my family, in South Africa and Zimbabwe at the time, were well into the Sabbath hours. It took some strategizing to get my children to pause their play and sit in front of a laptop as we sang and told stories, taking turns for who would lead out each week. Often, particularly in the winter, I'd have to complete my preparation of the house by early afternoon to ensure that we would have our home ready by sundown. It required effort. It was worth it!

The Sabbath School lesson study was our go-to material for the children, and eventually for the adults as well. Seeing as it was their evening worship time, most times my brother and his family would lead out the children's section of the worship. I got a sneak peek into how his family conducted their worship on a daily basis. His children knew what to do when it was time to pray (if they *always* did it is another matter entirely, but they're children). All week long they had been committing their memory verse to memory (a practice we can all still benefit from), and my brother would invite all the children to share what they had learned. You could tell that worship wasn't a one-off thing. It was part of his family's DNA.

Being in his home now as I support his family through this challenging time, I can see how central their family worship experience is to their family identity. Aside from being a focused time of instruction, it is a time of spiritual fellowship—a time to form and solidify the family ties. I sat praying for God's wisdom as in the warmth of the worship afterglow of singing, storytelling, and prayer my sister-in-*love* gently explained to the children that their father, who had been in the hospital for only one night, would not be coming home again. The space to have difficult conversations already existed through the practice of consistent family worship.

The pandemic gifted my family with the impetus to connect in worship on a weekly basis. As we, the adults, wrestled through texts in the adult Sabbath School lesson, we came to know each other better on a spiritual plane. As we shared prayer requests that we prayed over throughout the following week, our hearts were knit together with eternal ties. While I knew my siblings and parents were churchgoing Adventists, gathering together the way we did during the pandemic turned them into brothers and sisters in Christ. Although it is only God who can read the heart, I am not worried about my brother's eternal destiny, because, through our times of family worship, I came to know him as a faithful Christian man.

The bonds formed through years of worship together are, in this time of grief, a source of comfort and strength. No one would wish this pain on another, but every Christian family deserves the consolation of close family ties rooted in the worship of a God who is faithful.

INBOX

THE BEST!

If you check your records, you will discover that I have read hundreds of *Adventist Reviews*. When I proclaim this *Review* (June 2024) was the best, believe it! I was particularly impressed by the Adventist Health Update. Even Clifford Goldstein's contribution was encouraging, thoughtful, and inspiring! Wow!

Andrew Hanson



INSPIRING ARTICLE

I was really inspired by the article "The Anatomy of Prayer," by Kenneth Crawford (June 2024), and His daily connection with the Lord "waiting at the gates of the divine temple for an audience with my Creator." What a privilege we have, as feeble human beings, to open our hearts to our Creator, sharing with Him our sorrows, our daily plans, and receive the assurance that no matter what happens, He will be there for us! It is indeed very hard to explain. That's why Paul says that we should "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

Leo Ranzolin

RIGHTEOUS ANGER

With respect to John Peckham's article "Angry God?" (June 2024), yes, love and anger are not mutually exclusive. You can be angry because you love someone. As a therapist who works with anger, I realize that many people don't know how to handle their anger in a loving way. Because of that, we oftentimes neutralize our anger and then end up with passive churches that don't express righteous anger when there are injustices going on around us.

Thomas Luttrell

I believe some anger is justified in this world of sin.

Mary Elling

Happy to see this subject addressed in the *Adventist Review* in John Peckham's article "Angry God?" (June 2024). I struggled with this subject until I read more on this topic at www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org.

Seth Amankwah

NOT ALL SURVIVE

The court system often reabuses mothers and children, as in the case in Gina Wahlen's article "My Father and Your Father" (June 2024). I am glad Gina came through with her faith intact. Her mother deserves all the accolades.

Debra Ball Hann

I do wish that my testimony was like the one in Gina Wahlen's article "My Father and Your Father" (June 2024). I came from a hateful family who never read the Bible, never went to church, never accepted the real God of Scripture, yet claim that they prayed for me for decades, and now reject me for my faith. . . . Some of us have had to endure

What a privilege we have, as feeble human beings, to open our hearts to our Creator.

LEO RANZOLIN

the rebuke of our own fathers and mothers because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. I pray that's not you, friend.

Chip Douglas

THOUGHT-PROVOKING!

Clifford Goldstein's article "A Dissent From Deep Time" (June 2024) is very interesting and thought-provoking!

Carina Gisela Ramos

NICE SABBATH AFTERNOON READING

Michael Campbell's article "The Wright Connection" (June 2024) is an interesting article and nice light Sabbath-afternoon reading.

Ellen Watters

I question whether the evidence supports the claim that camp meetings are a major evangelistic tool today, even if they were in the past. As I experienced them as a child growing up in central California, they were simply a source of spiritual enrichment for Seventh-day Adventist members, to include those who were elderly and made the camp meeting circuit, coming to Soquel from distant places.

It may have been true in the time of Ellen White that camp meetings were a good evangelistic tool. But that does not mean that they would still be a good evangelistic tool 100 years later. Ellen White's advice was often time-focused and not predictive for many future decades later. As a former Adventist congregational pastor, I cannot recall any baptisms that occurred because of attendance at a camp meeting. In short, our evangelistic efforts today should be focused on what is demonstrated to obtain results, and not on what worked 100 years earlier, unless demonstrated to work today.

Gregory Matthews

TOTAL VEGETARIANS LIVE LONGER

I actually took part in this study reported in "Adventist Health Update" (June 2024) and am delighted to see these results. Total vegetarians live longer, but the fish-eating ones have fewer neurological challenges, such as dementia and Parkinson's, in the later years.

Gloria B. Dorsey

FINISHING FAITHFULLY

What a neat story and also bizarre to my Western mind that is found in "Finishing Faithfully," by Justin Kim (adventistreview.org, posted June 1). Glad Kanakuri didn't go kamikaze on his life after the Olympics. So curious as to how he was as a teacher. So. Many. Questions. But I digress. Thank you for the lesson on enduring to the end!

Ellen Cho

AWESOME SERMONETTE

Merle Poirier's article "Martha or Mary?" (May 2024) is an awesome sermonette.

Lewis Lubungo

A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TIME OF TROUBLE

Regarding the review of "Love Is! A Journey of Grief, Grace, and Gratitude," by Frank M. Hasel (May 2024), I have walked this horrifying walk also and found God, as always, to be "a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

Jennifer Philippiadis

YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.

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"Our God is big and faithful, and we need to be faithful and have big visions and plans for Him."
Robert Dulay, p. 15

NEWS



Part of the production team films the presenter of the program during one of his segments at Chetumal Bay in March 2024. PHOTO: LIZBETH ELEJALDE/IAD

A MISSION TRIP PROMPTS U.S. AND MEXICAN STUDENTS TO PRODUCE A TV SERIES

MONTEMORELOS UNIVERSITY AND SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY JOIN FORCES FOR THE FIRST TIME.

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

When a mission trip was planned in 2023 for a group of students from Southern Adventist University (SAU) in Tennessee, United States, to preach the gospel in southeast Mexico, the idea to document their experience quickly emerged.

The trip, which included 24 students, was organized by SAU's School of Theology, with film professors from SAU and Montemorelos University in northern Mexico. The organizers talked about how to tell visually their first experience preaching the gospel.

Pablo Fernández, media producer and assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at SAU, said that he has always had the desire to create an opportunity for students to be exposed to a new cultural experience as they serve the church. "I wanted them to understand how an audiovisual production is done in other places," he said. When he found out about an upcoming mission trip at SAU, he knew it was the chance to accomplish that.

Fernández, who has produced several television series for Hope Channel Inter-America, contacted Abel Márquez, executive director of Hope Channel Inter-America, with the production idea for the trip, and the wheels started turning. "God blessed this purpose for the project, and collaboration began with the television production leaders in Montemorelos University," Fernández said. The idea drew

the support of Hope Channel Inter-America and landed a "short television series" spot on the television network.

"We couldn't let this opportunity pass to produce evangelistic content for our television channel, and in addition provide students from two universities a platform that will for sure enrich their formation as Christian producers," Márquez said. "When we unite, we optimize efforts and are stronger in our mission."

The production team included four communication and media students from Montemorelos University and five from SAU, who documented the journey of SAU students taking part before, during, and after the mission trip experience in Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico, March 7-17.

"The mission trip was an opportunity that provided a practical learning environment for [the production team] as well as cultural and spiritual enrichment," said Jorge André Diaz, film professor at Montemorelos University and production director of the Chetumal Project. "The series will highlight in a different way how the gospel is shared, and not only what takes place in front of the camera but what takes place behind the camera."

Coined as Proyecto Chetumal, the series is narrated by Ruben Díaz Quetz, a theology student from Montemorelos University and program presenter, who introduces the experiences of the missionary students and highlights the subjects presented during the evangelistic week in Chetumal, a city bordering Mexico with Belize. "This program has been an invaluable opportunity to motivate other young people to live the experience of being missionaries and also share messages of hope not only with Chetumal but the whole world," Quetz said.

The 20-minute episodes will include the topics of the Ten Commandments; the seventh-day Sabbath; baptism; why so much suffering; and what happens after death, among others.

For Bernardo Medina, communication and media student at Montemorelos University, who served as project cameraman, it was an unforgettable experience. "The filming days were one of the most significant experiences I have had during my studies, because it allowed me to work in a real production and interact with teachers and students from the United States with the same purpose of service."

Briana Cabriales, a nursing student from SAU, who was among those who preached at a local church, said she had an incredible experience. "Church members were so loving and made me feel like part of the family. We were able to connect with visitors, and that allowed me to see how God can work with each one of us if we put our talents to good use."

The mission group took part in daily devotionals, trainings, group feedback, and preparation sessions for the topics that would be preached in the local churches every evening.

Because of the efforts by the team of 33 students—preachers, pastors, professors, and the production staff—62 baptisms took place at the end of the evangelistic series, Juan Carlos González, secretary of the Adventist Church's South Quintana Roo Mission, reported. González thanked the group for supporting them in the mission and inspiring local young people to engage in similar evangelistic projects in the future.

The cross-cultural production experience worked extremely well, Fernández said. "It was all we imagined and wanted. We created teams that mixed students from each university and rotated them daily, which allowed both groups to produce under different leadership and visual language styles," he explained. At the end of the day, the team got together during a meal and shared experiences, he said. "All involved came to the table with a team-spirit mindset. We are here to help each other to take the gospel being preached in Chetumal and beyond the territory."

The preproduction of the project began in October 2023, said Lizbeth Elejalde, program director of Hope Channel Inter-America and supervisor of Proyecto Chetumal. The series, which it is currently being edited, is expected to air in early October 2024.

TV NETWORK EMPLOYEES GO TO SERVE IN THE AMAZON

PROJECT HELPS THEM REACH AN ISOLATED COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN BRAZIL.

GABRIELA FRONTINI, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*



A group of Novo Tempo employees traveled to an isolated Amazon village to do volunteer work. PHOTO: SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

The goal of the Novo Tempo Communication Network is to preach about the Bible on various media channels such as television, radio, and the Internet. But there is another option by which the network employees can engage directly with people: through an initiative called Novo Tempo in Mission.

This initiative is responsible for promoting projects on different fronts to serve the local community and also with mission trips. Novo Tempo's headquarters are in Jacareí, in the interior of São Paulo, Brazil. Since the beginning of 2024 a group of volunteers from the network has visited children's homes, set up prayer tents, visited a prison, and delivered donations in the city and surrounding municipalities, Novo Tempo leaders reported.

On June 7 a group of 32 employees of Novo Tempo traveled to Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, in northern Brazil, to work on the Salva Vidas Amazonas project, of the Northwest Missions Institute. The institute is an initiative of the Northwest Brazil Union Conference, the administrative office of the Adventist Church in that area.

The group of Novo Tempo employees was made up of representatives from various departments such as TV, Radio, Web, Marketing, Bible School, and Technology. The 32 people arrived on Friday, June 7, and sailed for 12 hours by boat on the Mipindiaú Creek, which is a branch of the Rio Negro, toward the Nova Jerusalem community, where other mission initiatives have already taken place.

COMMUNITY SERVICE IN THE AREA

Volunteers carried out several projects, including the manufacturing of 550 concrete blocks for the expansion of the local church building. They put coats of paint on both the inside and outside of the church. The group organized a health fair, evangelism meetings for adults, and another series of meetings for children.

Organizers also reported that Novo Tempo volunteers distributed food baskets and made mission visits to the community, among other initiatives.

For mission group leader William Silvestre, "it was a dream come true to be part of the team and live this experience of service." According to him, actions like this reinforce the sense of mission of those who participate.

"This project helped me to relearn the value of gratitude for the small details, which often go unnoticed in our daily lives," Novo Tempo TV producer Jocemara Mai said. "I was able to see up close, in practice, that happiness can be found in the little things. Now, returning home, I bring with me a lot of learning and the feeling that the mission continues, right here, in my home, in my community, in my church . . . bringing a message of hope in the soon second coming of Jesus."

Jeferson Queiroz da Silva works in the One for Christ project at the Northwest Missions Institute. He spoke about the satisfaction of hosting the group for this special project. "For us it was very good to welcome the people of Novo Tempo here in our community," da Silva said. "They came with a strong desire to serve. Residents will never forget these days."

The group returned from the trip on June 16 and are already dreaming of their next mission, organizers said.



Ted N. C. Wilson (right), General Conference president, preaches as Jonatan Contero interprets in Fuenlabrada, Madrid, Spain, on June 14.
PHOTO: MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

"GOD IS CALLING YOU BACK TO THE ALTAR FOR MISSION SERVICE"

SPAIN CHURCH MEMBERS GATHER TO WORSHIP AND RECOMMIT TO MISSION.

MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

Moments of praise and congregational singing, study of God's Word, prayer, and even a dramatic sketch marked the opening program of the Back to the Altar national congress of the Spanish Union of Churches Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SUC) in Fuenlabrada, Madrid, Spain, on June 14.

The event, cosponsored by the SUC and Safeliz Publishing House June 14-16, drew more than 4,000 church members and leaders on behalf of the more than 19,000 baptized members across the country for a weekend of spiritual renewal and commitment, event organizers said. Thousands more from across Spain and other countries followed the livestreamed event through the church's official media channels. Hearing-impaired people could also enjoy simultaneous sign language interpretation throughout the program.

"Even though this is a national congress, it is a Back to the Altar event, going back to the arms of Jesus," cohost Esther Azon said. "And we'll do it together, because we are family."

GETTING CLOSER TO GOD AND HIS WORD

Spanish Union Conference president Oscar Lopez celebrated the opportunity for members to meet together, after a previous congress planned for 2020 had to be canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our wish is to be finally together, to reclaim our faith, to go back to the altar as a family that perseveres in faith, and to make our homes a place to pray and get together around God's Word," Lopez said.

Safeliz general manager Mario Martinelli agreed. "Our first goal here is to come closer to God through a life dedicated to Him," he said. "God has a plan for us and longs for us to stay close to Him and His Word."

Martinelli explained that when we gather around God's Word, His Word transforms us and moves us into action. "Faithfulness to God's Word drives us to fulfill God's purpose and mission for our families and as a church," he emphasized.

As the first speaker of the evening, Jonatan Tejel, Inter-European Division youth director, emphasized that "there's no fear, guilt, hurt, or defect that a new birth in Jesus won't repair." He added, "And there's nothing more impressive than witnessing someone being transformed by God." Likewise, the new birth furnishes us with a new identity. "When we are born again, we are born into a family," Tejel said. "And now we belong to God because Jesus calls us to accept a new identity rooted in Him."

GOING BACK, GOING OUT

Then Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference president, called Adventist members and leaders to remember the significance of the moment and the Back to the Altar initiative.

Going back to the altar, he reminded those present, is truly a missionary endeavor. "When we speak about going back to a relationship with Jesus through Bible study, a personal prayer connection, and through understanding God's instructions through the Spirit of Prophecy, we do it for one reason," Wilson said. "Because God wants to use each one of you in this great country to lift up Jesus, His precious three angels' messages, and His soon second coming."

He emphasized the missional purpose of "going back to the altar" several times. "To come in prayer and study to God [has been the goal and] then sending us to our mission to the world," Wilson said. "God is calling you to come back to the altar to then go out in mission service. . . . When we are called back to the altar and to God, we are then sent by the Holy Spirit to touch the lives of people and tell them that Jesus is coming."



International participants in the 2024 Dino Dig Experience led by Southwestern Adventist University.
PHOTO: GEOSCIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

DINO DIG HELPS ADVENTIST RESEARCHERS RECONCILE SCIENTIFIC PURSUITS WITH FAITH

SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE CONNECTS INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS.

EMERAUDE VICTORIN TOBIAS, FAITH AND SCIENCE COUNCIL

For many, the pull of uncovering ancient relics and the mysteries of the past is an irresistible draw. Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU), a Seventh-day Adventist school in Keene, Texas, offers a unique opportunity to step back in time with its Dino Dig Experience, a dinosaur excavation research project in the Lance Formation of eastern Wyoming.

This program, held annually in June, brings together students, families, and international participants to uncover and study dinosaur fossil remains.

The Dino Dig Experience is not just a summer activity but also an accredited course students at SWAU can take for academic credit. The hands-on experience in the field provides a practical extension to classroom learning, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting. The excavation site offers an unparalleled opportunity to study Cretaceous dinosaur bones in their natural context.

AN INTERNATIONAL GATHERING

In 2024 the Dino Dig Experience was indeed a global affair, featuring eight international participants from Brazil, Chile, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Kenya, and Mexico. Among them was Nelson Llempen, a recent geology graduate from the University of Concepción in Chile. Llempen's journey to the Dino Dig is a testament to the power of passion and perseverance.

Llempen has long been fascinated by dinosaurs and geology, a passion nurtured from childhood. His journey began with an online conference for teachers in South America, which he attended despite not being a teacher himself but a geology student. His active participation led to an invitation to an online forum. This forum opened doors for further opportunities, including research trips to Bolivia and Brazil.

In August 2023 Llempen completed a three-week internship at the GRI, which solidified his aspirations.

BRIDGING FAITH AND SCIENCE

For Llempen the Dino Dig Experience is more than just an opportunity to unearth fossil bones; it is a chance to reconcile his scientific pursuits with his faith. Raised as an Adventist, Llempen has always been interested in how geological evidence can be harmonized with the biblical narrative. The Dino Dig provides a platform for him to explore these questions in a community that shares his values and interests.

The Dino Dig Experience is also a hub for networking and collaboration. Participants like Llempen have the chance to work alongside experienced scientists and fellow enthusiasts, sharing ideas and forging connections that can lead to future research opportunities. Llempen sees this as a vital aspect of the program, emphasizing the need for more outreach and collaboration in creationism. He also said he hopes to contribute his knowledge of rocks and sediments to the team, enhancing their understanding of the fossils they uncover.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As Llempen prepares to start his master's degree in geology at Loma Linda University this fall, he reflects on the Dino Dig Experience as a pivotal moment in his academic and spiritual journey. The program has provided him with invaluable field experience, deepened his understanding of geological processes, and connected him with a network of like-minded individuals.

The Dino Dig Experience at SWAU is more than just an excavation project; it is a transformative adventure that brings together people from diverse backgrounds to uncover the past, explore scientific questions from a biblical foundation, and build a community of faith and learning. For participants like Llempen, it is a stepping-stone to a future in which their passions and beliefs coexist and thrive.



Workers in Native American ministries from several church regions and their families gathered at Camp Yavapines in Prescott, Arizona. PHOTO: ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

LOCAL CHURCHES INCREASE RADIO BROADCASTING TO NAVAJO NATION

ADVENTISTS WORK ACROSS REGIONAL LINES TO REACH THE RESERVATION.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE COMMUNICATION

For the past five years a group of lay and pastoral leaders of the Navajo Nation in the United States have been working across conference lines to develop an FM radio network known as Diné Adventist Radio (DAR) to share the Adventist message of hope, wholeness, and healing with the Navajo people, whose name for themselves is "Diné."

The Navajo Nation is the largest Native American reservation with the largest indigenous population in North America, with territory that includes portions of four Seventh-day Adventist conferences in three union conferences. Most of the Navajo people follow traditional ways and are unreached by the Adventist message.

Since August 2020, a 30-minute weekly broadcast on the Navajo Tribal radio station has generated hundreds of Bible study requests and even led some individuals to baptism. These weekly programs are produced on a monthly rotation by Native-oriented Adventist congregations on and around the Navajo Reservation, including the Waterflow Adventist Church in Waterflow, New Mexico, and the LaVida Mission Adventist Church in Farmington, New Mexico. The goal is to be on the air across the Navajo Nation 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has already issued three full-power construction permits for stations that will cover much of the Navajo population, but there was a gap in the northeast section, the portion in the Rocky Mountain Conference (RMC). Last fall the FCC announced they were opening a rare "application window" for low-power FM radio stations. These stations must be owned and operated by an incorporated local nonprofit organization. According to FCC rules, Adventist churches don't qualify as "local nonprofit" organizations because they are owned by the conference.

In response to this opportunity, members of the Waterflow and Farmington churches explored creative ways of applying for LPFM licenses. The Waterflow church already had a qualifying local nonprofit organization, and they used it to successfully apply for an LPFM station.

A group of Farmington church members created a new nonprofit called Bisti Broadcasting and successfully applied for a low-power station to be located at the Piñon Hills Adventist Church in Farmington, New Mexico. "We are excited to engage in establishing radio programming to be broadcast from our Piñon church," Karen Bowen, coordinator of the project, said.

Remarking on the local broadcasting project, Allen Steele, member of the Adventist World Radio board of directors and advisor to the Navajo Radio Network, said, "Members of two Rocky Mountain churches took this step so that the Navajo people in the Four Corners can hear God's last-day message." When broadcasting begins in Farmington, it will reach some 12,000 Native American residents of the area.

Each group has three years to reach the point of being on the air, but they hope to accomplish this stage much sooner. The goal is to be broadcasting live and full-time on KDHP 91.9 FM, the 100,000-watt flagship station at the heart of the reservation, by November 1.

The network is planned to include as many as seven stations plus worldwide streaming on the Internet, reaching the majority of the Navajo Nation population. The network office and main studio will be located at the Gallup All Nations Adventist Church in Gallup, New Mexico.



Saw Samuel (left) and Hiroshi Yamaji arrive in Nepal on June 10. PHOTO: HIMALAYAN SECTION

SECRETARIAT TEAM VISITS THE HIMALAYAN SECTION

LEADERS ASSESS INSTITUTIONS TO BETTER SUPPORT MISSION.

UMESH KUMAR POKHAREL AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

Saw Samuel, associate secretary of the General Conference (GC), and Hiroshi Yamaji, secretary of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), visited the Himalayan Section of the Adventist Church from June 10 to 16.

It was the first visit of the secretariat team from the GC and the NSD after Nepal was transferred to the administrative area of the NSD. The goal of the visit was to better understand the Adventist Church's activities in Nepal, church leaders said.

Three mission institutions in Nepal are serving under the world church to fulfill its mission. These include the Scheer Memorial Hospital, a pioneering health-care institution in Nepal; the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Nepal, engaged in social work in collaboration with the government of Nepal; and the Himalayan Section, the regional church office directly involved in spreading the everlasting gospel, teaching and preaching about Christ and leading people from darkness to light.

On June 10 Samuel and Yamaji arrived and spent a week extensively studying the situation in Nepal. They visited several entities, met with leaders, and spent time with youth and church members. On June 11 they visited the Himalayan Section office, met with leaders, shared God's words, and encouraged section leaders and workers to keep fulfilling God's mission. On the same day, they visited ADRA Nepal, learned about ADRA activities, and discussed plans.

A day later the team visited Scheer Memorial Hospital, met its leaders, and learned about its operations. They also attended the inaugural gathering of the youth leadership camp organized by the Youth Department of the Himalayan Section. The event's main speakers were Ho Young Choi and Hyun Tae Kim, youth directors of the NSD and the Korean Union Conference, respectively, under the theme "The Love of Christ Compels Us."

In an opening message of the youth leadership camp, Samuel outlined seven important pieces of advice given by Paul to Timothy, emphasizing the essential traits that young people need to fulfill their God-given task. Yamaji offered a special prayer, asking God to grant success to the camp initiative.

