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ADVENTIST REVIEW

MARCH 2025: CURING "HEZEKITIS" + HOW HIGH WAS THE PRICE? + WHERE SCIENCE CAN'T GO + THE MIRACLE + DEEP AND WIDE

# EVEN IF NOT

PAGE 54

*God will never leave you, even in the fire.*

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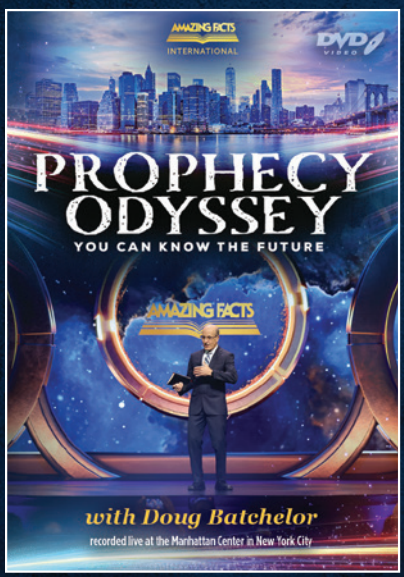



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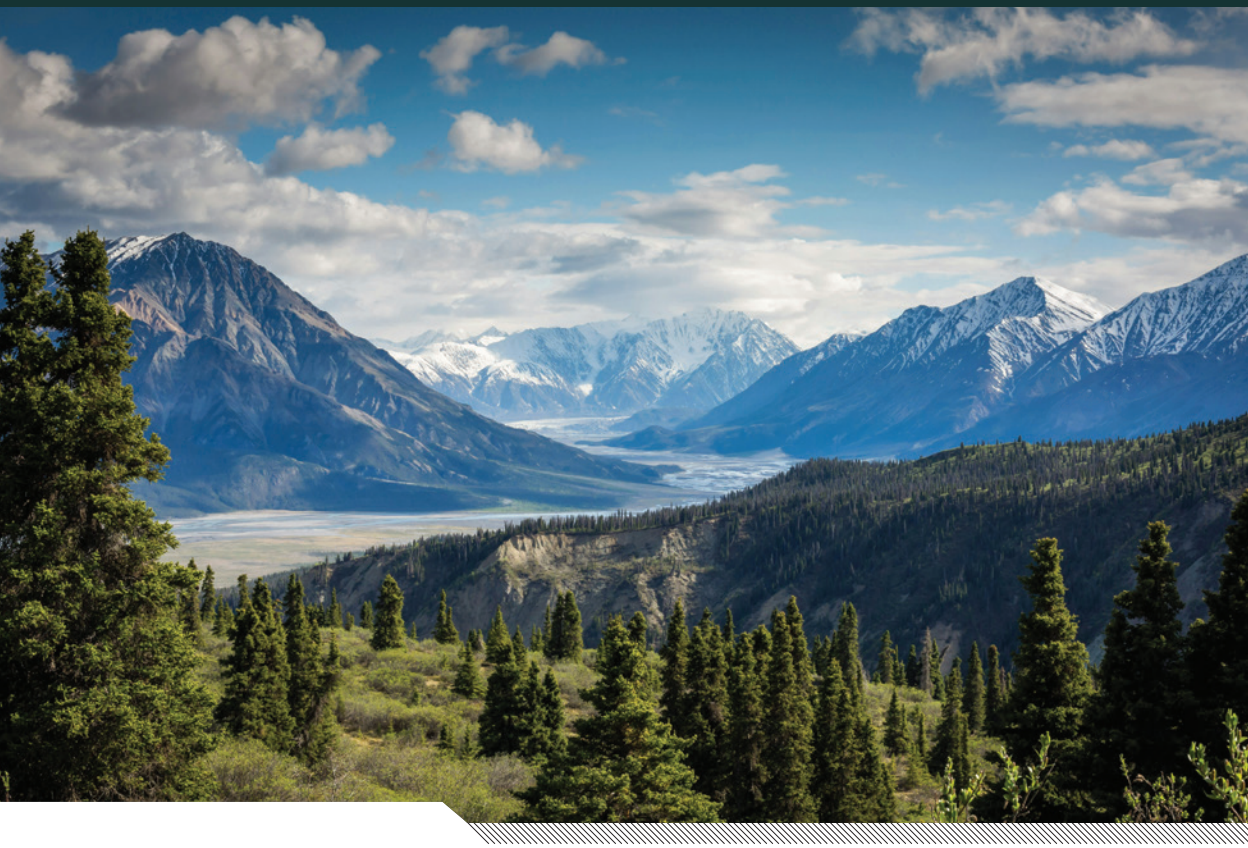
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COVER PHOTO © LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

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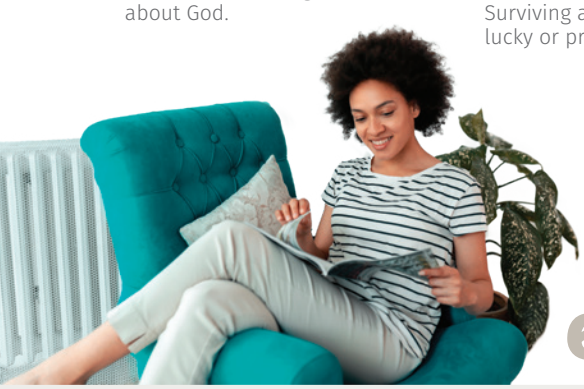
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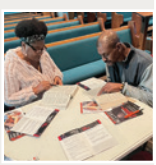
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# TRENDING

## THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

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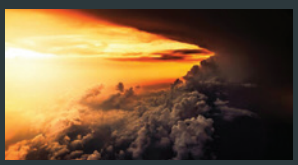

The Mark of the Beast and Legalism
by Clifford Goldstein

2



Death on the Potomac
by Marcos Paseggi

3



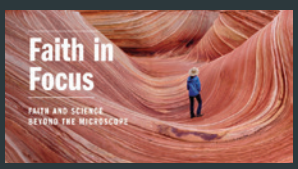
Sabbath and Eschatology
by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez

4




A New Operating System
by Chantal J. Klingbeil and
Gerald A. Klingbeil

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With All the Mind
by Ben Clausen

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*There is something that is impossible for God to do. He cannot lie.*

# The Instrument of Creation: How Ex Nihilo Outshines Hocus Pocus

*Abracadabra. Shazam. Alakazam. Presto chango. Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo. Hocus pocus.* Or simply, *open sesame.* Scholar of magic Craig Conley categorizes these words as "pseudo-Latin phrases, nonsense syllables, or esoteric terms from religious antiquity." But he also calls them a part of "language as an instrument of creation."* While their narrative context may be innocent, it is interesting to note that what often undergirds the majority of fantasy and fiction is a presuppositional spiritualism, in which humanity creates something from nothing, with a little supernatural help.

When God created the heavens and the earth, Genesis 1:3 narrates that God said and it came to be. Whereas the English uses three words (let there be), the Hebrew is more dramatic, in that one word is used to command existence: *yehi*. God speaks, and the reality of matter and material come to *be* (Ps. 33:9). Said in another way, God's Word holds the power of existence. For God, there need be no space, pause, or gap between speech and reality—a fundamental characteristic of the unique Creator.

As a corollary, there is something that is impossible for God to do. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Yes, Luke 1:37 says nothing shall be impossible with God, but that is within the human framework. When it comes to the divine, God alone has the power to speak things into existence—to create and make things as He wills by fiat. The one with such ability must be careful with speech. The consequences of misusing it are explored in our fairy tales, magic stories, comic books, myths, and legends. But God is a perfect Creator, for His ultimate goodness ensures that speaking and being can coexist.

Perhaps this is why Scripture takes a hard stance on spiritualism, in which human beings claim to entertain the power of creation through speech. On a lower level, perhaps this is why Scripture takes a hard stance on sins of the mouth altogether, sins in which speaking and reality are dissonant: lying, gossip, slander, boasting, flattery, profanity, harshness, cursing, breaking promises, idle chatter, backbiting, contrarianism, and the like (James 3 counsels on controlling the tongue). Note Revelation 21:8, which lists sorcerers and all liars in the same category as those receiving the second death.

Romans 4:17 connects creation and the covenant with our conversion. God who called "those things which do not exist as though they did," created the world ex nihilo, and promised Abraham to be the first of many who would be spiritually reborn, giving that same experience to anyone today.

This presuppositional characteristic of creation ex nihilo is one that is interlaced throughout Scripture. As already described, it is in the creation narrative. It is the basis for the covenants given to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. It is the voice for the law of God given to humanity and to Israel. It is the source of prophecies—conditional, unconditional, local, and universal. It is the power for the incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is the grace for conversion, salvation, justification, and sanctification. It is the origin of the church, the gospel, evangelism, and ministry. It is the foundation for the judgment, the Second Advent, the resurrection, the millennium, and the apocalypse.

The belief in macroevolution or the denial of creation ex nihilo should not be relegated to a philosophical scientific debate. Rather, pulling at this one string loosens and undoes the entire fabric of Genesis to Revelation. Not as pseudo-Latin or nonsense words of creation, but may His Word unite our being and speaking to be one like our Creator—only by His creative and re-creative grace.

* Craig Conley, *Magic Words: A Dictionary* (Weiser Books, 2008), p. 18.

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# INBOX

In our daily rush, how many casual opportunities to be Jesus to someone do we miss?
**ELI ROJAS**

**OH, FOR A DO-OVER**
Every day is a chance for a do-over. The Holy Spirit continues to teach us and guide us. The Spirit used Mark Mashburn through his article, "The Healing Touch of Jesus" (January 2025), to remind me that today is a fresh day that we can demonstrate God's love. I am thankful for the reminder.
**Allie**




I pray that the Lord will help me be found in the second story outlined in "The Healing Touch of Jesus," and not in the first!
**Chrissie**

Mark Mashburn shares a challenging story in "The Healing Touch of Jesus." How often do we go through life without the intentionality of being like Jesus. His was a close and personal encounter. But in our daily rush, how many casual opportunities to be Jesus to someone do we miss? We may even have personal encounters in which we could be more intentional about *being Jesus* to someone in need, and miss the opportunity. May the Lord help us to listen carefully to the voice of the Holy Spirit and be ready to act the next time we have a chance to *be Jesus* to someone else.
**Eli Rojas**

**A WAKE-UP CALL**
I truly appreciated David Buruchara's "The Reasonable Ones" (February 2025). It was a bit of a wake-up call to be more concerned with loving well than with being right.
**Rex Turnberry**

**EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE**
Here are comments on our additional online-only content (www.adventistreview.org). You might enjoy the series based on the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide,* where authors share reflections on each week's lesson.

**NO CATCH**
In "What's the Catch?" by Adam Ramdin, I was struck by how God's love is relentless and unconditional. What a powerful reminder.
**Julissa.ust (via Instagram)**

**BEAUTIFULLY STATED**
I am so thankful for Nestor Soriano's beautiful reminder of the faithfulness of Christ, our only Righteousness, in his Sabbath School Reflection, "Great Is His Faithfulness" (September 2024).
**Sheri Christie**

I was struck by how Nestor Soriano points out that the older son's self-righteousness caused him to reject the gospel. I like to put it this way: the gospel is like durian, which I'm personally convinced is directly descendant from the fruit of the tree of life. Those who live a life based on God's faithfulness find the aroma of the gospel to be undeniable. They have tasted and seen that the Lord is indeed good. But those who have never experienced God's grace and solely rely on their own righteousness will always find the fruit appalling and will soundly reject any invitation to taste of its goodness!
**Bernie Jay**

*Check our website each Friday for a new Sabbath School Reflection.* ***adventistreview.org/category/theology/sabbath-school/.***

**2025 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION**

Official notice is hereby given that the sixty-second session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held July 3-12, 2025, in the America's Center Convention Complex in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 2:00 pm, July 3, 2025. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

*Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference President*
*Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary*

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**"We are excited to see young engineers using their skills to further mission work."**

**Kyle Fiess, p. 15**




A group of 17 AdventHealth CEOs recently visited Battle Creek, Michigan, to learn the importance of their role as spiritual leaders. PHOTO: ADVENTHEALTH

# MISSION INTEGRATION TRIP TIES ADVENTHEALTH LEADERS TO BATTLE CREEK LEGACY

## SEVENTEEN CEOS LEARN FIRSTHAND ABOUT THEIR ROLE AS SPIRITUAL LEADERS.

**MICHELLE CONKLIN, FOR ADVENTHEALTH**

Every AdventHealth hospital leader has two roles: chief executive officer and chief spiritual officer. While the daily demands of the first role could easily overshadow the second, AdventHealth believes it's the latter that determines the organization's ultimate success.

A group of 17 AdventHealth CEOs had the opportunity to learn this lesson firsthand in Battle Creek, Michigan, where, beginning in 1866, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began its commitment to extend the healing ministry of Christ through health-care services to the public. The CEOs, all in the early phase of their tenures, were there as members of the inaugural class of AdventHealth's Chief Executive Leadership Program (CELP).

"The visit to Battle Creek was to ground the CEOs in our mission to extend the healing ministry of Christ," Michael Paradise, executive director of the AdventHealth Lead-

ership Institute, said. "They were able to feel and experience the health-care legacy that differentiates us as an organization."

The visit to the Battle Creek Sanitarium and Historic Adventist Village was part of a three-day intensive focused on sustaining the mission through communication and influence. It was the second of three intensives spread throughout the year that are themed on leading self, leading others, and leading results.

"AdventHealth truly believes that leadership matters," Paradise said. "This organization is trying to stay grounded in mission because of the threat of mission drift, which says you are only one generation away from losing sight of what matters most in the organization."

## A WORKING TOUR

Although the sanitarium and village are open to tourists, the CEOs were not there as sightseers. During the three-hour drive from Chicago to Battle Creek, the CEOs participated in discussions based on readings they had been assigned in advance. While in Battle Creek, they toured the sanitarium, the historic village, and the gravesites of notable Adventists at Oak Hill Cemetery. They also participated in a prayer service and "sense-making" discussions on-site and again the following day, centered on such experiential questions as What is the CEO's responsibility to be intentional about the "healthstyle" principles of the Seventh-day Adventist health tradition in leading self and leading others? They also discussed if the healthstyle tradition started at the Battle Creek Sanitarium was just window dressing. How do CEOs guard against this? Finally, they delved into how the lack of alignment about mission as the core motivation related to Battle Creek Sanitarium's demise.

While the positive lessons learned at Battle Creek were expected, the discussion around what led to the closing of the sanitarium in 1942 was unexpected but just as beneficial. In particular, the criticality of a single person, in this case John Harvey Kellogg, to the organization's survival demonstrated the importance of succession planning today and that individual CEOs are just one link in the Adventist health-care legacy.

"The entire experience regrounded me in the special gift and mission we have been given to carry forward," said Dallas Purkeypile, CEO of AdventHealth South Overland Park in Kansas. "It really reinforced the responsibility we each have to ensure this not only remains a part of our organization but is expanded. It is our duty."

Vladimir Radivojevic, CEO of UChicago Medicine AdventHealth GlenOaks in Illinois, commented, "The experience at Battle Creek tied our work back to our heritage and made it both personal and relevant."

## FROM LEARNING TO LIFE

To ensure that the knowledge gained during CELP, including the Battle Creek experience, is translated into practice on the ground, each CEO works on two action documents. They review and revise their entity's Christian Service Plan, which outlines how the entity will emphasize spirituality within its operations.

"They revise it with intentionality, not just as something to check off," Paradise said. "This experience inspires them to be intentional about keeping mission at the top of their priority list."

They also are asked to write the job description for their chief spiritual officer role, which will be unique to each entity. Each description is reviewed by AdventHealth corporate leaders, members of the leadership institute team, and by the other CEOs in the cohort. After revising the descriptions based on the feedback, the CEOs are expected to use them to frame their daily activities in leading self, others, and results.

"As the chief spiritual officer they are responsible for the culture and atmosphere of extending Christ's healing ministry to their entire organization," Paradise saids. "Mission is our motivator, and culture is our differentiator. How does it show up on your campus? How does a nurse experience the difference? How does a patient feel the difference? It has to happen through the culture, and that is something the CEO owns. It is the biggest lever a CEO can pull. It can be our competitive advantage, too. This program helps turn mission into practical culture."



Florinda Clark earnestly studies the Word. She became acquainted with the Cedar Grove Adventist Church through the Christmas party service act. PHOTO: COURTESY OF WINSTON TAYLOR

# CHURCH SETS A TEMPLATE FOR PARTICIPATION IN PENTECOST 2025

PASTOR CALLS EVERYONE TO "JUST DO SOMETHING."

**JOHN SIMON, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS**

Pentecost 2025, a comprehensive, all-hands-on-deck revival and evangelism initiative of the North American Division (NAD), is already in full force across the territory.

NAD president G. Alexander Bryant has emphasized the objective and mission of this initiative: "Pentecost 2025 is an acknowledgment of our need for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. It is a commitment to pray earnestly for the outpouring of this latter rain; . . . to engage in the compassionate ministry of Jesus through community activities; . . . to harvest the interests of those who are open to knowing Jesus; to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ; . . . to engage in discipling new members. And finally, to start the cycle all over again."

One of the tangible goals of Pentecost 2025 is to collectively conduct at least 3,000 proclamation initiatives across the division within the year. A firstfruit of this goal is scheduled for March 9-29 in Shreveport, Louisiana. Winston Taylor, pastor of the Cedar Grove Seventh-day Adventist Church, and a core team of about 15 members have already established significant connections with the community through multiple outreach efforts.

## BUSY BELIEVERS

Cedar Grove began planning for the March meetings in October 2024, understanding the need for active groundwork and soil cultivation to experience a rich harvest. One of the church's acts of service was a Christmas party in December. A local benefactor partnered with the team to effect a toy distribution for children who would have otherwise experienced a scant holiday season.

More than 400 people attended the party, and more than 100 expressed interest in Bible studies, including Florinda Clark. She and Taylor have been steadily progressing through the *Message* magazine Bible study course.

On January 19, Cedar Grove hosted a community baby shower. Guest speakers included specialized professionals from fields such as pediatric health and childhood education. With assistance from various sources, the team shared a hearty supply of items necessary for parenthood preparation, such as baby beds, car seats, and diapers.

Cedar Grove's Facebook page has been flooded with positive, appreciative feedback, including this comment from Nakia Gee: "Thanks to Cedar Grove church at such a hard time for me right now, they have [become] a blessing to me and my kids. I have to smile to keep from crying almost every day."

The Cedar Grove team has been also going to the hospital each Tuesday, standing outside to offer prayer support to people as they enter or exit. Taylor and his members gather the prayer requests, mostly health-related, as well as contact information to forge deeper relationships and follow up on how God is intervening in their lives. Dozens of people have expressed interest in Bible studies through this project.

## "JUST DO SOMETHING"

There may be churches—members and leaders—throughout the division that desire to participate in Pentecost 2025 yet are battling various hesitancies. For his North American brothers and sisters, Taylor has simple yet profound advice: "Just do something, and as you do something, something turns into something more and something more and something more. Allow the Spirit to lead you to creativity."



Four young men are baptized at the ATSIM national camp in Brisbane, Australia, by Luke Stuart and Darren Garlett (left and second from left). PHOTO: *ADVENTIST RECORD*

# INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES CAMP WAS A MILESTONE IN AUSTRALIA, LEADERS SAY

MORE THAN 350 PEOPLE MET IN BRISBANE FOR THE FIRST GATHERING SINCE 2019.

**NATHAN BROWN, *ADVENTIST RECORD***

More than 350 people from across Australia gathered at the early 2025 national Indigenous camp, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministries (ATSIM) of the Australian Union Conference (AUC). Hosted at Watson Park in Brisbane, this was the first national camp since 2019, after delays caused by COVID-19 and the cancellation of the planned event in the aftermath of the cyclone and flooding in Cairns in 2024.

"Since our last camp we have had some significant things happen, . . . so many of our people were keen to get together again for a time of healing and celebration," ATSIM director Darren Garlett said.

Celebrating the theme "Following Jesus: One Message, One Ministry, One Mob," some camp participants traveled by bus for days from communities including Finke and Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, as well as remote areas of South Australia, the Torres Strait, northern Queensland, and Western Australia.

"Our people used to meet together for cultural events, which were times for sharing stories, sharing grieving, sharing good news, and introducing new members of the family—and this camp is similar with the additional spiritual focus," said John Beck, ATSIM's senior pastor for Outback Remote Ministries. "For the next three years our people are going to remember this camp, the stories shared, the songs we have sung. It is like a mini-evangelistic program where everybody is sharing together and encouraging one another."

A highlight of this year's ATSIM camp was a Sabbath-afternoon baptism, after which seven more people responded to an appeal to prepare for baptism. For ATSIM leaders Garlett and Luke Stuart—ATSIM director for South Queensland—the baptisms were personal, including Garlett's grandson, Malcolm, and Stuart's sons, Jacob, Nathanael, and Joshua. "It is significant for four young men to be baptized, and it is a testament to Luke and his family that the three boys wanted to be baptized together," Garlett said.

"ATSIM camps have always been a family camp with several generations together and the largest group being our younger people," he added. "We are a very diverse and inclusive group, and that is something we are intentional about."

AUC president Terry Johnson emphasized the importance of Indigenous ministry to the Australian church. "While Indigenous people make up about 3 percent of the Australian population, they represent just under 6 percent of our active Seventh-day Adventist members," he said. "So this camp is an important gathering for our church, impacting a significant portion of our membership."

As well as speaking at the ATSIM camp, Johnson said he has been impressed by Indigenous members' "sense of joy and resilience."

"When I hear their individual stories, I'm constantly reminded of what they've experienced and survived," he said. "It's sobering, disquieting, and yet encouraging as I hear time and again how God intervenes in their lives and brings them happiness."

According to Garlett, the camp acts as a milestone and a time to reflect on the progress made and the work yet to be done in this unique ministry. "I think we can be proud of the fact that we have a strong ATSIM ministry," he said. "But we also want to ensure that ATSIM is not creating a parallel church, that we have a growing presence and acceptance in the wider church."



Leaders cut the ribbon to mark the launch of Andrew's Memorial Hospital new MRI and Cardiac Cath Lab Services. PHOTO: PHILLIP CASTELL

# HOSPITAL IN JAMAICA LAUNCHES MRI AND CARDIAC CATH SERVICES

ANDREWS MEMORIAL WILL HELP STRENGTHEN THE COUNTRY'S HEALTH CARE, LEADERS SAY.

**DYHANN BUDDOO-FLETCHER AND INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS**

Andrews Memorial Hospital (AMH), a health-care institution operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jamaica, recently launched its Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory Services. These additional services mark a significant step in the hospital's goal toward delivering quality care that addresses critical gaps in diagnostic and cardiac care in the nation.

N. Nick Perry, U.S. ambassador to Jamaica, highlighted the importance of this achievement during the January 8 inaugural ceremony. "Andrews Memorial Hospital is strengthening the health-care infrastructure in Jamaica," he said. "The U.S. Embassy Kingston is proud to celebrate this milestone with our longtime partner in health and immigration services."

Currently AMH is the only facility in Jamaica authorized to conduct medical examinations for immigrant visas. As part of the application process, all immigrant visa applicants are required to undergo a medical exam, making the hospital a critical player in both health care and immigration services.

## A STEP FORWARD FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE

AMH president Donmayne Gyles emphasized the transformative impact of these new services. "By addressing the gaps in diagnostic imaging and cardiac care, we are contributing to the overall strengthening of Jamaica's health-care system," he stated.

With the addition of MRI and Cardiac Catheterization Services, Andrews Memorial Hospital now joins a select group of approximately 10 health-care facilities in Jamaica offering MRI services and five facilities in Kingston providing cardiac cath lab services.

## KEY CONTRIBUTORS AND PARTNERS

Gyles thanked interventional cardiologist Raquel Gordon-Adlam. He further paid tribute to former presidents Patric Rutherford and Marvin Rohoutas for their vision in initiating the MRI and beginning the conversation about the cardiac cath lab projects, respectively.

AdventHealth, a Seventh-day Adventist health-care organization based in the United States, has partnered with AMH for 30 years. During this partnership they have donated various equipment, including a GE Signa 1.5T MRI scanner and a GE Innova 2100 cardiac catheterization machine.

"This donation was spearheaded by the president/CEO for the East Florida Division of AdventHealth, Dr. Audrey Gregory, and her team. Thank you, AdventHealth," Gyles said.

## ADDRESSING A NATIONAL CRISIS IN HEALTH

Gregory shed light on Jamaica's alarming cardiovascular disease statistics.

"In 2024 Jamaica was projected to have approximately 200,000 deaths due to cardiovascular disease. This collaboration between AdventHealth and Andrews Memorial Hospital is a response to these staggering figures," she said.

Geoffrey Liburd, neurosurgeon and chief of neurosurgery on the AMH medical executive committee, echoed similar sentiments. "The detailed capabilities of MRI best serve brain and spine imaging. This addition underscores AMH's commitment to meeting the population's health-care needs," he said.

## DEDICATED LEADERSHIP AND WORKFORCE

Everett Brown, chair of the AMH board and president of the Jamaica Union Conference, praised the hospital's leadership and workforce of more than 400 for their dedication.

"This is a testament to AMH's commitment to offering the best health care possible. We look forward to continued support as the hospital builds its capacity to be the best in its class," he said.



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# CAN BRAIN HEALTH BE IMPROVED?

THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT THE BRAIN'S IMPACT ON OVERALL HEALTH

**ALYSSA HUNT, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS**

While physical and mental health are key components of overall well-being, brain health—often overlooked as a crucial factor—is closely linked to general health, rather than existing as a separate concept. Fortunately, many actions that improve physical health, such as managing blood sugar and blood pressure, along with practices that support mental health, such as therapy and mindfulness, directly support brain health.

An important outcome of maintaining good overall health is a well-functioning nervous system. Healthy habits, such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, and stress management, support both body and mind.

Jeffrey Rosenfeld, professor of neurology, neuromuscular specialist, associate chairman of neurology, and director of the Center for Restorative Neurology at Loma Linda University Health, said that brain health often isn't prioritized because people mistakenly believe they have little control over it.

"The brain is part of the complex nervous system, which thrives on balance," Rosenfeld said. "Actions that promote physical and mental health help maintain balance in the brain, leading to a reduction in risk for such conditions as dementia, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's disease."

While the brain is a complex organ that researchers have more questions than answers about, brain health deserves a place alongside other wellness goals.

## WHAT IS BRAIN HEALTH?

Brain health refers to the overall functioning and well-being of the brain, enabling it to perform essential tasks, such as thinking, learning, memory, emotional regulation, and physical coordination. A healthy brain supports cognitive abilities, mood stability, sensory perception, and overall quality of life.

The brain, however, can be susceptible to diseases, which generally fall into two categories: cognitive decline, such as dementia, and neurodegenerative disorders, including Parkinson's, Huntington's, ALS, and Alzheimer's disease. While not all neurodegenerative diseases affect cognition, they can significantly impact brain function.

Despite significant medical advances, the reason some individuals develop certain brain diseases remains unclear. While maintaining good brain health through positive choices is not a guaranteed safeguard against neurological disorders, it can significantly influence brain function, resilience, and quality of life.

## HOW TO SUPPORT BRAIN HEALTH

A widespread misconception is that people cannot directly influence their cognitive well-being. In truth, adopting healthy habits can significantly improve brain health. Rosenfeld addresses the following key lifestyle habits that help support optimal brain function.

***Mental activity:*** Keeping the brain engaged through simple and challenging tasks promotes a concept known as plasticity—the brain's ability to form new connections. Plasticity, also referred to as neuroplasticity, helps the brain develop and strengthen new internal pathways, which can be done through staying mentally active.

"The nervous system thrives on novelty, meaning trying new things. Taking up a hobby, reading, traveling, or learning a new language," Rosenfeld said. "Even taking a different route to and from work can help the brain's plasticity by encouraging it to stay intellectually curious."

Additionally, brain training apps and puzzles provide a modern way to keep the brain stimulated. For many people, utilizing a brain app on their phone or smartwatch provides a convenient platform to challenge and engage brain agility in a fun and unique way.

***Exercise:*** Regular physical activity supports both physical and brain health by increasing blood flow, reducing stress and anxiety, boosting cognitive function, and enhancing neuroplasticity.

***Diet:*** A healthy diet provides the brain with the essential nutrients that support its structure and function. Consuming foods rich in antioxidants, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals promotes better cognitive performance, enhances memory, and helps protect against neurodegenerative diseases.

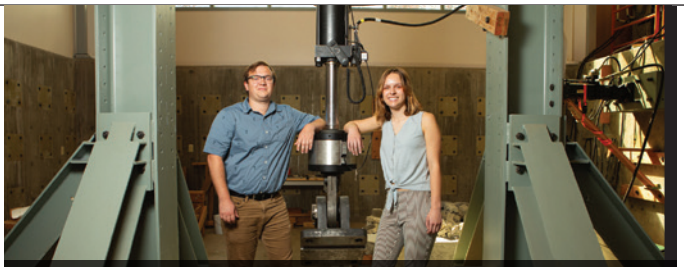
***Sleep:*** Sleep is vital for brain health because it plays a key role in restoring and maintaining cognitive function. During sleep the brain consolidates memories, strengthens neural connections, and enhances learning by processing information from the day. Insufficient or poor-quality sleep can impair these processes, potentially leading to reduced mental clarity, slower reaction times, and increased risk of neurological disorders.

### POOR HABITS AND BRAIN DECLINE?

While maintaining good exercise, diet, and sleep patterns and staying mentally curious help increase brain function, there is no research that suggests the absence of these choices promotes diseases in the brain.

"Watching TV won't cause dementia," Rosenfeld says. "But you're not doing yourself any favors, nor are you optimizing choices to maintain better brain health, by avoiding mentally engaging and healthy activities."

Healthy habits can lead to a healthier brain. By integrating physical exercise, proper sleep, a balanced diet, and mental stimulation into daily life, individuals can foster cognitive resilience, which can lead to significant benefits for brain function in the years ahead.



Jenna Fanselau and Reuben Herbel, Walla Walla University recently graduated civil engineering majors. PHOTO: CHRIS DRAKE

## WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY SENIOR PROJECT AIDS IN ONE-DAY CHURCH REDESIGN

MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL SIGNATURE CHURCH BUILDING GETS AN UPGRADE.

**STACY WISENER, WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY**

For their senior project, Jenna Fanselau and Reuben Herbel, Walla Walla University (WWU) recently graduated civil engineering majors, created a redesign of a one-day church for Maranatha Volunteers International, a nonprofit organization that builds worship and education structures all over the world for communities in need.

A one-day church is exactly what it sounds like: a church structure built in one day. One of Maranatha's most common projects, the current design of the structure has proved to be ideal for smaller congregations. Such structures, however, have easily been outgrown in many communities by Adventist ministry growth, which has presented a scalability challenge for such congregations that wish to continue growing.

Fanselau heard about this project during her junior year from a family friend who works at Maranatha and had expressed the need for a redesign. After partnering with Herbel and talking to their advisors, the team committed to the project, taking on the challenge of creating a new one-day church redesign that not only would allow for a quality structure to be erected but also would allow for future expansion as needed.

Working closely with their technical advisor, Louie Yaw, WWU engineering professor, Fanselau and Herbel began with sketches. After spending several months evaluating their design, they eventually selected a T-shaped structure that could easily be made of materials accessible to Maranatha when working internationally. The design also allows existing one-day church structures to be converted into T-shaped structures when congregations outgrow their current church.

Throughout their project they kept in close communication with the team at Maranatha, who would review the redesign and send feedback to Fanselau and Herbel. "I did enjoy working with Jenna," said Kyle Fiess, Maranatha vice president of projects. "We are excited to see young engineers using their skills to further mission work."

While Fanselau and Herbel satisfied the requirements for their senior project, additional steps still need to be taken before the design can be implemented in the mission field. Fanselau will send over the package of materials she and Herbel made for Maranatha's structural engineering team. Once the materials have been reviewed, Fanselau will meet with the team to go over the design and discuss further steps so the one-day church redesign can be utilized in the organization's future builds.



Jack J. Blanco passed peacefully to his rest on Sabbath, January 11, at 95.
PHOTO: SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

# JACK BLANCO, AUTHOR OF *THE CLEAR WORD* PARAPHRASE, PASSES TO HIS REST

**FORMER PROFESSOR, PASTOR, EDITOR, AND ADMINISTRATOR WAS 95.**

**NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS**

Jack J. Blanco, author of *The Clear Word* paraphrase and former dean of the Southern Adventist University School of Religion and professor emeritus, passed peacefully to his rest on Sabbath, January 11. He was 95.

After a fruitful career in pastoral ministry, mission service, teaching, academic administration, and editorial work at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Blanco was called to Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, in 1982, where he served until 2010.

Blanco graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Union College (now Union Adventist University) in Lincoln, Nebraska. He continued his studies, graduating with an M.A. and M.Div. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan; an M.Th. from Princeton Theological Seminary; and a Th.D. from the University of South Africa.

## FROM WORLD WAR II TO *THE CLEAR WORD*

Blanco was born in Chicago in 1929. He never met his father, who abandoned his bride-to-be upon finding out that she was pregnant. Raised Catholic, when Blanco was 9 his mother surprised him with tickets to go visit her parents in Germany.

He stayed with his grandparents for a year. But World War II broke out right before he was to sail home, and travel became difficult. Blanco enrolled in school in Germany and, for a time, was able to conceal his nationality from the government. After the U.S. joined the war in 1941, however, he had to disclose his origins and was consequently sent to a labor camp as an enemy of the Third Reich.

In 1945 Blanco escaped the labor camp during the American invasion and returned to his grandparents' house weighing only 80 pounds. Repatriated to the U.S., the malnourished 16-year-old was mistaken for a 12-year-old. After experiencing the atrocities of the war, Blanco left the faith of his youth behind.

At 20 Blanco was drafted into the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Witnessing the poor values among his peers, Blanco eventually decided to model his life after the life of Jesus. While stationed in Guam, he was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, immersing himself in writings by Ellen G. White. Blanco later became a pastor, serving in the U.S., the Philippines, and in several countries in Africa.

In 1984 during his devotions, Blanco began paraphrasing the New Testament to deepen his connection with God. Starting with Mark, he worked prayerfully for three years, producing a paraphrase of all 27 books of the New Testament. Friends and family encouraged him to continue, and seven years later he completed paraphrasing the Old Testament.

The result, *The Clear Word*, published in 1994, has touched countless lives. Reflecting on its impact, Blanco said, "When people thank me for what *The Clear Word* has done for them, I always tell them to give the glory to God. That is my goal in life."

Blanco is survived by his daughter, Cheri Blanco Jones, and her husband, Geoff; his grandson Derek Jones and Derek's wife, Andrea; and his three great-grandchildren: Connor, Emily, and Hailey.

A memorial service will be held at the Southern Adventist University Church this spring.



**CHURCH IN CHILE DEVELOPS CHURCH PLANTING MISSIONARY PROJECT.** A missionary project from the Adventist Church in Chile that seeks to plant 150 new congregations is already resulting in tangible results. In the first stage 33 new churches have been planted, as church districts establish planting teams and keep working to reach their goal. Some of the new congregations have been planted in places where there was no Adventist presence before 2023. The goal goes beyond planting churches, and includes training new leaders.



**TEACHERS' CONVENTION IN EASTERN AFRICA EMPOWERS EDUCATORS FOR MISSION.** The East-Central Africa Division Education Department hosted a teachers' convention from December 11 to 14 in Arusha, Tanzania. Under the theme "Educating for Mission" the event brought educators from private and public schools together. Various presentations stressed the importance of maintaining a focused vision for education in a world in which moral and spiritual values are increasingly challenged. The convention enabled educators to explore new methods, share best practices, and reaffirm Adventist education's mission.



**WOMEN'S MINISTRIES LAUNCH SINHALA AND TAMIL DEVOTIONAL BOOK.** On January 7 the Women's Ministries Department of the Sri Lanka Mission celebrated the launch of the women's devotional, produced by the General Conference Women's Ministries Department. For the first time, this devotional book has been translated into both Sinhala and Tamil, ensuring that it is accessible to women throughout Sri Lanka. The devotional invites women to reflect on God's Word, to find encouragement, and to extend blessings to others.



**THIRTY-FIRST MEETING OF MUSICIANS CELEBRATES TALENT, ART, AND WORSHIP.** About 600 musicians, teachers, singers, and former choir participants gathered at Brazil Adventist University in Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, Brazil, to share musical and spiritual experiences. This event took place January 7-11 in partnership with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with the goal of improving the music ministry across local congregations. The workshops, band, choir, and orchestra rehearsals, shows, and concerts helped participants to increase their musical acumen.



**ADVENTISTS OPEN A NEW SPACE OF WELCOME AND DEVELOPMENT IN LYON**. The South France Conference inaugurated Espace Potenciel, in Lyon, on January 19. This center of influence, located in the heart of the city, aims to welcome young people to a friendly and relaxed setting. It provides an alternative to traditional church formats, to reach an audience that is wary of religious institutions. Additionally, the pastoral team offers counseling and listening sessions for young people in spiritual search.



**JOHN PECKHAM'S BOOK LISTED IN *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*'S 2024 BOOK AWARDS.** The book *Why We Pray: Understanding Prayer in the Context of Cosmic Conflict*, written by John Peckham, associate editor at the *Adventist Review* and research professor at Andrews University, was recently recognized as one of the top works in academic theology in the 2024 *Christianity Today* Book Awards. This book addresses many of the complex and complicated questions surrounding prayer and communication with God from a biblical perspective.

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# Never Give Up

*Lessons from Ellen White's relationships with her siblings*

**TOM GROVE AND S. JOSEPH KIDDER**

Not much has been written about Ellen White's siblings and her relationship with them. If you were to ask church members, they probably wouldn't be able to tell you how many siblings she had or if she even had any (for the record, she did have siblings—seven of them, in fact). Yet one of the fascinating things about Ellen White is how she interacted with each of them, especially concerning spiritual matters. How did she relate to each sibling? And what can we learn from her interactions that will help us better reach our family members for the kingdom?