On June 14 Samuel, Yamaji, and Robert Dulay, Adventist World Radio (AWR) director in the Asia-Pacific region, left Kathmandu and traveled seven hours on a rough road to a remote mountain village, where they helped to inaugurate a newly built church. The church started a few years ago through contact with AWR listeners.

The new church is located in a remote mountainous village with a dozen families who became Seventh-day Adventists through the radio program *The Voice of Hope*. The villagers, who live simple and humble lives, face very difficult circumstances, leaders reported.

Samuel preached a sermon that outlined three principles: Relax, Release, and Rely. He encouraged the villagers with these principles, stating that they are the keys to success, no matter the circumstances.

The newly built church was inaugurated jointly by the three guests and was dedicated by Yamaji. Speakers expressed their gratitude to those who helped to build the church, which included donors from the United States.

Dulay addressed members and church leaders, emphasizing the faithfulness of God and encouraging them to have big visions and plans for Him.

"Our God is big and faithful, and we need to be faithful and have big visions and plans for Him," Dulay said. "Let us not limit our God and ourselves." He added, "We thank God for His providence in our lives. . . . It was God who raised a group of believers and established His church."



Arne P. Nielsen, NAD education vice president, passed away unexpectedly on June 3. PHOTO: NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

CHURCH LEADERS REMEMBER ARNE NIELSEN AFTER HIS SUDDEN DEATH

EXPERIENCED AND VISIONARY EDUCATOR DIED ON JUNE 3 AT 64.

KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, AND AIMEE LEUKERT, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

Arne P. Nielsen, vice president for the Office of Education for the North American Division (NADOE), passed to his rest on June 3 after several days in the intensive-care unit dealing with complications from an acute illness. He was 64.

"We have lost a tremendous servant of God, a great leader, a true friend, a devoted husband and father," NAD president G. Alexander Bryant said upon hearing the news of Nielsen's death. "We especially lift up his wife, Teen, and three sons—Josh, Jake, and Jesse—and offer to this family our most sincere condolences. Though our hearts are broken, we look forward to seeing Arne again."

"Our hearts are heavy and burdened with the news that Arne Nielsen died early this morning," General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson wrote in a communication to world church leaders. Wilson, who knew Nielsen's parents when they were missionaries, continued: "Arne Nielsen was a very committed educator dedicated to the wonderful spiritual asset of Adventist education. . . . What hope we have in Jesus' soon return!"

In November 2018 Nielsen was voted to serve as the division's vice president for education, a role he fulfilled until his unexpected death. Previously he served as the NAD director of secondary education and accreditation from 2014 to 2018.

Larry Blackmer, retired NAD vice president for education, said, "Arne's gift was in collaboration. He had an open-mindedness that allowed him to strengthen relationships and really build the team at the NADOE. During his time at the NAD he connected with people, with key stakeholders, and really got them to buy into his vision."

A lifelong educator, Nielsen thought that the best way to make the most of the students' potential was by relying on God to lead, building trust and buy-in from educators, developing instructional leaders at the school level, and creating a differentiated system that provides resources and support for educators to grow and flourish.

"Arnie was an easy, informal, comfortable person to work with. He also had a good sense of humor that made our relationship enjoyable," said Gordon Bietz, retired Southern Adventist University president and retired NAD associate director for higher education. "His legacy enriched education worldwide."

Nielsen was born in Ghana, West Africa, to missionary parents from Denmark, and his early years in the mission field instilled in him a love of service, a heart for mission, and the ability to connect with people from all walks of life.

He landed his first teaching job at Mount Pisgah Academy (MPA) in North Carolina in 1983. He taught physical education, health, and biology lab; coached gymnastics; and served as a boys' dean. He eventually served as MPA principal from 1991 to 1996. In 1996 the Nielsen family moved to Africa, where Nielsen spent seven years as principal and business manager for Maxwell Adventist Academy in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 2020, while working for the NAD, Nielsen earned his Ph.D. in leadership from Andrews University.

Kyoshin Ahn, NAD secretary, said that "Arne Nielsen was a Christian gentleman and a respected colleague. . . . He touched the lives of many and brought people together for a common cause."

Arne is survived by his wife, Teen, who has partnered with him in life for more than 40 years; and three sons: Josh, Jake, and Jesse (Noora).



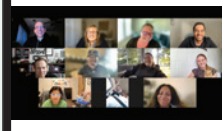
U.S. PARALYMPICS CYCLING PARTNERS WITH LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH. These two organizations announced the PossAbilities U.S. Paralympics cycling time trial, the only domestic qualifying race leading up to the Paralympic Games Paris 2024. This event took place on Sunday, July 7, in Loma Linda, California, and featured more than 40 participants across the nation vying for a chance to represent Team USA. The event represents a significant milestone in PossAbilities' commitment to promoting para sports and fostering a supportive environment for elite athletes on the pathway to the Paralympics.



NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE INSPIRES INNOVATION IN ONLINE MINISTRY. More than 200 people gathered in Auckland, New Zealand, to explore innovative ways to use technology for spreading the gospel and building community at the Digital Discipleship Conference held from June 21 to 23. Workshops and presentations covered such topics as leveraging technology for digital discipleship, enhancing church communication and online presence, effective website planning, video production, using artificial intelligence, Instagram growth strategies, podcasting, and harnessing digital tools for community engagement and ministry.



ADVENTIST HOSPITAL IN INDONESIA BREAKS GROUND FOR NEW MEDICAL FACILITY. On May 16 Manado Adventist Hospital (Rumah Sakit Advent Manado, RSAM) in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, held a groundbreaking ceremony for its new Building C. This event marked the start of the third phase in the hospital's ongoing expansion of its medical facilities. The ceremony took place at the RSAM compound in Manado. The project underscores RSAM's dedication to enhancing service and care through its healing ministries.



NAD CHURCH LEADERS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CHAT TO FIND COMMON GROUND. Leaders of the North American Division met with student leaders from universities across the division on May 15. Eight students represented Adventist and non-Adventist campuses. The meeting was composed mainly of questions posed to the students, specifically focused on their experience as young adults in the church. Several topics were addressed, and students expressed their opinions and frustrations openly and freely, yet stressed that it came from a place of intense care and hope.



MULTICULTURAL NIGHT RAISES FUNDS FOR MISSION TRIP TO TONGA. More than 1,000 people attended a recent multicultural night at Macarthur Adventist College, a secondary school in Macquarie Fields, New South Wales, Australia. The event raised more than $13,300 for the school's year-11 service trip to Beulah Adventist College, in Tonga. The project will involve renovating Beulah Adventist College classrooms, running a youth and outreach program, and providing essential items to the community. Twenty-seven students will be embarking on the mission trip.



FOUR CONFERENCES IN BANGLADESH PROMOTE INCREASED CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT. The Children's Ministries Department in the Bangladesh Union Mission collaborated with the regional missions in its territory to facilitate the Mission-Wide Children's Bible Conference. More than 2,655 children attended the conferences. The events focused on the importance of Bible studies and Bible stories for helping children to grow and learn in Jesus Christ. It inspired them to lead a life of devotion and service that reflects their Christlike character. During the conferences 65 participants were baptized.

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ONE MEAL IS NOT ENOUGH

Why family worship is key to nurturing the family life of faith

MARCOS PASEGGI

Imagine for a moment that one day you decide to go on a diet. *From now on*, you tell yourself, *I will fast every single Sabbath*. The following week you start your plan. You eat a balanced abundant diet for six days, and then fast on the Sabbath. The second week you do the same. And so forth and so on. What do you think might be the results? You might stop looking forward to the Sabbath hours, but otherwise, you will survive and perhaps even thrive by fasting one day a week.

Now imagine that you decide to implement a more drastic approach. *I'm going to stuff myself with food every Sabbath*, you tell yourself, *and then I'll fast for six days each week*. I probably don't need to tell you that such a course of action may lead to your eventual demise. No one can survive eating one day a week long-term.

Many of us, however, try to follow a similar approach regarding spiritual nurture. We stuff ourselves each Sabbath, assuming the spiritual food will

last until the next Sabbath we worship. Is it surprising, then, we don't get the spiritual results we are aiming for?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

The transmission of the knowledge of God and its implications for living on this earth were the center of family unit dynamics in ancient Israel. Teaching within a family setting was not theoretical but led to an experience of daily connection with God through praise and prayer. "From generation to generation we will proclaim your praise," wrote Asaph (Ps. 79:13, NIV).

This connection between older and younger generations was a natural part of regular interactions between parents and children. The teaching could sometimes take place in a formal setting, but often would happen in the everyday environment of the home or everyday experiences. God-fearing parents were supposed to summon their children and initiate moments of worship and reflection. But parents also had to be ready to answer their children's questions whenever they arose, as in the case of the yearly Passover celebration: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'" (Ex. 13:14).

Another important aspect of intergenerational teaching in Israel is that it did not happen in a vacuum. Teaching your children and grandchildren was part of a historical and theological continuum, a small but important part to play in God's plan of salvation. In the case of Israel, the passing of God's instructions to the next generation was a given, a key element for the ongoing survival of God's people. Its goal was straightforward: "So that you, your children, and your children's children may revere the Lord your God and follow, as long as you live, all His laws and commandments . . . to the end that you may long endure" (Deut. 6:2, Tanakh).[1] People can be motivated to obey out of fear or love. God is suggesting that teaching children His law and requirements might motivate everyone—both parents and children—to obey out of love.

At the same time, it is important to note that teaching one's children would be preceded by a series of presuppositions about God and "homework"—that parents would have previously learned and understood before even thinking of starting their children's "classes." This is not unique to Israel. These prerequisites are essential for anyone who wishes to engage in a formal or informal system of sharing God's knowledge to younger generations.

For a committed parent, any instance at home, out in nature, or in the marketplace can become an opportunity to impress a lesson on younger minds.

KNOWING WHO GOD IS

After God outlined the goal and the results of paying heed to His teachings—"Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly" (verse 3, Tanakh)—He pronounced the words that became the most well-known confession for Jewish people even today. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (verse 4). Or: "The Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (Tanakh).

This is not a discussion of Trinitarians versus anti-Trinitarians. The focus is on the uniqueness of God. Simply put, there is none like Him (see Jer. 10:6). "All the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 96:5). Or as a thankful Hannah acknowledged in 1 Samuel 2: "There is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God" (verse 2).

Even before formal or informal teaching takes place, parents must grasp the biblically based idea of who God is. He is the Creator God, who not only created but has subsequently sustained and protected His people on their journey. "He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes" (Deut. 10:21, NLT).[2] Thus, any divine

PHOTO: EDDIESTOCK / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

requirement, any commandment, any future transmission of those requirements and teachings to the next generation is grounded in the character of this God, who "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25).

Acknowledging the uniqueness of God is a worthy first step. It is not, however, an end in and of itself. On the contrary, it should move the believer to engage with that unique God in a unique way.

ENGAGING WITH GOD

Once the believer acknowledges the uniqueness of God, God Himself calls His people to love Him with all they are and have. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5). Unlike the Greek notion of gods well beyond the comprehension of human earthlings, forever detached, forever unreachable, God calls His people to engage with Him in a loving relationship framed

Two Novel Bible Editions for Family Worship

These volumes were introduced at a church congress in Spain.

MARCOS PASEGGI

Church leaders and members attending the Spanish Union of Churches Conference national congress in Fuenlabrada, Madrid, Spain, participated in a special dedication ceremony on June 15. Safeliz Publishing House leaders introduced and dedicated to God two new editions of the Bible: The Praise and Worship Bible and the Maranatha Study Bible. Although first published in Spanish, English and Portuguese versions will soon follow. Both editions can be powerful resources to underpin family worship, publishers said.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP BIBLE

This Bible includes 210 biblical songs with lyrics that include selected verses from the Bible. Each song reviews the verses, characters, and most well-known biblical events from Genesis to Revelation. They are available in video format by accessing QR codes.

The songs, which include the scores and professional production and musical arrangements, were written by composer Liliam Martinelli using various musical styles "to help children, teenagers, young people, and adults to memorize God's Word through song." Also, the Bible includes an index, which, among other data, allows you to search for songs to use as a solo, in duet, trio, quartet, or choir.

The Praise and Worship Bible also includes hundreds of devotional readings that, according to publishers, make family worship "easy, attractive, and relevant."

MARANATHA STUDY BIBLE

"It has been called the Maranatha Bible, because our greatest hope is the second coming of Jesus," Safeliz general manager Mario Martinelli said. The Maranatha Bible "is the result of a project that has taken more than 10 years of hard work," he added. "More than 100 Adventist theologians have contributed, not only compiling but also developing the resources included here."

Safeliz leaders explained that this Bible has the goal of helping church members go deeper into the study of God's Word. "It includes study notes and insightful articles divided into different categories."

The Maranatha Study Bible also includes a series of infographic illustrations on the prophecies of the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation. "The Bible also includes maps with explanatory notes, a dictionary of Bible terms, and an outstanding chronology of biblical events and the history of the Christian church."

Thanks to QR technology, the Bible includes links to a long list of articles and discussions of such topics as "God and Suffering" or "Marriage in the New Testament." "The Maranatha Study Bible is truly a lamp unto our feet," publishers said.



by our way of thinking, feeling, and acting. There is no aspect in our lives—our thoughts, affections, hobbies, projects, our lifework—that is beyond the possibility of interacting with the Master of the universe.

That relationship is devoted, candid, and lifelong. It may go through rough patches, but even questions, doubts, or complaints to Him take place within an understanding that there is no plan B. There is no meaningful life without God.

This human-to-God relationship does not hesitate to question or ask for explanations, just as Abraham did when advocating for the citizens of Sodom. "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

It's not wrong to question a perceived absence or remoteness of God, as David and others did. "My God, my God, why have You abandoned me; why so far from delivering me and from my anguished roaring?" (Ps. 22:2, Tanakh).

One of the tragedies of many young people growing up in Christian homes is perhaps that they are handed down a prepackaged bland model of a relationship with God. They never move past formulaic prayers and perfunctory, worship. They never learn to wrestle with God, or to "chat," demanding things from Him even when it results in ultimately surrendering to His will. In these circumstances, our children may mature spiritually aboveground but never develop roots. They may pay their respects, but never engage with their deepest thoughts, feelings, and actions. Eventually this may result in withering and drifting away.

Through heartfelt discussions, open-heart testimonies, and Bible-based prayer, daily family worship can become an outstanding opportunity for teaching younger generations to love the Lord with all they are and have, and in everything they do.

ALWAYS A TEACHING MOMENT

After God is acknowledged, God's words dwell in the parents' heart, and the family unit itself learns to engage with Him in a wholistic loving relationship, effective formal and informal teaching can take place.

According to the Bible, at this stage, two elements are key: diligence and repetition. "Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deut. 6:6, 7, Tanakh).

Both elements are important. The sharing of the knowledge of God, His commandments, and requirements are not a onetime event, but a daily, planned, calculated endeavor. Random Bible teaching results in random, shallow Christians or worse. For a committed parent, any instance at home, out in nature, or in the marketplace can become an opportunity to impress a lesson on younger minds. These opportunities are not simple forums for parents to share their personal opinions and preferences, but "classrooms" to recite and explain God's words in terms children can understand and to lead by example.

Against this background, attending church on Sabbath can certainly be the cherry on top of a week of delightful spiritual meals. Regarding our spiritual life, one meal a week is not enough. Only the daily eating and drinking from the life-giving Source will do.

[1] Texts credited to Tanakh are from *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Copyright © The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985, 1999.

[2] Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Marcos Paseggi is senior news correspondent of *Adventist Review* and, together with his wife, Cintia, are passionate about transmitting the Adventist faith to his two teenage sons.

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UNLIMITED!

The possibilities and creative solutions for family worship are endless no matter the age.

S. JOSEPH KIDDER AND KATELYN CAMPBELL WEAKLEY

No matter what your family looks like, whether you have a lot of children in your home or whether it's just you and your spouse, beautiful things can happen when you spend intentional time in family worship. First Thessalonians 5:11 reminds us to "comfort each other and edify one another," and consistent family worship is a perfect opportunity to do just that.

It is also a powerful way to guide the next generation in their spiritual journey. "Train up a child in the way he should go," Proverbs 22:6 says, "and when he is old he will not depart from it." This training happens with consistently modeled worship. In Genesis 18 God speaks of Abraham and his way of living and bringing up children. "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice" (verse 19). The best way for children to learn God's righteousness and justice is through following their parents' examples and guidance.

For families without children in the home, worshipping with each other is still a blessed opportunity to grow together in God. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). While personal time of prayer and worship is important, there is something special that happens when we join others in worship.



Ellen G. White wrote about the importance of family worship, as well as specifics on how best to employ it in the home. "There is no reason why the hour of worship should not be the most interesting and enjoyable hour of the day,"[1] she said. She advocates for two set times of family worship for the household every day: one in the morning and one in the evening.[2] With such a frequency of worship, some may fear that family worship might grow stale. For those who have not yet made a habit of gathering the household together for worship, it may be difficult to know how to start.

Here we will share ideas that you can incorporate in your own home. You know your family best, however! Prayerfully and intentionally consider what methods will speak to your children's hearts the most for however old they are. Above all, remember that this is your family's opportunity to connect with your Lord.

INGREDIENTS FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

There are many different types of ingredients you can utilize in your family worship. We recommend considering four primary elements upon which you can build the rest of your worship experience: Bible engagement, prayer, music and singing, and ministry and mission.

BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

There are many exciting methods that your family can use to engage with the Bible in a meaningful way to build faith. Scripture engagement in family worship means reading, understanding, discussing, and applying what you've read. To start, always make sure that the portion of Scripture you are reading is an appropriate length: remember that family worships should neither be so short that they feel pointless nor so long that they feel exhausting. Perhaps take turns reading the passage together or have a designated Bible reader for each day. You might choose to read the Bible thematically or chronologically with Ellen G. White's accompanying writings—whatever works best for you!

Look for the meaning of Scripture as well as how it can impact our lives today. Don't shy away from serious or hard questions children may ask. Rather, demonstrate to boys and girls that God and faith can handle difficult questions and that it is through asking that we learn and grow. The whole family can then study and learn together.

For families with younger kids, Bible story skits or drawing a Bible story together are appropriate. You might also use children's Bibles with pictures to illustrate stories that are told. Scripture memorization can also be fun to do together as a family. You can make crosswords and fill-in-the-blank activities to practice and solidify your family's Scripture memorization. Remember, the more your family engages with God's Word, the more likely they are to let it guide them in life.

PRAYER

Like reading Scripture, prayer is an important component of all worship. In fact, the Bible tells us we are to be in a constant prayer posture (see 1 Thess. 5:16-18). Prayer is so important that we are called to do it all the time!

Prayer is communion with God, a conversation that allows us to connect with our Creator. There are many different types of prayer, such as prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and petition, and there are plenty of different ways to pray, too. You can connect what you read in the Bible to your prayer—perhaps paraphrasing a portion of the Scripture you read earlier or praying for the ability and opportunity to apply what was read. You can take turns in your family, praying for each other. You can have different prayer themes for each day of the week: for example, pray for missionaries on Monday, believing friends on Tuesday, nonbelieving friends on Wednesday, world events on Thursday, etc. You can also utilize "popcorn" prayers,



PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

The best way for children to learn God's righteousness and justice is through following their parents' examples and guidance.

during which family members take turns offering a simple sentence prayer one after another.

MUSIC AND SINGING

The book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, and it is a songbook comprised of 150 psalms. With the Bible filled with so many songs, it makes sense to incorporate music and singing into our lives. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16; see also Eph. 5:19).

Spiritual songs retell the love, grace, and goodness of God, as well as the great doctrines and theology of Scripture. Songs also allow for important truths to be more easily learned and recalled. "Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart. Often by the words of sacred song, the springs of penitence and faith have been unsealed."[3]

If someone in your family plays an instrument, your family can sing songs with accompaniment. If no one plays an instrument, you can still sing together a cappella. You can incorporate praise songs at every family worship, or you can have designated music days. Your family could select a worship theme song each week or month and sing it to open or close your family worship. Praise songs have a habit of creating an atmosphere of joy, so however your family would like to incorporate music, enjoy the experience together.

MINISTRY AND MISSION

Ministry is any activity done to serve God, serve others, and expand the kingdom of heaven. We are told in Scripture that we have been given gifts and abilities in order that we may serve and minister to others (see 1 Peter 4:10, 11). God is glorified when we use our talents and abilities in ministry. A family that serves together worships together.

There are many ways your family can minister together. You can serve at a soup kitchen or shelter. Together you can "adopt" a family for Christmas and pick out gifts that you know they will enjoy. As a family you can minister together at your church, perhaps leading the congregation in singing or leading out in Sabbath School. If you notice a neighbor who needs some yard work done, your family can help rake leaves, pull weeds, or shovel snow. When you start looking through the eyes of ministry, there is no end of possibilities for how your family can serve!

COUPLES WITHOUT KIDS

Often when we think of "family worship," we imagine parents and children gathering together. But there is power in gathering your family for worship, even if your family is just you and your spouse.

While it is important to have personal worship time, there are some additional benefits to worshipping as a couple. It helps us grow closer to God and closer to each other. Through worshipping together with your spouse, you can learn how to better honor one another (Rom. 12:10); build one another up (Rom. 14:19); care for each other (1 Cor. 12:25); forgive each other (Eph. 4:32); bear patiently with each other (verse 2); comfort each other (1 Thess. 4:18); and encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11).

You can keep a prayer journal together, including answers to prayer, or spend time appreciating various character traits in one another and then see what the Bible says about these traits. Whatever you do, be sure to agree with one another on how you would best like to worship together.

CLOSING THOUGHT

However you choose to hold your family worship, the key is consistency. Take time to worship with your family throughout the day as you notice and reflect on the goodness of God. Above all, ask God to guide you in how to best make your home a place of worship where you can grow closer to Him and closer to each other.

[1] Ellen G. White, "The Hour of Worship," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 22, 1902, p. 1.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1954), p. 520.

[3] Ellen G. White, "Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give," *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1912, p. 198.

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CREATION ACCORDING TO OVID

Why is it so similar to the biblical account?

Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.–A.D. 18), better known as Ovid, was a Roman poet of extraordinary gifts, his greatest work being *Metamorphoses,* a work that goes "from the world's beginning to our own days,"* that is, to the reign of Caesar Augustus.

Ovid's spin on "the world's beginning," however, sounds familiar.

At first there was "a shapelessness," "Chaos," with "no sun" and "no moon." Before long, God "separated Heaven from earth," and "water from land." Then, with "division, subdivision, he molded earth."

What followed?

"Behold, the stars, long hidden under darkness, broke through and shone." And then, "shining fish were given the waves for dwelling, and beasts the earth, and birds the moving air."

Next, as the crowing act, humanity appears, depicted like this: "So Man was born, it may be, in God's image."

This early earth was quite sweet, with "rivers of milk, and rivers of honey, and gold nectar dripped from the dark-green oak trees." Then, however, evil arose—"Men lived on plunder. Guest was not safe from host, nor brother from brother. A man would kill his wife, a wife her husband."

On his throne, Jove saw "all this evil, and groaned." Along with his brother, Neptune, he unleashed torrents of water, wiping out the world until "everything is ocean, An ocean with no shore-line."

With the exception of Deucalion ("There was no better man than Deucalion") and Pyrrha, his wife (" . . . there was no woman more scrupulously reverent than Pyrrha"), who, alone surviving the flood, quickly offered prayer and worship to Themis: "Bring aid, most gentle goddess, to sunken circumstances."

Now, if this poem had been written 1,500 years *before* Genesis, as opposed to 1,500 *after*, then, as sure as God made little green apples, the world's greatest Bible scholars would have proclaimed that the author(s) of Genesis simply borrowed these pagan myths and retooled them to fit their Yahwist theology. In other words, we shouldn't take too seriously, or literally, the biblical creation story, because, after all, it obviously borrowed from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

But Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was written long *after* Genesis. What, then, explains the similarity? It's easy. The Creation, the Fall, the Flood—happened. Over the long millennia, echoes of the true story were distorted, retreaded, and paganized by the ensuing cultures. The Lord then raised up the Hebrew nation, who, through Moses, recaptured, in Genesis, the true account of our origins, which remains with us today.

That's why, for instance—instead of King Neptune putting "down his trident," and "wet-bearded, Triton, summoned from far down under, with his barnacle-strewn shoulders" being the ones who pushed back the waters after the Flood—Scripture says that "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided" (Gen. 8:1).

Same event, two accounts, except one was a paganized rendition of the truth, and the other—*the* truth itself.

CLIFF'S EDGE
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN



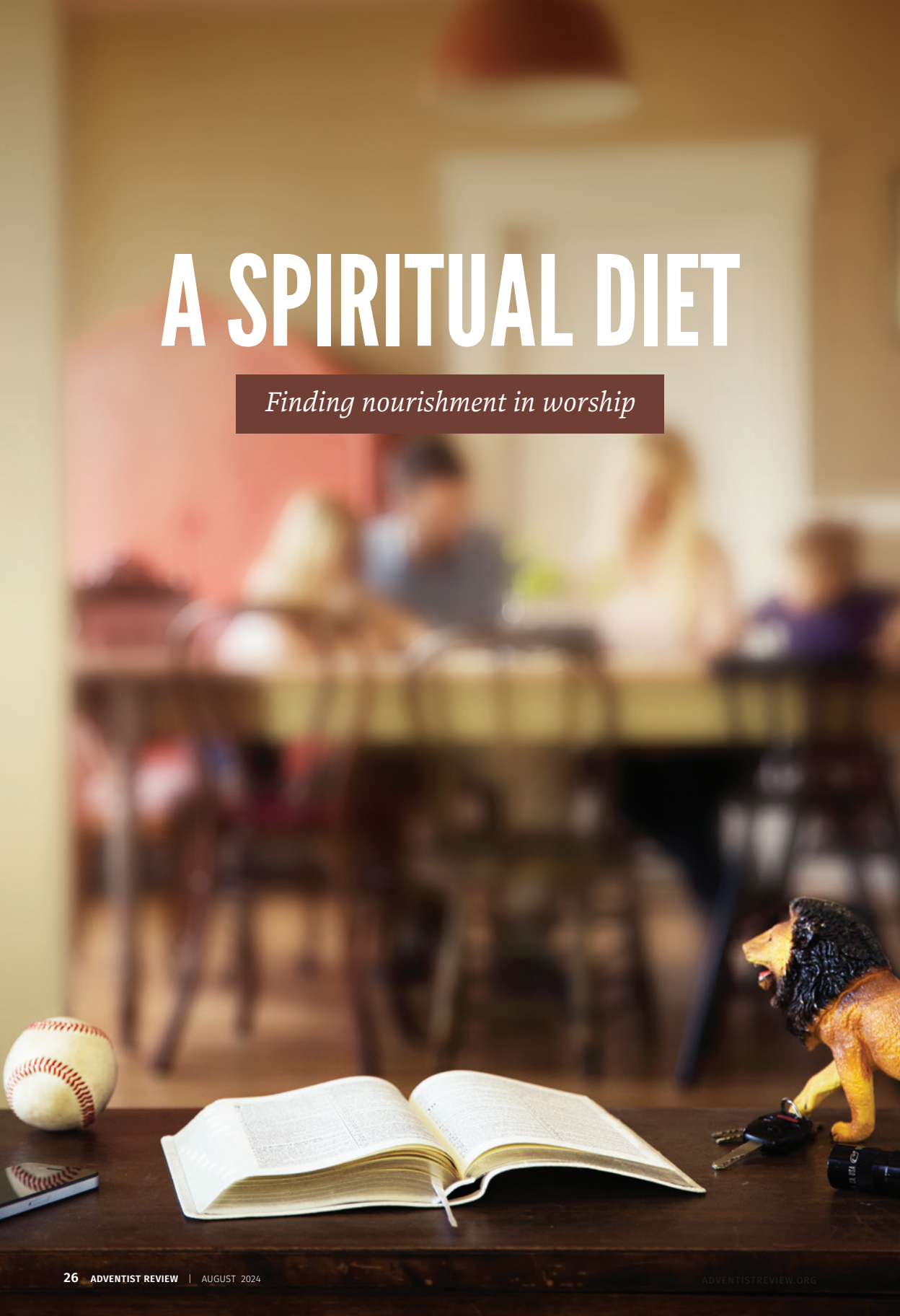
SAME EVENT, TWO ACCOUNTS. ONE A PAGANIZED RENDITION; THE OTHER—THE TRUTH ITSELF.

* All quotes are from *Metamorphoses*, Book One, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955), pp. 3-13.

Clifford Goldstein is the editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. His latest book is *Risen: Finding Hope in the Empty Tomb.*

A SPIRITUAL DIET

Finding nourishment in worship



As we build the habit of daily spending time in worship, we also grow in our relationship with Jesus.

MERLE POIRIER

Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). Have you ever thought how the Lord might "taste"? By feasting on the Word of God, we come to know God better and, in the process, find ourselves filled and satisfied.

While all might agree that spending time with Jesus is important, many don't. As Marcos Paseggi explained (see p. 18), while we wouldn't think of eating only once a week, that's exactly what we do with worship. When worship is neglected, the effect can be no different than skipping a meal. We become weak without food and drink. Without spiritual food, it's the same.

Family worship is an important part of a "spiritual diet" whether we are single or a part of an intergenerational family. As we build the habit of daily spending time in worship, we also grow in our relationship with Jesus.

Between 1999 and 2005 *Adventist Review* published a family worship column called Tuesday's Child. The idea was to encourage family worship once a week. We've prepared a sample *week* of daily family worships—Sunday through Friday. On Sabbath we encourage attendance at a church near you. Six stories have been adapted from Tuesday's Child. While geared toward families with children, we're suggesting everyone can benefit from these lessons. Discussion questions are included for all age groups. Using all the elements provided should take about 10 minutes a day. Find the best time and try this spiritual meal plan. After this week, look for a devotional or select a Bible book to continue your own daily worship plan.

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

Scripture Reading:
"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10).

Prayer: If alone, pray silently or aloud. If with others, select someone to pray.

Song: Choose a praise song, hymn, or children's Sabbath School song. If you need a suggestion, try "Stand Like the Brave" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 610).[1]

Questions/Activities

With small children: Talk about the spider and why one should be careful around them and other insects. In simple terms, tell how God protects us from danger. Pray that God will protect the family this day.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Talk about Jessica's courage. Would they be able to do the same? Where did she find her courage? How does protecting others give us more courage? Make a list of Bible characters with courage.

Adults: What scripture can you read, or Bible story can you remember, in which God protected His people, and the people demonstrated courage? How can you practice courage today?

Closing Prayer

Sardines and Spiders[2]

Bonnie Walker

Nine-year-old Jessica eyed a large hole that Flash, Grandpa's dog, had dug under the foundation behind the barn.

H'mmm, that's a neat place to hide, she thought, peering into the gloomy entrance.

"Is that a humongous spider?" she asked.

Jessica was able to visit her grandparents often, but her cousins lived far away. She looked forward to the times they got together once or twice a year.

Today the old house fairly burst with cousins, aunts, and uncles. As the evening began to cool, the children begged, "Can we play 'Sardines' like last time, Grandpa?"

"Please," pleaded Jessica. "Can Betty and I hide first?"

"Why not?" Grandpa agreed. "Come on, everyone," he said to all the cousins, including their parents.

Everyone went where they wouldn't see where the two girls hid. After three minutes they'd come looking for them. If someone found them, they were to hide with them until everyone was in the same place—packed like sardines in a can. The last two to find the hiding spot would be "it" for the next game.

Jessica ran for the red barn. "Where are you going?" Betty asked.

"Wait and see," laughed Jessica. She pushed aside the weeds at the back of the barn and scrambled down into the cool darkness under the building.

"You know the best places," Betty whispered. "They won't find us here."

Several times people came and searched, but they never found the children.

As their eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, Betty saw movement just above the opening. "Is that a humongous spider?" she asked.

The creature's shiny black body was about as big as a fat pea, and with its legs extended it would be about 1.5 inches across. She remembered a spider Grandpa had shown her once. "That's a black widow spider," he had pointed out. "Give them their space. They're poisonous."

Jessica knew that in "Sardines" people would have to squeeze past that spider. She grabbed a large tin can nearby. Then she crept forward and clapped it over the spider, holding it tightly.

After a long time the two girls heard the whole family approaching the barn. "We give up," Grandpa called. "None of us can find you."

"Down here," they shouted.

Soon Grandpa rescued them. "You did the right thing about the spider, Jessica," he said. "If someone had disturbed it, it may have bitten them."

Jessica cringed. "I've had enough of Sardines and spiders to last me a long time," she said.

She Who Can Do No Wrong[3]

Bonnie Walker

Is that a diary under the edge of her bed? Melissa wondered. She'd just brought some clean laundry to her younger sister Rita's bedroom. Mom and Dad were at work, and Rita was spending the day with a friend. What a temptation!

Melissa had been jealous of her little sister all her life. Melissa was 15, and Rita, 10, but Melissa never forgot the day Rita came home from the hospital. Suddenly the spotlight was off her and focused on "she who can do no wrong."

After Rita was born, it seemed Melissa was always competing for her parents' approval.

I wonder what she writes about me in that diary, Melissa thought. *Maybe I'll even find something bad she did that I could tell my parents about—then maybe they won't think she's such a Goody Two-shoes.* Melissa didn't even consider whether looking into Rita's diary was wrong.

Picking up the blue book, Melissa began turning the pages, searching for her name or some information she could use against her sister.

Melissa suddenly felt sick as she read page after page of things Rita had written. "I really wish I could be like Melissa," Rita wrote. "She knows what to do all the time. She is so smart." And further along: "Melissa is so pretty, and everyone likes her. I wish I were like Melissa."

She wants to be like me, Melissa thought.

This was worse than Melissa could have imagined. Rita looked up to her. Suddenly Melissa realized she had spent 10 years finding fault in someone who loved her.

Quietly she put the book back under the edge of the bed and began to think about her relationship with Rita. She wanted to get to know her better. *But first she'd start with a note of apology.*

LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE



Scripture Reading

"Love suffers long and is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4).

Prayer

Song: "'Tis Love That Makes Us Happy" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 579).

"I really wish I could be like Melissa."

Questions/Activities

With small children: Find an object that must be treated gently and with permission. Talk about the fact that sometimes we must not touch and need to obey. Jesus also has rules to keep us safe. We obey because we love Jesus.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Was it OK for Melissa to open and read the diary? Are there times reading something someone has kept private is OK to read or share? Read 2 Kings 22:8-10. How is this different from what Melissa did?

Adults: Sometimes we judge people without knowing their true motives. Have you ever been jealous of someone? Send a note or email to someone today telling them how they have been a positive influence in your life.

Closing Prayer

Scripture Reading:
"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Prayer

Song: "When He Cometh" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 218).

The Family Tree[4]

Edna May Olsen

Jay rushed back from the mailbox. "A letter from Grandma!" he shouted.

"Grandma sent a copy of our family tree," Mother said. "She wants us to add you and your sister to it."

"What's a family tree?" asked Cheryl.

"Let me explain it," said Mother as she spread the paper on the table.

"It's a list of the members of a family comparing it to a tree with branches," Mother said.

"Our family tree starts with Samuel Ward, up here." She pointed to the top branches of what looked like a tree. "Now, here," she said, pointing to the next branch, "it shows that Samuel married Anne Heywood, and they had five children. One of their children was Frances, my grandmother."

"And my grandmother married Jacob Frost, and they had seven children." She traced another branch of the tree. "One of those children was Elizabeth, my mother and your grandmother."

Dad came to see what they were doing. "I can tell you about another family tree," he said. He opened his Bible to Matthew 1:1 and read: "'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.'"

"*Genealogy* is another word for 'family tree,'" he explained. "In Bible times family background was important. That's why the Bible lists the genealogy of Jesus, starting with Abraham, the father of Isaac, the father of Jacob, and all the way to Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus." Then he turned to Luke 3. "Here is another family tree. This one goes back to Adam, 'the son of God.'"

"But the best part," smiled Mom, "is that those who love Jesus are part of God's family. We're part of His family tree!"

Dad came to see what they were doing. "I can tell you about another family tree," he said. He opened his Bible to Matthew 1:1.

Questions/Activities

With small children: Show them pictures of them, their parents, and their grandparents. Tell them how you are all family and love each other. There is someone else who is part of the family too. Jesus loves them even more! Sing "Happy, Happy Home," being sure to end "With Jesus in the family, happy, happy home."

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Can they name their ancestors? How far back can they go? Why do they think Jesus has two family trees? Compare Matthew 1 and Luke 3. How are they different? [Answer: It was important to demonstrate that Jesus was descended from David. In Matthew 1 His family tree is through Joseph, and Luke 3 is thought to be His family tree through Mary. Jesus was a double Son of David!]

Adults: Study the family trees in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Where are the differences? What does it mean for you to be part of God's family? What will you do today to make your Father proud?

Closing Prayer



Scripture Reading:
"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

Prayer

Song: "This Is My Father's World" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 92).

Pharaoh[5]

Bonnie Walker

Mom always thinks she knows best," grumbled Sierra, pushing the garage door open. "Pharaoh," she called. *Why do we always have to lock that dog up when we go to school? He never gets lost.*

"Pharaoh," she called again. But no dog came running. "Well, I'm just going to let him be. I can't go chasing around the neighborhood looking for that dog," Sierra said. She closed the door and ran to get her school bag. "Goodbye, Mom," she called.

The school day passed quickly, and soon Sierra was home. *H'mmm, Pharaoh usually barks. Where can he be?* she wondered as she looked in the garage.

A note from Mom explained she had come home and found that Pharaoh was not in the garage, where she thought Sierra had put him. She had taken the car and was driving around the neighborhood.

"I've driven everywhere, and didn't see any sign of him," Mom said. "We may have to call the animal shelter."

The next day Mother phoned the shelter. "We're looking for our German shepherd. He's been gone since yesterday."

"We have a shepherd here. This one looks so sad, and he cried all night."

Soon they were on their way to the shelter. They were greeted by Pharaoh's happy barking. Pharaoh jumped into the front seat beside Mom. All the way home he whimpered and moaned. Sometimes he laid his muzzle on Mom's shoulder.

Sierra sat in the back feeling guilty. *What a lot of expense and worry to everyone. Even Pharaoh. To think that a dog could show that much feeling!* She knew it was her fault, too. Leaning forward, Sierra patted Pharaoh's head. "I'm sorry, boy," she said.

"We're looking for our German shepherd. He's been gone since yesterday."

Questions/Activities

With small children: If you have a pet, practice holding or petting it. If no pet, try a stuffed animal. Talk about Jesus, who made the animals, and how we must be kind.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: What different and sadder ending could this have had for Pharaoh? Why is it important to be kind to animals? Read the story of Balaam and the donkey (Num. 22:22-35).

Adults: What can you do to help God's creation? It might be supporting the environment, putting out water for bees, peanuts for squirrels, or picking up trash on the side of the road.

Closing Prayer

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / MARCUS

DAY 05

Scripture Reading:
"And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10).

Prayer

Song: "I Need the Prayers" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 505).

Pastor Lennox began to pray as if he were talking to his best friend.

Questions/Activities

With small children: Compare talking to Jesus with talking to our friends and family. Maybe call someone and talk with them on the phone. Then teach them to talk to Jesus the same way. Help them to kneel, fold their hands, and close their eyes. Lead them in a simple prayer.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: What does it mean to pray for others? Why did Ben feel good about the pastor praying for him? Create a list of people to pray for. Include these names in the closing prayer.

Adults: Intercessory prayer is important. Create a list of others to pray for through the rest of the week. How do you feel when someone prays for you?

Closing Prayer



LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

What About Me?[6]

Bonnie Walker

It was Sabbath morning, and Ben's family was rushing to get ready for church.

"We're invited to lunch at the Clarks," Mom said. "Pastor and Mrs. Lennox will be there too. I want you to bring play clothes for the afternoon."

Just then Dad came into the living room. He didn't always go to church, but today he was all dressed up.

After church Ben's brother grabbed his arm. "Remember your manners at the Clarks," he reminded him.

It was raining after lunch, so they went into the living room. Pastor Lennox told stories of when he was a young pastor. His stories were exciting. Then Ben's dad began telling his story, including his struggle to stop smoking.

"Will you pray for me, Pastor Lennox?" asked Dad.

Pastor Lennox read Philippians 4:13, a promise that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Then the group knelt in a circle and held hands. Pastor Lennox began to pray as if he were talking to his best friend. He asked God to be with Ben's family and to give Ben's dad strength to overcome.

While the pastor prayed, Ben remembered that he had a temper sometimes. Ben wanted God to bless him, too. During prayer Ben peeked at Pastor Lennox. He looked so happy and so sure that God would help his dad. "What about me?" Ben said out loud. His sister poked him for being rude.

Elder Lennox paused and opened his eyes. He looked right at Ben and smiled. Closing his eyes, he continued to pray. He then prayed for Ben by name. Ben never forgot that moment. It was just as if Ben was lifted right to God's throne and God smiled at him.

In the Middle of a Storm[7]

Bonnie Walker

It was a hot July afternoon in Alberta, Canada. Laurene could see her dad hammering shingles on the new shed for their cows.

Laurene was glad to be done picking berries. Helping her mom lift the last crate of strawberries onto the truck, she had an idea. "Mom," Laurene begged, "may we have a sleepover tonight and invite Helen and Esther?"

"Pleeeeease," chimed in her sisters, Ruthi and Evie.

"I suppose," said Mom, smiling at the three expectant faces. "You've all been a big help."

After supper Uncle Art brought her two cousins over. They had fun setting up the trailer. On top of the trailer was a tentlike structure. Poles held up the roof, and the sides flopped out to form narrow beds on each side.

Finally the five girls and Laurene's dog climbed through the tent flap. "Evie, you sleep on the floor with Mitzie," Laurene said. "Helen can sleep with me on this side, and Ruthi and Esther can sleep on that side."

Splat, splatter, splat! "Rain!" exclaimed Ruthi. The girls laughed and told stories until they were lulled to sleep by the wind and rain.

Suddenly the wind became gusty, moving the tent sides up and down. Laurene dreamed she was flying across the road. The wind woke Dad, who quickly hurried outside to move the big grain truck closer to the trailer to protect it from the wind.

Suddenly a mighty gust lifted the sides of the camper. Both sides folded in, dumping the four bigger girls on top of Evie and Mitzie. "Help!" screamed the girls.

Laurene knew she must unzip the flap. She fumbled for the zipper. Mitzie found the bottom of the zipper and nosed her way out, with the girls close behind. "Bend low," Dad shouted. "Run for the cab of the truck."

When all six people and the dog were safely in the truck, they watched lightning flash in the sky. A big sheet of plywood flew through the air and cut into the side of the garage as if it were slicing cheese. Shingles and more plywood blew past. Finally the storm subsided enough for the family to run for the house.

"Jesus sent the angels to help us," said Ruthi.

KIEFERPIX / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



Scripture Reading:
"He calms the storm, so that its waves are still" (Ps. 107:29).

Prayer

Song: "A Shelter in the Time of Storm" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 528).

Questions/Activities

With small children: Go to a dark room and turn the lights on. Talk about how safe it feels when we can see. Then turn the lights off. Allow the darkness to have its effect and then turn the lights back on. Explain that Jesus is like the light. He's with us even if it is dark, and keeps us safe.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Why are storms scary? Compare a storm to life and sin that has entered the world. Read how Jesus calms the storm (Luke 8:23-25). What keeps us safe during the storms of life?

Adults: What storms have you encountered? Compare weather storms to our problems. What can we learn from coping with a storm that allows us to feel at peace when assaulted by life?

Closing Prayer

[1] Visit sdahymnals.com for music and lyrics. Even young children can learn the refrains of some hymns.
[2] *Adventist Review*, October 2003, p. 10.
[3] *Adventist Review*, July 17, 2003, p. 29.
[4] *Adventist Review*, July 10, 2003, p. 16.
[5] *Adventist Review*, November 2002, p. 106.
[6] *Adventist Review*, Aug. 21, 2003, p. 17.
[7] *Adventist Review*, Aug. 15, 2002, p. 17.



BACK TO THE ALTAR

A call to unreserved surrender to God

RAMON J. CANALS

In 2022 the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched the Back to the Altar initiative. This initiative calls us to return to God as individuals, families, and churches; to restore the family altar by worshipping God in the morning and evening. It is a call to be more devoted to prayer and worship of God. "We should improve the opportunity for prayer, both in secret and around the family altar. Many need to learn to pray."[1] Back to the Altar is about spending unhurried time with God. It is about coming to Jesus as we are: weak, tired, and helpless. The initiative emphasizes four key areas: (a) personal worship, (b) family worship, (c) congregational worship, and (d) limiting distractions. It reminds us that "He calls upon us to offer ourselves on the altar of service, a living, consuming sacrifice. We are to make an unreserved consecration to God of all that we have and are."[2]

Certain spiritual practices have been widely acknowledged throughout history as essential for a meaningful spiritual life. These practices include prayer, meditation on the life of Jesus, and the study of the Scriptures. When used together, these practices are integral to the development and growth of every church member. This is why emphasizing the importance of focusing on our relationship with God through prayer and reflection on His Word is critical to the initiative.

COMMUNION WITH GOD

Back to the Altar is about communion with God. Ellen G. White wrote, "There is nothing more needed in the work than the practical results of communion with God."[3] Back to the Altar is a plea to individuals, families, and churches to return to God. The restoration of personal and family worship among Seventh-day Adventists is the most pressing need of our time, but doing so will require much prayer and effort. Like Elijah restoring the broken altar in Israel, we should commit to daily morning and evening worship, restoring our "altars" as individuals and families.

RADICAL OBEDIENCE

The initiative aims to inspire radical obedience to Jesus Christ, urging church members to surrender completely to His Lordship. This involves being guided by biblical truth and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out faith practically. It challenges believers to follow God's lead in all aspects of life, making intentional choices that honor Him. For this purpose, Back to the Altar provides resources, training, and support to help church members grow in faith and positively impact their communities.

PRIORITY TO PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Back to the Altar encourages individuals and churches to prioritize daily prayer, worship, and personal and family devotions to cultivate a deep and abiding relationship with God. Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). Why is the personal and family altar so important? Mrs. White wrote, "No words can properly set forth the deep blessedness of genuine worship."[4]

DAILY SURRENDER

Back to the Altar serves as a profound and inspiring reminder of the transformative power and deep significance of the cross of Christ in our lives. It beckons us to embrace a daily commitment to surrender every facet of our existence to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The initiative encourages church members to open their hearts fully, permitting the Holy Spirit to infuse them with God's constant life-giving presence. It's an invitation to immerse themselves in spiritual renewal and personal growth based on God's enduring love and grace.

LONGING FOR GOD

Back to the Altar is a passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ and a wholehearted commitment to follow Him. It involves constantly yearning for God and His presence. Jesus promised to satisfy our thirst in John 7:37: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." To practice Back to the Altar, we must cultivate a love for God and a desire to know Him more intimately by spending quality, unrushed time with Him. This involves developing a deep love for the Bible as the inspired Word of God and committing to study and apply its truths in our daily lives.

The restoration of personal and family worship among Seventh-day Adventists is the most pressing need of our time.

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP

Back to the Altar is a call to reject superficiality and embrace an authentic relationship with God. This relationship must be free from empty rituals and traditions. We are all very busy, but God loves us so much that He desires to draw us closer to Him. We can do this by spending quiet moments reading, learning, and meditating on His Word. We cannot truly know God and have an authentic, deep relationship with Him if we are unfamiliar with His Word. Only by studying and learning the Bible can we get to know Him.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS

As a church we have never faced a more formidable challenge to personal worship than the one posed by digital media. Back to the Altar is a call to refocus our lives on worshipping and honoring God by turning away from the distractions of modern life. These distractions can include, but are not limited to, excessive busyness, digital devices, social media, and other forms of entertainment or noise that take our attention away from our spiritual well-being. Another type of distraction is overwork. This could be secular work or even working for God. We can become so busy serving the Lord that we forget the Lord of the work!

PREPARED HEARTS

Back to the Altar encourages us to prepare our hearts for Jesus' second coming by living in expectation of His return and sharing the hope of salvation with others. This means committing to preparing our families for Jesus' return by spreading the gospel and nurturing our relationships with our spouses, children, and loved ones.