### CAROLINE HARMON CLOUGH

All of Ellen White's siblings but her twin sister, Elizabeth, were older. The oldest sister was Caroline, who was 15 years older than Ellen. Because of the age difference, Ellen was a young girl when Caroline married Mace Clough, a Methodist Episcopal pastor, and moved to Kansas. They had a daughter named Mary. Mary worked for a short time for her aunt as a literary assistant. Ellen kept in touch with her sister via letters and at least one visit in 1872 while James and Ellen were passing through Kansas. After not seeing her sister for more than 15 years, Ellen reflected to her son Edson about Caroline: "She is an understanding, intelligent woman, living, I think up to the best light she has had. She is a powerful singer. . . . I think I never heard a voice that would thrill the soul like hers."[1]

Their relationship, however, hit a bump in 1877 when Caroline's daughter, Mary, was working for Ellen but chose not to keep the Sabbath. Ellen wrote to Caroline reiterating their conversation about the Sabbath. She pointed out to her sister that she reverted to writing a letter, because "I have decided that it would not be profitable for you or for me for us to have conversation together on any points of differences. You make your statements so recklessly

Ellen White, left, with her twin sister, Elizabeth (Lizzie)

ALL PHOTOS: ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE



Ellen White and Caroline Harmon Clough

and so sweeping that it is hopeless to attempt in conversation to say things which will give the right impression, and will be repeated to have the correct meaning."[2] After going through many arguments for keeping the Sabbath, Ellen pointed back to Jesus and the importance of being obedient to Him. "Dear sister," she wrote in another letter, "it is not enough to confess Christ. His image must be reflected in us. Our natures must be softened, refined, and elevated. We must exemplify Christ in our daily walk at home, abroad, everywhere. Our conversation must not be rambling upon everything. Our words must be select, our conversation on heavenly things."[3]

She concluded this letter with words of love and affection: "I do not write because I do not have affection for you. No, no. That is not love and true affection which would cover up and gloss over errors of words, voice, or deportment which are deleterious to the Christian character and spiritual advancement."[4] She appealed to Caroline for continued dialogue: "If you see me in word or in act wrong, I will take it kindly of you to tell me of it. I will not resent reproof." [5]

We don't know Caroline's response to her sister's letters. She died in 1883.

The lesson we learn from Ellen's interaction with Caroline is when a verbal conversation is not going anywhere and leads to sharp disagreement, it is good for us to revert to writing. We also see that we must never be dogmatic in our beliefs, but always be open to dialogue and correction.

### HARRIET HARMON MCCANN

Ellen's second sister, Harriet, was about 14 years older than Ellen. She was married to Samuel McCann, who was a pastor in various Christian churches in Maine. They had six children, three of whom died of consumption (tuberculosis). Her husband also died of the same disease. In a visit to Harriet in 1874 Ellen pointed out, "She felt that she could not be reconciled to this [contracting tuberculosis], but felt that it was useless to war against her destiny and has submitted to go the same way the others have gone. Yet there is not a religious influence in the family. No family prayer, and no blessing asked at the table. A godless, prayerless house! What can be worse?"[6]

**Ellen constantly strived to help her siblings see Jesus.**

Heartbroken by this visit, it would be another year until Ellen saw her sister again. This time Harriet was on her deathbed suffering from the effects of consumption. Ellen recounts this visit in a letter to her son Willie. She pointed out that she didn't expect to see her sister again, and she said, "I felt such strong desire to gather my sister in my arms and shield her from the anguish of physical prostration she endures daily; but Jesus loves her better than I can. I leave her in His tender arms of love."[7] Harriet died a few months later.

One lesson that we see in Ellen's relationship with Harriet is her love for her sister and the deep compassion she had for her, even in the midst of Harriet's home being a "godless, prayerless house!" Ellen could have had the attitude that because Harriet had no interest in God, there was no need to visit her. But to the contrary, Ellen visited Harriet and continued to minister to her despite her lack of interest in religious things.

The second lesson is that Ellen never gave up on showing her sister the love of Jesus, even if it was just by her presence as Harriet was dying. Ellen left her sister's side, hoping to see her again on resurrection day. She wrote, "We parted with my dear sister, never expecting to meet again until the Lifegiver shall call the captives from their prison houses."[8]

### JOHN HARMON

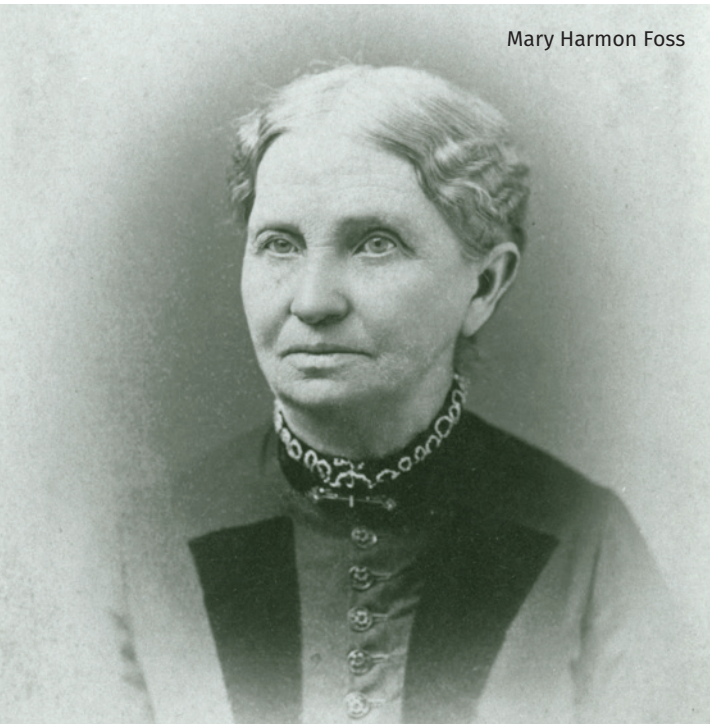
John was Ellen's oldest brother. He was 12 years older than Ellen. John moved away from Maine to Georgia, and then to Missouri soon after he got married in 1836. The next time Ellen saw John was in 1859, when John, then living in Illinois, came to visit Ellen and James in Battle Creek. In subsequent years they lost touch. In 1873 Ellen wrote a letter to John begging for him to write back. The entreaty must have worked, because he wrote at least four letters to his sister in the early 1880s. There were plans being made for John to visit Ellen in 1883. Unfortunately, John died before he could visit his sister.

We have very little knowledge about John's religious experience. His obituary does state that he became a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church about 10 years before he died. Ellen never ceased to want to keep in touch with her brother despite their age difference and him living so far away. She persevered in seeking a relationship with him.

### MARY HARMON FOSS

Mary was the third sister of Ellen and was six years older. In 1842 Mary married Samuel Foss, a farmer. It was Mary who, in 1845, invited Ellen to a Millerite gathering, showing that she and Samuel were still interested in the Millerite message. It was at that time that Ellen talked about her first vision. Interestingly, Mary's brother-in-law, Hazen, was given the same vision as Ellen but chose not to share it. In 1875 Ellen and James invited Mary and Samuel to a camp meeting about which Ellen commented, "They were very much interested in the meeting, and we hope the truth which they there heard preached will result finally in their conversion to the truth."[9] Even though Ellen and Mary didn't see each other much, they kept up regular correspondence, with Ellen regularly sending Mary Adventist literature and books. In a letter Mary wrote to Ellen she indicated she had read a book Ellen sent her and found it to be interesting.[10] She also shared in her later letters that she was keeping the Sabbath. The letters between the sisters seem to show that Mary was a practicing Seventh-day Adventist, but there is no record of her formally joining the church. Mary and Ellen continued to correspond until Mary's death in 1912.

Ellen continued to be patient with Mary and kept talking about the Adventist work and message. She also frequently sent Mary Adventist literature and books and invited Mary and her family to Adventist gatherings. It shows us how important it is to keep in touch with our family members and seize opportunities to share stories or literature about God's work and love.



Mary Harmon Foss

### SARAH HARMON BELDEN

Another one of the Harmon siblings was Sarah, who was nearly five years older than Ellen. Before Ellen and Sarah were both married, they traveled together as Ellen related her visions. In 1851 Sarah married Stephen Belden in a service conducted by James White, showing the strong relationship between the two families. Sarah and Stephen worked with Ellen and James in the publishing house both in Rochester, New York, and later in Battle Creek, Michigan, until 1860. Sarah and Ellen were beside the bedside of their brother Robert, Jr., as he died from consumption in 1853. Sarah herself was diagnosed with consumption in 1868. She died that same year; Ellen was beside her bed, comforting her.

## We need to listen as much as we share and to be open and vulnerable with our family members.


Sarah Harmon Belden

It is apparent from her obituary[11] that she loved the Lord and looked forward to His soon return. Just before she died, she urged her family to give their hearts to the Savior.

Sarah and Ellen had a close relationship with each other, even working together for several years. Ellen showed a tremendous love and care for her sister in difficult times and was right there beside her sister, comforting her as she faced suffering and death. Her care of her sister extended to the entire Belden family following Sarah's death.

### ROBERT HARMON, JR.

Robert Harmon, Jr., was two years older than his sister Ellen. Merlin Burt points out, "Besides her twin sister, Elizabeth, Ellen White probably had the closest emotional bond to her brother Robert."[12] From a young age Robert was described as being in ill health and "feeble." He was baptized into the Chestnut Street Methodist Church, like some of his siblings and parents. He also was disfellowshipped from the Methodist Church in 1843.

After the Great Disappointment Robert became disenchanted with the Advent movement and lost faith in the soon return of Jesus. In 1852 he rejoined the Methodist Church. Later that year he contracted tuberculosis, which made him bedridden. During his last illness Robert again accepted the message of the soon return of Jesus and the seventh-day Sabbath. Just prior to his death he asked that his name be removed from the Methodist Church. Robert died in his parents' home in February 1853. Frederick Wheeler conducted his funeral.

From their early years Ellen accompanied Robert to many Methodist and Millerite meetings. In their discussions and their testimonies in the meetings, Robert showed his deep love of God. They both experienced a deep stirring in their hearts when they attended a presentation on the Second Coming. Following the meeting, Ellen felt a deep sense of uncertainty of her salvation. As she was sharing her feelings with Robert, he didn't respond right away, because he was weeping with her. Ellen later asked Robert if God would spare her life if she fervently prayed. He replied, "I think He will if you ask Him with faith, and I will pray for you and for myself. Ellen, we must never forget the words we have heard this night."[13]

Ellen and her brother Robert both loved to attend religious meetings and discuss the content of the meetings deeply with a lot of emotion. They even spoke freely about their hope in the soon return of Jesus. While we don't have any known letters between them, we can surmise that, based on Ellen's account of her visit when he was dying, they continued to discuss religious topics. This may have led to his acceptance of the three angels' messages and the seventh-day Sabbath. As we see from Ellen's interaction with her brother, we need to listen as much as we share and to be open and vulnerable with our family members.

### ELIZABETH HARMON BANGS

Elizabeth, or "Lizzie," as she was known, was Ellen's twin sister. It is unclear who was born first, but they remained close their entire lives. Lizzie was there and helped Ellen when she was struck by the stone when they were 9 years old. During their younger years Ellen and Lizzie showed great interest in the second coming of Jesus and raised money to buy literature to be distributed. She even accompanied Ellen as she shared some of her early visions.[14]

Lizzie, like her sister Ellen, was voted into membership at the Chestnut Street Methodist Church in late 1842. But she was never baptized, possibly because her parents and siblings were removed from membership in the Methodist Church in 1843. This may have contributed to Lizzie's disillusionment with religion.[15]

In 1849 Lizzie married Reuben Bangs, an inactive Quaker, who showed no interest in religion and was "always picking flaws in religious people."[16] This might be another contributing factor as to why Lizzie lost interest in religion. One time when Ellen visited her sister Mary joined by Lizzie, she observed that there were "no prayers, no blessing at the table in either of my sister's houses."[17]

Ellen, however, constantly strived to move the heart of her sister toward Jesus. One example is Ellen's appeal following the death of Lizzie's daughter Eva in 1858. Speaking of the resurrection morning, Ellen wrote this: "The angels receive the motherless infants and conduct them to the tree of life. Jesus places the golden ring of light, the crown upon their little heads. God grant that the dear mother of 'Eva' may be there, that her little wings may be folded upon the glad bosom of her mother."[18]

Throughout the rest of Lizzie's life she and Ellen corresponded regularly. Ellen would send her religious books and periodicals.[19] As Lizzie's health failed in the early 1890s, Ellen made a last appeal to Lizzie: "Don't you believe on Jesus, Lizzie? Do you not believe He is your Saviour? That He has evidenced His love for you in giving His own precious life that you might be saved? All that is required of you is to take Jesus as your own precious Saviour. I pray most earnestly that the Lord Jesus shall reveal Himself to you and to Reuben. Your life in this world is not one of pleasure but of pain; and if you will not doubt Jesus but believe that He died to save you, if you will come to Him just as you are, and give yourself to Jesus and grasp His promises by living faith, He will be to you all that you can desire."[20]

She continued to share the simplicity of the gospel with her sister, making a strong appeal to her to accept Jesus and rest on His bosom.

"I long to take you in my arms and lay you on the bosom of Jesus Christ.

"I am praying for you all, that you might melt your hearts in view of the love of Jesus and accept His love and have His peace and joy and righteousness. . . . You must accept of Jesus. He longs to give you His peace and the light of His countenance. Lizzie, my heart longs to see you trusting in Jesus, for He can give you His grace to bear all your acute sufferings. He loves you. He wants to save you."[21]

We don't know Lizzie's response to this fervent appeal from her sister. Lizzie died on December 21, 1891. Ellen never gave up on Lizzie. She wrote her letters as well as sending her books and periodicals. No matter the topic of a letter, Ellen always brought it back to Jesus and appealed to Lizzie to accept Him as her personal Savior. As long as there is life, we must never give up on our family members' salvation.

## CONCLUSION

Even though she was the youngest sibling, Ellen White was very intentional about growing her relationship with each of her siblings and took different approaches to talking to them and showing them the love of Jesus. Whether it was through conversations, letters, sending them periodicals and books, or visiting them, Ellen constantly strived to help her siblings see Jesus. It is very clear that she did it with earnestness and with a passion to see her brothers and sisters in heaven. These are tremendous lessons for us all as we reach out to our families and loved ones. And just as Ellen ministered to each of her siblings in a unique way, we must pray that God will reveal to us the best way to reach our loved ones for Jesus.

[1] Ellen G. White letter 10, 1872.
[2] Ellen G. White letter 35, 1877.
[3] Ellen G. White letter 35a, 1877.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Ellen G. White letter 50, 1874.
[7] Ellen G. White letter 31, 1875.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Ellen G. White letter 35, 1875.
[10] Mary Plummer Foss to Ellen G. White, July 22, 1883.
[11] *Review and Herald*, Dec. 22, 1868, p. 286.
[12] Merlin Burt, "Robert F. Harmon, Jr.," *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2013), p. 400.
[13] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 15.
[14] Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts With Annotations* (Hagerstown, Md. Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2014), vol. 1, pp. 786, 787.
[15] Merlin Burt, *Adventist Pioneer Places: New York & New England* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2011), pp. 10, 12.
[16] E. G. White, *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts With Annotations*, vol. 1, p. 787.
[17] Ellen G. White letter 51, 1874.
[18] Ellen G. White, "Bereavement," *The Youth's Instructor*. April 1858, p. 29; see also Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 260.
[19] E. G. White, *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts With Annotations*, vol. 1, p. 787.
[20] Ellen G. White letter 61, 1891.
[21] *Ibid.*

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# APPEAL TO UNSAVED FAMILY MEMBERS

*Witness the stirring appeals Sister White made to her sisters Lizzie and Mary*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

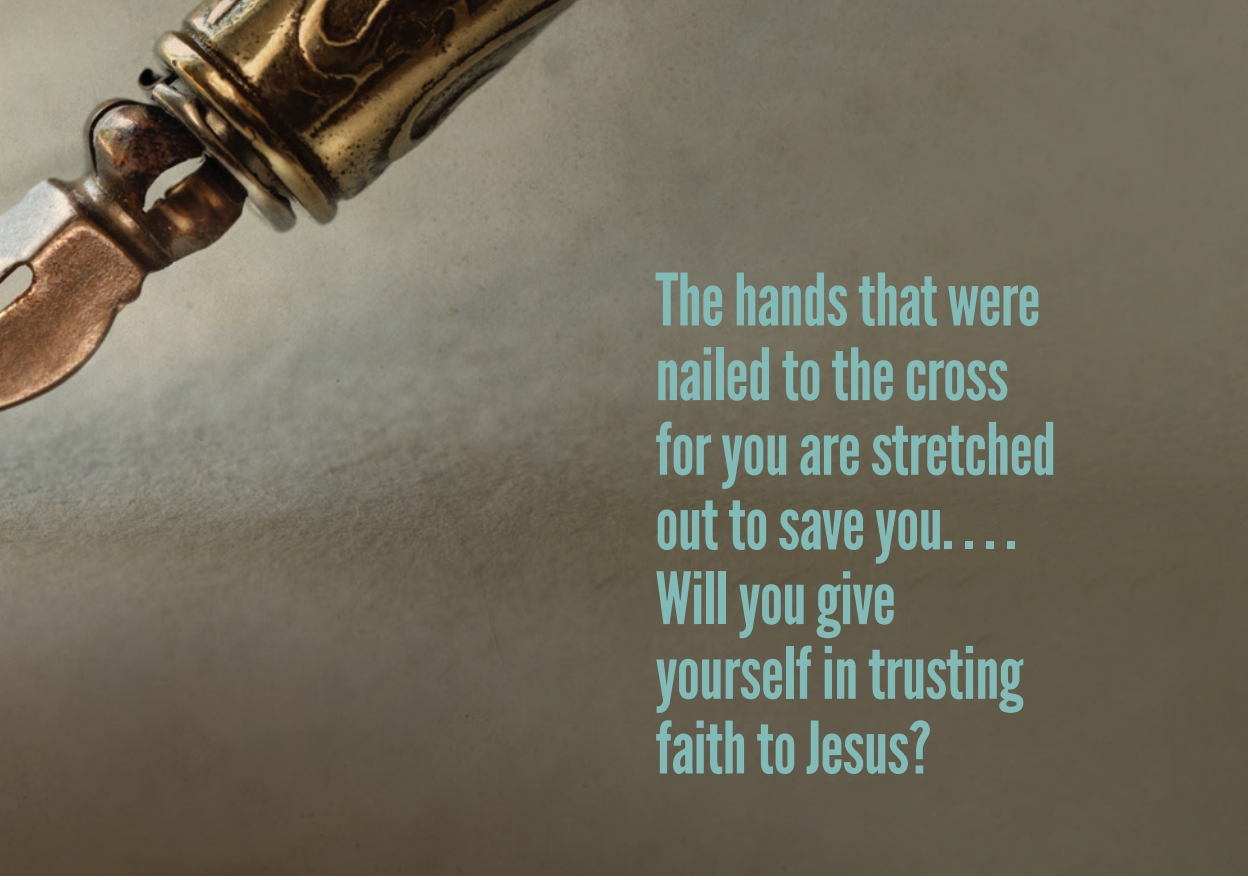
[Dear Lizzie (1876):]

Dear sister, Jesus is your helper. Jesus requires that we surrender ourselves unreservedly to Him. Will you tell me just how you do feel? I want to know whether you are indeed wholly the Lord's. You are precious in His sight, and while you lie there a patient sufferer, how precious to know that Jesus is yours and that His grace will sustain you in your affliction. Something more is required of us all than an intellectual consent that Jesus is the Son of God.