[1] Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1883.
[2] Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, May 16, 1907.
[3] Ellen G. Whte, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 47.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 143.

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ONE MEAL IS NOT ENOUGH

Why family worship is key to nurturing the family life of faith

MARCOS PASEGGI

Imagine for a moment that one day you decide to go on a diet. *From now on*, you tell yourself, *I will fast every single Sabbath*. The following week you start your plan. You eat a balanced abundant diet for six days, and then fast on the Sabbath. The second week you do the same. And so forth and so on. What do you think might be the results? You might stop looking forward to the Sabbath hours, but otherwise, you will survive and perhaps even thrive by fasting one day a week.

Now imagine that you decide to implement a more drastic approach. *I'm going to stuff myself with food every Sabbath*, you tell yourself, *and then I'll fast for six days each week*. I probably don't need to tell you that such a course of action may lead to your eventual demise. No one can survive eating one day a week long-term.

Many of us, however, try to follow a similar approach regarding spiritual nurture. We stuff ourselves each Sabbath, assuming the spiritual food will

last until the next Sabbath we worship. Is it surprising, then, we don't get the spiritual results we are aiming for?

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

The transmission of the knowledge of God and its implications for living on this earth were the center of family unit dynamics in ancient Israel. Teaching within a family setting was not theoretical but led to an experience of daily connection with God through praise and prayer. "From generation to generation we will proclaim your praise," wrote Asaph (Ps. 79:13, NIV).

This connection between older and younger generations was a natural part of regular interactions between parents and children. The teaching could sometimes take place in a formal setting, but often would happen in the everyday environment of the home or everyday experiences. God-fearing parents were supposed to summon their children and initiate moments of worship and reflection. But parents also had to be ready to answer their children's questions whenever they arose, as in the case of the yearly Passover celebration: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'" (Ex. 13:14).

Another important aspect of intergenerational teaching in Israel is that it did not happen in a vacuum. Teaching your children and grandchildren was part of a historical and theological continuum, a small but important part to play in God's plan of salvation. In the case of Israel, the passing of God's instructions to the next generation was a given, a key element for the ongoing survival of God's people. Its goal was straightforward: "So that you, your children, and your children's children may revere the Lord your God and follow, as long as you live, all His laws and commandments . . . to the end that you may long endure" (Deut. 6:2, Tanakh).[1] People can be motivated to obey out of fear or love. God is suggesting that teaching children His law and requirements might motivate everyone—both parents and children—to obey out of love.

At the same time, it is important to note that teaching one's children would be preceded by a series of presuppositions about God and "homework"—that parents would have previously learned and understood before even thinking of starting their children's "classes." This is not unique to Israel. These prerequisites are essential for anyone who wishes to engage in a formal or informal system of sharing God's knowledge to younger generations.

For a committed parent, any instance at home, out in nature, or in the marketplace can become an opportunity to impress a lesson on younger minds.

KNOWING WHO GOD IS

After God outlined the goal and the results of paying heed to His teachings—"Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly" (verse 3, Tanakh)—He pronounced the words that became the most well-known confession for Jewish people even today. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (verse 4). Or: "The Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (Tanakh).

This is not a discussion of Trinitarians versus anti-Trinitarians. The focus is on the uniqueness of God. Simply put, there is none like Him (see Jer. 10:6). "All the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 96:5). Or as a thankful Hannah acknowledged in 1 Samuel 2: "There is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God" (verse 2).

Even before formal or informal teaching takes place, parents must grasp the biblically based idea of who God is. He is the Creator God, who not only created but has subsequently sustained and protected His people on their journey. "He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes" (Deut. 10:21, NLT).[2] Thus, any divine

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requirement, any commandment, any future transmission of those requirements and teachings to the next generation is grounded in the character of this God, who "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25).

Acknowledging the uniqueness of God is a worthy first step. It is not, however, an end in and of itself. On the contrary, it should move the believer to engage with that unique God in a unique way.

ENGAGING WITH GOD

Once the believer acknowledges the uniqueness of God, God Himself calls His people to love Him with all they are and have. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5). Unlike the Greek notion of gods well beyond the comprehension of human earthlings, forever detached, forever unreachable, God calls His people to engage with Him in a loving relationship framed

Two Novel Bible Editions for Family Worship

These volumes were introduced at a church congress in Spain.

MARCOS PASEGGI

Church leaders and members attending the Spanish Union of Churches Conference national congress in Fuenlabrada, Madrid, Spain, participated in a special dedication ceremony on June 15. Safeliz Publishing House leaders introduced and dedicated to God two new editions of the Bible: The Praise and Worship Bible and the Maranatha Study Bible. Although first published in Spanish, English and Portuguese versions will soon follow. Both editions can be powerful resources to underpin family worship, publishers said.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP BIBLE

This Bible includes 210 biblical songs with lyrics that include selected verses from the Bible. Each song reviews the verses, characters, and most well-known biblical events from Genesis to Revelation. They are available in video format by accessing QR codes.

The songs, which include the scores and professional production and musical arrangements, were written by composer Liliam Martinelli using various musical styles "to help children, teenagers, young people, and adults to memorize God's Word through song." Also, the Bible includes an index, which, among other data, allows you to search for songs to use as a solo, in duet, trio, quartet, or choir.

The Praise and Worship Bible also includes hundreds of devotional readings that, according to publishers, make family worship "easy, attractive, and relevant."

MARANATHA STUDY BIBLE

"It has been called the Maranatha Bible, because our greatest hope is the second coming of Jesus," Safeliz general manager Mario Martinelli said. The Maranatha Bible "is the result of a project that has taken more than 10 years of hard work," he added. "More than 100 Adventist theologians have contributed, not only compiling but also developing the resources included here."

Safeliz leaders explained that this Bible has the goal of helping church members go deeper into the study of God's Word. "It includes study notes and insightful articles divided into different categories."

The Maranatha Study Bible also includes a series of infographic illustrations on the prophecies of the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation. "The Bible also includes maps with explanatory notes, a dictionary of Bible terms, and an outstanding chronology of biblical events and the history of the Christian church."

Thanks to QR technology, the Bible includes links to a long list of articles and discussions of such topics as "God and Suffering" or "Marriage in the New Testament." "The Maranatha Study Bible is truly a lamp unto our feet," publishers said.



by our way of thinking, feeling, and acting. There is no aspect in our lives—our thoughts, affections, hobbies, projects, our lifework—that is beyond the possibility of interacting with the Master of the universe.

That relationship is devoted, candid, and lifelong. It may go through rough patches, but even questions, doubts, or complaints to Him take place within an understanding that there is no plan B. There is no meaningful life without God.

This human-to-God relationship does not hesitate to question or ask for explanations, just as Abraham did when advocating for the citizens of Sodom. "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

It's not wrong to question a perceived absence or remoteness of God, as David and others did. "My God, my God, why have You abandoned me; why so far from delivering me and from my anguished roaring?" (Ps. 22:2, Tanakh).

One of the tragedies of many young people growing up in Christian homes is perhaps that they are handed down a prepackaged bland model of a relationship with God. They never move past formulaic prayers and perfunctory, worship. They never learn to wrestle with God, or to "chat," demanding things from Him even when it results in ultimately surrendering to His will. In these circumstances, our children may mature spiritually aboveground but never develop roots. They may pay their respects, but never engage with their deepest thoughts, feelings, and actions. Eventually this may result in withering and drifting away.

Through heartfelt discussions, open-heart testimonies, and Bible-based prayer, daily family worship can become an outstanding opportunity for teaching younger generations to love the Lord with all they are and have, and in everything they do.

ALWAYS A TEACHING MOMENT

After God is acknowledged, God's words dwell in the parents' heart, and the family unit itself learns to engage with Him in a wholistic loving relationship, effective formal and informal teaching can take place.

According to the Bible, at this stage, two elements are key: diligence and repetition. "Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deut. 6:6, 7, Tanakh).

Both elements are important. The sharing of the knowledge of God, His commandments, and requirements are not a onetime event, but a daily, planned, calculated endeavor. Random Bible teaching results in random, shallow Christians or worse. For a committed parent, any instance at home, out in nature, or in the marketplace can become an opportunity to impress a lesson on younger minds. These opportunities are not simple forums for parents to share their personal opinions and preferences, but "classrooms" to recite and explain God's words in terms children can understand and to lead by example.

Against this background, attending church on Sabbath can certainly be the cherry on top of a week of delightful spiritual meals. Regarding our spiritual life, one meal a week is not enough. Only the daily eating and drinking from the life-giving Source will do.

[1] Texts credited to Tanakh are from *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Copyright © The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985, 1999.

[2] Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Marcos Paseggi is senior news correspondent of *Adventist Review* and, together with his wife, Cintia, are passionate about transmitting the Adventist faith to his two teenage sons.

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UNLIMITED!

The possibilities and creative solutions for family worship are endless no matter the age.

S. JOSEPH KIDDER AND KATELYN CAMPBELL WEAKLEY

No matter what your family looks like, whether you have a lot of children in your home or whether it's just you and your spouse, beautiful things can happen when you spend intentional time in family worship. First Thessalonians 5:11 reminds us to "comfort each other and edify one another," and consistent family worship is a perfect opportunity to do just that.

It is also a powerful way to guide the next generation in their spiritual journey. "Train up a child in the way he should go," Proverbs 22:6 says, "and when he is old he will not depart from it." This training happens with consistently modeled worship. In Genesis 18 God speaks of Abraham and his way of living and bringing up children. "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice" (verse 19). The best way for children to learn God's righteousness and justice is through following their parents' examples and guidance.

For families without children in the home, worshipping with each other is still a blessed opportunity to grow together in God. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). While personal time of prayer and worship is important, there is something special that happens when we join others in worship.



Ellen G. White wrote about the importance of family worship, as well as specifics on how best to employ it in the home. "There is no reason why the hour of worship should not be the most interesting and enjoyable hour of the day,"[1] she said. She advocates for two set times of family worship for the household every day: one in the morning and one in the evening.[2] With such a frequency of worship, some may fear that family worship might grow stale. For those who have not yet made a habit of gathering the household together for worship, it may be difficult to know how to start.

Here we will share ideas that you can incorporate in your own home. You know your family best, however! Prayerfully and intentionally consider what methods will speak to your children's hearts the most for however old they are. Above all, remember that this is your family's opportunity to connect with your Lord.

INGREDIENTS FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

There are many different types of ingredients you can utilize in your family worship. We recommend considering four primary elements upon which you can build the rest of your worship experience: Bible engagement, prayer, music and singing, and ministry and mission.

BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

There are many exciting methods that your family can use to engage with the Bible in a meaningful way to build faith. Scripture engagement in family worship means reading, understanding, discussing, and applying what you've read. To start, always make sure that the portion of Scripture you are reading is an appropriate length: remember that family worships should neither be so short that they feel pointless nor so long that they feel exhausting. Perhaps take turns reading the passage together or have a designated Bible reader for each day. You might choose to read the Bible thematically or chronologically with Ellen G. White's accompanying writings—whatever works best for you!

Look for the meaning of Scripture as well as how it can impact our lives today. Don't shy away from serious or hard questions children may ask. Rather, demonstrate to boys and girls that God and faith can handle difficult questions and that it is through asking that we learn and grow. The whole family can then study and learn together.

For families with younger kids, Bible story skits or drawing a Bible story together are appropriate. You might also use children's Bibles with pictures to illustrate stories that are told. Scripture memorization can also be fun to do together as a family. You can make crosswords and fill-in-the-blank activities to practice and solidify your family's Scripture memorization. Remember, the more your family engages with God's Word, the more likely they are to let it guide them in life.

PRAYER

Like reading Scripture, prayer is an important component of all worship. In fact, the Bible tells us we are to be in a constant prayer posture (see 1 Thess. 5:16-18). Prayer is so important that we are called to do it all the time!

Prayer is communion with God, a conversation that allows us to connect with our Creator. There are many different types of prayer, such as prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and petition, and there are plenty of different ways to pray, too. You can connect what you read in the Bible to your prayer—perhaps paraphrasing a portion of the Scripture you read earlier or praying for the ability and opportunity to apply what was read. You can take turns in your family, praying for each other. You can have different prayer themes for each day of the week: for example, pray for missionaries on Monday, believing friends on Tuesday, nonbelieving friends on Wednesday, world events on Thursday, etc. You can also utilize "popcorn" prayers,



PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

The best way for children to learn God's righteousness and justice is through following their parents' examples and guidance.

during which family members take turns offering a simple sentence prayer one after another.

MUSIC AND SINGING

The book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, and it is a songbook comprised of 150 psalms. With the Bible filled with so many songs, it makes sense to incorporate music and singing into our lives. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16; see also Eph. 5:19).

Spiritual songs retell the love, grace, and goodness of God, as well as the great doctrines and theology of Scripture. Songs also allow for important truths to be more easily learned and recalled. "Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart. Often by the words of sacred song, the springs of penitence and faith have been unsealed."[3]

If someone in your family plays an instrument, your family can sing songs with accompaniment. If no one plays an instrument, you can still sing together a cappella. You can incorporate praise songs at every family worship, or you can have designated music days. Your family could select a worship theme song each week or month and sing it to open or close your family worship. Praise songs have a habit of creating an atmosphere of joy, so however your family would like to incorporate music, enjoy the experience together.

MINISTRY AND MISSION

Ministry is any activity done to serve God, serve others, and expand the kingdom of heaven. We are told in Scripture that we have been given gifts and abilities in order that we may serve and minister to others (see 1 Peter 4:10, 11). God is glorified when we use our talents and abilities in ministry. A family that serves together worships together.

There are many ways your family can minister together. You can serve at a soup kitchen or shelter. Together you can "adopt" a family for Christmas and pick out gifts that you know they will enjoy. As a family you can minister together at your church, perhaps leading the congregation in singing or leading out in Sabbath School. If you notice a neighbor who needs some yard work done, your family can help rake leaves, pull weeds, or shovel snow. When you start looking through the eyes of ministry, there is no end of possibilities for how your family can serve!

COUPLES WITHOUT KIDS

Often when we think of "family worship," we imagine parents and children gathering together. But there is power in gathering your family for worship, even if your family is just you and your spouse.

While it is important to have personal worship time, there are some additional benefits to worshipping as a couple. It helps us grow closer to God and closer to each other. Through worshipping together with your spouse, you can learn how to better honor one another (Rom. 12:10); build one another up (Rom. 14:19); care for each other (1 Cor. 12:25); forgive each other (Eph. 4:32); bear patiently with each other (verse 2); comfort each other (1 Thess. 4:18); and encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11).

You can keep a prayer journal together, including answers to prayer, or spend time appreciating various character traits in one another and then see what the Bible says about these traits. Whatever you do, be sure to agree with one another on how you would best like to worship together.

CLOSING THOUGHT

However you choose to hold your family worship, the key is consistency. Take time to worship with your family throughout the day as you notice and reflect on the goodness of God. Above all, ask God to guide you in how to best make your home a place of worship where you can grow closer to Him and closer to each other.

[1] Ellen G. White, "The Hour of Worship," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 22, 1902, p. 1.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1954), p. 520.

[3] Ellen G. White, "Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give," *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1912, p. 198.

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CREATION ACCORDING TO OVID

Why is it so similar to the biblical account?

Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.–A.D. 18), better known as Ovid, was a Roman poet of extraordinary gifts, his greatest work being *Metamorphoses,* a work that goes "from the world's beginning to our own days,"* that is, to the reign of Caesar Augustus.

Ovid's spin on "the world's beginning," however, sounds familiar.

At first there was "a shapelessness," "Chaos," with "no sun" and "no moon." Before long, God "separated Heaven from earth," and "water from land." Then, with "division, subdivision, he molded earth."

What followed?

"Behold, the stars, long hidden under darkness, broke through and shone." And then, "shining fish were given the waves for dwelling, and beasts the earth, and birds the moving air."

Next, as the crowing act, humanity appears, depicted like this: "So Man was born, it may be, in God's image."

This early earth was quite sweet, with "rivers of milk, and rivers of honey, and gold nectar dripped from the dark-green oak trees." Then, however, evil arose—"Men lived on plunder. Guest was not safe from host, nor brother from brother. A man would kill his wife, a wife her husband."

On his throne, Jove saw "all this evil, and groaned." Along with his brother, Neptune, he unleashed torrents of water, wiping out the world until "everything is ocean, An ocean with no shore-line."

With the exception of Deucalion ("There was no better man than Deucalion") and Pyrrha, his wife (" . . . there was no woman more scrupulously reverent than Pyrrha"), who, alone surviving the flood, quickly offered prayer and worship to Themis: "Bring aid, most gentle goddess, to sunken circumstances."

Now, if this poem had been written 1,500 years *before* Genesis, as opposed to 1,500 *after*, then, as sure as God made little green apples, the world's greatest Bible scholars would have proclaimed that the author(s) of Genesis simply borrowed these pagan myths and retooled them to fit their Yahwist theology. In other words, we shouldn't take too seriously, or literally, the biblical creation story, because, after all, it obviously borrowed from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

But Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was written long *after* Genesis. What, then, explains the similarity? It's easy. The Creation, the Fall, the Flood—happened. Over the long millennia, echoes of the true story were distorted, retreaded, and paganized by the ensuing cultures. The Lord then raised up the Hebrew nation, who, through Moses, recaptured, in Genesis, the true account of our origins, which remains with us today.

That's why, for instance—instead of King Neptune putting "down his trident," and "wet-bearded, Triton, summoned from far down under, with his barnacle-strewn shoulders" being the ones who pushed back the waters after the Flood—Scripture says that "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided" (Gen. 8:1).

Same event, two accounts, except one was a paganized rendition of the truth, and the other—*the* truth itself.

CLIFF'S EDGE
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN



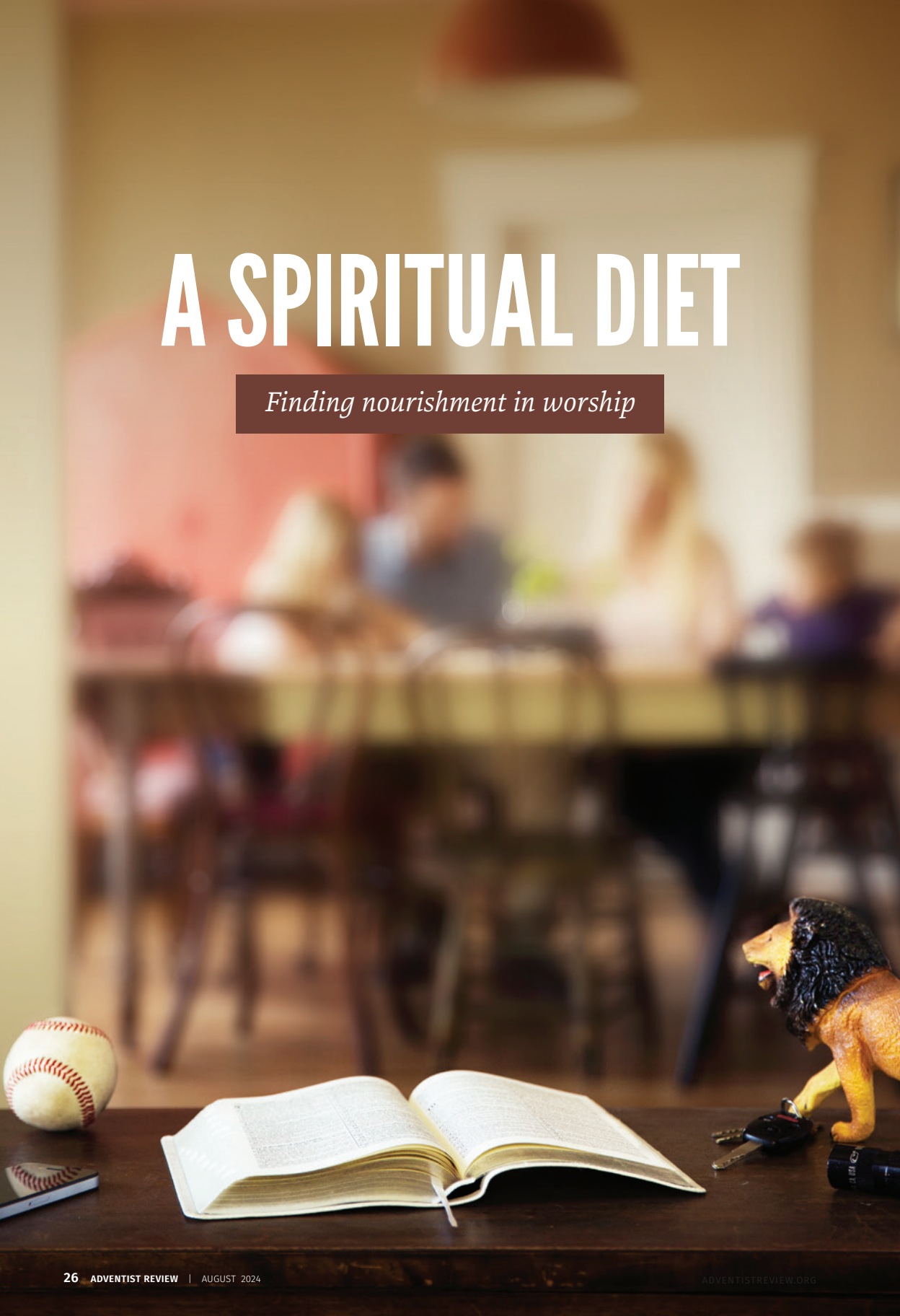
SAME EVENT, TWO ACCOUNTS. ONE A PAGANIZED RENDITION; THE OTHER—THE TRUTH ITSELF.

* All quotes are from *Metamorphoses*, Book One, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955), pp. 3-13.

Clifford Goldstein is the editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. His latest book is *Risen: Finding Hope in the Empty Tomb.*

A SPIRITUAL DIET

Finding nourishment in worship



As we build the habit of daily spending time in worship, we also grow in our relationship with Jesus.

MERLE POIRIER

Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). Have you ever thought how the Lord might "taste"? By feasting on the Word of God, we come to know God better and, in the process, find ourselves filled and satisfied.

While all might agree that spending time with Jesus is important, many don't. As Marcos Paseggi explained (see p. 18), while we wouldn't think of eating only once a week, that's exactly what we do with worship. When worship is neglected, the effect can be no different than skipping a meal. We become weak without food and drink. Without spiritual food, it's the same.

Family worship is an important part of a "spiritual diet" whether we are single or a part of an intergenerational family. As we build the habit of daily spending time in worship, we also grow in our relationship with Jesus.

Between 1999 and 2005 *Adventist Review* published a family worship column called Tuesday's Child. The idea was to encourage family worship once a week. We've prepared a sample *week* of daily family worships—Sunday through Friday. On Sabbath we encourage attendance at a church near you. Six stories have been adapted from Tuesday's Child. While geared toward families with children, we're suggesting everyone can benefit from these lessons. Discussion questions are included for all age groups. Using all the elements provided should take about 10 minutes a day. Find the best time and try this spiritual meal plan. After this week, look for a devotional or select a Bible book to continue your own daily worship plan.

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

Scripture Reading:
"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10).

Prayer: If alone, pray silently or aloud. If with others, select someone to pray.

Song: Choose a praise song, hymn, or children's Sabbath School song. If you need a suggestion, try "Stand Like the Brave" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 610).[1]

Questions/Activities

With small children: Talk about the spider and why one should be careful around them and other insects. In simple terms, tell how God protects us from danger. Pray that God will protect the family this day.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Talk about Jessica's courage. Would they be able to do the same? Where did she find her courage? How does protecting others give us more courage? Make a list of Bible characters with courage.

Adults: What scripture can you read, or Bible story can you remember, in which God protected His people, and the people demonstrated courage? How can you practice courage today?

Closing Prayer

Sardines and Spiders[2]

Bonnie Walker

Nine-year-old Jessica eyed a large hole that Flash, Grandpa's dog, had dug under the foundation behind the barn.

H'mmm, that's a neat place to hide, she thought, peering into the gloomy entrance.

"Is that a humongous spider?" she asked.

Jessica was able to visit her grandparents often, but her cousins lived far away. She looked forward to the times they got together once or twice a year.

Today the old house fairly burst with cousins, aunts, and uncles. As the evening began to cool, the children begged, "Can we play 'Sardines' like last time, Grandpa?"

"Please," pleaded Jessica. "Can Betty and I hide first?"

"Why not?" Grandpa agreed. "Come on, everyone," he said to all the cousins, including their parents.

Everyone went where they wouldn't see where the two girls hid. After three minutes they'd come looking for them. If someone found them, they were to hide with them until everyone was in the same place—packed like sardines in a can. The last two to find the hiding spot would be "it" for the next game.

Jessica ran for the red barn. "Where are you going?" Betty asked.

"Wait and see," laughed Jessica. She pushed aside the weeds at the back of the barn and scrambled down into the cool darkness under the building.

"You know the best places," Betty whispered. "They won't find us here."

Several times people came and searched, but they never found the children.

As their eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, Betty saw movement just above the opening. "Is that a humongous spider?" she asked.

The creature's shiny black body was about as big as a fat pea, and with its legs extended it would be about 1.5 inches across. She remembered a spider Grandpa had shown her once. "That's a black widow spider," he had pointed out. "Give them their space. They're poisonous."

Jessica knew that in "Sardines" people would have to squeeze past that spider. She grabbed a large tin can nearby. Then she crept forward and clapped it over the spider, holding it tightly.

After a long time the two girls heard the whole family approaching the barn. "We give up," Grandpa called. "None of us can find you."

"Down here," they shouted.

Soon Grandpa rescued them. "You did the right thing about the spider, Jessica," he said. "If someone had disturbed it, it may have bitten them."

Jessica cringed. "I've had enough of Sardines and spiders to last me a long time," she said.

She Who Can Do No Wrong[3]

Bonnie Walker

Is that a diary under the edge of her bed? Melissa wondered. She'd just brought some clean laundry to her younger sister Rita's bedroom. Mom and Dad were at work, and Rita was spending the day with a friend. What a temptation!

Melissa had been jealous of her little sister all her life. Melissa was 15, and Rita, 10, but Melissa never forgot the day Rita came home from the hospital. Suddenly the spotlight was off her and focused on "she who can do no wrong."

After Rita was born, it seemed Melissa was always competing for her parents' approval.

I wonder what she writes about me in that diary, Melissa thought. *Maybe I'll even find something bad she did that I could tell my parents about—then maybe they won't think she's such a Goody Two-shoes.* Melissa didn't even consider whether looking into Rita's diary was wrong.

Picking up the blue book, Melissa began turning the pages, searching for her name or some information she could use against her sister.

Melissa suddenly felt sick as she read page after page of things Rita had written. "I really wish I could be like Melissa," Rita wrote. "She knows what to do all the time. She is so smart." And further along: "Melissa is so pretty, and everyone likes her. I wish I were like Melissa."

She wants to be like me, Melissa thought.

This was worse than Melissa could have imagined. Rita looked up to her. Suddenly Melissa realized she had spent 10 years finding fault in someone who loved her.

Quietly she put the book back under the edge of the bed and began to think about her relationship with Rita. She wanted to get to know her better. *But first she'd start with a note of apology.*

LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE



Scripture Reading

"Love suffers long and is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4).

Prayer

Song: "'Tis Love That Makes Us Happy" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 579).

"I really wish I could be like Melissa."

Questions/Activities

With small children: Find an object that must be treated gently and with permission. Talk about the fact that sometimes we must not touch and need to obey. Jesus also has rules to keep us safe. We obey because we love Jesus.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Was it OK for Melissa to open and read the diary? Are there times reading something someone has kept private is OK to read or share? Read 2 Kings 22:8-10. How is this different from what Melissa did?

Adults: Sometimes we judge people without knowing their true motives. Have you ever been jealous of someone? Send a note or email to someone today telling them how they have been a positive influence in your life.

Closing Prayer

Scripture Reading:
"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Prayer

Song: "When He Cometh" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 218).

The Family Tree[4]

Edna May Olsen

Jay rushed back from the mailbox. "A letter from Grandma!" he shouted.

"Grandma sent a copy of our family tree," Mother said. "She wants us to add you and your sister to it."

"What's a family tree?" asked Cheryl.

"Let me explain it," said Mother as she spread the paper on the table.

"It's a list of the members of a family comparing it to a tree with branches," Mother said.

"Our family tree starts with Samuel Ward, up here." She pointed to the top branches of what looked like a tree. "Now, here," she said, pointing to the next branch, "it shows that Samuel married Anne Heywood, and they had five children. One of their children was Frances, my grandmother."

"And my grandmother married Jacob Frost, and they had seven children." She traced another branch of the tree. "One of those children was Elizabeth, my mother and your grandmother."

Dad came to see what they were doing. "I can tell you about another family tree," he said. He opened his Bible to Matthew 1:1 and read: "'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.'"

"*Genealogy* is another word for 'family tree,'" he explained. "In Bible times family background was important. That's why the Bible lists the genealogy of Jesus, starting with Abraham, the father of Isaac, the father of Jacob, and all the way to Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus." Then he turned to Luke 3. "Here is another family tree. This one goes back to Adam, 'the son of God.'"

"But the best part," smiled Mom, "is that those who love Jesus are part of God's family. We're part of His family tree!"

Dad came to see what they were doing. "I can tell you about another family tree," he said. He opened his Bible to Matthew 1:1.

Questions/Activities

With small children: Show them pictures of them, their parents, and their grandparents. Tell them how you are all family and love each other. There is someone else who is part of the family too. Jesus loves them even more! Sing "Happy, Happy Home," being sure to end "With Jesus in the family, happy, happy home."

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Can they name their ancestors? How far back can they go? Why do they think Jesus has two family trees? Compare Matthew 1 and Luke 3. How are they different? [Answer: It was important to demonstrate that Jesus was descended from David. In Matthew 1 His family tree is through Joseph, and Luke 3 is thought to be His family tree through Mary. Jesus was a double Son of David!]

Adults: Study the family trees in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Where are the differences? What does it mean for you to be part of God's family? What will you do today to make your Father proud?

Closing Prayer



Scripture Reading:
"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

Prayer

Song: "This Is My Father's World" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 92).

Pharaoh[5]

Bonnie Walker

Mom always thinks she knows best," grumbled Sierra, pushing the garage door open. "Pharaoh," she called. *Why do we always have to lock that dog up when we go to school? He never gets lost.*

"Pharaoh," she called again. But no dog came running. "Well, I'm just going to let him be. I can't go chasing around the neighborhood looking for that dog," Sierra said. She closed the door and ran to get her school bag. "Goodbye, Mom," she called.

The school day passed quickly, and soon Sierra was home. *H'mmm, Pharaoh usually barks. Where can he be?* she wondered as she looked in the garage.

A note from Mom explained she had come home and found that Pharaoh was not in the garage, where she thought Sierra had put him. She had taken the car and was driving around the neighborhood.

"I've driven everywhere, and didn't see any sign of him," Mom said. "We may have to call the animal shelter."

The next day Mother phoned the shelter. "We're looking for our German shepherd. He's been gone since yesterday."

"We have a shepherd here. This one looks so sad, and he cried all night."

Soon they were on their way to the shelter. They were greeted by Pharaoh's happy barking. Pharaoh jumped into the front seat beside Mom. All the way home he whimpered and moaned. Sometimes he laid his muzzle on Mom's shoulder.

Sierra sat in the back feeling guilty. *What a lot of expense and worry to everyone. Even Pharaoh. To think that a dog could show that much feeling!* She knew it was her fault, too. Leaning forward, Sierra patted Pharaoh's head. "I'm sorry, boy," she said.

"We're looking for our German shepherd. He's been gone since yesterday."

Questions/Activities

With small children: If you have a pet, practice holding or petting it. If no pet, try a stuffed animal. Talk about Jesus, who made the animals, and how we must be kind.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: What different and sadder ending could this have had for Pharaoh? Why is it important to be kind to animals? Read the story of Balaam and the donkey (Num. 22:22-35).

Adults: What can you do to help God's creation? It might be supporting the environment, putting out water for bees, peanuts for squirrels, or picking up trash on the side of the road.

Closing Prayer

PHOTO: LIGHTSTOCK / MARCUS

DAY 05

Scripture Reading:
"And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10).

Prayer

Song: "I Need the Prayers" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 505).

Pastor Lennox began to pray as if he were talking to his best friend.

Questions/Activities

With small children: Compare talking to Jesus with talking to our friends and family. Maybe call someone and talk with them on the phone. Then teach them to talk to Jesus the same way. Help them to kneel, fold their hands, and close their eyes. Lead them in a simple prayer.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: What does it mean to pray for others? Why did Ben feel good about the pastor praying for him? Create a list of people to pray for. Include these names in the closing prayer.

Adults: Intercessory prayer is important. Create a list of others to pray for through the rest of the week. How do you feel when someone prays for you?

Closing Prayer



LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

What About Me?[6]

Bonnie Walker

It was Sabbath morning, and Ben's family was rushing to get ready for church.

"We're invited to lunch at the Clarks," Mom said. "Pastor and Mrs. Lennox will be there too. I want you to bring play clothes for the afternoon."

Just then Dad came into the living room. He didn't always go to church, but today he was all dressed up.

After church Ben's brother grabbed his arm. "Remember your manners at the Clarks," he reminded him.

It was raining after lunch, so they went into the living room. Pastor Lennox told stories of when he was a young pastor. His stories were exciting. Then Ben's dad began telling his story, including his struggle to stop smoking.

"Will you pray for me, Pastor Lennox?" asked Dad.

Pastor Lennox read Philippians 4:13, a promise that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Then the group knelt in a circle and held hands. Pastor Lennox began to pray as if he were talking to his best friend. He asked God to be with Ben's family and to give Ben's dad strength to overcome.

While the pastor prayed, Ben remembered that he had a temper sometimes. Ben wanted God to bless him, too. During prayer Ben peeked at Pastor Lennox. He looked so happy and so sure that God would help his dad. "What about me?" Ben said out loud. His sister poked him for being rude.

Elder Lennox paused and opened his eyes. He looked right at Ben and smiled. Closing his eyes, he continued to pray. He then prayed for Ben by name. Ben never forgot that moment. It was just as if Ben was lifted right to God's throne and God smiled at him.

In the Middle of a Storm[7]

Bonnie Walker

It was a hot July afternoon in Alberta, Canada. Laurene could see her dad hammering shingles on the new shed for their cows.

Laurene was glad to be done picking berries. Helping her mom lift the last crate of strawberries onto the truck, she had an idea. "Mom," Laurene begged, "may we have a sleepover tonight and invite Helen and Esther?"

"Pleeeeease," chimed in her sisters, Ruthi and Evie.

"I suppose," said Mom, smiling at the three expectant faces. "You've all been a big help."

After supper Uncle Art brought her two cousins over. They had fun setting up the trailer. On top of the trailer was a tentlike structure. Poles held up the roof, and the sides flopped out to form narrow beds on each side.

Finally the five girls and Laurene's dog climbed through the tent flap. "Evie, you sleep on the floor with Mitzie," Laurene said. "Helen can sleep with me on this side, and Ruthi and Esther can sleep on that side."

Splat, splatter, splat! "Rain!" exclaimed Ruthi. The girls laughed and told stories until they were lulled to sleep by the wind and rain.

Suddenly the wind became gusty, moving the tent sides up and down. Laurene dreamed she was flying across the road. The wind woke Dad, who quickly hurried outside to move the big grain truck closer to the trailer to protect it from the wind.

Suddenly a mighty gust lifted the sides of the camper. Both sides folded in, dumping the four bigger girls on top of Evie and Mitzie. "Help!" screamed the girls.

Laurene knew she must unzip the flap. She fumbled for the zipper. Mitzie found the bottom of the zipper and nosed her way out, with the girls close behind. "Bend low," Dad shouted. "Run for the cab of the truck."

When all six people and the dog were safely in the truck, they watched lightning flash in the sky. A big sheet of plywood flew through the air and cut into the side of the garage as if it were slicing cheese. Shingles and more plywood blew past. Finally the storm subsided enough for the family to run for the house.

"Jesus sent the angels to help us," said Ruthi.

KIEFERPIX / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



Scripture Reading:
"He calms the storm, so that its waves are still" (Ps. 107:29).

Prayer

Song: "A Shelter in the Time of Storm" *(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,* no. 528).

Questions/Activities

With small children: Go to a dark room and turn the lights on. Talk about how safe it feels when we can see. Then turn the lights off. Allow the darkness to have its effect and then turn the lights back on. Explain that Jesus is like the light. He's with us even if it is dark, and keeps us safe.

With middle schoolers or teenagers: Why are storms scary? Compare a storm to life and sin that has entered the world. Read how Jesus calms the storm (Luke 8:23-25). What keeps us safe during the storms of life?

Adults: What storms have you encountered? Compare weather storms to our problems. What can we learn from coping with a storm that allows us to feel at peace when assaulted by life?

Closing Prayer

[1] Visit sdahymnals.com for music and lyrics. Even young children can learn the refrains of some hymns.
[2] *Adventist Review*, October 2003, p. 10.
[3] *Adventist Review*, July 17, 2003, p. 29.
[4] *Adventist Review*, July 10, 2003, p. 16.
[5] *Adventist Review*, November 2002, p. 106.
[6] *Adventist Review*, Aug. 21, 2003, p. 17.
[7] *Adventist Review*, Aug. 15, 2002, p. 17.



BACK TO THE ALTAR

A call to unreserved surrender to God

RAMON J. CANALS

In 2022 the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched the Back to the Altar initiative. This initiative calls us to return to God as individuals, families, and churches; to restore the family altar by worshipping God in the morning and evening. It is a call to be more devoted to prayer and worship of God. "We should improve the opportunity for prayer, both in secret and around the family altar. Many need to learn to pray."[1] Back to the Altar is about spending unhurried time with God. It is about coming to Jesus as we are: weak, tired, and helpless. The initiative emphasizes four key areas: (a) personal worship, (b) family worship, (c) congregational worship, and (d) limiting distractions. It reminds us that "He calls upon us to offer ourselves on the altar of service, a living, consuming sacrifice. We are to make an unreserved consecration to God of all that we have and are."[2]

Certain spiritual practices have been widely acknowledged throughout history as essential for a meaningful spiritual life. These practices include prayer, meditation on the life of Jesus, and the study of the Scriptures. When used together, these practices are integral to the development and growth of every church member. This is why emphasizing the importance of focusing on our relationship with God through prayer and reflection on His Word is critical to the initiative.

COMMUNION WITH GOD

Back to the Altar is about communion with God. Ellen G. White wrote, "There is nothing more needed in the work than the practical results of communion with God."[3] Back to the Altar is a plea to individuals, families, and churches to return to God. The restoration of personal and family worship among Seventh-day Adventists is the most pressing need of our time, but doing so will require much prayer and effort. Like Elijah restoring the broken altar in Israel, we should commit to daily morning and evening worship, restoring our "altars" as individuals and families.

RADICAL OBEDIENCE

The initiative aims to inspire radical obedience to Jesus Christ, urging church members to surrender completely to His Lordship. This involves being guided by biblical truth and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out faith practically. It challenges believers to follow God's lead in all aspects of life, making intentional choices that honor Him. For this purpose, Back to the Altar provides resources, training, and support to help church members grow in faith and positively impact their communities.

PRIORITY TO PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Back to the Altar encourages individuals and churches to prioritize daily prayer, worship, and personal and family devotions to cultivate a deep and abiding relationship with God. Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). Why is the personal and family altar so important? Mrs. White wrote, "No words can properly set forth the deep blessedness of genuine worship."[4]

DAILY SURRENDER

Back to the Altar serves as a profound and inspiring reminder of the transformative power and deep significance of the cross of Christ in our lives. It beckons us to embrace a daily commitment to surrender every facet of our existence to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The initiative encourages church members to open their hearts fully, permitting the Holy Spirit to infuse them with God's constant life-giving presence. It's an invitation to immerse themselves in spiritual renewal and personal growth based on God's enduring love and grace.

LONGING FOR GOD

Back to the Altar is a passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ and a wholehearted commitment to follow Him. It involves constantly yearning for God and His presence. Jesus promised to satisfy our thirst in John 7:37: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." To practice Back to the Altar, we must cultivate a love for God and a desire to know Him more intimately by spending quality, unrushed time with Him. This involves developing a deep love for the Bible as the inspired Word of God and committing to study and apply its truths in our daily lives.

The restoration of personal and family worship among Seventh-day Adventists is the most pressing need of our time.

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP

Back to the Altar is a call to reject superficiality and embrace an authentic relationship with God. This relationship must be free from empty rituals and traditions. We are all very busy, but God loves us so much that He desires to draw us closer to Him. We can do this by spending quiet moments reading, learning, and meditating on His Word. We cannot truly know God and have an authentic, deep relationship with Him if we are unfamiliar with His Word. Only by studying and learning the Bible can we get to know Him.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS

As a church we have never faced a more formidable challenge to personal worship than the one posed by digital media. Back to the Altar is a call to refocus our lives on worshipping and honoring God by turning away from the distractions of modern life. These distractions can include, but are not limited to, excessive busyness, digital devices, social media, and other forms of entertainment or noise that take our attention away from our spiritual well-being. Another type of distraction is overwork. This could be secular work or even working for God. We can become so busy serving the Lord that we forget the Lord of the work!

PREPARED HEARTS

Back to the Altar encourages us to prepare our hearts for Jesus' second coming by living in expectation of His return and sharing the hope of salvation with others. This means committing to preparing our families for Jesus' return by spreading the gospel and nurturing our relationships with our spouses, children, and loved ones.

[1] Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1883.
[2] Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, May 16, 1907.
[3] Ellen G. Whte, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 47.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 143.

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PHOTO: THITAREESARMKASAT / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



THE LAST 153 DAYS

A true prophet to the very end

VIRGIL E. ROBINSON

After her fall in 1915, Ellen White's caretakers occasionally moved her bed to the upper porch of her "Elmshaven" home to get some fresh air. Her son William C. White can be seen standing on the lower step outside the front porch.

On July 16, 1915, 109 years ago, Ellen G. White passed to her rest. In recognition of this event, we herewith present a brief review of the last 153 days of her life. What Sister White said and did during this time conveys a message of relevance to the church today.—Editors.

It was about noon on Sabbath, February 13, 1915, that Ellen G. White, while passing through a door into her large writing room at Elmshaven, near St. Helena, California, tripped and fell. Her nurse, May Walling, was near, and endeavored to help Mrs. White to her feet, but found that any movement of her left leg brought severe pain. Mrs. White did not walk again after her fall.

The following is a commentary on some of the events of the last five months of her life, written by her son W. C. White in personal letters, or for the *Review and Herald*.

The words in quotation were spoken by Mrs. White herself and taken down by one of her secretaries.

* * *

At first, when I learned that the femur was fractured, I felt that it was doubtful if she could ever recover; but as I see how she is sustained and how little she has suffered yesterday and today, I begin to hope that she will live through the shock and the suffering.

Mother bore with remarkable fortitude the painful experiences of being carried downstairs and conveyed up the hill in a wagon; then the X-ray examination and the return home. Notwithstanding all this, she slept about six hours the night following the accident.

Sunday morning, Drs. Klingerman and Jones came down from the Sanitarium. They brought a surgical bed, which we set up in Mother's study. Then her leg was bandaged and set and the weights were attached to keep it in place. She has two good, competent nurses—May Walling and Mrs. Hungerford—and her bed is in the room where she has done her writing for more than ten years. When I visited her this morning, she was looking bright and cheerful, and after our season of prayer together she expressed great thankfulness that she suffered so little pain.[1]

Day before yesterday [March 1], when I repeated to her some of the messages of sympathy from old friends in Mountain View, Los Angeles, and Washington and mentioned Elder Corliss, Adelia van Horn, Brother and Sister J. J. Wessels, and Elders Butler and Haskell, she said: "Tell my old friends that I do not forget them."[2]

"I feel, the sooner the better; all the time that is how I feel—the sooner the better. I have not a discouraging thought, nor sadness. I have hoped I should be able once more to speak to the people; but that is the Lord's business, not mine."

PHOTO: ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

"I have light and faith and hope and courage and joy in the Lord, and that is enough. The Lord understands what I can endure, and He has given me grace to bear up under the discouragements that I have sometimes had to bear, and I feel thankful for this.

"I have nothing to complain of; I thank the Lord for all His goodness, all His mercy, all His love."

Pointing to and handling some of her books, she continued: "I appreciate these books as I never did before. I appreciate them. They are truth, and they are righteousness, and they are an everlasting testimony that God is true.

"I have nothing to complain of. Let the Lord take His way and do His work with me, so that I am refined and purified; and that is all I desire. I know my work is done; it is of no use to say anything else: I shall rejoice, when my time comes, that I am permitted to lie down to rest in peace. I have no desire that my life should be prolonged."

Following a prayer by Brother Crisler, she prayed:

"Heavenly Father, I come to Thee, weak, like a broken reed, yet by the Holy Spirit's vindication of righteousness and truth that shall prevail. I thank Thee, Lord, I thank Thee, and I will not draw away from anything that Thou wouldst give me to bear. Let Thy light, let Thy joy and grace be upon me in my last hours, that I may glorify Thee, is my great desire; and this is all that I ask of Thee. Amen."

Following the prayer: "I did not know how it would be in the last, the very last, on account of the affliction. But I find that I can lean my whole weight on the promises of God; and do not at all doubt or question His wisdom in any way. He has provided for me to be carried through; and I will rejoice just as long as I have tongue and voice"[3]

Sunday evening, April 18, Mother was sitting in her big bay window, with a copy of *The Desire of Ages* in her hands. I sat down beside her and spoke of the precious truths which the book contains and the good that is being accomplished by it and her other books in bringing souls to Christ. I told her that her books are being circulated more and more. To this she, replied: "Keep it up, keep it up. Do not be discouraged. Do what you know to be right, though others may object. I want the truth to stand out in its beauty. I get terribly tired of nonentities. Let us not serve the devil in that way.

"I do not say that I am perfect, but I am trying to be perfect. I do not expect others to be perfect; and if I could not associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not know what I should do.

"I try to treat the matter the best that I can, and am thankful that I have a spirit of uplifting and not a spirit of crushing down. . . . No one is perfect. If one were perfect, he would be prepared for heaven. As long as we are not perfect, we have a work to do to get ready to be perfect. We have a mighty Saviour. . . .

The Lord wants us each to do all we possibly can, and fight the good fight of faith.

"I am going to keep my mind as much as ever I can on the prominent things of eternal life. They are not dwelt upon enough. I rejoice that I have that faith that takes hold of the promises of God, that works by love and sanctifies the soul. A sanctified soul will not blunder a great deal. I will not keep talking, talking, talking about what this one should do, and what that one should do. The Lord wants us each to do all we possibly can, and fight the good fight of faith. That is what I mean to do. I will not give up to a mind of despondency."[4]

May 1, 1915, Elder White wrote to his cousin Mary Watson:

I am delighted to tell you that Mother has been stronger since Wednesday morning, and she is now eating a little better. We begin to hope that her life will be prolonged for several weeks yet.[5]

On July 7 he reported:

Mother is slowly losing ground. She talks but little now and longs for rest. It is now 144 days since the accident. What a strange world this will be to me when mother is gone![6]

The end came, and the tired warrior entered into her rest at 3:40 on Friday afternoon, July 16, 1915.

[1] W. C. White to cousin Mary C. Watson, Feb. 15, 1915.
[2] W. C. White to the editor of the *Pacific Union Recorder*, Mar. 3. 1915.
[3] W. C. White to the editor of the *Pacific Union Recorder*, Mar. 7, 1915.
[4] W. C. White to the editor of the *Pacific Union Recorder*, Apr. 23, 1915.
[5] W. C. White to Mary C. Watson, May 14, 1915.
[6] W. C. White, in *Review and Herald*, July 22, 1915.

Virgil E. Robinson was a great-grandson of Ellen White's. 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 was taken from *Review And Herald*, July 23, 1970.