I had a long conversation with Mary upon some of these points. She believed intellectually that Christ came into the world to save sinners. The Pharisees felt no need of a Saviour. Said Christ, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" [Mark 2:17]. It is those who feel their need of a Saviour, those who will by faith give the full consent of their hearts to receive Christ because they have personal need of Him. If we do not do this we cannot believe in Jesus in a saving sense.

All our rebellion against God's plans arises from the fact that salvation is a free gift. Only believe in the merits of the blood of Christ and cling to Jesus as your Saviour. If your mind is convinced in regard to the doctrine, accept that which you do see, receive every ray of light which Heaven has given you. You have nought to do with whether others accept or not. You must believe for yourself and not make others your criterion. You cannot purchase salvation. When you accept Christ it will be under the sense of your inability to save yourself by your own righteousness. Said I, Dear sister, I am acquainted somewhat with your righteousness and your standard of goodness and both are pitiful indeed. They are no better than any poor sinner's. When you can from the heart sing "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee. . . .In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling" then you have learned the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

I told her sin was not man's misfortune but his guilt. Man was not a sinner because of circumstances, or his education or his temperament, but from deliberate choice. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither




cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" [John 3:19, 20]. We must meet God in the judgment. What excuse can you there offer why you have not given Him your heart, your best and holiest affections? You put a plaster on your conscience by greedily presenting before those who converse with you, professors who have fallen into sin and disgraced themselves and the church.

I said, Mary, I tell you frankly that it is with great satisfaction you present these marked cases before me as though they were an excuse for your neglect to act upon that which you admit is truth and light. Will you dare to offer any such excuse to your Maker, the Judge of all the world? You are reasoning on Satan's side of the question. He was an apostate. He fell from his holy state of purity, he became an accuser of those who believed in and accepted Christ.

**ANOTHER PLEA**

Dear Sister Lizzie [April 8, 1883]:

I have felt fearful I should never meet you and my remaining sisters in this world again, but it may be that the Lord will grant us another opportunity. I greatly desire this if it is for His glory. I have been fearful one or both of us might fall by death.

I have had special seasons of most earnest prayer that you would take a decided stand for Jesus. I know you love the Saviour, but I want you to acknowledge Him openly as your only hope. I have asked this of the Lord. Will you tell me, dear sister, how you feel in this matter? Do you trust to your morality, or do you rely upon the merits of the blood of Christ? This is my only hope. I dare not trust in any goodness of my own as a sinner. I must come to Jesus with repentance and claim His merits as all-sufficient.

I do not want you to rely upon any human opinion. One says, "If I am only sincere, God will accept me." Another says, "It matters not what a man believes, if his conduct is only right," by which he means, if he is tolerably moral and does no criminal action, this will be enough. But all of these are making a fatal mistake. They all take the position that man is not utterly ruined and lost as to require a new nature, a new purpose which Christ alone [remainder missing].

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## To everyone inquiring, "What must I do to be saved?" I answer, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**EIGHT YEARS LATER**

Don't you believe on Jesus, Lizzie [Feb. 21, 1891]? Do you not believe [that] He is your Saviour? that He has evidenced His love for you in giving His own precious life that you might be saved? All that is required of you is to take Jesus as your own precious Saviour. I pray most earnestly that the Lord Jesus shall reveal Himself to you and to Reuben [Lizzie's husband]. Your life in this world is not one of pleasure but of pain; and if you will not doubt Jesus but believe that He died to save you, if you will come to Him just as you are, and give yourself to Jesus and grasp His promises by living faith, He will be to you all that you can desire.

To everyone inquiring, "What must I do to be saved?" I answer, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not doubt for a moment but that He wants to save you just as you are. He says to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" [John 5:40]. Let not this be said of Reuben and you, and your helper in your household. Jesus wants to save you, to give you peace and rest and assurance while you live, and eternal life in His kingdom at last. No one will be compelled to be saved. The Lord Jesus forces the will of none. He says to all, Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. The mind and heart given to Jesus Christ will find rest in His love. . . .

Then you, my dear sister, Reuben, and your attendant, have reason to hope in His mercy and to believe on Jesus Christ, that He can save you. Why? Because you are guiltless? No; because you are sinners, and Jesus says, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." When the devil whispers to you, There is no hope, tell him you know there is, for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What more could God do for you, more than He has done, to make you love Him? Lizzie, believe, simply believe that Jesus means just what He says. Take Him at His word and hang your helpless soul on Jesus Christ. . . .

The hands that were nailed to the cross for you are stretched out to save you. . . . Will you give yourself in trusting faith to Jesus? I long to take you in my arms and lay you on the bosom of Jesus Christ. . . .

You must accept of Jesus. He longs to give you His peace and the light of His countenance. Lizzie, my heart longs to see you trusting in Jesus, for He can give you His grace to bear all your acute sufferings. He loves you. He wants to save you.

Seventh-day Adventist believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. These excerpts were taken from Letter 57, 1876; Letter 10, 1883; and Letter 61, 1891.

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# IMAGES IN A DREAM FORGOTTEN

*On fleeting glory and eternal perspectives*

I'm reading *A Voyage Around the Queen,* by Craig Brown, a quirky kaleidoscopic peek at Queen Elizabeth, with such insights as: "The first biography of Princess Elizabeth appeared in November 1930, when she was four years old."[1] Or about her granddad, George V, not known for his effusive compassion. In 1898, at the formal launching of a ship, a platform collapsed, and 200 spectators were swept into the water. "Writing up his diary that evening, King George V mentioned the incident, but only as an afterthought. 'I am afraid over 30 were drowned. Got home at 4:15.'"[2]

What moved me, though, was Elizabeth's coronation in 1953. All the robes, all the barons, all the counts and countesses, the bedecked clergymen, the crown, the trumpets, the violins, the world watching (Jacqueline Bouvier, soon to be a Kennedy, covered it for an American newspaper)—it was heavy-laden with aristocratic traditions that were already crusted over when western Pennsylvania was still the American frontier. (In America those watching the event felt jilted when NBC interrupted the festivities with a commercial starring J. Fred Muggs, a chimpanzee.)

Yet Elizabeth is now as stone-cold dead as the ancestors interred with her—including Charles I, whose subjects chopped off his head (Charles III likely won't go that way). You're the queen of England, and then you're dead. That's just how it goes.

The book also talked about how the royals have fared at Madame Tussauds in London. Elizabeth had 24 different waxwork versions of her, the first when she was 2. Though all her children had been on display, all were melted down and reshaped into others (perhaps some went into Miley Cyrus?)—except Charles III, who remains, along with Camilla and the duke and duchess of York. Prince Andrew has long been gone. Harry? Present but "standing at a discreet distance from the other four."[3] Meghan was there (alongside Kim Kardashian). Princess Diana took up space in a corner, with a plaque telling the new generation just who she was, anyway. I get it. (I recently told some 25-year-old that I hated my voice because I sound like Woody Allen on steroids, and he asked, "Who?")

Another monarch (predating Elizabeth a bit) expressed his thoughts about earthly accomplishments and honors. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). The Hebrew word for vanity means *vapor* or *breath*. Our existence is so vaporous (James 4:14), so fleeting, that in the big picture it's as if we're mere images in a dream forgotten, nothing more.

And we would be but for the God who knows every hair on our head (Luke 12:7) *and* who, by His death, proved how much we, as souls to be saved, do matter. Sure, some terrestrial trappings—e.g., coronations, wax effigies to be oohed and aahed at, whatever—have their place, but they're such small places and so fleeting, too.

"For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Not sure what it means, but in this context it seems worth remembering.

[1] Craig Q. Brown, *A Voyage Around the Queen*, Kindle Edition (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), p. 31.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 15.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 31.

**Clifford Goldstein** is the editor of the Adult Bible Study Guide. His latest book is *An Adventist Journey*, published by the Inter-American Division Publishing Association (IADPA).

CLIFF'S EDGE
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN



**OUR EXISTENCE IS SO VAPOROUS, SO FLEETING, THAT IN THE BIG PICTURE IT'S AS IF WE'RE MERE IMAGES . . . NOTHING MORE.**

GARY BLANCHARD

How do we reach and retain the younger generation? Without a doubt, this is one of the biggest questions being asked by parents, youth leaders, teachers, and church administrators worldwide. Especially as we hear reports that between 60 and 70 percent of our youth disappear from active church life in their 20s and never return. Interestingly, but not shockingly, the reason for this crisis is spelled out for us in the Word of God.

In Isaiah 38 we learn about the God-fearing King Hezekiah who was diagnosed with a terminal illness but by the grace of God was healed and given 15 more years of life. In the next chapter, however, we learn that visitors from Babylon came to "congratulate" him on his recovery, and in an act of complete stupidity King Hezekiah showed them all the treasures of the kingdom (Isa. 39:1, 2). When the delegation left, Isaiah the prophet confronted the king, prophesying that the Babylonians would return, take the treasures for themselves, and kidnap their kids, making them slaves in Babylon.

Notice Kings Hezekiah's shocking response to this terrible news! "'This message you have given me from the Lord is *good.*' For the king was thinking, 'At least there will be peace and security during *my* lifetime'" (Isa. 39:8, NLT).[1]

Why are we losing so many young people today? Why are they being dragged away from the church and assimilated into the world? Because this kind of attitude, we will call it Hezekitis, is also coming from the older generation! King Hezekiah was a godly man and was one of the greatest kings Israel ever had, but like many godly church leaders today, he was wholly concerned about the present, about his generation, and gave little thought to the future and those who would one day lead!

Sadly, it was during the extra 15 years of life God granted him that Hezekiah and his wife had a child who would become one of the most wicked kings in Israel's history! He was godless, lawless, and heartless, and the Bible testifies that he became a leader who "led them [Israel] to do even more evil than the pagan nations that the Lord had destroyed when the people of Israel entered the land" (2 Kings 21:9, NLT).



## THE CURE

Currently in the United States everything from guns to drugs is being blamed for the situation among our nation's youth. Violence is high, and you can't watch the news without another school shooting or violent act being committed by the younger generation. This reality is also reflected in other countries, but few are aware of the real systemic problem behind the moral free fall among the younger generation. It is the conviction of this writer that Hezekitis is the problem—like King Hezekiah, we are either preoccupied with our own generation or unconscious of the desperate need of the younger generation for our proactive attention. Among this generation is a deep need realized or not for spiritual fathers—an older generation



# CURING "HEZEKITIS"

*The Elijah solution*

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who cares for the souls of the up-and-coming Manassehs (millennials and Generation Z).

But there is great news! God has a cure for Hezekitis and real hope for a Manasseh generation! God's Word predicts that just before His return He will send "Elijah the prophet," who will "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:5). Interestingly, Ellen White compares Elijah to those living at the end of time. She writes, "Elijah was a type of the saints who will be living on the earth at the time of the second advent of Christ and who will be 'changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,' without tasting of death."[2] So just before the return of Christ, God will raise up a generation that will cure His church of Hezekitis as they wholeheartedly pursue intergenerational youth ministry.

Elijah the prophet was without question one of the greatest youth leaders in the Old Testament. He was a godly man like Hezekiah, but one who cared for the younger generation and did more than just preach "total youth involvement." Elijah "rolled up his sleeves" and invested compassionately into the younger generation as if the future of the church depended upon it! Elijah understood that effective youth ministry is intergenerational, and he did three profound but simple things to cure Hezekitis!

**Care:** First, he cared for them. You will remember that when the widow of Zarephath's son died, it was Elijah who carried the boy's body upstairs, stretched himself over him three times, and cried out to God to bring him to life. Intergenerational ministry follows a simple formula: proximity + prayer = revival. When the older generation builds close relationships with the younger generation (proximity) and cries out earnestly for their spiritual revival (prayer), supernatural things happen! In Ezekiel 37 it was only after Ezekiel prayed for the Spirit to revive the dry bones that the army of God came to life (verse 10). I believe this prophesy applies specifically to our army of youth, but that's another article. Caring for this generation is about praying earnestly for

**Just before the return of Christ, God will raise up a generation that will cure His church of Hezekitis.**

their spiritual revival as we pursue close relationships with them.

**Challenge:** Second, Elijah challenged them. On Mount Carmel he did not preach smooth and comfortable messages. Instead he shook the younger generation up by challenging them to get off the fence and follow the Lord wholeheartedly. "If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" he declared (1 Kings 18:21, NLT).

Yes, the younger generation needs to know that Jesus loves them and that His grace covers their sins and that justification is theirs by faith alone and not by works; *but* where are the challenging messages today? Where are the messages calling young people to live holy lives for God, keep His Sabbath, live pure, grow in grace, and be Spirit-filled and sanctified? Where is the challenge to live counterculturally for Jesus even when it's dangerous? Where are the messages calling for health reform, mission service, tithing responsibility, and respect for religious and political authority? Moreover, where are the warning messages that the end is near and that faith, as well as repentance, is required of those who wish to be saved?

**Call:** Third, Elijah called young people. In the eyes of most, Elijah was an example of ministry success. He was well loved and respected by the church, but apparently, in the eyes of God, his ministry was incomplete. In 1 Kings 19:16 God commands him to pass on leadership to the younger generation! Ellen White writes: "As Elijah, divinely directed in seeking a successor, passed the field in which Elisha was plowing, he cast upon the young man's shoulders the mantle of consecration."[3]

While it may appear from the biblical account that Elijah was halfheartedly following God's command by tossing the mantle and continuing to walk by, Elisha understood the symbolism of the act. He was being called by God for service! He requested to go and say goodbye to his family. Elijah responded, "Go on back, but think about what I have done to you" (1 Kings 19:20, NLT). He was testing Elisha's faith response. Would working for God be worth the sacrifice to him? Elisha accepted the call without hesitation. Jesus took the young people on His ministry team through a process that took three years. He began with observation (watch Me do it), then participation (help Me do it), and finally activation (you do it). Elijah did the same thing over several years. Ellen White writes: "Ministry comprehends far more than preaching the word. It means training young men as Elijah trained Elisha, taking them from their ordinary duties, and giving them responsibilities to bear in God's work—small responsibilities at first, and larger ones as they gain strength and experience."[4] We would be wise to do the same.

Elijah grew to be an amazing mentor to Elisha. Some might even argue that he was so good at it that his young successor exceeded him! The greatest compliment to the older generation is the younger generation that they have cared for, challenged, and called into ministry becoming even wiser than they!

What matters most in these last days is that we pour into the younger generation and resist the urge to care only for ourselves and our generation. Now is the time for the Elijah leaders to step up and stand out on behalf of the younger generation. It's time to intentionally care, challenge, and call them! As mentioned above, Hezekiah was a godly king, and no doubt he cared deeply for his son Manasseh, but life has a way of forcing priorities. If we are not careful, it is highly likely that our priority will be for ourselves and will naturally lead to neglecting the needs of the younger generation. But Jesus will help us; He prioritized children, and He can put this same desire within each of us.

Why not take some time in the next few days or weeks to come up with an intentional plan to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" in your area of influence?

[1] 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.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 227.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 219, 220.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 222.

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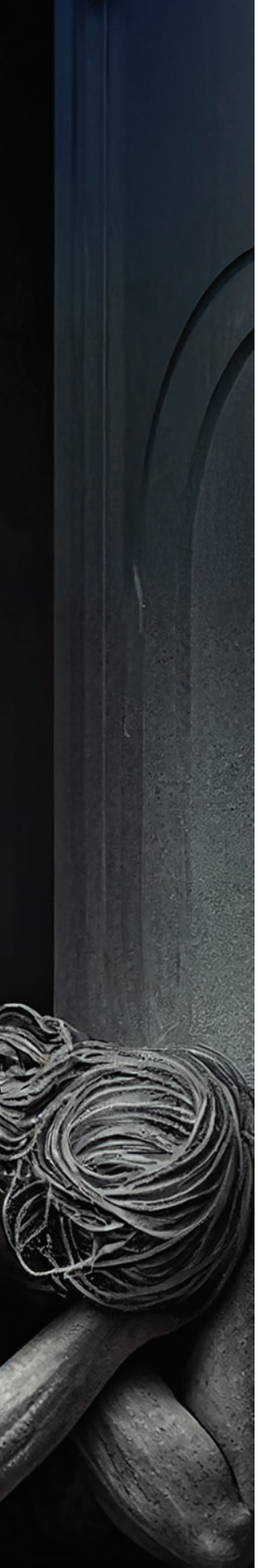
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# HOW HIGH WAS THE PRICE?

*God paid the greatest price of all.*

**BY LEONARD BRAND**





From the time of Adam and Eve the human race has paid a high price for disobedience. To understand just how high the price has been, we have to also think about how high a price God has paid. Long ago the universe was peaceful, and then ego entered the scene. Lucifer was apparently the most capable and most honored of the angels. He knew more about God than all the others, so how could he have thought that he could become greater than God—that he could "be like the Most High"?

God was maker and ruler of the universe, but it seems evident that He did not throw His weight around. Even though Lucifer became self-centered and wanted to be greater than God, I wonder how he could actually think he could accomplish that. There was no excuse for Lucifer's rebellion, but I suggest there was one part of God's leadership that to some extent allowed that possibility.

## A UNIVERSE RULED BY LOVE, NOT POWER

That may sound like heresy, but actually it perhaps describes the most wonderful part of the character of God; the part that makes the universe such an awesome place to live. Lucifer and all the other created beings were made by God, through His amazing power and knowledge, but God was not willing for the universe to be governed by power. He could have made His power obvious, maybe even in gentle ways, making Lucifer reluctantly realize that he could not rise above his Maker. But our God was unwilling to have His universe ruled by anything other than love, even if this made Him misunderstood, making the cost for Him very high. Our first parents were warned to avoid the tempter, because they would learn about good and evil. Was God really trying to keep something from them? Well, yes, He was. He did not wish them to know and experience what evil was. They were learning how good God was and how good their created home was, and what endless opportunities there were for them to experience the wonder of their God-given life. That is all they needed to know. The only thing they didn't know was evil, and it would not be beneficial for them to find out what evil was and how it would hurt them. Our loving God did not want them to experience evil, to have their first family torn apart by murder.

I will suggest one other idea that might sound heretical, but it really isn't. I suggest that before Lucifer's fall all the created beings in the universe were naive, and innocent. Was that a bad thing? If you are a parent with young children, do you want them to grow up innocent, not experiencing evil? Since we live in an evil world, with pain all around us, our children will not be innocent in the way people before sin could be innocent. Before the entrance of Lucifer's pride and self-love the universe was happy and peaceful. The people were not disadvantaged by their innocence and naivete in regard to

IMAGE: LIGHTSTOCK / DEVON

**Both Satan's angels and the human race have paid a high price for our knowledge of evil.**

evil. They did not have to make decisions of whether to follow evil ways, because God's obvious love for them left no reason they should question how they should live. Their happiness was assured, and that put them in the most beneficial position that was possible.