THE MISSION OF GOD

A rescue plan



N. ASHOK KUMAR

On October 7, 2023, during a Sabbath celebration for an elderly couple in a village on the borders of Israel, an alarm went out from the local authorities of an attack. The elderly couple's two caregivers from India rushed to close the doors and windows of the house. The attackers came to the front door, knocking and spraying bullets at the doors and windows. To protect the elderly, the two caregivers held their ground behind the door for four and a half hours. After constant vigilance of five to six hours, the caregivers were able to rescue the elderly couple. The rescue operation was praised by the Indian embassy. The officials praised the two caregivers as "superwomen."[1]

Have you ever been rescued from disaster or destruction? God initiated the ultimate rescue

PHOTO: ELIAS VICARIO

plan from before the beginning of human history—God's great mission plan to rescue humans from the clutches of sin, a divine rescue operation wherein the kingdom of heaven works to defeat Satan's kingdom of sin, suffering, and death.

PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING MISSION

I once had a number of wrong conceptions about mission. In 1998 I joined the mission work. In the initial stages of my pastoral work, I thought of mission in terms of the conference, union, and division offices because these entities plan and execute mission work, often utilizing such terms as mission compound, mission school, and mission building. Later I came to believe that the local church was in charge of the mission work. And still later I thought as a church pastor that I was responsible for mission. My understanding of the mission was progressive but wrong. What, then, is the mission, and where is it located?

THE MISSION OF GOD

The mission of God is rooted in the Scriptures.[2] Several biblical narratives confirm that the mission began in the mind of God. He is the alpha and omega of the mission. Indeed, according to Christopher J. H. Wright, Scripture is all about the mission of God. This does not mean, Wright explains, that we must find something directly about mission in every single verse of the Bible, but that God's mission is a primary theme throughout Scripture.[3] The Bible describes the origin, purpose, channels, and arena of *God's* mission.

This understanding has relieved my previous doubts and confusion about the nature of the mission. The moment Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8, 9), our amazingly merciful God came in search of them. This is the first missionary journey of God described in Scripture, undertaken to rescue humans from the snares of sin. As many scholars have noted, the God of the Bible is a missionary God.[4] The mission of God has several dimensions, including relative to the calling, context, challenges, and identity of the missions. My own study on God's mission has greatly helped me to see mission from new perspectives.

MISSION AND CALLING

God's mission and calling are interwoven together. God often initiates mission by calling humans. While Abraham was enjoying a peaceful and prosperous life in Haran, God called him to leave all that he knew. To leave his property, his people, and his homeland involved great risk and sacrifice (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham obeyed the calling, took the risk, and faced the hardships of taking his family and becoming a stranger in the land of Canaan. He lived as a sojourner in tents and faced famine (Heb. 11:8-12). This "call of Abraham in Genesis 12 marks a turning point in God's dealings with the world."[5]

Later God's call of Moses to mission also involved great risks and sacrifices. Moses could have enjoyed the pleasures of Egypt in his high position. But God called him to a mission that involved great sacrifices, and he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (verses 24-26). Regarding this, Ellen G. White comments, "Moses had been instructed in regard to the final reward to be given to the humble and obedient servants of God, and worldly gain sank to its proper insignificance in comparison." Moses "looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch's crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin" and "faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin."[6] Moses was called for a unique purpose of great responsibility. He was called to lead a group of people out of bondage to establish Israel in the Promised Land.

In these stories and elsewhere in Scripture, calling is an indispensable factor in God's mission,

in which those called face difficult personal choices. Each calling, however, is unique, setting forth distinct responsibilities to advance God's mission in specific contexts.

MISSION AND CONTEXT

God's calls to mission take place in various contexts linked to the distinct purposes, needs, and demands of specific situations. Joseph, for example, was called to a unique mission in a foreign land, filled with dangers and hardships and twists and turns, but ultimately making God known in Egypt and beyond as a forerunner of Christ. Ellen White comments, "Not to the people of Egypt alone, but to all the nations connected with that powerful kingdom, God manifested Himself through Joseph. He desired to make him a light bearer to all peoples, and He placed him next the throne of the world's greatest empire, that the heavenly illumination might extend far and near. By his wisdom and justice, by the purity and benevolence of his daily life, by his devotion to the interests of the people—and that people a nation of idolaters—Joseph was a representative of Christ" and through him Egypt and others "were to behold the love of their Creator and Redeemer."[7] In this and other instances of God's mission, the specific context of the mission determines the role of the missionary.

Daniel was called in a different context than that of Joseph. Though both were placed in a strange land, Daniel was placed in Babylon and witnessed of God through his integrity and lifestyle. David was called in the context of political leadership as king whereas prophets were called to, among other things, the task of exhorting and rebuking the people, including rulers. Each narration of God's call to the mission has to be understood in the broader context of God's mission and the specific context in which each call takes place. Then and today, the call and context determine the role of the mission and task of the missionary.

MISSION AND CHALLENGES

Every call to the mission is associated with significant challenges, many of which are unforeseen. A call to mission without challenges would be unheard of. The father of modern missions, William Carey, was sent to India to preach the gospel. To do so, he had to face the challenge of learning the language and understanding the cultures of the land. He learned the Bengali, Sanskrit, and Urdu languages to translate the Scriptures into Indian languages.

In Carey's case and others, the God of mission who called the missionaries to the task of carrying on His mission work enables and equips them to face the challenges of the mission. God not only chooses and calls, but He always equips those whom He calls. As Jesus Himself proclaimed to His disciples: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16). Every missionary has the privilege of facing unique challenges in the missionary work to which he or she is called. But the missionary is never alone in this task of facing the challenges of the mission.

The specific challenges faced in mission are different for each individual. Some missionaries, such as William Axling (to Japan) and Stanley Jones (to India), were asked to spend 60 years of their service in a foreign land. Others, such as John and Betty Stam (to China), had to return to their homeland in the middle of the term they expected to serve.[8] Each of these and many others faced great challenges, and yet, through it all, God was with them—as He is with everyone who responds to His call to serve in the great mission of God.

Scripture provides ample examples of the challenges of the mission. Stephen became the first Christian martyr. His fellow deacon, Philip, however, served Christ for a whole generation (Acts 21:8). The apostle James was beheaded by King Herod, while around the same time apostle Peter, slated for the same fate, was miraculously delivered (Acts 12:6-10). Through it all Scripture assures us that every challenge faced by missionaries is within the bounds of God's providence. The missionary God knows the challenges of the mission. The God who has called the missionaries to carry out the mission will enable the missionaries to face the challenges of the missions to which they are called.

MISSION AND IDENTITY

God's mission provides a unique identity to each missionary God calls to carry His message. For example, God called the entire nation of Israel with a special identity. "For you are a people holy

to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6, NIV). The first identity given to the nation of Israel here was to be the chosen people among all the peoples on the face of the earth. The second identity given here was that they were a treasured possession of God. These identities were not given merely for their sake, but for the special task of accomplishing the mission of God to bless the entire world (cf. Gen. 12:3).

The New Testament provides another example of identity granted to those involved in God's mission. Jesus called His disciples to follow His commandments and commission. He called them to a new identity in Him. And He called them to be *friends*, saying, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

The identity of everyone called by God is inseparably linked with the special responsibility of contributing to completing the mission of God—the great rescue plan of God to save the world. As Ellen White puts it: "Whatever one's calling in life, his first interest should be to win souls for Christ."[9]

CONCLUSION

God set forth His great rescue plan knowing full well the costs involved. The mission of God involves immense costs, including the sacrifice of the Son of God Himself. God calls chosen people to serve in His great mission, each in a specific context, each facing distinct challenges, and each given an identity as His missionary. But the missionary is never alone, and has the privilege of working with God in His great rescue plan. In these and so many other ways, the mission of God is a miracle indeed. God calls each of His followers to play a part in His mission. Have you answered His call?

[1] *Hindustan Times*, Oct. 28, 2023, https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/israel-hamas-war-kerala-woman-in-israel-recounts-hor ror-says-held-on-to-door-they-destroyed-everything-101697594273248.html.

[2] See Herbert J. Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), p. 15.

[3] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006), p. 31.

[4] See "Our God Is a Missionary God," in John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), pp. 321-336.

[5] Kane, p. 23.

[6] Ellen G White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 246.

[7] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, pp. 219, 220.

[8] Kane, p. 101.

[9] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 822.

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THE YEAST OF HEROD

Navigating politically charged times

As the journalist H. L. Mencken noted: "The most dangerous man to any government is the man who is able to think things out for himself." In Mark 8:15 Jesus encourages believers to do just that—think. He warned, "Be careful. Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod" (NIV). Today, in our politically charged environment, this warning is absolutely relevant.

Jesus' metaphor of yeast highlights the potential corrupting nature of these influences. Herod Antipas, known for his moral compromises and political maneuvers, exemplifies the dangers of allowing political pressures to override ethical and spiritual values. His unlawful marriage to Herodias and the execution of John the Baptist are stark reminders of how political expediency can lead to moral decay, hypocrisy, and untold pain.

Much like yeast, which spreads and transforms its environment through fermentation, political influence can positively or negatively permeate every aspect of society.

Here are four biblical L.I.F.E. principles to help us avoid the yeast of Herod:

L—Live With Integrity and Moral Standards. Steadfastly refuse to compromise moral standards for political gain or convenience. Be a witness for truth and justice, standing against moral corruption and injustice even when inconvenient. Work toward peacemaking and reconciliation, promoting respectful dialogue and understanding among diverse groups.

I—Intentionally Think Critically and Use Discernment. Christians should critically evaluate political rhetoric and actions, discerning whether they align with biblical principles of justice, mercy, and integrity (Micah 6:8). Avoid blindly following political leaders or parties. Ask yourself, "How does this position or person approximate itself to the principles of the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy, and basic Christian values?"

F—Foster Spiritual Vigilance and Dependence on God. These are unquestionably tough times and uncharted waters. Regularly pray for wisdom and discernment in navigating political complexities. Consciously remember that political systems and leaders are temporal, but God's kingdom is eternal. Be spiritually vigilant.

E—Evaluate and Avoid Political Manipulation and Opportunism. Herod's willingness to execute John the Baptist and his mocking treatment of Jesus during His trial demonstrate how political pressures and manipulation can lead to unjust and immoral actions. They serve as a warning about the dangers of succumbing to negative political influences and compromises. Always stand for ethical and biblical values.

The "yeast of Herod" serves as a timeless warning for Adventist believers. By applying this L.I.F.E. framework and educating ourselves on the issues, we can navigate the complexities of political life while remaining true to our convictions. Let us rely on God's wisdom and guidance to be an influence for good.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

DELBERT W. BAKER



MUCH LIKE YEAST, WHICH TRANSFORMS ITS ENVIRONMENT THROUGH FERMENTATION, POLITICAL INFLUENCE CAN POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY PERMEATE EVERY ASPECT OF SOCIETY.

Delbert W. Baker, Ph.D., is director of research and development for the Regional Conference Retirement Plan/Office of Regional Conference Ministries in Huntsville, Alabama.

Changing of the Guard



Kenneth H. Wood

An unexpected event leads to a new editor.

MERLE POIRIER

Francis D. Nichol was a dynamo by anyone's definition. In addition to editing the *Review*, a weekly publication, including answering hundreds of letters each week, Nichol also managed and edited *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*.

J. D. Snider, book manager for the Review and Herald Publishing Association (RHPA), first had the idea of a commentary. It was an ambitious project that he pursued relentlessly until he eventually persuaded the RHPA board to launch the project in 1952. By 1955 the first four volumes were available.[1] By 1957 volumes 5 and 6 were published,[2] and volume 7, the final in the set, was released in 1958.[3] Nichol led a team of two associates and an assistant editor. "Nobody else could have driven that [the commentary project] through the way he did," observed Kenneth Wood. "When he had a program he really wanted to push through, he had them there at 4:00 and 5:00 in the

PHOTO: REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

morning. If you said, 'You know, I don't have time to do something,' his question was 'What are you doing between 2:00 and 3:00 in the morning?'"[4]

During this time editing the *Review* was largely left in the hands of associate editor Frederick Lee, assisted by Kenneth Wood, who was hired in 1955. While Nichol never fully took his hand off the plow, and stayed engaged with correspondence, even he recognized he could not tackle both and give them his full attention.

The real question before us isn't whether the *Review* has a long title or a short one, but whether we are going to present in the future the same good doctrines and principles as we did in the past.

NEW SHOES

In 1961 several changes occurred to the paper itself. In an editorial by Nichol (F. D. N.), he announced that the *Review* had "returned to 24 pages per issue, which until a few years ago, was its standard size." He went on to enumerate what the loss of pages would mean—less advertising (down to one page), discontinuation of the Sabbath School lesson feature, editorials reduced to two, and the reduction in type size for report pages. Nichol added that these changes would allow a decrease in subscription price, which all would appreciate.

"At times," he wrote, "it is appropriate, even for the most proper of people, to put on a new hat, coat, and shoes. That is what we have done with the *Review*. But the *Review* is still the same great, good journal, and the new shoes are pointed in the same direction as the old—toward the gates of heaven."[5] What he didn't mention, but months later explained, was that he also changed the name of the publication. The nameplate now read *Review and Herald*.[6]

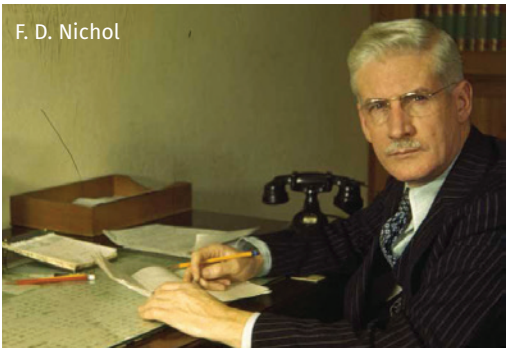
With any change made to the *Review*, as expected, readers would respond. Most were favorable, but not all. Quite a number wrote disparagingly about the loss of the Sabbath School lesson helps. Others complained about the page count. And another the shortening of the name. Each Nichol answered faithfully, many with humor, and some expressing reasons behind the decision.

"After all, most folks pay their money for the *Review,* not for a beautiful scenic picture on the cover, but for good articles that instruct them in the ways of righteousness and good reports from the far mission fields," he wrote to one. "I think you'll agree that you didn't buy the *Review* because of the table of contents, or a nature picture on the front cover, or perhaps even because of the lesson helps. You bought it because it gave you counsel from the leadership of the church, helpful guidance on holy living, and reports from the advancing work in all the mission fields."[7] On the complaint of the shorter name, Nichol responded: "The real question before us isn't whether the *Review* has a long title or a short one, but whether we are going to present in the future the same good doctrines and principles as we did in the past."[8] After a day of catching up on correspondence, much of it critical of the changes, he wrote another: "You see the difficulty and the dilemma of a poor editor."[9] Six weeks later, when readers were still writing their opinions on the changes, we discover he may have reached his limit. Nichol responded to one writer: "It is a letter like yours that helps to keep an editor humble and make him realize that he can never hope to publish a journal that will fully please everyone."[10]

GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

The 1962 General Conference (GC) Session was held in San Francisco, California. The historic practice of producing a daily bulletin each day of the session by the *Review* staff was firmly in place. It's a formidable task. F. D. Nichol was no stranger to GC Sessions, having been pressed into service in 1922 as a young man when the session was also in California. The challenge of these distant locations was that the RHPA, the printer of the bulletins, was located in Washington, D.C. (in this case, 3,000 miles away). It was an amazing accomplishment between editor and publishing house, using telephones, dictation, and airplanes to offer daily bulletins to the delegates as well as to subscribers. They never missed a day. In writing to C. H. Watson, former GC president, describing the process, Nichol wrote, "We have certainly come to a great age in rapid transmission of news."[11]

Nichol was gearing up for the 1966 GC Session to be held in Detroit. He had devised an efficient



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plan for preparing the *GC Bulletins* that is still used today. Much of the material was planned ahead so that a high percentage of the pages were completed in the office and ready before leaving. This left only the breaking news to care for at session. While still a great number of pages, this plan made feasible the idea to turn around a publication in less than 24 hours. Nichol was excited to incorporate new technology into the system for that session by using a Telex machine. Stories would be typed in Detroit and received in Washington, decreasing transmission time. In addition, the publishing house had purchased a high-speed, four-color web-fed offset press that was running in time for the session, printing 18,000 to 20,000 pages an hour.[12] For anyone involved with *GC Bulletins,* this was exciting news, but for Nichol it was a delight.[13]

SUDDEN LOSS

Unexpectedly, editor Francis D. Nichol passed away suddenly on June 3, 1966—12 days before the 1966 GC Session. Nichol routinely walked home two miles from the office for lunch. He left that Thursday, June 2, as usual, but experienced pain in his chest. Arriving at the hospital in reasonable spirits, he visited with associate editors Kenneth Wood and Raymond Cottrell. Included was conversation about the *Review* and its progress. All seemed well, until it wasn't. The next morning he passed away, the cause of death later identified as a dissecting aortic aneurysm. The news spread quickly through the publishing house and was met with shock, dismay, and grief.

"He was an absolutely tireless worker," commented Kenneth Wood.[14] "The simple truth is that he intended to live forever. I mean he considered [age] 69 as nothing. . . . Elder Nichol's death was a complete surprise to him and to everybody."[15]

An eight-page "extra" of the *Review* was printed in Nichol's honor, six pages detailing his life, commentary, and funeral. Wood summed up Nichol's work in this statement: "With a single-mindedness that sometimes mystified and awed even his associates, he proclaimed both the truths held in common with all Christian bodies and those biblical insights that are God's special gift to the world through the Advent people."[16]

For 39 years the initials F. D. N. had been a part of the *Review*, since the invitation by Elder Wilcox to join the editorial staff. Of these, 21 years were as editor in chief.[17]

TAKING THE HELM

Associate Kenneth H. Wood was asked to take charge of the bulletins at GC Session. At the conclusion of the session, before even leaving Detroit, the RHPA board met and appointed Wood as editor. "Emotion almost choked me as I reflected on the mutability of life. F. D. N. had had no intimation that he was laying down his pencil for the last time, and that another hand would have to pick it up," wrote Wood upon returning from Detroit to Nichol's office.

Despite his grief, the *Review* schedule was (and still is) relentless. "The ten months since Elder Nichol died have been very difficult ones here," Wood wrote. "A man of Elder Nichol's stature cannot drop out of the picture without leaving a gaping hole. All the routines that had been carried out with such ease for so many years were disrupted."[18]

One of the first things Wood did was to write an editorial. Interestingly he wrote in plural, using what some call the royal "we." This was because of his belief supported by Nichol that editorials represented the view of all editors, not just one point of view. He echoed what Nichol wrote when he became editor that there would be no change in the principles or policies that had guided the journal thus far. He reassured readers that while we may "redecorate" occasionally, there was "no plan to change the foundation stones or to move a pillar."[19]

FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT

Wood inherited the *Review* when there were about 80,000 subscriptions, with close to 43 percent of Adventist families in the United States receiving the magazine.[20] For this reason and more, then GC president Robert H. Pierson wrote: "I am very anxious, Elder, to keep close to the grass



Kenneth Wood, *Review* editor, inspects a *Review* run on the press with RHPA manager, John Brown.

REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

roots of the movement and to keep my finger upon the pulse of our people around the world. . . . You receive hundreds of letters there, and no doubt a lot of them reflect their attitude toward the leadership in the General Conference."[21] Pierson and Wood were close. Both elected at the 1966 GC Session, they came into leadership together. They were known to have lunch once a week, travel permitting, and stayed in close communication.

Pierson wasn't beyond sending a letter to the editor himself despite their relationship. A handwritten note commenting on the *Review* was sent marked "not for publication." The first paragraph began with "Kudos"; the second with "A bouquet"; the third started with "Some roses"; while the last paragraph started with "A well-aimed brickbat for your prolonged discussion of uniforms for schoolchildren."[22]

The reference to uniforms related to a new feature that Wood brought to the *Review*—Letters From Readers—one of Wood's attempts at "redecorating."[23] The section consisted primarily of readers commenting on articles, but an occasional letter might appear simply expressing an opinion. One such example was on the topic of uniforms for schoolchildren. The writer, a mother, wrote a detailed letter published in a March issue making her case for school uniforms.[24] Readers chimed in with their opinions in subsequent issues. The "conversation" between readers went on until October, when the editor ended the discussion, perhaps because of the letter from Pierson.[25]

Wood kept the best of what he learned from Nichol, but added his own deep commitment to the *Review*. Part of this was exactly what was demonstrated in Letters From Readers. He gave members a place to talk, express their viewpoints, and feel as if they were making a difference in the church. As we continue studying the history of the *Review*, we will discover his natural bent toward inclusivism, his desire to speak not only to senior citizens but also to youth, and to unite the church by helping each member feel valued. But it was not without peril. The church was about to enter some rough controversial waters.

[1] *Review and Herald*, Dec. 1, 1955, p. 28.
[2] *Review and Herald*, Mar. 14, 1957, p. 31.
[3] *Review and Herald*, Mar. 20, 1958, p. 30.
[4] Oral history, Part 1, Kenneth Wood with Michael Campbell and James Nix, James R. Nix Adventist Heritage Collection, Ellen G. White Estate, Apr. 12, 2005, p. 51.
[5] *Review and Herald*, May 4, 1961, p. 4.
[6] *Review and Herald*, July 6, 1961, p. 12.
[7] F. D. Nichol to Sylvia Bewley, May 31, 1961.
[8] F. D. Nichol to Fred Minner, May 31, 1961.
[9] F. D. Nichol to Julia McCune, May 31, 1961.
[10] F. D. Nichol to Myrtle Nelson, July 12, 1961.
[11] F. D. Nichol to C. H. Watson, May 22, 1962.
[12] *General Conference Bulletin*, no. 1, June 16, 1966, p. 9.
[13] Miriam and Kenneth Wood, *His Initials Were F.D.N.* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1967), p. 222.
[14] Oral history, Part 1, Kenneth Wood with Michael Campbell and James Nix, James R. Nix Adventist Heritage Collection, Ellen G. White Estate, Apr. 12, 2005, p. 51.
[15] Oral history, Part 2, Kenneth Wood with Michael Campbell and James Nix, James R. Nix Adventist Heritage Collection, Ellen G. White Estate, Oct. 13, 2005, p. 8.
[16] *Review and Herald*, June 10, 1966, vol. 143, no. 24 [Extra], p. 2.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[18] K. H. Wood to Sherman A. Nagel, Jr., Apr. 16, 1967.
[19] *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1966, p. 13.
[20] Dorothy Emmerson to M. H. Jensen, Nov. 14, 1967.
[21] R. H. Pierson to K. H. Wood, June 5, 1967.
[22] R. H. Pierson to K. H. Wood, Sept. 17, 1967.
[23] *Review and Herald*, Sept. 1, 1966, p. 32.
[24] *Review and Herald*, Mar. 30, 1967, p. 13.
[25] *Review and Herald*, Oct. 26, 1967, p. 13.

E. E. CLEVELAND

FROM ALIENS TO SONS

How do sinners obtain salvation—through works or through faith?



PHOTO: DIANA VARGAS

This month features excerpts from an article in the January 3, 1963, issue of the Review and Herald, *in which E.E. Cleveland highlights how believers become children of God through childlike trust and simple faith in Christ's righteousness.*

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).[1]



We are not sons of God by nature, but creatures of sin. "You were at that time separate from Christ, strangers to the community of Israel, outside God's covenants and the promise that goes with them" (Eph. 2:12, *The New English Bible*).[2] Man's status, by reason of his sinful nature, is that of an alien, not a son. The sinner can claim nothing of the promises of God as long as he chooses to remain in his natural state. The promises of the covenant are for sons, not strangers.

Man's first and most pressing need, therefore, is a changed relationship familywise. He must be brought into position to receive Heaven's life-giving currents. The water of life may be freely partaken of, but only by sons, or those in the process of choosing God as Father and Christ as Saviour.

In the great heart of God abundant provision has been made for this change in relationship. It is literally true that all men may become sons. "It is not that the Lord is slow in fulfilling his promise, as some suppose, but that he is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, N.E.B.).

To remove all doubt as to the depth of His love, our heavenly Father yielded the life of His Son for our ransom. For 4,000 years innocent animals died as sacrifices, each drop of blood serving as an invitation from God to man to become His son. At last Christ died on the cross, atoning for our sins and giving the supreme demonstration of God's love. "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of his love towards us" (Rom. 5:8, N.E.B.). And now sin's prisoners may with confidence make their dash for freedom, in hope proclaiming, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me."