### THE EXPERIENCE OF EVIL

Then it happened—Lucifer questioned God and learned something he would not have otherwise experienced. He experienced the evil of being self-centered, and it didn't make him a better person. Lucifer's prideful choices also brought the other inhabitants of the universe to the need to decide what choice to make regarding Satan's claims, and they were not prepared for the emergency. Now that evil was in the air, it would not work for God just to tell them how bad evil would be; they would understand it only if they experienced it. The price would be very high, but the presence of evil left no other choice. We lost our innocence, and the price for the human race has been growing through the centuries. We invent more effective weapons to destroy each other in wars, and more clever deceptions. As doubt of the existence of a Creator God grows, life seems to lose its meaning. We find more effective drugs to deaden the pain of our misery, even if it kills us.

We long for our children to live happy lives and not to experience the evil that surrounds us, but as children they are naive and innocent. We long for them to stay that way. Are we keeping something from them? Yes, we hope to keep them from experiencing evil, just as God wished for His created family not to experience evil. I have friends whose child left a happy home because they thought they were missing something. They came back later, sadder but wiser. They learned something they didn't know before, but the price was very high. Perhaps the parents could have exerted their power and prevented their child's wrong choice. But sometimes love has to recognize that because of the evil around us, our children may have hard lessons to learn.

### THE PRICE GOD HAS PAID

Both Satan's angels and the human race have paid a high price for our knowledge of evil. The only beneficial result is that we are no longer naive and innocent. We are told that the result will be that rebellion will not arise a second time. The universe as a whole lost its innocence because of our choices. We now all know what evil is, but that came at a very high price.

Think beyond what we have paid, and think of the price that God has paid. He knows that the universe will be a happy and secure place only if it is governed fully by love, never by power. When this experiment with evil is over, we will finally have learned that lesson. We will have lost innocence and gained wisdom, but this came at a very, very high price. God knew how much we would pay, but He also knew that love as the ruling principle of the universe could not be sacrificed. Instead, He would rule only by love, and to save the universe He would pay the greatest price of all.

God sent His Son to spend 33 painfully difficult years on earth, and He was finally murdered in the most painful, humiliating way possible. Can you imagine? God, with the power to create untold billions of stars and planets and the power to eliminate all of us if He chose to, subjected Himself to that kind of treatment, to maintain His policy of governing only by love. That is more than we can fathom, if we think about it. And that is only the beginning. Most parents love their children deeply and suffer for them if they lose their way. How many millions of His loved children has God lost? Certainly His pain is beyond what we can imagine. We chose to wander away, and the price for us has been high, and the price for God has been very, very high. The value of the reward for all who accept His sacrifice will also be very, very high.

When this long episode with evil is finally over and each person accepts the result they have chosen, the painful memories will fade away, and God's unfathomable wisdom and love will be eternally and unquestionably clear.

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# WHERE SCIENCE CAN'T GO

*Has God told us the truth about the age of the earth?*

Can we trust God and His Word when it comes to information in the Bible about the age of the earth, or the duration of the week of creation? Or is this just information for a prescientific phase of humanity? Are these questions too hot of a potato to burn our fingers on? I think not.

## LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

I have always found it curious that we, as a church, invite natural scientists for lectures on the age of the earth and the duration of the creation process. Sometimes they're biologists, sometimes physicists. With all due respect to scientists, though, a scientist is limited to describing what already exists in nature, not its origins. Scientists are taught to think within the frame of reference of nature and to argue according to the laws of nature—the laws whose effect and validity God set in motion in the first place with creation. This means that scientists generally come to the right conclusions when it comes to describing nature itself, but not when it comes to describing the origin of nature.

Further, by definition, natural science does not recognize "God" and "divine omnipotence" as factors. God is larger than nature and therefore outside the frame of reference of the natural sciences. To explain things that it cannot explain with its methods, science has developed (godless) theories and hypotheses in attempts to explain the inexplicable. Very long periods of time and the "chance" factor are often used for this purpose, as in the theory of evolution. For many nowadays this theory has become scientific truth. Natural scientists, however, in their capacity as natural scientists, cannot, because of three constraints, generally make correct statements about the age of the earth or the duration of the week of creation. First, no natural scientist personally witnessed creation. Second, the process

of creation cannot be repeated under scientific conditions. And third, according to the biblical description, creation is a supernatural event that brings about the existence of nature as we know it.

The perspective needed in a discussion about origins is more philosophical than (natural) scientific. We need familiarity with the theory of science combined with a theological and philosophically educated outlook mingled with faith to look at the system from the outside. It needs to be clear in our minds what the natural sciences can and cannot do. In other words, we need to define the frame of reference of the natural sciences.

## A LITERAL DAY

Biblical chronology places creation week around 6,000 years ago, but according to natural science the earth is around 4.5 billion years old. According to the biblical account, the creation week took place in six literal days. Science says it took millions or even billions of years. How do we deal with these contradictions? Are they even relevant? Can't we just ignore this hot potato? It's not that simple.

Questions about the age of the earth touch the credibility of God and the Bible. If the Bible does not tell us the truth on this point, where else is it fibbing? And is it then the Word of God at all? What about the promises and prophecies of the Bible, which also cannot be verified outside of the testimony of Scripture—the return of Christ, the resurrection, and eternal life, for example? Even the promise of forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ cannot be verified and must be believed. If the Bible is not true from its very first narrative, can we rely on the rest being true?

In the creation account God defines days as being literal, consisting of day and night ("evening and morning" in Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). This is equivalent to what we today define as a 24-hour period.



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**The uniqueness of the divine act of creation overrides our experience and knowledge.**

When the Ten Commandments were codified at Sinai, the Sabbath commandment affirmed that the individual days of creation were literal days—made of 24 hours. The Sabbath commandment states: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11). This is precisely the basis for us also resting on this one day. To assume that God meant something other than a literal day would be abstruse. Of course, God must have been referring to such days as were known at the time of the Israelites wandering in the desert. The fact that God wrote the justification for the Sabbath commandment with His own finger* limits the scope for interpretation.

One question that arises in this context is: Does God need more time for complex tasks? If so, He would not be omnipotent. And if we don't trust God to create a human being, an animal, or a tree in a fraction of a second, how could He suddenly raise millions of people on resurrection day? How could He reconstruct them from millions of tiny components in a fraction of a second?

And what about the transformation of the believers still alive at the Second Coming? Paul writes: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). The change will not happen over a period of 1,000 years, but "in the twinkling of an eye."

There are some who say, regarding the age of the earth: "We don't know how much time passed between creation and the fall of man. Maybe it was a few thousand years." But that cannot be.

There is no need to speculate on the age of Adam at the generation of Seth, because the Bible tells us plainly: "And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth" (Gen. 5:3). To expel any doubt about Adam's full life span, from his creation, the Bible tells us, "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died (verse 5). Adam, therefore, could not have been around for thousands of years before sinning (or before fathering Seth), bringing us back to a literal creation week around 6,000 years ago.

## FOG BANKS

Believers face two "fog banks" when attempting to determine the age of the earth by investigating geological phenomena that necessarily obstruct our view. These so-called fog banks are events that falsify our otherwise correct findings or scientific research results. They are the supernatural act of creation and the global flood.

Allow me to use a working hypothesis to illustrate the uniqueness of creation. Let's assume that there is a time machine. We know it doesn't exist, except in fictional movies or novels, but the concept may be helpful as a working hypothesis.

So we get into the time machine and beam ourselves back to the first Sabbath in history. We meet God and Adam in the Garden of Eden. Now, God might ask us: "How old do you think Adam is?" We

may look at Adam and estimate him to be perhaps 20 or 30 years old, because according to our experience and our scientific knowledge, a fully grown young man is about that age.

But God would then say: "Wrong! He's less than a day old. I created him yesterday afternoon." This would throw us completely off course. According to our experience and scientific knowledge (and both would be correct after the completion of creation), a human being who is one day old would be an infant.

The uniqueness of the divine act of creation overrides our experience and knowledge. According to the Bible, God created finished creatures. He did not set an evolutionary process in motion. The chicken or the egg causality dilemma is easy to answer for a person who believes in the Bible. Of course the chicken came first. Why? Because the Bible teaches that God created finished creatures; He did not initiate an evolutionary process.

Here is the second case of my working hypothesis: Suppose we were to set our time machine to the fourth day of the creation week. There are already trees. God created them on the third day. We are standing in front of a stately oak tree. Again, God would ask us: "What do you think? How old is this tree?"

Again, we would use our experience and scientific knowledge as a basis and perhaps estimate the tree to be 100 years old. And again, God would say: "Wrong. I created it yesterday. It's only one day old." But the tree would have all the characteristics of a tree that is about 100 years old. It might even have annual rings. Because these are probably not only an aid to determining the age of trees, but also an element of statics in the structure of the trunk.

Our experience and scientific knowledge reach their limits when it comes to the divine act of creation. Our determination of the age of created things is based on laws that were initiated at creation, the laws of nature. But our otherwise correct methods are no good when it comes to determining or describing the act of creation itself.

So from our thought experiment we deduce that God created a full-grown man and a full-grown tree. God created finished things that would therefore appear older than we would estimate them to be based on the natural processes of generation and ageing. This makes it clear why science cannot make conclusive statements about when the earth was created. Science does not know and does not consider the "divine omnipotence" factor (this is different for a believing scientist). So the pure logic of science can lead to errors when it comes to the subject of "creation."

Let's briefly address the second "fog bank": the flood. Even if the number of scientists who see evidence of several large regional floods is increasing, conventional science generally does not speak of a worldwide flood as described in the Bible. The fossil record, however, provides important evidence for the occurrence of large-scale catastrophic mass mortality in the past.

Moreover, since the volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helens in Washington State in 1980, we have known that sediment deposits in layers can be formed not only by very long periods of time but also by volcanic eruptions and associated flooding. These eruptions caused huge flows of lava and mud, creating layers within a few days that conventional science explains in a similar way in other places by processes lasting millions of years. If the geological effects of volcanic eruptions and mega floods are not considered, then we may reach incorrect age-of-earth determinations.

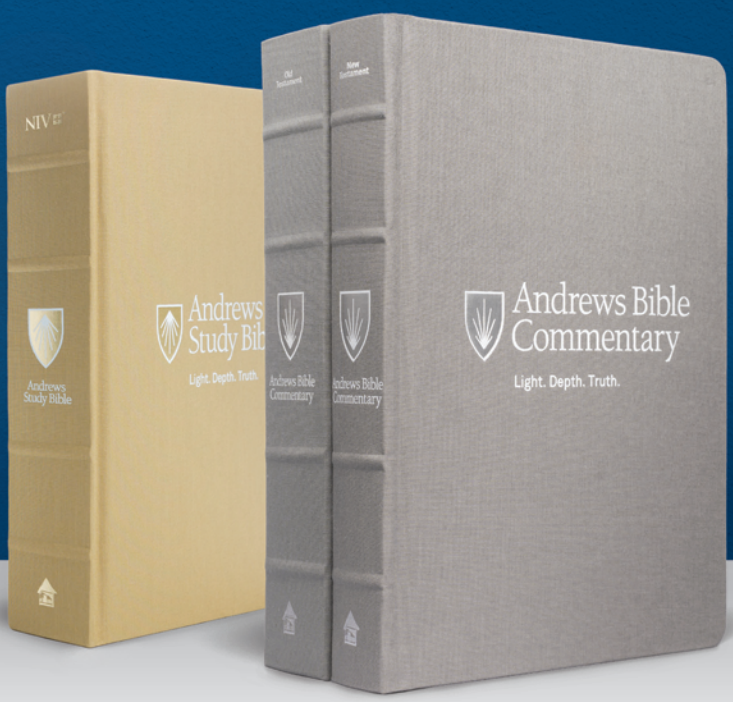
To believe in a recent (6,000 years ago) creation in six literal days, as reported in the Bible, you don't have to be uneducated. Likewise, natural science is not inherently evil or anti-God; only that it does not account for an omnipotent God who inspired the Bible, which contains an authoritative account of origins. This omission means natural science comes to necessarily wrong conclusions on some topics, including, among other things, the age of the earth and the duration of the creation process. We can trust that God has told us the truth in His Word: "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Including the truth about the age of the earth and the duration of the creation week.

*Ellen White saw, in vision, the Ten Commandments, written with God's own finger, in the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies in heaven. "The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six," she writes. "But the fourth, the Sabbath commandment, shone above them all; for the Sabbath was set apart to be kept in honor of God's holy name. The holy Sabbath looked glorious—a halo of glory was all around it" (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945], pp. 32, 33).

**Gerhard Padderatz** is an author, historian, and theologian retired from an international career in Adventist education.

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# THE GREATEST LESSON FROM THE 2024 ELECTION?

*And we thought it was about them.*

THE PIONEERING PASTOR
SHANE ANDERSON



What's the greatest lesson from the 2024 U.S. presidential election? While numerous candidates (forgive the pun) abound, one strong possibility is this: *Too many of us don't know how to disagree agreeably.*

To be fair, many Christians remained kind to their "enemies" throughout the election season. But many others did not. Biting sarcasm on many a Christian's social media platform too often flourished, with disagreeing agreeably seemingly the last thing on their minds.

To be clear, I am not immune to the temptation to lampoon people I disagree with. But through the years (and after having to apologize too many times for my verbal intemperance), I have learned at least three things that have helped rein in my tongue, whether dealing with politicians or anyone I disagree with:

1. *The desire to cut down another person says much more about me than them.* The urge to diminish others often springs from fear: fear of appearing to be in the wrong, fear of others gaining power over us (political or relational), etc. Whatever the case, when the temptation to insult someone arises, I now ask myself: What am I afraid of? How come? What need am I not letting Christ fill? Jesus has promised that His "perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18, NIV), and stopping, praying, and asking for that gift has stopped many a diatribe from my lips or pen in its tracks.

2. *It is possible to profoundly disagree with someone without insulting them.* Disagreeing agreeably does not mean we never disagree! But disagreeing in Christ-honoring ways is an acquired skill. One way to get it is to find an empty/private space and try this: 1. Picture someone with whom you have profound disagreements. 2. Tell them, out loud, as though they were present, what you really think of them and their ideas. 3. Tell them again, but this time while visualizing Jesus at their side, pointing to you as a stellar example of His love for them. I have found at times that my language of disagreement has been transformed by such an exercise.

3. *Love for those we disagree with can be one of the most difficult virtues for a Christian to acquire—and one of the most freeing.* When the crucified Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, KJV), it was a divine thunderclap, an astonishing counterpoint to the grinding hate Satan perpetuates to this day. The same love Christ had for His enemies is His gift to us—and an immensely freeing one. Why? Because in light of eternity, the only true weapon an enemy can have is fear. And as already mentioned, Christ's perfect love casts that fear out. Those who love most are then, by definition, the most free—free to love their enemies . . . and even those who merely disagree with them.

I HAVE LEARNED AT LEAST THREE THINGS THAT HAVE HELPED REIN IN MY TONGUE, WHETHER DEALING WITH POLITICIANS OR ANYONE I DISAGREE WITH.

The 2024 election was indeed a great learning experience. May we prove to be excellent students! And may those we disagree with be abundantly blessed by the wisdom we've gained.

**Shane Anderson** is the lead pastor of Pioneer Memorial church on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

# REST

*Developing a rest ethic to accompany our work ethic*

**JANINE LIM**





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Adventism, coming out of a Puritan and Methodist background, has a strong work ethic (see Prov. 6:6-8; Eccl. 9:10; Col. 3:17). We work hard, diligently. Our work ethic includes showing up on time, not doing personal business during work, giving our best to the Master.

Even on Sabbath we are often busy with ministry. We may even "humble brag" to each other about how busy we are and how hard we are working.

Our work ethic may even be a witnessing opportunity. When I worked in the public school system, a colleague commented on my productivity. When I shared the Adventist health message and lifestyle, the response was "Stop doing that! You're making the rest of us look bad!" Dare to be a Daniel, right?

Even so, from time to time in my life God has provided reflection opportunities for me to consider and reset the rhythms of my life. Recently after an initial bout of part flu and part COVID-19, I found myself fighting the brain fog that can come with or after flu symptoms. I experienced the fatigue and depression that comes with not recognizing your brain and its diminished capacity.

This experience provided me with an opportunity for significant reflection, including considering what practices may have contributed to my lowered immune system. And in my contemplation I came to the conclusion that I need a rest ethic to complement my work ethic. A set of rest practices to counterbalance my drivenness. A mindset of rest that grows my dependence on God. I pray that the reflections I share here may be helpful as we learn together to rest in God.

## REST AS A MINDSET

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Have you ever wondered, Where is the easy yoke? Have you also wondered where the "rest for your soul" is? Can we experience it this side of heaven?

When I started working at Andrews University in 2011, I reread Ellen White's book *Education* as preparation to return to Adventist education, and found a quote I have returned to again and again during the past decade.

"To every man" is given "his work" (Mark 13:34, KJV), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work that will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God. Thus our business or calling is a part of God's great plan, and, so long as it is conducted in accordance with His will, *He Himself is responsible for the results.* "We are labourers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9, KJV), and "our part is faithful compliance with His directions. Thus there is no place for anxious care. Diligence, fidelity, caretaking, thrift, and discretion are called for. Every faculty is to be exercised to its highest capacity. But the dependence will be, not on the successful outcome of our efforts, but on the promise of God."[1]

The foundation of my rest ethic is a realization that God takes responsibility for the results of my work. Incredible! And this promise is not just for church workers. Each of us is given our work, which provides an opportunity to bless others and honor God.

Think of Joseph in slavery, working for Potiphar, and the Lord blessing his work (Gen. 39:2). A rest mindset begins with letting go of the urge to control the outcome and cooperating with God, laboring side by side with Him.

As Pastor Taurus Montgomery shared in his farewell sermon to Pioneer Memorial church on December 23, 2023: "Don't worry about the why or the how, just obey what God wants you to do." Rest begins with a mindset of trusting and obeying.

## MICROBREAKS

*"The king said to me, 'What is it you want?' Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king" (Neh. 2:4, NIV).*

Building rest into my workday means taking microbreaks. A recent Fast Company article suggested several strategies successful people use to manage work intensity, including:

- Instead of giving 100 percent, work at an 85 percent intensity.
- After a presentation or work session, take 60 seconds to reflect.
- Use the 555 model: work for 55 minutes and take five minutes of rest.
- Take eight breaks per day.[2]

In 2022 a company in Japan decided to give nonsmokers an extra six days of vacation because they don't take smoke breaks.[3] The business world recognizes the productivity impact of taking small breaks.

As believers, we have even more compelling reasons to take microbreaks, to take time to listen to the Holy Spirit, to talk to God about our work. Nehemiah provided an example for us:

"In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance, as did Nehemiah when he made his request before King Artaxerxes. A closet of communion may be found wherever we are. We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul. . . . We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun."[4]

And yes, this applies to our secular work as well. "Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice."[5] Nothing! Yes, "I need Thee every hour." Day by day, moment by moment, we can lift our hearts to God to ask for help in our work. Those of us who are knowledge workers can put space between tasks and conversations to take a few moments to check in with our heavenly Father. Those of us who are engaged in physical labor can regularly take time to talk to God. Instead of turning to our phones or email when we have a free moment or are having trouble concentrating, we can lift our hearts to heaven.

## IN TIMES OF OVERLOAD

*"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38).*

Sometimes, no matter how we try to trust in God, manage our work, and take microbreaks, our work still becomes overwhelming. We feel buried. It seems impossible to catch up. What then?

Notice that Jesus doesn't tell us to do more when we see more work to do. He says to pray for more laborers.[6] Remembering that the results of our work depend on God, we can tell Him about how overwhelmed we are. Crazy busy times are the most important times to slow down. To wait and talk to God more instead of doing the first solution that pops into our minds. To bring the pile of work to God for wisdom and advice.