Is it not strange that so many, offered so much, accept so little? The sad fact is, the call to sonship falls unheeded on the ears of the majority of earth's inhabitants. To them, the open door means nothing. The fearful price paid at Calvary for man's redemption is ignored.

But God continues His appeals. The Creator summons the creature to the throne of grace. He invited man to receive the benefits of sonship. And what does He require?

Acceptance. Acceptance of His terms, purpose, and person. It is the simplicity of the plan of salvation that, in a way, makes it complicated. How

It is man's refusal to believe in his own *nothingness* that hinders his spiritual development.

can any proposition that offers something for nothing be trusted? And yet this is exactly what God offers—something (salvation) for nothing (ourselves). This requires faith above and beyond our natural inclination to trust. Such faith must be conferred. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8, KJV).

The receipt and exercise of such faith is a base requirement without which spiritual progress is impossible. "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him" (Heb. 11:6, N.E.B.).

Heaven-born faith may be grown like the flower that daily extends its reach heavenward. It may be nourished through (1) Prayer—"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5, KJV).

(2) Bible study—"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17, KJV). Some have a tendency, in moments of discouragement, to absent themselves from church services. This they do to their spiritual loss, for where the Word of God is read, faith is fed.

(3) Exercise also strengthens faith. "But can you not see, you quibbler, that faith divorced from deeds is barren?" (James 2:20, N.E.B.).

It is through faith in Christ that man accepts the righteous character of Christ, freely bestowed. This dispensation of grace infuses the whole man with new life. Christ becomes in man an element of life. Man's response to this new Presence assumes whatever form Heaven requires. As the convert progresses toward perfection, his expressions, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, increasingly assume the divine mold. Thus it is that by faith in Christ, aliens become sons, and man receives status with God.

A man in a large Eastern city was faced with financial ruin unless he could obtain a loan. Knowing his position to be too risky, no bank would honor his request. In his extremity he remembered a friend of sound financial standing in the community. In desperation he sought him out and poured out his story in a torrent of words. "I will stand for you," his friend assured him. And he did, thus saving him from ruin.

And so it is with us. We are without merit before God, of ourselves. Our performances in whatever area of church activity add nothing to our standing with God. Financial contributions or solicitation avail nothing in our search for merit with Christ; nor does abstemiousness in diet. All of these virtues are taught in the Scriptures. They are vital in their place. But to obtain sonship for us is not their function. Becoming a son of God requires none of these things! We become sons of God through faith in Christ—*alone!*

"Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

It is man's refusal to believe in his own *nothingness* that hinders his spiritual development. It is Satan's studied purpose to benumb our sensitivity to our own true condition. Dear reader, we are helpless to save ourselves. The twin evil is to assume that by some righteous activity we gain God's favor. This is gross error. The blood of Jesus Christ alone is legal tender at the throne of grace. We are saved from sin by what He did, not by what we do or leave undone. Man, stripped of his pride, is eligible for sonship, for he knows his utter helplessness. Through childlike trust and simple faith in Christ's righteousness bestowed, the sinner becomes a saint and the alien a son.

[1] E. E. Cleveland, "From Aliens to Sons: How Do Sinners Obtain Salvation—Through Works or Through Faith?" *Review and Herald*, Jan. 3, 1963, pp. 1, 8.

[2] Texts credited to N.E.B. are from *The New English Bible*. © The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press 1961. Reprinted by permission.

Edward Earl (E.E.) Cleveland served for more than 60 years as a pastor, evangelist, church administrator, professor, and civil rights leader.

Sherry and Gary

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FAMILY WORSHIP

MRS. W. M. BEACH

This article was featured in the September 24, 1970, Review. *While we do not know much about Mrs. Beach (including her first name), we do know she was the wife of a colporteur and mother of four, and wrote at least one other article published in the* Review. *We selected it because it supports nicely our focus on the importance of family worship.—Editors.*

Being new in the Christian faith, we wondered how we could teach our four children, ranging in age from one to 12 years, to know and love the Lord as we had come to know and love Him. Family worship seemed to be at least part of the answer.

Our first attempts were hesitant and self-conscious, but as our faith in God developed, so did our ability to conduct family worship. In the 15 years since we made our beginning, despite many attempts by Satan, we have allowed nothing to prevent our regularly scheduled meetings with God. Because of employment and for certain other reasons, we have at times had to change our schedule for family worship, but the daily feature has never been tampered with.

In conducting our worship, we have done more than read a verse from the Bible and offer a formal prayer. As the children were growing up, we gathered in the living room immediately after breakfast, sang hymns, and took turns reading from the Bible or other inspirational book. We reviewed the children's memory verses, praying silently each verse would be so embedded in the young minds

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

that it would be an ever-present help in time of need. We read Arthur S. Maxwell's *The Bible Story* at least six times. The children loved these stories. As the girls learned to play the piano, we sang hymns around the old piano until schooltime.

VARIED PROGRAMS

Our worship program was diversified. Sometimes it turned into a good gab session, and at such times we really learned to know our children. Our discussions ranged from the nearness of Jesus' coming to the role politics plays in Bible prophecy.

Sometimes we became so involved in our discussions and research that it was difficult to stop. Sometimes Dad and one of the boys prayed; at other times the two girls or I. Sometimes when God came so close we felt we could touch Him, we each one prayed.

On our knees in a circle, holding hands, we would offer up our plans to God for Him to approve or change according to His will for us. We would ask for God's guidance, the protection of the holy angels, and for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide us in the right way. Then, still kneeling and holding hands we would sing, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." I know angels hovered over our family at such times. We could feel their presence. Each little one learned early to pray for the unconverted relatives and friends. He learned to appreciate, and thank God for religious freedom among the other myriad blessings he recognized as coming from His hand.

JOHNNY'S DIAGNOSIS

When we took a trip to Mexico when Johnny was three years old, we left him with his grandmother. One morning he came in the house to his grandmother and told her he was sick. Making him lie down on the couch and putting his head in her lap, she talked to him to discover what the symptoms might be. In relating the incident later, she said Johnny told her, "Grandma, I know why I'm sick."

"Why?" she asked.

Johnny responded quickly, "Because I haven't talked to Jesus yet today." After he knelt and talked to Jesus he went happily on to his play. We experienced many tender moments as our children testified of their love for their heavenly Father. Angels drew near as those little children confessed Christ as their Saviour. In familiar surroundings it was easy for them to speak freely. We encouraged them to stand up before us and speak and endeavored to help them enunciate clearly and with ease. This early training was a blessing to them as they took their places in church and school, either in speaking or singing.

Each little one learned early to pray for the unconverted relatives and friends.

Our worship brought us closer to God and naturally nearer to one another. It didn't eradicate all our problems, but it certainly did diminish many of them. Because it was a daily convocation, troubles didn't pile up. We took them as they came and usually were able to divert the large calamities.

WORSHIPS A WITNESS

We also found family worship to be a means of witnessing to our friends, relatives, and neighbors. The neighbor children learned quickly when it was our worship time, and they came running. They loved the songs and stories about Jesus.

Our greatest test came when visiting our relatives who were not Christians. Somehow we got through to them that daily family worship was an established custom with us, so they enjoyed it with us and even looked forward to our coming to share our faith. Also, when guests came to our home, we didn't let their presence stop our meeting with God. To us, Christ was the most important Guest we could entertain in our home, and we didn't permit anyone to interfere.

We feel our worship period has strengthened our faith and has given faith to our children. It has cemented family ties more tightly than any human scheme could cement them. It has helped our children develop an experience to which they can hold amid the tumult of the world whose landmarks and traditions are fast crumbling. It has helped us to gain strength to fight the good fight of faith daily.

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WHEN THE YOUTH EXODUS IS A GOOD THING

It's a personal barometer.

We often lament when young people leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But apparently, at least one time in our history it was a good thing—according to Ellen White, that is.

In 1892 Ellen White wrote a letter to S. N. Haskell in which she bemoaned the state of the Adventist Church. It was full of "sleepy, half-paralyzed souls," who "simply have the name of Christians but are not fitted for the work of God." The denomination was "indolent" and characterized by "formality," she further reflected.

But there was "a little hope in one direction," she explained. "Take the young men and women, and place them where they will come as little in contact with our churches as possible, that the low grade of piety which is current in this day shall not leaven their ideas of what it means to be a Christian."[1]

The first time a friend introduced me to this quote about 15 years ago, I was blown away by it. Ellen White understood the excitement, zeal, and fervor that "young men and women" often possess. And she understood that quite often our congregations don't affirm that zeal and excitement but undermine them. She understood that instead of building young people up, we far too often bring—and sometimes tear—them down.

And for that reason, she encouraged young people—at least in this instance—to remove themselves from the influence of their dead, lifeless, and loveless congregations.

Among other things, this tells me that sometimes when young people leave the church, it's not because they are moving away from God but toward Him. In order to preserve their faith, they sometimes feel compelled to leave.

We often like to blame "the world," or blame young people's attachment to the world, for any backsliding that takes place. And sometimes that's true. But according to Ellen White, perhaps that doesn't tell the whole tale.

Perhaps it's just as often an indication that *we're* the problem, not the world. Or perhaps it simply means, as Preston Sprinkle has argued, that "people will gravitate to where they are loved the most. And if the world outloves the church, then we have implicitly nudged our children away from the loving arms of Christ."[2]



HOW WELL ARE WE DOING AT PROCLAIMING AND EMBODYING THE LOVE OF GOD?

In that regard, the so-called youth exodus can serve as a barometer that indicates how well we, as a denomination, are doing at proclaiming and embodying the love of God. It can encourage sober reflection as we recognize that large defections possibly point to the ways in which we continue to be the church of Laodicea.

This isn't to imply, of course, that we should celebrate young people leaving. Neither should we flippantly encourage them to do so. I've never utilized this counsel to that end. Nor is it a call to cast aside principle in order to sell out to the whims or desires of any demographic.

It's simply to recognize that there's a place for empathy rather than blame, and to take stock of our own deficits as we seek to align more effectively with the love of Christ.

[1] Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), vol. 12, pp. 332, 333.

[2] Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), p. 140.

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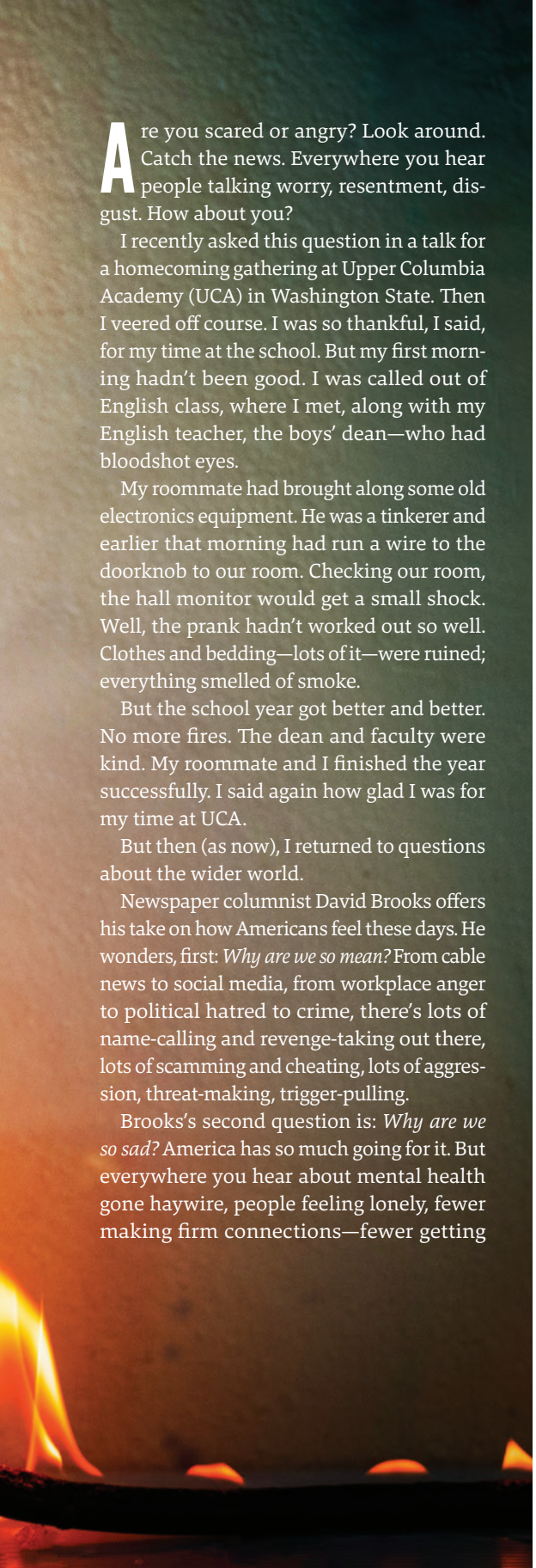


WHAT NOW?

What shall we do with Jesus now?

CHARLES SCRIVEN

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Are you scared or angry? Look around. Catch the news. Everywhere you hear people talking worry, resentment, disgust. How about you?

I recently asked this question in a talk for a homecoming gathering at Upper Columbia Academy (UCA) in Washington State. Then I veered off course. I was so thankful, I said, for my time at the school. But my first morning hadn't been good. I was called out of English class, where I met, along with my English teacher, the boys' dean—who had bloodshot eyes.

My roommate had brought along some old electronics equipment. He was a tinkerer and earlier that morning had run a wire to the doorknob to our room. Checking our room, the hall monitor would get a small shock. Well, the prank hadn't worked out so well. Clothes and bedding—lots of it—were ruined; everything smelled of smoke.

But the school year got better and better. No more fires. The dean and faculty were kind. My roommate and I finished the year successfully. I said again how glad I was for my time at UCA.

But then (as now), I returned to questions about the wider world.

Newspaper columnist David Brooks offers his take on how Americans feel these days. He wonders, first: *Why are we so mean?* From cable news to social media, from workplace anger to political hatred to crime, there's lots of name-calling and revenge-taking out there, lots of scamming and cheating, lots of aggression, threat-making, trigger-pulling.

Brooks's second question is: *Why are we so sad?* America has so much going for it. But everywhere you hear about mental health gone haywire, people feeling lonely, fewer making firm connections—fewer getting married, or participating in church life, or even sustaining close friendships. You hear, too, about heedless escape-from-sadness strategies—booze after hours or all day, drug-taking, abusive sex, binge television, endless scrolling through other people's shiny self-presentations on social media. Meanwhile, "deaths of despair"—death by suicide, alcohol, and drugs—have been rising, especially among teenagers.

With so many people mean and sad, there's good reason to be scared and angry.

But why are some people *not* like this? Why do some people find a way through life's hard parts without being jerks or fools or tiresome unhappy campers? Why do some people still project helpfulness and positivity, so that in their company you feel blessed?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

I don't know all the answers, nor would I want to pass harsh judgment on anybody. But for the help it may offer, I want to explore the astonishing moment of church beginnings described in Acts. At one point people "cut to the heart" (somehow uneasy, somehow unsettled) pose a question: "Brothers, what should we do?" (Acts 2:37).[1] *"What now? What shall we do with Jesus now?"*

Today that question feels urgent, not just because of difficulties I've been mentioning, but also because of the growing unpopularity of conventional religion. The so-called nones are on the rise. Not the nuns, who teach in Catholic schools, but those who don't belong to any organized Christian (or other kind of) religion. Disdain for religion is now a *trend*, likely affecting even students in our schools. *What shall we do with Jesus now*?

As the story in Acts begins, Jesus has "presented himself alive" (Acts 1:3). It is Pentecost, the annual commemoration of the partnership between God and the Jewish people established at Mount Sinai. Jerusalem is teeming with worshippers, some visiting from so far away they don't speak the local language. A crowd gathers when a group of 100 or more Galileans (verse 15; 2:7) is able to communicate with these Jewish foreigners. It's astonishing, though some sneer and say these Galileans are drunk (Acts 2:12, 13).

Now Peter raises his voice. These people are not drunk; what you "see," he tells the crowd, is that of which the prophet Joel spoke long ago: in the

"last days" God will pour out His Spirit on "all flesh," the young, the old, slaves, women—"all flesh." These "last days," Peter declares, have now arrived. Jesus is alive again. The outpouring out of the Holy Spirit is happening. Jesus has been installed at God's "right and" and made "both Lord and Messiah" (verses 16-36).

I don't know if it was as hard then to believe all this as it may be now. But Peter stopped a lot of listeners in their tracks. *What now?* Peter declared in Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Luke, the book's author, means to bring his *readers* up short. His story addresses *us*. What am *I* to do? *Repent?* That sounds "churchy" and "pious," but repentance is the beginning of *all* moral seriousness. Yes, I need to slam the brakes on self-satisfaction and self-deceit. Nothing is harder, but I need to face up to my flawed reality, and turn from it. *Be baptized?* Yes, that, too. I need to join the Jesus movement. Or if I already have, I need to stick with my commitment.

And all this so *my sins may be forgiven*. The story is telling us that those following Jesus enter an atmosphere of forgiveness. What if I forget that? Then, falling short of my goals, I feel defeated or guilt-ridden. I worry that God is eager to condemn me. But that's wrong. If God in Christ sets before us a difficult responsibility, set before us also is the kindness and patience at the heart of divine love. When I take sides with Jesus, the context is forgiveness. Whenever the church forgets this, it is like a railroad coach misaligned with the tracks: it goes nowhere!

And I receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. Young or old, woman or man, I receive God's presence in my life. God's gifts of new strength and insight lift me up. I can go forward.

DO WHAT WITH JESUS?

Peter says: Receive all God's gifts, and take sides with Jesus. Anyone can be mean, sad, scared, angry. But through Jesus, God grants us opportunity to project helpfulness and positivity. Many on that day long ago responded to Jesus. The church was beginning to spring up, a new people, with "glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46).

Some days after Pentecost Peter finds himself again in front of a crowd at the temple. He again tells the Jesus story, now adding: "You are the *descendants of the prophets and of the covenant* that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, 'And in your descendants all the families *of the earth* shall be blessed' " (Acts 3:25). As God had put it long before: "I will bless you . . . so that you will be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2).

The Bible thinks of faithful people as God's *partners*—Paul (and also Ellen White) says, God's "colaborers." The "covenant" is the *partnership agreement*, the agreement between God and God's colaborers. And here is its main point: *God blesses us on earth so we can bless others on earth*. Responding to God's blessing, I promise to bless others—*on earth*. Some Christians, it's true, are so heavenly minded they forget that and treat the earth like a bus stop—we're just waiting here for something else. But according to the first Christian preacher, life on earth is the *focus* of our partnership with God.

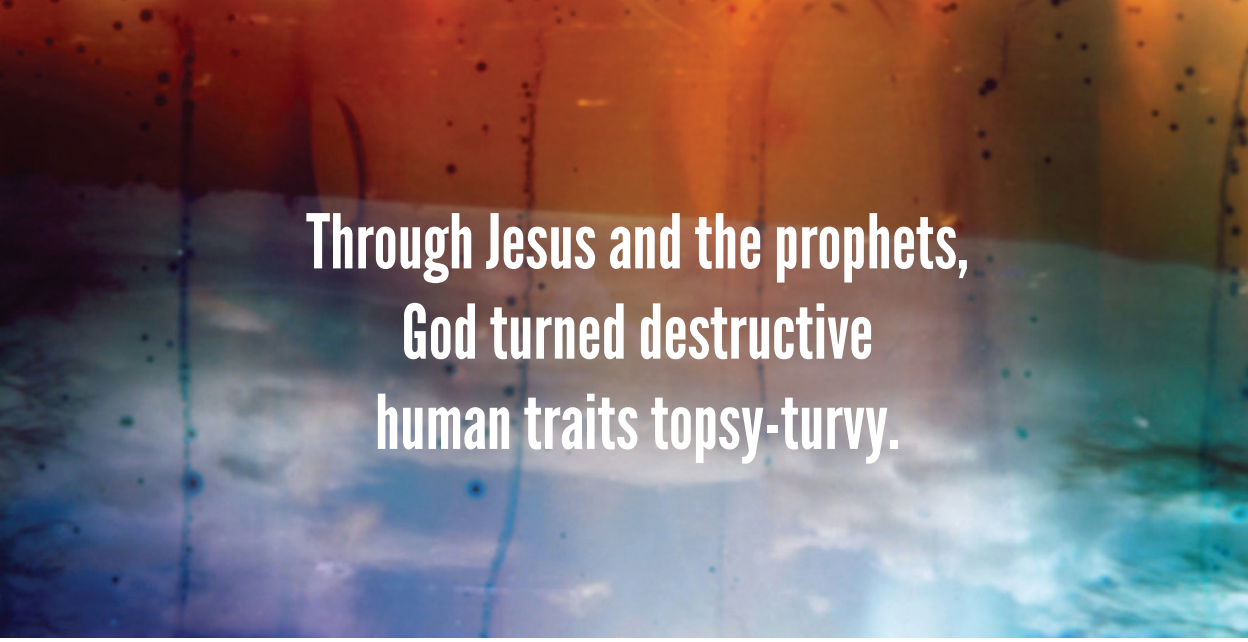
Peter's experience reminds us this is not easy. We know from later in Acts—and from a story Paul tells—that Peter struggled to be a blessing for others *when the others were different from him*. Once he was praying (and hungry) when he fell into a trance and saw something like a large sheet coming down, teeming with all kinds of animals, including reptiles. Peter objected when a voice told him to kill and eat; some of these animals were "unclean." But the voice warned Peter not to call unclean what God had declared clean. Peter, who had looked down on Gentiles, grasped the lesson: "God shows no partiality. . . . Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all" (Acts 10:34-36). Peter then oversaw the first recorded baptism of a group of Gentiles into the new community. Still, he struggled. Peter even refused, sometimes, to eat at the same table with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14). But all along, remember, he was living in the context—the atmosphere—of forgiveness.

Blessing others on earth is not easy, especially when the others are different from us.

WHAT, THEN, SHALL WE DO WITH JESUS NOW?

The path Peter recommends is difficult. Convictions supporting that path may themselves present difficulties, leaving many Christians struggling with doubt. Is all this worth it? Why not follow the new trend, like all the nones? Why not live by my own light?

What if everyone said no to Jesus? Thoughtful people, such as the British historian Tom Holland,



are suggesting how disastrous that could be, how the new trend threatens to make our world meaner, sadder, scarier, angrier.[2] Through Jesus and the prophets, Holland notes, God turned destructive human traits topsy-turvy. No, it's not right for big shots to step on little people. No, it's not right for insiders to hoard all advantage to themselves. No, it's not right to set aside the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, not right to leave people with only themselves for a "god." Suggesting to people they can live by their own light is lethally dangerous.

OK, but if I try to walk the Jesus walk, I end up feeling hemmed in and guilty. Feelings like this may owe partly to problems the church has interpreting its own gospel. But circle back to Peter. He said that true Christian life takes place in an *atmosphere of forgiveness*. Period. Church people need to remember that, just as the dean and faculty at my academy did after the dorm room fire. Did you catch that? My fire story is a reminder of gospel truth in action.

Here is another. One day I looked out my study window and saw my two sons, the older 18 at the time, the younger 5, in the backyard. Both had baseball mitts; they were tossing a tennis ball against the brick wall of the house and retrieving the grounders that shot back. The older one, Jonathan, threw soft line drives. Little Jeremy had to throw high arching flies just to cover the span, 20 feet or so, to the wall.

I saw how pleased *both* of them were, one the eager coach, the other his eager student. For Jeremy the demand was high, the distance to his older brother's skill level hard to fathom. Still, no harsh code of do's and don'ts put him on edge, nor any threat of harsh condemnation. Jonathan was there to coach, not condemn. Jeremy simply wanted to do his best. And that was exactly what his big brother was hoping for.

The whole atmosphere—again this phrase!—was an atmosphere of forgiveness. Judging by Peter's preaching, an atmosphere like that is what the gospel intends.

CONCLUSION

What shall we do with Jesus now? Well, threatened as we all are by fears, anger, meanness, and sadness, we can recall the gospel offer of partnership with God. And hearing that offer—"Jesus is alive! Join the movement! Live a life that blesses other lives"—we can remember, too, that forgiveness is its undergirding gift.