When I first started working at Andrews University, my mom, a professor, taught me a beautiful strategy. I use it most often in very busy times. I open up my email or task list, and ask God which item I should do first. And then I just work systematically through the situations that He brings to my mind. Then I can rest confidently that He is working on the items that I didn't get to yet. We can claim this verse as a promise: "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21).

**SILENCE**

*"Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).*

Another essential aspect to rest is ensuring we have time for silence in our lives. Think about it. Do you fill every waking moment with audio and visual input? Radio. TV. Scrolling on phones. Games on phones. Endlessly checking news, email, social media. When do we have time to listen to the Holy Spirit? When do we have space in our lives to hear God's nudging and conviction?



PHOTO: MIKHAIL BLAVATSKIY / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES




In one of my favorite *Desire of Ages* chapters Ellen White writes, "When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God."[7]

Take stock of your weekly routine. Yes, daily devotional time is one way to have this quiet time. Where else can you find silent time in your week? Driving to work. Friday evening. Sabbath afternoon. While walking. Have a talk with God about your routine. He will give you ideas to find silent time if you ask Him.

## SLEEP

*"He gives His beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2).*

Do you wake up at 2:00 a.m. with a work problem on your mind? Do you have trouble going back to sleep? So do I. Lately I've been reading how science is beginning to scratch the surface of all the many blessings God packed into sleep.[8] Health advocates encourage us to spend an extra hour in bed to actually achieve our intended sleep goal.[9]

But what if we wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep? Sometimes we are awake because something is running through our minds over and over. It may be a storm of our own causing or not. But we can turn to Jesus to save us from the trials that keep us awake at night.

"However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, 'Lord, save us,' will find deliverance. His grace, that reconciles the soul to God, quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest."[10]

We can also claim sleep promises when we wake up in the night:

"When you lie down, you will not be afraid. . . . You will lie down and your sleep will be sweet" (Prov. 3:24).

"I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me" (Ps. 3:5).

When I wake in the night, I claim these promises. I take a few deep slow breaths. I pray for things I remember in work, family, and church until "He gives His beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2). We can rest in Jesus, even when we are awake in the night.

## A WORD ABOUT EXERCISE

*"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5, KJV).*

In our thinking about rest and the rhythms of our lives, exercise is an important consideration. Ellen White encourages those who are brain workers to get outdoor exercise; and those who are involved in physical labor to exercise the mind.[11] Our restoration activities should complement our work activities.

Extending this principle to the rhythms of life, we can pay attention to how we are doing each day. If we are experiencing high stress, perhaps high-intensity exercise such as heavy lifting or running isn't the best option. Choosing to take a rest day, a nature day, or a recovery day of stretching or light walking may be best. This is a new concept I'm attempting to implement in my life. Instead of pushing myself for a hard workout that I had planned, I make adjustments and get outside to walk and talk with God about my situation.

## RHYTHMS OF LIFE

"*Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31).*

Most of our work situations have natural rhythms, ebbs and flows. Times that are super busy; times that are quieter. It's essential not to fill up the quiet times with more busyness. God calls us to think and reflect, to listen to His leading

and prompting in a review of our work. Winter is a time to sleep longer; summer a time to spend more time outside. We can embrace these rhythms to build rest into our years.

Vacations are an excellent time to reconnect with God. I encourage you not to fill every minute of your vacation with activities. Jesus calls us to rest: "Christ is full of tenderness and compassion for all in His service. He would show His disciples that God does not require sacrifice, but mercy. They had been putting their whole souls into labor for the people, and this was exhausting their physical and mental strength. It was their duty to rest."[12]

This quote is from the "Come Rest Awhile" chapter in *The Desire of Ages*, which provides commentary on Mark 6, where Jesus calls the disciples away for reflection and grief recovery after the death of John. I try to read this chapter each time I take a vacation or a long weekend break. Another great vacation chapter in *The Desire of Ages* is "'Peace, Be Still.'" Take along some reading that calls your heart to reconnect with God.

### WHEN SICK

*"The Lord sustains them on their sickbed" (Ps. 41:3, NIV).*

It seems obvious that we should rest when we are sick. But sometimes we still fret over things undone or what the future may hold. At these difficult times this line from *The Ministry of Healing* calls us to rest in Jesus: "Often your mind may be clouded because of pain. Then do not try to think. You know that Jesus loves you. He understands your weakness. You may do His will by simply resting in His arms."[13]

### SABBATH

*"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (Heb. 4:9, 10).*

Of course, as Adventists, when we think about resting, we insist that we do rest on the Sabbath. In this article I hope you've found many ways to bring a Sabbath rest into the rest of your week. Let us conclude with a check-in on our Sabbathkeeping. Not legalistically. But are your Sabbath habits resulting in a sense of rest and peace each week?

When I worked in the public school system, I started two habits I've kept now that I work at Andrews University. I used to get off work so close to Sabbath in the winter that I made a habit of cleaning my house for Sabbath on Thursday evening. It resulted in a lovely Sabbath feeling coming on Friday afternoon. Even while I was working on Friday afternoon, every chance I could I would listen to my favorite Sabbath music to start "getting in the Sabbath mood." So much so that one of my colleagues noticed the difference in me on Friday afternoons.

Is there space in your Sabbathkeeping to spend time with God? I like to have some time lying on the couch with my cats and letting the Holy Spirit convict me about my week. It requires fighting the urge to scroll through social media or even putting the phone away! In talking with my Adventist Christian counselor regarding my long COVID depression, she reminded me to focus on the goodness of God. To spend time thinking about His majesty and power. Do your Sabbath habits include time to bask in His presence and goodness?

### RESTING

I pray that this testimony is an invitation to you to examine your rest and work ethics. God keeps teaching me these ideas, and I have to keep relearning them. May these ideas not be a guilt trip, but instead a compelling invitation. An invitation to rest in God's sustaining grace.[14]

[1] Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 138.

[2] Stephanie Vozza, "How the 85% Rule Can Help You Succeed at Work," *Fast Company*, Oct. 16, 2023, https://www.fastcompany.com/90964282/how-the-85-rule-can-help-you-succeed-at-work.

[3] Vanya Gautam, "This Japanese Company Gives Non-Smoking Employees Extra 6 Days Off Every Year," *India Times*, Mar. 11, 2022, https://www.indiatimes.com/ worth/news/ japan-company-piala-gives-extra-six-days-off-to-non-smoking-employees-564208.html.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Prayer* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2022), p. 10.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[6] See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 361.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 363.

[8] See Matthew Walker, *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams* (New York: Scribner, 2017).

[9] See Kelly Starrett, *Built to Move: The Ten Essential Habits to Help You Move Freely and Live Fully* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2023).

[10] E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

[11] See Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), vol. 2, pp. 399, 400; Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 130, 131.

[12] E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 360.

[13] E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251.

[14] See Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1991), p. 357.

**Janine Lim** is building a rest/work ethic while serving the Global Campus at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

PHOTO: AKARAWUT LOHACHAROENVANICH / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



# THE MIRACLE

*God protected us in a near-fatal plane crash.*

**BARBARA SUE AND WILLIAM FISHER**

It was the Friday after Thanksgiving in 2014, and we were preparing to fly from our home in Richmond, Indiana, to Berrien Springs, Michigan. We were headed to visit my mother, Eleanor, and my brother Otto and his wife, Georgia, who all lived in Berrien Springs as neighbors. Flying made for easy holiday visiting when the whole family was together. We carried with us a big dish of cranberry Jello salad and an equally large dish of green bean casserole to contribute to the meal.

In preparation for the flight, my husband, Bill, took the right front seat of the 1959 Piper Comanche PA-24-250. I sat behind him. Bryce, our son, had the left front position, which is the "pilot-in-command" seat. Behind him was his friend, Mirtha. We were all excited to spend the day with family who had convened in Berrien Springs for Thanksgiving.

The preflight check, packing the plane, and securing the food completed, we gathered for prayer. Right there, in front of the hangar, all four of us assembled with our arms around each other and thanked God for the ability to fly and for the airplane to fly in. Most important, we asked for God's protection; for angels to fly with us and bring us home safely.



PHOTO: SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE / FRED DODD



William and Barbara Fisher

**IN THE AIR**

The plane started up, and everyone buckled in, or so we thought. Mirtha had to retrieve her seat belt from behind and under her seat. Distracted by the exertion of trying to help Mirtha with her seat belt, I failed to secure my own.

I have since discovered this quote in *Early Writings*: "Could our eyes be opened, we should see forms of evil angels around us, trying to invent some new way to annoy and destroy us. And we should also see angels of God guarding us from their power; for God's watchful eye is ever over Israel for good, and He will protect and save His people, if they put their trust in Him. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. Said the angel, 'Remember, thou art on the enchanted ground.' I saw that we must watch and have on the whole armor and take the shield of faith, and then we shall be able to stand, and all the fiery darts of the wicked cannot harm us."[1]

Off we went from the Richmond, Indiana, airport, leveling off smoothly at 7,000 feet and looking forward to being home for the holidays. About a half hour into the flight we felt a slight shudder in the engine, but it quickly smoothed out. Since the pilots did not seem concerned, we in the back relaxed. After about an hour and 15 minutes of flying, we saw the South Bend, Indiana, airport. Only 25 miles to the Berrien Springs airport remained.

Flying over the dam in Berrien Springs, we watched the St. Joseph River's course toward Lake Michigan. Many orchards came into view. There was Andrews University. I had started first grade in Berrien Springs and went on to Andrews Academy, then to the first year of the university. I met Bill during the first year of college. We were married in the Pioneer Memorial church in 1965. My thoughts were disrupted as the runway came into view.

Bill had told us, five miles from the Berrien Springs airport, that there would be a delay. There was a solid blanket of a snow squall right over the runway. We could not even see the giant markers that indicated the runway direction. He said we would go into a holding pattern off to the clear side of the airport and assured us that the prevailing winds would blow the snow shower away from the airport so we could safely land.

I heard Bryce speaking our location and heading into the radio. Then Bill and Bryce started discussing other options: "Should we try to land at the Dowagiac airport?" "Does the Niles airport have clear runways?" "Is the Benton Harbor airport close enough for a successful landing?" After 20 minutes Bryce announced that the airport was clear to land! We turned toward the airport and lined up on a two-mile final stretch at 1,000 feet altitude. Then the engine quit running, and all was deafening *silence*.

We were in God's hands.

We turned toward the airport and lined up on a two-mile final stretch at 1,000 feet altitude. Then the engine quit running, and all was deafening *silence*.

**IN GOD'S HANDS**

Before even starting the engine, we had prayed for divine protection. This was not the time to lose our faith. "Mayday, Mayday," Bill calmly announced over the radio as the plane got lower and slower. Then we heard and felt the trees scraping the bottom of the plane. Mirtha and I grabbed each other's hands and started to pray in earnest. Only the prayer was simply "Help us, Jesus! Help us, Jesus!" And Jesus did help us! All four of us made it out alive. God's hand was securely around each of us.

None of us has any actual memory of the crash through the trees, or the sudden jerk-stop on the ground, or the crunch of bones as we came to an abrupt stop, upside down. All I remember is the snow. There was none in Indiana, but here the snow was deep and cold.

My next memory is of Bill, who had already found a way out of the front seat of the crashed plane, and was lifting me away from the airplane. He wanted to get me farther away so that if the plane shifted or rolled completely to the ground, further injuries would not occur. When I came to, I realized that although I was alive, everything hurt.

Mirtha remembers being upside down, restrained by her seat belt until Bill came to release her. Since her feet were also stuck under the seat in front of her, he had to pull her loose and lift her out. He helped her walk to the back porch of the house 20 feet away before she became aware of the excruciating pain in her ankle. Although she tried, it was too painful to take her boot off. Later, at the hospital, she was told that the boot was actually putting pressure on the ankle and foot, decreasing the bleeding and keeping the bones from moving out of place. Still, she had two large blood blisters that took a long time to heal.

From the porch where she sat, Mirtha could see Bill trying to access Bryce's vital signs. Bryce was still upside down and apparently bleeding from the head or face. It looked like a lot of blood. Just as we were on the verge of severe panic, it came to light that all that "blood" we had seen on Bryce was mostly cranberry Jello. He was not hurt as badly as we had feared! God is good!

Bryce was alert and talking coherently to us as we waited for the rescue squad, who, when they arrived, swiftly assessed the situation and had Bryce quickly out of the wreckage. His injuries were limited to his face and teeth. His face had rammed into the yoke (steering wheel) and the control panel, leaving one tooth missing. Where had it gone? A facial X-ray in the ER showed the tooth was jammed right up into the sinus, halfway up his face. Once the oral surgeon had retrieved the tooth and cleaned out the sinuses, it took a year of letting the bones of the mouth heal before they could use a bridge to set the new teeth in position.



THE FISHER FAMILY



**IN THE HOSPITAL**

It is a miracle that Bill had managed to release his own seat belt, carry me a safe distance away, help Mirtha, and check on Bryce, all while he had two fractures of the cervical spine, three of the lumbar spine, and two broken ribs. Of course, he didn't know about these injuries at the time, but though he said he was not in pain, he still got a ride in the ambulance to the St. Joseph emergency room, as did the rest of us. The X-rays later revealed the damage.

Strangely enough, I remember nothing about the ambulance ride to the St. Joseph Lakeland Hospital emergency room. The only thing I heard one of the nurses say was "We have to get her warmed up. She has been lying in the snow." I also did not realize that the family was gathering in the emergency room, so that by the time I was receiving treatment, they were all already there.

My X-rays revealed multiple fractures of the pelvis and right upper arm and shoulder. That should have clued me in to the surgeries, healing, and rehab that I was in for the next year; actually, for the rest of my life. Both Bill and I were transferred to Kalamazoo Trauma Center for pain control and possible surgery. We had adjacent rooms where we received consultations with medical personnel and visits from friends and family, as well as pastors and elders from churches we had been members of. Thankfully, we never contracted an infection as we went from one surgery to another.

Roughly a week after my operations, my care was transferred to Reid Hospital in Richmond, Indiana, where I stayed for a month of physical therapy. It was only a 10-minute drive from our home to the hospital, and Bill came to see me every day. Nearly a week into my stay at Reid Hospital Bill did not come to take me back to my room after my physical therapy, as he had done during the week prior. The head nurse came to tell me what had happened.

As Bill was coming on to the floor to get me, he doubled over with severe right flank pain. The head nurse had quickly come to his aid, putting him in a wheelchair and transferring him to the ER. There he was diagnosed with an eight-millimeter kidney stone. Evidently the sudden and severe impact of the plane hitting the ground had jarred the stone loose, and it had started its journey down the ureter. When asked what he got out of the airplane crash, Bill says in jest, "Oh, just a kidney stone."

After a year of therapy, strengthening, and doctor visits, I was allowed to go back to work. For several years I had worked as a nurse in Bill's medical office and had become friends with many of the patients. They had heard about the airplane accident from newspaper articles[2] and had been calling the office to see how we were recovering. My return to work was anticipated with happiness, and I was met with gentle hugs and the repeated remark: "Barb, you are one lucky lady." Well, I appreciated their words, but "lucky" was not acceptable. I knew that God's own hand had protected and lifted us up alive. I could not let this opportunity to witness of His love pass by. Strengthened by God's grace, I answered the same each time: *God Himself gave us protection and healing. And I thank Him for it.*

Lord, You have been faithful to Your promises: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). Thank You, Lord.

[1] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 60.

[2] Here are some examples of news articles that covered the accident: "UPDATE: Berrien County Police Release Names of 4 Involved in Plane Crash," Nov. 28, 2014, https://wsbt.com/news/local/update-berrien-county-police-release-names-of-4-involved-in-plane-crash; "Probe Continues in Berrien Springs Plane Crash," Dec. 3, 2014, https://www.southbendtribune.com/story/news/local/2014/12/03/probe-continues-in-berrien-springs-plane-crash/46607497/.

**Barbara Sue and William Fisher** live in Cleveland, Tennessee.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE FISHER FAMILY

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# NO PROBLEM

We stood looking at a bright-orange home with a huge flag hanging from a paneless upstairs window. We'd been in our host country just a few months with our three sons and had expected to be deep into language learning by now. But the only way to get a residency permit was to own a home, so we were spending our time searching. It wasn't going well. We wanted outdoor space for our kids, but everything we saw was too rural, dilapidated, expensive, or illegal.

The orange house in a small village on the edge of the city had just become available when we came asking, but it took three appointments before the real estate agent finally showed up with the right keys. *This better be good*, I thought, watching him turn the lock in the old metal door. We entered a dingy corridor with uneven, stick-on vinyl flooring. The home was unfinished, with open windows and daylight showing through the tile roof, even though it had been occupied for several years. We had no intention of spending our time on a fixer-upper, so we walked out, hoping never to see it again.

The agent called repeatedly, "I can get a team to refurbish the house in two months! I can get the owner to lower the price!" he promised. Turning up nothing else, we met him again at the orange house.

"Can we get Wi-Fi here?" we asked. "Does it have a legal deed?"

"Of course! No problem!" he assured us.

It had neither. The deed office assured us that after purchasing the house, we could apply for the deed, and it would be "no problem." It seemed like a risk, but it was our only option if we wanted to try to stay, so after serious prayer we signed the papers.

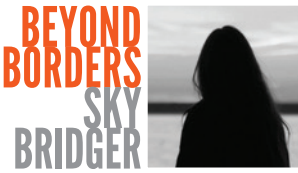
During the next three months we waited for the holidays to pass, then waited for a background check to be completed, then waited some more. As we faced so many apparently impossible obstacles we were at peace knowing that God would open the way if He wanted us to stay. Then one day the house was ours!

Our application for a legal deed was rejected. "The house is too big for the lot, and one wall is over the property line," they told us. Now what? Jacob visited the immigration office to see if we could still get the homeowner's residency permit with only the property deed and the deedless house.

"No problem!" they said. But we had heard that before! We decided the best option was to move forward with the remodel, take our chances with immigration, and, if necessary, try to flip the house.

The real estate agent hired relatives for the job. Despite the unseasonably mild winter, progress was slow. One day one main worker shot his father, our other worker, and work halted while the real estate agent worked to bail him out of jail. Both men returned to work, only to walk off the job. Five months later we finally moved in, and a week later we were denied the residency permit. They did give us another five-month tourist visa. As King Hezekiah did with Sennacherib's letter in 2 Kings 19, my husband, Jacob, spread the paperwork before the Lord on our new terrace and pleaded for guidance.

"No problem," said God. Two weeks later a law was passed allowing illegal dwellings like ours to qualify for deeds.




**"NO PROBLEM!" THEY SAID. BUT WE HAD HEARD THAT BEFORE!**

**Sky Bridger** is a pseudonym. All names have been changed to protect privacy. Sky and her family are church planters in the Middle East.



# EVEN IF NOT

*God will never leave you, even in the fire.*

JOHN PECKHAM

It was a crisis that required an extremely costly choice. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon commanded everyone to bow down to his statue of pure gold. Three Hebrew young men refused, enraging the king. He demanded that they bow down to his idol and threatened to throw them into a furnace of blazing fire if they persisted in refusing. Despite the threat of death, the three young men remained steadfastly faithful, replying, "Our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods nor worship the golden statue that you have set up" (Dan. 3:17, 18, NASB).

Notice those amazing words, "even if He does not." Although they knew God possessed the power to deliver them, they also recognized that He *might not* do so. In the end, God did save them. They were hurled into the fiery furnace, but God protected them so that they were completely unharmed. Even "the hair of their head was not singed" (verse 27). And while only three men were cast into the furnace, the king saw four "men" in the furnace, "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (verse 25). God did not leave them alone. God was with them and protected His faithful servants from harm.

## YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE, BUT TAKE HOPE

Deliverance, however, does not always come in this life. Even when deliverance does not come here and now, though, we should remember that just as there was a fourth one in that furnace with the three Hebrew youths, God is always with His faithful people. He will never leave nor forsake His people (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5).

This promise is sure. But it does not guarantee deliverance from the hardships and sufferings of this life. In fact, often God's faithful servants face the opposite. And this should come as no surprise. Christ Himself foretold to His followers: "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33)—*a promise we often like to forget*. Many faithful servants of God, including James, John the Baptist, and even Jesus, were martyred for their faith.

Nevertheless, even if deliverance does not come in this earthly life, ultimate deliverance will come for all who call on the name of the Lord—in the world to come. Further, Jesus did not only foretell "In the world you will have tribulation," but He immediately added, "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Even in the midst of suffering, even if it seems deliverance will never come, even if it seems as if things will never get better, even if it seems as if there is no light at the end of the tunnel, "be of good cheer."

Take hope. God will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5). Whatever suffering or hardship you or your loved ones are facing now, this is *not* the end of the story.

In a less-than-humane experiment many decades ago, a scientist placed wild rats in jars filled with water to test how long they would swim before giving up. Though known to have strong swimming skills, the wild rats lasted only a few minutes before giving up and drowning.

In a follow-up experiment the scientist rescued the rats around the time they typically gave up, dried them off, held them for a while, then placed them back in the water. This time, however, the rescued rats continued to swim, not for minutes, or even for an hour, but for tens of hours.[1]

Hope. The power of hope. When the rats believed rescue might come, the rats persevered far beyond anything that seemed possible. When we trust that God will ultimately deliver us, we can also endure far more than we think possible.

Even if our prayers are not immediately answered, if we place our confidence in Christ we

IMAGE: LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

can be confident that God will help us. Even if it seems as if darkness surrounds on all sides, help is on the way. Even if deliverance does not come here and now, it will come when Christ returns, and all wrongs will be set right forevermore. In this and other regards, hope and faith are integrally connected. Hope involves belief and trust that deliverance is possible, even if it seems very unlikely or distant.

God's promises are sure. Accordingly, even amid the fire, we are called to persevere in faith and prayer. Jesus Himself taught regarding how we "always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Likewise, Paul writes, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Persevering in prayer even in the darkest times is a testament of faith in God, a sign of allegiance to the true king even if the path ahead is shrouded in darkness, even if it seems as if the enemy is winning.[2] We know the end of the story. Christ triumphs, and all who are in Christ by faith will also be victorious in Him if only we do not lose hope and cling to Him. Though the fulfillment of God's promises might seem to tarry, "wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3). "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

## PAIN IN THE PROCESS

Sometimes, though, what God works to bring about for our good hurts in the process, not because God desires to hurt us, but because we are entangled in sin and evil in the midst of a cosmic conflict.

Have you ever seen a dog who had an unfortunate encounter with a porcupine, ending up with countless quills stuck in its snout? There is no way to help this dog get those quills out without causing more pain. In fact, a porcupine's quills are filled with backward-facing barbs, so pulling them out hurts a great deal more than they hurt going in. To pull them out inevitably causes *more* pain. In a sense, we are all stuck with the quills of the evil one, and sometimes painful remedies are needed to deliver us.

To take another example, consider someone whose heart has stopped beating. A medical professional is on the scene and, of course, performs CPR. But in many cases effective CPR will require breaking the ribs of the patient. Yet doing so is the only way to save that person. In somewhat similar ways, at times the only avenues available to God to save and deliver us require pain in the short term. God does not want us to suffer, but we are entangled with sin, a bit like being stuck with porcupine quills.

We live in enemy territory, and the enemy seeks to destroy our faith and our hope. But there is good news. God stands with us amid every trial. Indeed, God intercedes for us and will ensure in the end that we are victorious. Christ is "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Think of the case of Job. The enemy afflicted him deeply, and Job suffered great loss and personal suffering. Yet despite his profound suffering, Job held on to hope and declared, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:25, 26, NASB).

Like Job, we might also cry out to God in our distress, while at the same time maintaining hope and trusting that God will provide ultimate deliverance.

God's promises are sure. Accordingly, even amid the fire, we are called to persevere in faith and prayer.



IMAGE: LIGHTSTOCK / PRIXEL CREATIVE

## THE VICTORY ASSURED

Even in the darkest situations, hope can persist. Now we dwell in enemy territory, but the devil "knows that he has a short time" (Rev. 12:12). Christ's victory is assured, as is yours if are in Christ by faith.

Thus, Paul teaches, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39). And just a few verses earlier in Romans 8, Paul assured those who suffer that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (verse 18).

In the end God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4, NASB; cf. Rev. 15:3, 4). Until that day comes, I want to encourage you to hold fast to the hope that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

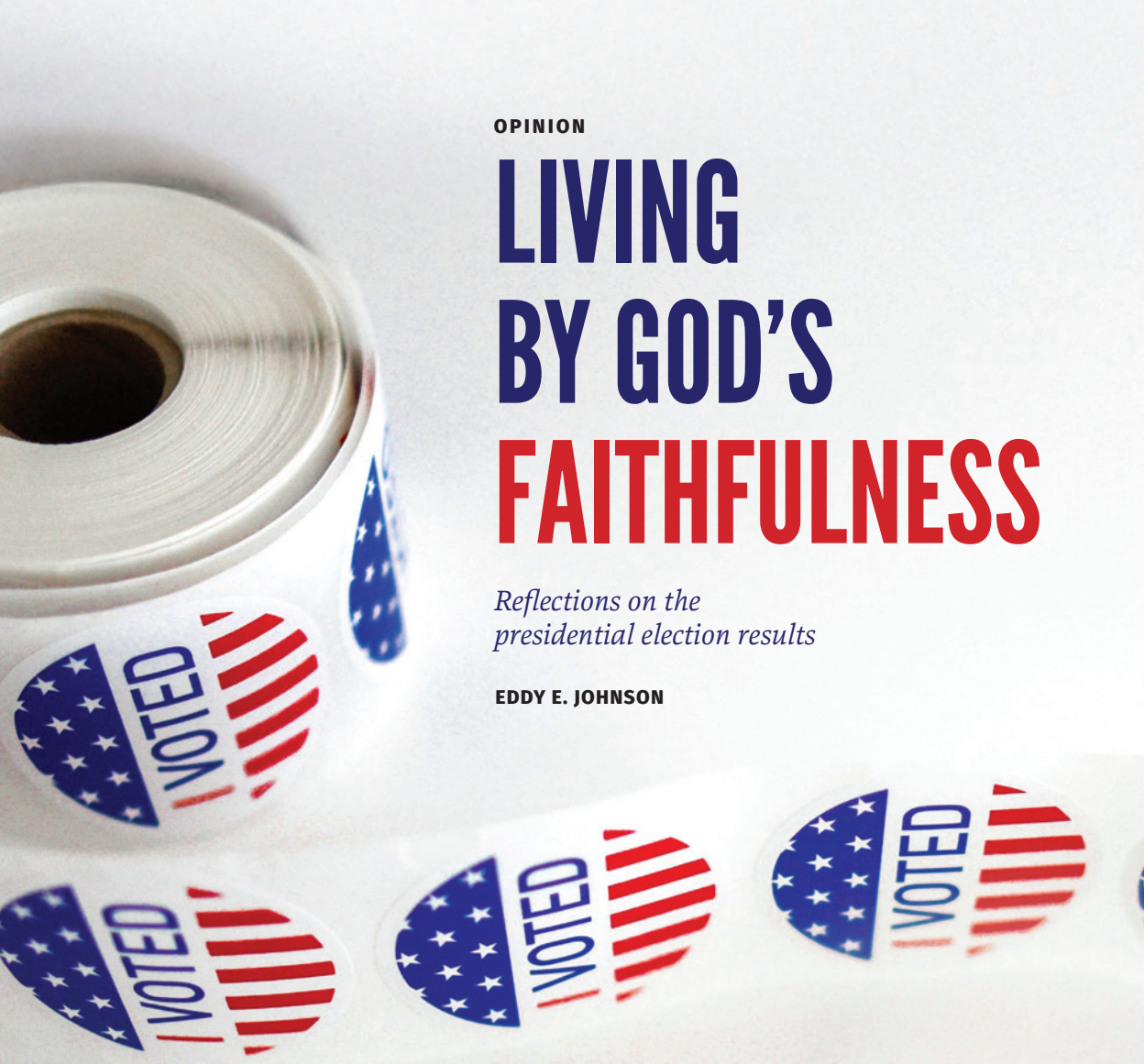
Like the three faithful Hebrew youths before Nebuchadnezzar, we do not know whether God will rescue us from what ails us now, in this life, but we can be sure that rescue will come to all who place their faith in Christ. One day soon all suffering and pain and darkness will be over forevermore. As we await that day, we might also pray:

"In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me and guide me" (Ps. 31:1-3).

[1] These 1950s experiments are recounted in Joseph T. Hallinan, "The Remarkable Power of Hope," *Psychology Today*, May 7, 2014, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/kidding-ourselves/201405/the-remarkable-power-hope, accessed May 10, 2023.

[2] For much more on this and the theology of prayer, see John C. Peckham, *Why We Pray: Understanding Prayer in the Context of Cosmic Conflict* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2024), chap. 6.

**John Peckham** is associate editor of *Adventist Review* and research professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.




OPINION

# LIVING BY GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

*Reflections on the presidential election results*

EDDY E. JOHNSON

That Donald Trump might win the 2024 presidential election was possible, but the magnitude of the victory surprised many in my circles. Of greater interest to me than the election results, however, were the reactions, in Christian quarters. Listening to Evangelical religious broadcasts, and engaging in personal conversations with some members of my own church since the election, have yielded the following reflections.

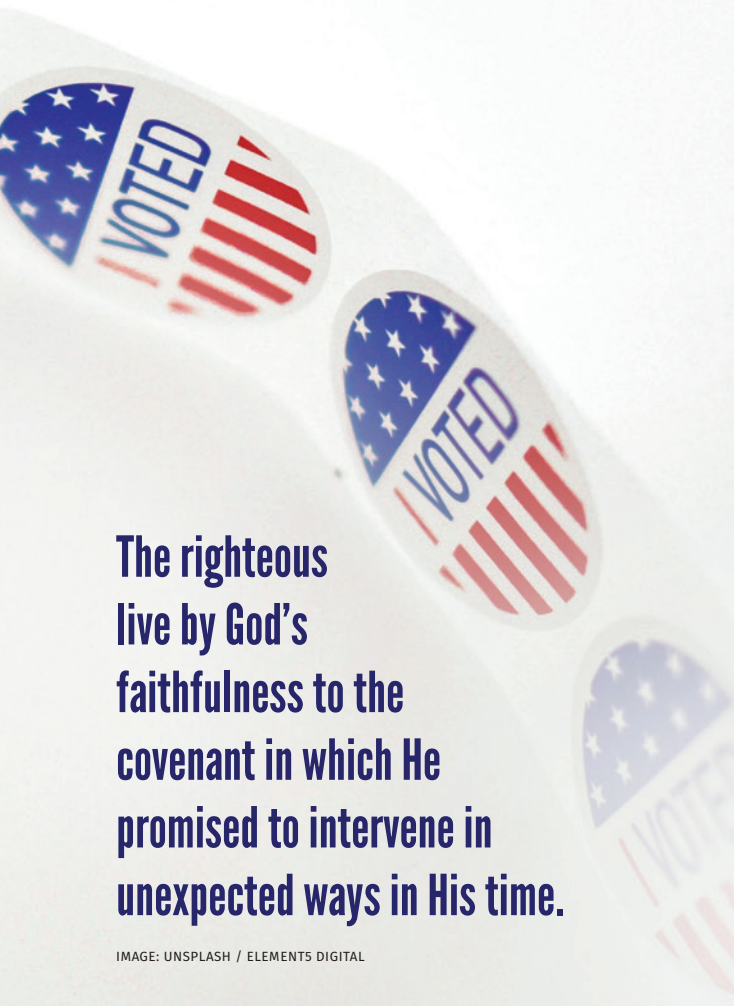
## SOME OF THE CHATTER

Many Evangelical and charismatic Christians interpret Bible prophecies from a premillennial dispensationalist perspective. Dispensationalism typically asserts that ethnic Israel remains significant in God's purposes and will be so in the future, teaching that Israel will have a functional role when Jesus rules the nations at His return to earth (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Matt. 25:31).

So when Trump relocated the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem during his first term, many Evangelicals rejoiced, in spite of strong opposition from different quarters.[1] Then when a bullet barely missed President Trump's head, some Evangelicals saw it as divine protection of the man chosen by God to play a crucial role in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel as a nation-state.[2] It would make sense, then, why such a significant portion of the Evangelical[3] and Protestant charismatic base would vote so heavily for Trump,[4] in addition to other ethical and economic factors.

The conversations I have had with Adventists in my circles since the election indicate two dominant anecdotal perspectives. There are those who express concern (indignation, even) at the decline of moral standards in a nation that would vote for a man they deem morally unprincipled. They would not vote for him regardless of his platform.

Some expressed support for the ideologies that Trump's campaign advanced based on their anticipated social and economic impact. Others, surprisingly, found a reason, in Bible prophecy, to vote for Trump—albeit not in the same way as dispensationalist Evangelicals. Pointing to the beast from the earth (Rev. 13:11-17), which we understand to be the United States of America, they saw Trump as one who could usher in the eschatological events of Revelation 13. Could Trump lead the United States to one day, in league with Roman Catholicism and apostate Protestantism, use its power to impose Sunday observance? Given the overwhelming support Trump enjoys in both the legislative and judicial branches of government, he would be well positioned to do so. Voting for him, they reasoned, would simply advance the eschatological time line to hasten the Second Coming.




**The righteous live by God's faithfulness to the covenant in which He promised to intervene in unexpected ways in His time.**

IMAGE: UNSPLASH / ELEMENT5 DIGITAL

## PASTORAL COUNSEL

In Romans 13:1-7 Paul outlines the imperatives of Christian moral behavior as citizens. Whether Adventists voted for or against Trump for president, Paul's instructions to act in love and obedience toward the established authority are based on three spiritual foundations.

**For the Sake of Conscience.** While God may not hand-pick every political authority (see Hosea 8:4), Jesus' words to Pilate remain true: "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11, NIV). It is God who "deposes kings and sets up kings" (Dan. 2:21, NRSV; cf. verse 37). "The Most High has sovereignty over the kingdoms of mortals, and gives it to whom he will" (Dan. 4:25, NRSV; see also verse 32). A Christian conscience is shaped by such biblical teachings as "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44, NRSV).

To Habakkuk the prophet, who questioned God about raising the evil and cruel Babylonian Empire to chastise wayward Israel, God said: "The righteous [the faithful believers] shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4, ESV). The transliteration

**Paul advises against behavior that would bring the church into disrepute, thereby making the fulfillment of its mission difficult, if not impossible.**

from Hebrew is closer to "The righteous one shall live by *My* faithfulness." The righteous live by God's faithfulness to the covenant in which He promised to intervene in unexpected ways in His time.

This does not proscribe the reality that a genuine God-shaped conscience must also courageously stand up against any abuse carried out by the authority/power in place. Genuine Christians have historically done so at the cost of their lives.

**For the Mission of the Church.** The manner in which we conduct ourselves as Christians should never prove legitimate grounds for the established power to legislate against the presence and mission of the church. In Romans 16:17 Paul urges the church to be aware of those who create dissension and difficulties in opposition to the doctrines that have been taught (read teachings, practices, and behavior). Such individuals should be avoided, i.e., their activities shunned and opposed.

Paul advises against behavior that would bring the church into disrepute, thereby making the fulfillment of its mission difficult, if not impossible. The advice would prove very pertinent when the Jews in Rome began to rise up against the authorities, and the church, against its own volition, was drawn into the conflict because of its links to Judaism. The advice is indeed timely for the Adventist Church in today's polarized nation of America.

**Considering the Advent.** "Besides this, you know what time it is. . . . The night is far gone, the day is near" (Rom. 13:11, NRSV). Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans around 56 C.E. The world today is almost 2,000 years closer to the twilight of history and the dawn of God's new creation. Paul's advice should be taken even more seriously in matters of everyday conduct by contemporary believers, and specifically in their attitudes relating to the established political power.

As F. J. Leenhardt states in his commentary on the book of Romans: "Paul's ethics offered the Roman Empire a better citizen than the empire could hope to raise by other means, whether by fear or flattery. On the flip side, however, the last thing a totalitarian regime wants is a population with a conscience: conscience gets in the way of unquestioning obedience; conscience submits to the authority of God rather than of the state."[5] This, in my view, should be the stance of Adventists in response to America's political realities.




[1] The following articles establish this perspective: Tom Gjelten, "Religious Leaders Divided Over Trump's Jerusalem Decision," Dec. 7, 2017, https://www.npr.org/2017/12/07/569011845/trumps-jerusalem-decision-engenders-breadth-of-reaction-from-religious-leaders; Tara Isabella Burton, "Pastor at US Embassy Opening in Jerusalem Says Trump Is 'on the Right Side' of God," May 14, 2018, https://www.vox.com/2018/5/14/17352676/robert-jeffress-jerusalem-embassy-israel-prayer/, accessed Jan. 9, 2025.

[2] See, for example: Jason DeRose, "Trump Assassination Attempt Lays Bare Deep Religious Divisions in the U.S.," July 18, 2024, https://www.npr.org/2024/07/15/nx-s1-5040606/trumps-assassination-shooting-god-religion; Drew Harwell, Michelle Boorstein, and Josh Dawsey, "Trump's Close Call in Assassination Attempt Fuels Talk He Was 'Chosen' by God," July 16, 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2024/07/16/trump-religion-messiah/, accessed Jan. 9, 2025.

[3] The year 2024 continued the trend seen in prior years: Justin Nortey, "Most White Americans Who Regularly Attend Worship Services Voted for Trump in 2020," Aug. 30, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/08/30/most-white-americans-who-regularly-attend-worship-services-voted-for-trump-in-2020/.

[4] A survey conducted by the Associated Press estimated that eight in 10 White Evangelical Christians voted for Trump in 2024 (Peter Smith, "White Evangelical Voters Show Steadfast Support for Donald Trump's Presidency," Nov. 7, 2024, https://apnews.com/article/white-evangelical-voters-support-donald-trump-president-dbfd2b4fe5b2ea27968876f19ee20c84, accessed Jan. 9, 2025).

[5] F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), p. 335.

**Eddy E. Johnson** is retired from both ministry and management at Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) as of 2021, but continues to volunteer at the ADRA center in Sydney, Australia, as a marriage counselor and chaplain.