Why, then, are some people *not* deeply fearful, angry, mean, or sad? Why do some people find a way through life's hard parts without being jerks or fools or tiresome unhappy campers? Why do some people still project helpfulness and positivity, so that in their company people are blessed?

The gospel is a large part of why. God help us receive it—welcome it!—anew.

[1] All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.
[2] Tom Holland, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

Charles Scriven is retired after many years in various lines of ministry and administration, including serving as president of Kettering College.

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TIME TO STAND

Understanding our motivations

JOURNEYS WITH JESUS

JILL MORIKONE



WHY DO WE STAND FOR TRUTH?

Motive matters. The questions swirl and settle around my feet, pulling me back. Do I reach out and help because I care and want to help? Or am I afraid of saying no, merely reacting out of obligation? Do I witness because it makes me feel more Christian somehow, or because I care for others' salvation? Do I offer to pray because it's expected, or because of the joy I experience when talking with my Savior? Do I study my Bible to prove a point, or because I love to fill my mind with the Word?

Am I love- or fear-based? Others-driven or others' perception-driven? Jesus-focused or self-focused?

We often preach about standing for truth. It is, after all, what Adventists are known for. In the beginning we forged a path, discovered some unpopular truths in the Word, and stood for what was right. We are truly people of the Book. We return our tithe, observe the seventh-day Sabbath, and eat our way to health and righteousness. All of those are good things, biblical practices, godly habits. But my question has become *why*.

Why do we stand for truth? *We must guard against the first step into apostasy.* And I agree. But am I guarding to enhance my standing with others? Am I sounding the trumpet to make a name for myself? Or do I deeply love others and earnestly desire them to know Jesus and the truths in His Word for themselves?

The young man sat across from my desk, black curly hair resting on his shoulders. He was unhappy with life, unhappy with personal relationships, unhappy with work. My heart broke for his pain. After listening awhile, I ventured a question: "What would you like to do? What would make you happy, or at least give you a measure of satisfaction?"

He put his head in his hands and said the saddest words I've heard. "I don't know. I don't know what I want, I don't know who I am, and I don't know how to change."

Truthfully, though, his experience matches that of many Christians. We might *think* we know what we want, but our motives can be so buried, so twisted, so altered by sin that we often do the right thing but for the wrong reason. We serve to be recognized, preach or sing to be applauded, or help others to ease our own conscience.

When has it ever been out of love? "By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Love awakens love.

Love produces love.

Love never fails.

God, grant me Your love so I can operate from love and give love because You are love.

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NOT HOMELESS. HOMEBOUND!

Trusting God in the midst of the trial

CLORETH S. GREENE

She was hurt and bewildered. In her own view she had always made the effort to trust God and to do her best to serve Him in the way she dealt with people and everyday circumstances. Yet the situation in which she found herself was an absolute contradiction to her expectations. It made no sense whatsoever!

NOSEDIVE

She had relocated with the expectation that the transition would support her plans for professional and financial stability, hoping that these dreams would be realized with hard work and determination. At times she had even held two jobs as she juggled her income to balance expenses. And had she worked hard! Not to mention her resolve to keep trying to beat the odds amid the existing and emerging challenges.

As a Christian she felt that dedication to serving her God and her community were paramount features of her life, and therefore she made efforts to persist in sustaining these pivotal elements: personal

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devotion and worship, active participation in church services and programs, being a source of inspiration in her sphere of influence. Now, instead of success, she was without the roof of a house over her head, without a job, and with not much of anyone to call a "friend indeed." Despite this being only the tip of her story's iceberg, she still struggled on.

When things had taken a swift nosedive, her life seemed plunged into total confusion. Repeatedly she had questioned herself and God about what was being played out, but had received no answers. What was the meaning of all this? On many occasions, while considering her real-time experience, she felt numb. This was no ordinary crucible, and as the psalmists sometimes expressed, she wondered how and why God would allow what was happening.

Which sentiment was dominant: Rejection? Disdain? Abuse? Betrayal? Ridicule? She did not know. The saying "a friend in need is a friend indeed" seemed meaningless for the most part, as family members, relatives, her church family, and people she had held as friends had all but disappeared. The few individuals who offered any amount of compassion were helpless to significantly help her. They could only make suggestions regarding the job search, and they were unable to help her find housing. Apart from three individuals who occasionally offered some financial assistance to help keep her afloat, she had no source of funding. But their assistance was not sustainable. She felt undeserving of her plight. This was an extremely low point in her life. So she pleaded, prayed, and beseeched God: *Help me, please!*

REBOOT

Her new "home" was a spot on a secured parking lot, with her car serving as her bed. At night she would close all the windows, lock the doors, and cover herself with a blanket so no passerby could readily discern that someone was inside (that is, not unless they saw when she drove up). The tooting of the nearby early-morning rush-hour train was her external alarm, heralding the time to get up and have her devotional time. This was followed by finding a fast-food outlet to get sanitized; then she would prepare to take on the new day following the same general routine. She would purchase a meal and divide it into two parts (no matter how small the portions) in order to keep starvation at bay, trying to include at least one drink for the day. Then she would, with heavy heart, visit the surrounding libraries to do house and job searches—how could she secure housing with no job, and how could she find a job when they were so few and far between? It was the very reason that she was unemployed in the first place!

Her sanitization and library visits were rotated so as not to draw too much attention to herself. She had been blessed to find an extremely affordable laundromat—a godsend—so she was able to do laundry every now and then. When the "routine" was completed, she would find a quiet street or a public property, such as a park, to station herself. No unnecessary use of car gas was acceptable. Despite safety concerns, she would return to the parking lot very late at night for discretionary

All she needed to do was trust Him completely, so she earnestly begged Him for the strength to do just that.

purposes. Her hopelessness and despair mounted with each completion of the day's routine.

One day as she was about to begin her worship session, the thought came to mind: *Why am I even worshipping Him, when it seems that He has abandoned me*? The question stopped her in her tracks. Was this really the case? Had God truly forgotten her? The facts all seemed to support this sentiment. But almost immediately and as if in direct response to the question, she remembered encouragement received from a friend some months earlier when things were nowhere near this terrible. Her friend told her not to give up on God, though her prayers seemed absent from the "answered" list.

On the heels of her friend's exhortation was the memory of two Bible characters: Joseph and Job. As she reflected on their stories, she acknowledged that despite enduring immense suffering, they remained steadfast in their commitment to serve God, determined to trust His love no matter what the circumstance. She also remembered a sermon she had heard about the times God brags about His children to the enemy. That thought didn't bring as much comfort as it should have, and she was suddenly jolted into contemplating how much she had let God down while feeling so confident of her spiritual achievements. In a rush much like the speed of the train, her devotions that morning took a turn. Of its duration she was uncertain, but she was certain that a "power reboot" had occurred: her spiritual core was strengthened and elevated. She became filled with renewed hope in her God to see her through this ordeal. All she needed to do was trust Him completely, so she earnestly begged Him for the strength to do just that. Most important, she asked God to guide her into His righteousness, not hers.

INTERVENTION

God's intervention came some days later, in a most surprising and dramatic way. Someone's heart had been burdened with her case. That person's actions helped her to finally get housed and off the streets.

But even before that, she had received a job offer and started to work. Employed while still living on the streets! Amazing! She felt like Lazarus resurrected. God truly had not forsaken her (and has promised that He never will!). Thankfully, she had not given up on Him even though she had felt like doing so. Her faith had been severely tested, and in the process it had grown. And while her deliverance process continues, she continues to seek God's help in submitting to His will, even when things don't go according to her plans.

The experience was an emphatic reminder that no matter the circumstance, God remains our Redeemer and Father, and we His children. He can be trusted above and like no one else. Like her, there are many who feel like throwing in the towel when circumstances seem to come to a screeching, grinding halt. Her words of advice? *Even without a roof of any kind over your head, know and believe that God's plan is for the ultimate salvation of His children . . . even if the upside happens only in heaven.* Sounds drab on this side of heaven, does it not? Yeah. And it feels even more drab when experienced! Yet if that "drab" is intended to help you make it to the eternal kingdom of God, it will be worth the heartache. That is God's faithful promise to us all (see, for example, Psalm 46:10; John 11:40; 1 Peter 3:12). She can't wait to meet Jesus face-to-face; perhaps then she may get the full understanding of why He chose to prune her in that way. Until that day comes and while she continues to strive for that goal, she asks: *Will you hold on with the determination to do just the same*? Remember, God purifies only what He deems worthy!

Cloreth S. Greene is an education and communication consultant from Jamaica who currently resides in Canada.


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Q: I am a 19-year-old college sophomore. My parents recently divorced, but my wonderful Christian childhood home became a war zone several years ago. Family devotions disappeared, and going to church became a distant memory. Now neither of my parents even pray, and I am tempted to give up on God too! I am on antidepressants. What can help me get off medication?

A: We're sorry to hear about the challenges you're facing, but are glad that you're reaching out for help. This is a sensitive and complex situation that may be best addressed with an appropriately qualified health professional. With what you're going through, it may be hard to hold on to the anchors that may have once held you steady in your childhood, but despite the pain of your parents' divorce, their abandonment of faith, and your struggle with depression, please don't give up. Remember that while connecting with God strengthens and comforts you, any decision to change or stop medication must always be made in consultation with your doctor.

On days when depression weighs heavily, every moment of reflection and whispered prayer counts. The Psalms express a full range of human emotions—let them give voice to your experiences. Psalm 42:11 acknowledges both despair and hope: "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (NIV). Knowing that you belong to God and are a steward of your body (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) will affect your choices about health, relationships, and personal conduct and help you affirm your identity and purpose. Daily devotions can help you cope with life's stresses and can even provide a moral compass for decisions common even to 19-year-olds.

So please, don't divorce your devotions. They're a refuge in time, a source of strength, and a reminder that you're loved unconditionally. Let God be your anchor, your fortress, and your strength. Your devotional time with Him is a lifeline, a quiet space where you can be honest about your pain, doubts, and hopes. While you seek to transition off antidepressants, your devotional life can complement the process, providing emotional support and perspective. Don't divorce your devotions . . . instead, let them be safe havens to process your experiences, find comfort, and nurture hope for your future. Studies have shown that spiritual practices can positively impact mental health, though they're not a substitute for appropriate medical care.

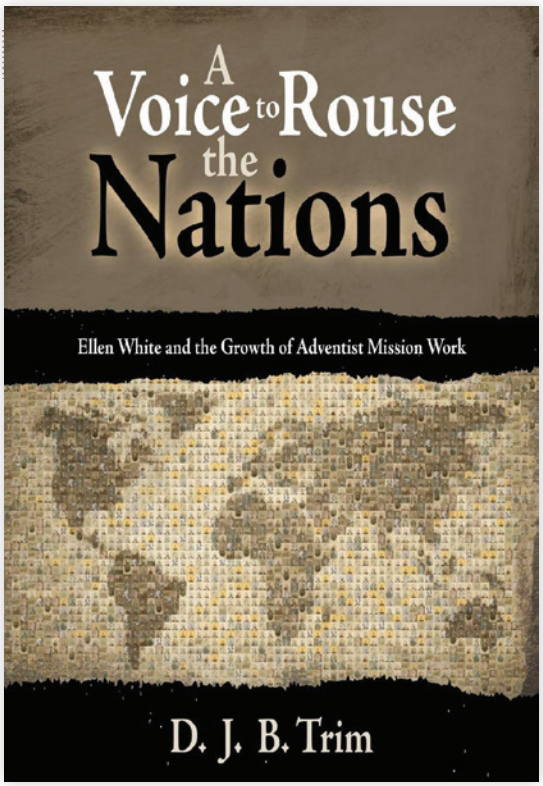
Let God be your anchor, your fortress, and your strength.

Engaging in regular devotional practices can promote healthier lifestyle choices, such as improved diet, regular exercise, and better sleep. Starting and ending your day with prayers of gratitude may reduce nighttime anxiety and improve your sleep quality. Find a campus ministry or a local church group to provide you with a supportive community. Interacting with others who share your faith can offer emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and increase a sense of belonging.

You are loved, you are valued, and you have purpose. Please don't abandon your daily connecting with God, even in the smallest ways. He's there, ready to meet you exactly where you are, supporting and leading you through every step of your healing journey. "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18, NIV). May His SHALOM be yours!

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

EDITORS' PICKS



A Voice to Rouse the Nations: Ellen White and the Growth of Adventist Mission Work

D.J.B. Trim, *A Voice to Rouse the Nations: Ellen White and the Growth of Adventist Mission Work* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2024), ISBN-13 978-0-816369-92-8 (paperback), 128 pages, US$16.99. Reviewed by Paul Glenn, retired book department manager (paulsbookwords.com), Silver Spring, Maryland.

David Trim has produced another informative work spanning the first four decades of Adventist mission (1874-1915). It contains historical facts of which most Seventh-day Adventists may be unaware, and challenges all who read it to participate in the ongoing mission of the church.

Given the global reach of the Adventist Church, most would be surprised to learn that our church was not always committed to a worldwide mission.

In 1859 a Sabbatarian Adventist living in Wisconsin wrote to the *Review*, asking: "Is the third angel's message being given, or to be given except in the United States?"[1]

Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review*, answered, "We have no information that the third message is at present being proclaimed in any country besides our own."[2] In addition, Smith stated that it might not be necessary to send missionaries to other countries in the world with the three angels' messages since so many residents of the United States were from these other countries.

For some time after 1844 many Adventist leaders, including Ellen White, believed that no more people could be saved. It was not very many years, however, before the leadership realized that there was still great work to do worldwide in preaching and teaching the three angels' messages.

By 1863, the year that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was officially organized, some Adventist leaders were beginning to think of the mission as a global responsibility.

By 1868 Seventh-day Adventists realized that through various means, people in other countries were learning about the three angels' messages, some through Adventist literature and some through human agents such as Michael Czechowski, for example, who secured his own funding to go to Europe as a missionary.

These were exciting times for the new denomination as they realized there was work to be done globally. In 1871 Ellen White wrote a testimony of missionary work, stating, "Missionaries are needed

to go to other nations to preach the truth in a guarded, careful manner."[3]

Finally, in 1874 the Seventh-day Adventist Church sent the first official missionary overseas to Switzerland, J. N. Andrews, along with his two children, Charles and Mary.

Trim details more overseas missionaries who were sent out soon after. Some of the other overseas missionaries sent out in the next few years included John G. Matteson and his wife, Anna, to Scandinavia in 1877; Daniel Bourdeau and his wife, Marion, to Europe in 1876; and John and Maggie to Britain in 1878. It is helpful to have a record of the missionaries deployed at the onset of overseas missions collected in one volume.

Trim points out an interesting fact that while in California and other places in the United States, large tents were used successfully for evangelistic meetings, it was not so in some parts of Europe. Large tents conveyed the wrong message to the people, so Ellen White counseled that it would be better to spend more money and hire a "respectable" hall than use a large tent, since that conveyed the idea of not being so respectable. This gives insight into how mission was contextualized in its early days.

Of note is that Ellen White was herself an overseas missionary in Europe and Australia in the late 1800s. This gave her an insight into the issues involved in doing mission work in new areas. She pushed strongly to do the work in a way that made the best first impression.

At the 1901 General Conference (GC) meetings some organizational changes were discussed and finally put into full effect at the 1903 GC Session. One of the changes was the introduction of union conferences so that more decisions could be made at the local level and free up the General Conference to be more fully involved in leading the whole world mission program.

I found this book a very interesting read and would highly recommend it. A sequel seems imminent because while the history of Adventist missions is covered through 1915 in this book, more than 100 years have passed since then.

In the last paragraph of the last chapter of the book, Trim summarizes its takeaway as such:

"Perhaps the most important lesson to learn from the first four decades of Adventist mission (1874-1915) is that we today need to become as committed as our pioneers became to proclaiming, 'this gospel of the kingdom . . . in all the world for a witness unto all nations' (Matthew 24:14, KJV). As Adventists have long affirmed: 'Then, and not till then, will the end come, for which we so earnestly long' " (p. 127).

Inasmuch as all Adventists are called to share the gospel, this book will inspire and encourage you to join in God's mission for the church.

Inasmuch as all Adventists are called to share the gospel, this book will inspire and encourage you to join in God's mission for the church.

[1] *Review and Herald*, Feb. 3, 1859, p. 7.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 204.

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Anna's first real opportunity for formal education came when the Chamberses arranged for her to attend Mount Vernon Academy in Ohio, beginning in September 1894. The following summer Anna served as cook for the camp meeting held in Chattanooga. Two medical missionary nurses, trained at Battle Creek Sanitarium, helped Anna plan healthy menus, and at their prodding she enrolled in the American Medical Missionary College, graduating as a missionary nurse in 1898.

MISSIONS AT HOME AND ABROAD

After graduation Knight returned home to Mississippi, where she opened a mission school in a one-room log cabin near Gitano, not far from her home. Twelve students were enrolled, consisting mostly of her relatives in the Knight community who were still denied opportunity to attend the other schools in the area. Enrollment grew, and Knight also established two well-attended Sunday schools held in nearby churches. As a result of her descriptions of the dire effects of alcohol in her health and temperance lectures, local moonshiners saw a decline in demand for their illicit product. Despite their violent threats and harassment, Knight refused to be intimidated.

While at the General Conference Session in 1901, Knight accepted a call to accompany J. L. Shaw and his wife for missionary service in India, along with a second nurse, classmate Donna Humphrey. That fall Knight and her fellow workers set sail for Calcutta. She thus became not only the first African American female Seventh-day Adventist missionary sent anywhere, but also the "first black woman to be sent to India by a mission board of any denomination."[4]

In India, Knight worked first as a nurse at a sanitarium in Calcutta before being called to the mission station at Karmatar that, along with a school, operated a small orphanage, a dispensary, and a printing press. There she served wherever needed—as a bookkeeper, teacher, nurse, and helper at the printing press, even planting a fruitful garden. Knight further branched out to take on new roles as a colporteur and Bible worker. The latter work became her top priority.

Knight's six and a half years on the Indian subcontinent would take her to the cities of Calcutta, Allahabad, Simla, Amritsar, Ambala, Ludhiana, Jullundur, and Lahore, as well as to small villages. She became acquainted with the Hindi language and worked with the village people.

After receiving a two-year furlough in 1907, Knight returned home to rebuild the school that had been burned down by the moonshiners in 1903, and resumed her work as teacher. She also worked as a part-time Bible worker for the Mississippi Conference.

For the remainder of her career, Knight intermittently ran a small sanitarium and served as a Bible worker and education administrator in the American South. Working with prominent women of several denominations, Knight organized the first local YWCA in Atlanta, where were offered courses on home nursing, healthy cooking, and first aid, and presentations to large gatherings on health, temperance, social purity, and personal hygiene.

Knight kept careful records, and in her autobiography, *Mississippi Girl* (1952), she gave a statistical summary of her work since 1911: "I have held 9,388 meetings and have made 11,744 missionary visits. My work required the writing of 48,918 letters, and in getting to my appointments I have traveled 554,439 miles."[5]

Throughout an era of severe oppression and segregation in American race relations, Knight challenged the status quo by enlisting in the gospel work and serving without fear both in the American South and across the globe in India. She died on June 3, 1972, at age 98 and is buried in the Newton Knight family cemetery in Jasper County, Mississippi.

[1] The source for information in this article not otherwise specified is the author's biography of Anna Knight: Dorothy Knight Marsh, *From Cotton Fields to Mission Fields: The Anna Knight Story* (self-published, Lulu, 2016).

[2] Newton Knight's story was dramatized in the 2016 film *Free State of Jones*. See Richard Grant, "The True Story of the 'Free State of Jones,'" *Smithsonian*, March 2016, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-free-state-jones-180958111/, accessed July 3, 2018. See also Victoria E. Bynum, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War* (Chapel Hill, N.C., and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[3] Anna Knight, *Mississippi Girl* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 27-31, 41.

[4] Louis B. Reynolds, *We Have Tomorrow: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists With an African Heritage* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1984), p. 323.

[5] Knight, *Mississippi Girl*, p. 223.

Dorothy Knight Marsh is retired after a career as a business owner and spends her time continuing the Knight family legacy. To learn more about Anna Knight, search for her entry in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*.



DOROTHY KNIGHT MARSH

ANNA KNIGHT

Pioneering missionary against all odds

Born on March 4, 1874, in Jasper County, Mississippi,[1] Rachel "Anna" Knight was an African American Adventist missionary nurse, teacher, colporteur, Bible worker, and conference official. Her father, Newton Knight, was a White farmer and ex-Confederate soldier,[2] and her mother, Georgeanne, who had been emancipated from slavery, was of racially mixed heritage. Anna lived with her extended family in a small, overcrowded house in the Knight community (called Six Town) in Mississippi.



EDUCATION AT ALL COSTS

Barred by race from attending the local school, Anna learned to read and write by bartering for books with her White cousins who attended school. Anna helped her cousins with their chores, and in exchange, they taught her how to read. She would go to the creek bed, smooth out the sand, and practice forming the letters of the alphabet in the sand with a stick. By the age of 14 she knew enough to teach other children. Using boards painted with wet soot as a blackboard, and with chalk from the creek bed, she wrote out the alphabet while the children sounded out the letters. Although her teaching style was primitive, it served its purpose, since no formal education was allowed for mixed-race children in that community.

DESPITE THEIR VIOLENT THREATS AND HARASSMENT, KNIGHT REFUSED TO BE INTIMIDATED.

When a salesman came to Six Town soliciting subscriptions for the *Home and Fireside* magazine, Anna subscribed, and then, after receiving the magazine, she sent in her name to receive free samples of additional magazines and other reading material. Eventually, in 1891, she received a copy of *Signs of the Times* from Edith Embree, who was part of a Young People's Literature and Correspondence Band. Edith kept in touch with Anna, sending new issues of the magazine and an occasional letter, and after nearly six months of intensively studying the literature and Bible lessons Edith had sent her, comparing everything with the Bible, Anna resolved to be baptized and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

At this time the Adventist church nearest Anna's home was located some 400 miles away, in Graysville, Tennessee, which is where she traveled for her baptism in late December 1892.[3] A couple in Graysville named Chambers opened their home to Anna and arranged for her to attend the Adventist school, Graysville Academy. Because of her light complexion she initially gained admission, but when some parents ascertained her racial identity, they protested, and Anna was prohibited from attending classes. The school matron took Anna into her room, though, and taught her individually, while Anna assisted the matron with her work.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71

PHOTO: ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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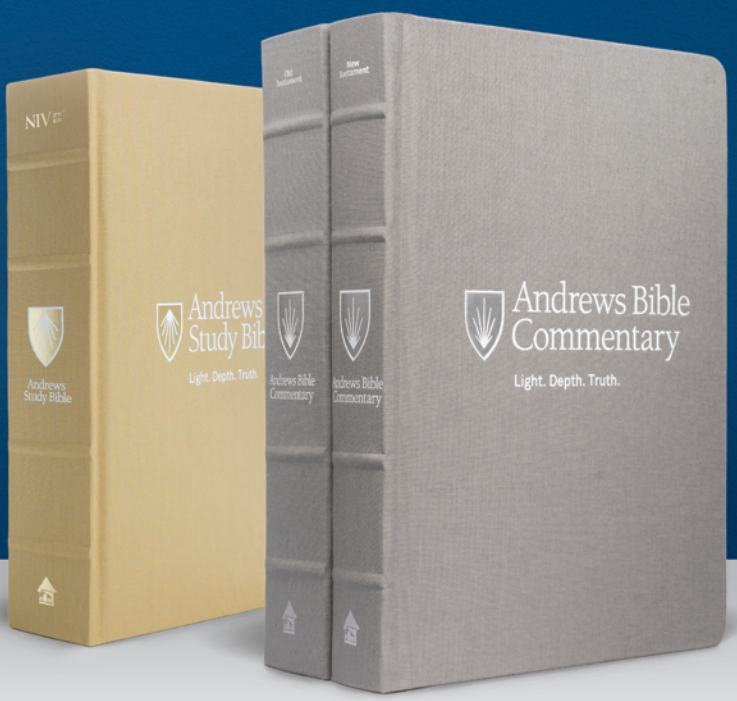
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