# Mariah

## travels the world

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# THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE AND JUSTICE

*How God balances compassion and righteousness*

**RENÉ GEHRING**

Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (A.D. 1194-1250), the former emperor of the Roman-German Empire, is said to have carried out a terrible experiment for supposedly scientific reasons. He wanted to know what the original language of humanity was. He assumed that Hebrew was the language of Adam and Eve in Paradise. So that would probably be the language that children would speak if they were allowed to grow up without any linguistic influence. Or would it perhaps be the language of their parents after all—or Latin, Greek or Arabic? Without parents or educators speaking to them, their natural language would emerge. That was the king's calculation.

He had some newborn babies taken away from their mothers and handed over to wet nurses, who were under strict orders not to talk to them or caress them tenderly. They were only to be given milk, bathed, and washed. That was all the care they were given. It wasn't long before all the children died. None survived, and none spoke any language. They could not survive without the loving care of smiles, caresses, and friendly words. Satisfying their physical needs alone was far too little.

Even if this barbarism, now referred to as a "forbidden experiment," did not reveal any primal language, another fact was proved even more clearly: humans require relationships and affection. We need the warmth of a smile, a hug, and compassionate conversation.

## GOD'S UNFAILING CARE

Our heavenly Father, who created us like this, not only knows this—He also wants to meet us on precisely this level. As important as it is not to be guided by feelings, it is equally important not to overlook our basic human emotional needs. He therefore promises us a closeness and loyalty that far surpasses the care of parents: "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on

This article was originally published online as part of our Sabbath School Reflection series. To read the weekly reflection, visit **adventistreview.org/category/theology/sabbath-school**.



the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you" (Isa. 49:15).[1]

This becomes particularly clear in the statements of the prophet Hosea. He tenderly describes how God takes His people in His arms and touchingly cares for them: "It is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms" (Hosea 11:3).

Presumably, no one has ever experienced God literally taking them in His arms and carrying them, as nice as that would be. God expresses His care in other ways. It is described in very practical prophetic descriptions in a very human and intimate way: "Raise your eyes and look around; all of them gather together, they come to you. . . . For your ruins and deserted places and your destroyed land—now you will certainly be too cramped for the inhabitants. . . . The children you lost will yet say in your ears, 'The place is too cramped for me; make room for me that I may live here' " (Isa. 49:18-20).

God's closeness is shown first and foremost through the people He gives us. This applies most of all to our family. But He also shows His love and care through those we meet outside of it,



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## Have we accepted God's love and mercy for us—and passed it on in the same way to other people for whom God has provided us as their *caregivers?*

especially through the community in His church. That is why it is so important to Him that His people, in particular, are always there for others as a channel of this care (Matt. 25:40).

But it is not only these people who serve as God's "arm" to carry us. Even the mighty of the nations are called by God: "Kings will be your guardians, and their princesses your nurses" (Isa. 49:23). These are unique moments when even the great ones of the earth stand up for a little child of God. It is often during these times that people recognize God's supernatural intervention (verse 26).

### THE LIMITS OF GRACE

We are given special insight into the emotional world of God and His inner struggle as Hosea continues: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I surrender you, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled. I will not carry out My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath" (Hosea 11:8, 9).

Now it becomes even more personal. God has not only created us with feelings; He himself *feels* very strongly. The fact that He created us in His image affects not only our body and our mind but also our feelings. In this, too, we resemble Him, and in this, too, we should emulate Him and become more and more like Him. Just as He restrains His own (naturally righteous) anger and allows love to prevail instead, we too should emerge victorious from our inner battles and not allow ourselves to be dominated by negative emotions.

The comparison with the fall of the daughter cities of Sodom makes one wonder. Did they not deserve to be destroyed by God? It is interesting that neither Sodom nor Gomorrah are mentioned, only the cities closely associated with them. Presumably, He wants to tell us that there is a degree of sin at which He must intervene with severity—as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah. He has mercy until the end, however, on all those who are closely associated with sin but for whom there is still hope.

This is also expressed in Jesus' heartbreaking lament over Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt. 23:37). It was still a time of grace for Jerusalem, her fate could still be averted. God's love and grace still triumphed over judgment.

But at some point, all the sin of this world also exceeds the endless forbearance of God, who feels all the suffering on this planet: "As 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together' (Rom. 8:22, KJV), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all."[2]

God feels all the pain in this world. How long will He hold back His anger at all the injustice and suffering caused by sin? In Jerusalem and Sodom and Gomorrah, there came a time when God's heartfelt love turned to anger and righteous judgment. Bible prophecy shows us that this will also affect our entire planet in the near future. The important question for us then is: Have we accepted God's love and mercy for us—and passed it on in the same way to other people for whom God has provided us as their *caregivers*, as nurses, as parents, siblings, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances? Have we done this even when they did not seem to deserve our attention and help?

[1]Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible.*

[2]Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), pp. 263, 264.

**René Gehring**, Ph.D., is president of Bogenhofen Seminary and a theology teacher.

# THE PARADIGM CHANGE

*Driven by hope*

It was a memorable day at the end of April in 1994. The sun shone warm, and clouds moved slowly through the sky. Autumn was just beginning in the Southern Hemisphere, where we lived in Somerset West, close to Cape Town, South Africa. This was the day! After decades of apartheid, conflict, hatred, and lots of pain, South Africa held its first free election in which *all* inhabitants—regardless of their skin color—were invited to vote. We stood as a couple with thousands of others in a long line waiting to cast our votes outside a local school. A festive atmosphere hung over the crowd. Some sang; others danced. We all waited patiently, and hope hung palpably in the air.

We can all do with some hope. Our world seems to be stuck in constant crisis mode. The list of crises seems to be growing week after week, and we are reminded by our own fears and conflicts that we are in dire need of hope.

Hope is an important theme in Scripture. The psalms—the hymnal of the Old Testament—refer to hope in many texts. The writers "hope" and "wait" for God's active engagement in this world—using the same Hebrew term. "Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I *wait* all the day long," writes the author of Psalm 25:5.* This waiting is always God-centered. We trust (or hope in) Him whom we know: "And those who know your name put their *trust* in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you" (Ps. 9:10). Israel's hope was based on past experiences with God. So knowing God is an essential precondition for experiencing hope.

The sixth century B.C. Israel was in crisis. Babylonian troops had destroyed Jerusalem, and a large portion of Judah's population had been taken into exile. The destruction of the temple, the place where God resided and atonement was taking place, particularly challenged God's people and the biblical authors of the time. Where was God? Where was hope?

Biblical interpreters call Jeremiah the "weeping prophet." His book is full of descriptions of conflict, divine judgments, and personal pain and disappointment—and yet, amid darkness, there is also hope. The prophet writes to those living in exile in Babylon a memorable letter. In it he confirms that the exile would last a long time and that God's people should settle down—both mentally and physically. But then he communicates to his readers in God's name something unexpected: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). God has plans for His people—that's the first surprising takeaway. These plans involve *shalom*, which the 2016 ESV translates here as "welfare" while other versions choose "peace," a future, and also hope. *Shalom*, a future, and hope—that sounds like a paradigm change. Instead of focusing upon the darkness we see all around us, we are assured of God's promise of peace that ultimately leads to a bright future and is powered by hope.

Not all the lofty hopes of South Africans have been fulfilled since 1994. God's message of hope to Israel sees a partial fulfillment in Israel's return from exile. But since then, generations of God's people throughout history have waited to see the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13)—first during the first coming of Messiah and now as we anticipate the second coming of Jesus as King of kings. The big question is: are we, individually and corporately, driven by this hope that knows no fear and is full of God's *shalom*?

TRANSITIONS

CHANTAL & GERALD KLINGBEIL



**WE CAN ALL DO WITH SOME HOPE.**

* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations have been taken from the English Standard Version.

**Chantal J. Klingbeil**, Ph.D., and **Gerald A. Klingbeil**, D.Litt., have served the Adventist Church for nearly three decades internationally as professors, TV host, editor, and associate director. They now live outside the beautiful city of Hamburg, Germany, where they serve in the Hanseatic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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# WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE GOOSE . . .

*Dad's lifestyle affects fertility and the unborn baby, too!*

**Q: We've been married for two years and want children. My wife receives fertility advice on avoiding tobacco, alcohol, and certain medications; should I, as a daddy-to-be, follow similar guidelines and give up some things too?**

**A:** We're thrilled to hear this thoughtful question from a "daddy-to-be"! It's great that you're considering how your lifestyle can impact your family's future.

Couples often focus on the mother-to-be's health, but the father-to-be's lifestyle is equally important for fertility and pregnancy outcomes. Sperm quality and quantity are highly influenced by lifestyle, so early changes can optimize reproductive success. Age also matters—women's fertility peaks in their 20s, declines after 30, and drops more sharply after 35 because of reduced egg quality and quantity.

Your wife was born with all her eggs, and her health, lifestyle, and even her mother's during pregnancy affect her egg quality and your future children. Women's choices before and during pregnancy are vital for reducing developmental risks. Similarly, your mother's lifestyle during her pregnancy may have influenced your fertility, as premature and low-birth-weight boys often face lower fertility as adults.

As for you, your sperm production is an ongoing process, and how you live day to day directly affects the quality and quantity of sperm you produce. It takes about 76 to 90 days for sperm to fully develop, so your lifestyle in the months before conception matters. Men experience a slower decline in fertility compared to women, but sperm quality (motility, morphology, and genetic integrity) begins to diminish after age 40. The higher your age over 40, the greater the chance for lower conception rates, longer times to achieve pregnancy, and increased risk of pregnancy complications for your wife.

Certain habits can harm sperm quality and count, including tobacco, alcohol, "junk food," excessive caffeine, illicit drugs, stress, poor sleep, and sedentary living. Secondhand smoke affects both your wife's fertility and the baby's health. Quitting tobacco improves sperm quality, while tight underwear and heat exposure can reduce fertility. The good news is that a balanced diet, regular exercise, stress management, and avoiding harmful substances can boost sperm health in just a few months!

**It's worth giving up unhealthy habits to benefit your wife and family. It's not a loss; it's an investment!**

What's especially beautiful is how your support and encouragement during this time can uplift your wife and positively impact her well-being and that of your unborn child. Your special contribution to marital happiness can create a positive feedback loop for you as parents-to-be: lower stress, improved physical health, and better pregnancy outcome. It's worth giving up unhealthy habits to benefit your wife and family, as she is doing. It's not a loss; it's an investment! As the Bible says: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25). You are preparing for a healthy godly home and family. Leading the way in adopting a healthy lifestyle together can create a nurturing environment for your family and strengthen your bond as you prepare for parenthood.

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

# DEEP AND WIDE

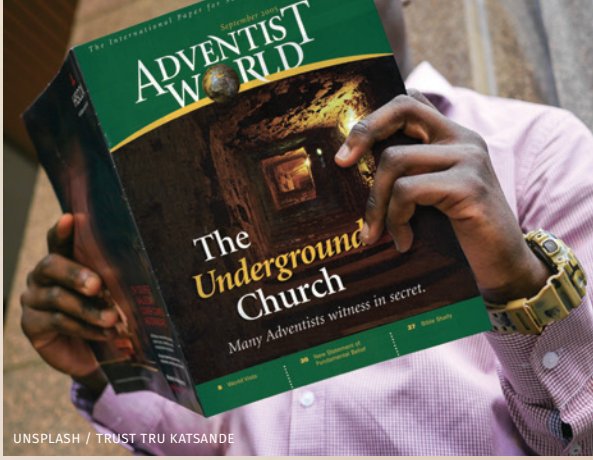
JUSTIN KIM

More than 175 years ago, Ellen White received a vision to launch a global publication. With neither experience nor resources, she and her husband, James, started a faith venture called *The Present Truth*. The project was renamed several times throughout its history and eventually came to be known as the *Adventist Review*. Today it is the official journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and one of the oldest periodicals in North America. Its 72 pages have often been referenced as the official publication of the church; its flagship journal; its prophetic conscience; the written pastor; the paper of record; a Friday night reader; and an authorized source of Adventist news and information. Along with its monthly magazine, *Adventist Review* as a ministry has since branched out, reaching those online, reaching children, and, through audio and video resources, featuring all things Adventist.





ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE




UNSPLASH / TRUST TRU KATSANDE

**At this year's General Conference Session, the two publications that have brought believers together will themselves come together to become one.**



In one word, *Adventist Review* seeks to convey *depth*. Whether in denominational commentary, theological discourse, Bible study, pastoral columns, or testimonies of mission, experience, and ministry, the *Review* reflects upon the Advent experience, energizes the Advent movement, and points to the Advent hope.

About 20 years ago General Conference leadership and the *Adventist Review* editors began another faith venture called *Adventist World*. Translated into more than 20 languages, this publication has traversed all over the world, reflecting the "streams of light" that Ellen White originally saw in her 1848 vision. Available in digital format but also with millions of copies printed each month, this magazine provides the church with news, doctrinal instruction, and spiritual inspiration relevant to those brothers and sisters waiting for Jesus to come again. It instructs on health, family life, theology, and generally all things Adventist.

In one word, it seeks to convey *breadth*. Not only does it showcase the latest in church developments, but it is one of the great tools to unite God's remnant from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. In an age when disinformation, heresy, factions, and propaganda threaten the unity and effectiveness of the Lord's gospel engine, the church has been blessed by this humble paper that has brought Adventists together.

At this year's General Conference Session, the two publications that have brought believers together will themselves come together to become one. Using the legacy name of *Adventist Review*, with a new logo that points to its history, the editors hope the reimagined magazine will be as deep and wide as its predecessors were. Keep your eyes peeled for it in the summer of this year!

**Justin Kim** is the editor of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*.

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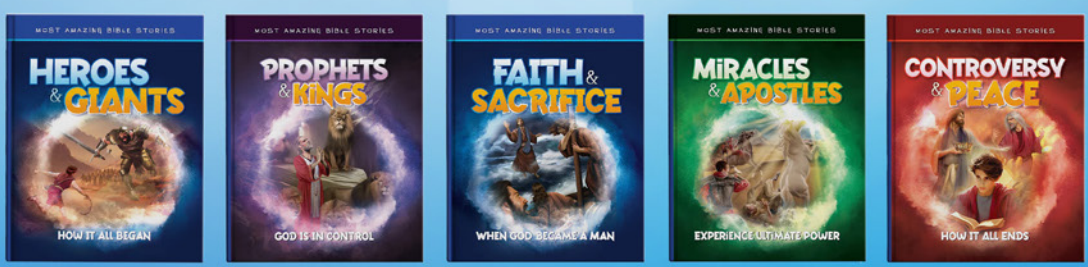
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CONTINUED FROM P. 72

hem for the ultimate cross-cultural endeavor. Following Jesus' ascension the early church gave itself to the same mission, living out Jesus' mission across an ever-broadening geographic area. Scripture has an uncanny way of not only educating me about God's mission purpose, but luring me into involvement with it. In fact, long before this international move, God's missional perspective had already permeated my life. It was motivating as a pastor in British Columbia, and now my life in Denmark is a continuation of the same.

Learning a language, making new friends, starting a church in post-Christian Europe—these things certainly frighten me, but somehow they also entice me. Beware if you have an entrepreneurial spirit. If you are a self-starter and have ideas and visions for new things, you're in dangerous territory and are prone to my fate! Perhaps God puts a risk-taking and restless tendency in some of us for a reason. In the early church such Christians as Paul and Barnabas had an apostolic gifting to take the message and mission of Jesus into new fields. If you are unsatisfied with the status quo yet see possibilities everywhere, beware! You might be called to an exciting new challenge soon.

To prepare me for His calling, God taught me skills and faith in difficult periods of my life, forming me through crucible experiences. While church planting during the pandemic, I found my energy expended and my plans insufficient. God taught me about the counterintuitive salve of vulnerability: encouragement would come when I admitted my brokenness. My local friends became my pastors, themselves reminding me that God has miraculous ways of bringing something out of nothing. I know that these lessons of openness and trust will serve me well in this new mission.

## CALLED

Back at Copenhagen Towers, I can't help thinking how much easier it would be to represent Jesus if I worked at a company in this building; if I spoke Danish and ate at the cafeteria with my friends every day. The truth is that the best missionaries are not cross-cultural. My learning curve is steep, it is not an efficient process, and I will never fully master the language.



IMAGE: UNSPLASH / SVEND NIELSEN

Yet God called my family here. And whether it is international or local, God's radical invitation is for all. I invite you to prayerfully reflect on how God has formed you through your own life experiences. What is God's task for you today, and where might God use you tomorrow? If you live your life to intentionally join God in His mission, whether that be abroad or at home, you will be filled with the purpose and joy I have found on this path. I am excited for what God will accomplish here in Copenhagen over time. But for now, back to my Danish lessons.

*Med venlig hilsen.**

* Translated "Kind regards."

**Rob Folkenberg III** spent four and a half years establishing a Seventh-day Adventist church in Squamish, British Columbia. He now embarks on the new task of church planting in Copenhagen, Denmark, with his wife and two daughters.



ROB FOLKENBERG III

# ECHOES OF A CALLING

*My journey to cross-cultural ministry*

Dear Reader,

I write this article as I sit in the lobby of Copenhagen Towers—an aesthetic combination of soaring ceilings, ambient skylights, and lush greenery. The atmosphere is peaceful, professional, put-together. But I, on the other hand, am none of those things. Instead I'm overwhelmed and frazzled, poring over study materials from my very first Danish language class. A year ago I would never have imagined I would be learning a Nordic language and living in Scandinavia's second-largest city. A year ago I was intently church planting in Squamish, British Columbia. We had developed a network of friends within and outside our new church community. Our life was filled with purpose and direction. Yet God opened doors for this new ministry role. A year later here I am—my life completely altered.

**NO CHRISTIAN SHOULD COMPLETELY RULE OUT AN INTERNATIONAL CALLING.**

Imagining such a move for yourself might fill you with trepidation. It would dramatically challenge your comfort and routine, your daily life and social structures. This type of move certainly is not for everyone. God may never call you to a new country. Yet some of Jesus' last words were that the Holy Spirit would use people to be His witnesses in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). So no Christian should completely rule out an international calling!

How might the Holy Spirit call you to such a dramatic life shift? We often imagine a voice, strong urges, or miraculous signs. While these might occur, the Holy Spirit also leads by forming us over time. Life circumstances, developing personalities, family histories, the impact of difficult experiences . . . the Holy Spirit guides us through all these means. In reflecting on my family's recent decision to move to Denmark, I realize that God used all these methods to prepare us for this task. As I share my journey, perhaps you will hear echoes of a calling on your own heart.

## PREPARED

I was raised as a missionary kid in Asia, and that enriching experience formed my international lens and interest in cross-cultural ministry. While there were sacrifices, my parents crafted our life as an adventure for Jesus, a fantastic opportunity God had given us to join Him where He was working. We traveled to new countries, spent quality time together, and lived with the conviction that we were a team contributing to something deeply meaningful. This primed me to be drawn to similar opportunities for my own family as an adult. Being a missionary is a rich and even fun calling, in my estimation. I am grateful for how my parents gifted me with my mission experience, and I want my own two daughters to have the same opportunity.

Seeing God as a missionary also motivated my missionary inclination. I found the core meta-narrative of Scripture, the Bible as a mission story, compelling. From Genesis through Revelation God is the missionary, seeking Adam and Eve in Eden, saving Israel in captivity, and incarnating in Bethle-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71

IT IS WRITTEN.

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