Adventist World

12/2024

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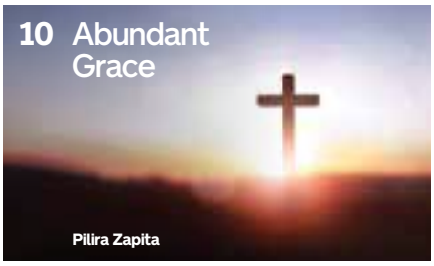
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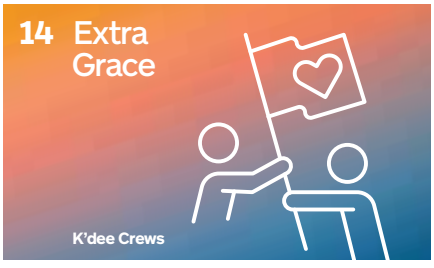
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Extending Grace



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Ladies and Gentlemen

Justin Kim

Before an entertainment venue, a competition, or boarding an airplane, one will hear a particular English salutation or its equivalent in most parts of the world: "Ladies and gentlemen." The greeting is comprehensive of everyone and invites an air of civility, propriety, and courtesy. One can argue the details of English etymology and origin, connecting *gentle* with the word *genteel*, which means refined and aristocratic. Regardless, both denote being kind, polite, and pleasant.

Philippians 4:5 points out that God's people are called to let their *epieikes* be known to everyone. Different translations have different words, but *epieikes* is usually rendered moderate, patient, or gentle. Christ's gentleness is to be known to all. Colossians 3:19 speaks to husbands being gentle with their wives. First Peter 3:4 speaks to wives being of a gentle and quiet spirit. And if you are neither husband nor wife, Ephesians 4:2 speaks to all that we should be humble, gentle, and patient, bearing one another in love.

One of the most insightful vignettes of Jesus's gentleness is found in Isaiah 42:1-4:



"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law."

Manifesting dominant and commanding features, the Messiah brings forth justice with truth to the Gentiles and establishes it in the earth. Sandwiched between the statements on justice are two precious illustrations of meekness and moderation.

Though victorious, Jesus does not cry aloud or raise His voice. Instead, Scripture points to a reed, which has no high value and no purpose, and can be easily discarded. As with strands of flax, both are weak, dispensable, and readily found anywhere.

Being bruised suggests having been damaged but not irreparable. Smoking points to embers that are about to lose their fire. The smallest force could break the reed or quench the flax, but Jesus does not. These lines point to the greatest Gentleman, who is tender, compassionate, and simply gentle.

Matthew 11:29 says, "I am gentle and lowly in heart." Christ models the gentle grace needed in every human relationship. Not only to strong trees, blossoming plants, or fruitful shrubs, but also to weak, broken reeds and flaxes did Jesus show the gentlest of grace.

May God's people look to the Gentleman of heaven to be empowered by His grace to be the ladies and gentlemen of earth.



Alvina, from the territory of Odesa, Ukraine, is grateful for ADRA's assistance. The military conflict in the Ukraine made her, her daughter, and grandson refugees in Tiraspol, Moldova.

Photo: Bunea Alina, PR & Communication Manager, ADRA Moldova

"AHSRA-Asia is a research hub for the Adventist research community . . . where researchers and scholars from across Asia engage in meaningful dialogues about human-subject research. [It] is a community that embodies our shared commitment to support Adventist researchers and advance the cause of the church through research."

–Arceli Rosario, president of the Adventist University of the Philippines and the president of the Asia chapter of the Adventist Human-Subject Research Association (AHSRA), about the purpose that AHSRA-Asia provides to the church. Through the research performed by AHSRA the church can conduct global research surveys that inform the development and improvement of the church's initiatives, programs, services, and policies. Global church strategic plans such as "I Will Go" and other initiatives are now based on research data.

***Adventist Review* Newsletter**

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Does your church care about you?

Church members were asked if they felt that other members in their local church cared about them.

- **26%** Strongly agree
- **53%** Agree
- **14%** I am not sure
- **4%** Disagree
- **3%** Strongly disagree



Scan the QR code to view the complete survey.

N=146,323
Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey

Data provided by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

"Today we are truly grateful to ADRA Solomon Islands for upgrading our run-down block, giving our students access to clean and proper facilities."

–Dennis Doro Narakana, deputy principal of Titiana Community High School, about the successful completion and handover of the new sanitation facilities for two schools in the Solomon Islands in October. The projects were fully funded by ADRA Australia and implemented by ADRA Solomon Islands under the Turn on the Tap project. This project improves water, sanitation, and hygiene in primary and secondary schools across the Solomon Islands. It partners with local leaders, education authorities, and businesses to provide fresh water, clean toilets, low-cost menstrual products, and hygiene education.

"The global release of *The Hopeful* marks a significant milestone in our mission to share hope with the world. By leveraging our own AI-powered translation technology, we're making this inspiring story accessible to more people, in more languages, than ever before. This effort directly supports our 2030 vision of reaching 1 billion people with the message of eternal hope, and we invite you to join us in spreading this powerful message with your communities and beyond."

–Vyacheslav Demyan, president of Hope Channel International (HCI), about the global release of *The Hopeful* on October 22. HCI's release seeks to share a message of hope and healing, offering a meaningful opportunity for viewers to connect and spread the story of the Advent hope.

"The identity of the Adventist Church is shaped not only by our beliefs and mission but also by how [we] are perceived through the visual and graphic elements that represent [us]. These elements are to be consistent across all platforms and give people a clear and unified perception of who Adventists are."

–Rhoen Shane P. Catolico, communication and public affairs and religious liberty director for Davao Mission, located in the Philippines. A total of 152 participants attended a communication event. The group consisted of individuals who are passionate about writing stories, producing videos and graphics, and generally creating content across platforms, which continuously attracts traffic. The event provided the most comprehensive opportunities to impact the digital mission of sharing the gospel of Jesus in many creative ways.

More Than 150

The number of ambassadors that gathered for the 10,000 Toes Campaign Lifestyle Medicine Summit in Fiji September 27-29. The three-day summit focused on health, wellness, and diabetes prevention, combining physical activities, expert-led training sessions, and spiritual reflections to promote wholistic well-being. The summit also aimed to engage Adventist pastors in leadership roles as health champions. Attendees participated in practical workshops on natural treatments, including therapeutic juicing, hydrotherapy, poultices, plant-based cooking, and massages.

"Ninety-five years—and look at the way God blessed a spark in a young preacher's heart! The ministry started so humbly—in a chicken coop—and now it's across the face of the earth, ministering in more than 70 languages. It's become a frontline evangelistic agency for the church."

–Shawn Boonstra, current speaker/director of Voice of Prophecy (VOP), about the ministry's ninety-fifth anniversary. VOP began on October 19, 1929, when H.M.S. Richards, Sr., started regularly broadcasting biblical messages on California radio stations. Soon the young evangelist was broadcasting his program, *The Tabernacle of the Air* (renamed the *Voice of Prophecy* in 1937), daily. The ministry continues to focus on supporting local church evangelism by producing high-quality media resources and bridge events.



Photo: Hope Channel International

Korean Adventist Health Food Company Builds Wells and Schools Worldwide

Sahmyook Foods makes a global impact beyond profit, its leaders say.

Jeanne Damasio, ANN, and *Adventist World*

A Seventh-day Adventist health food company in South Korea recently shared its mission to serve beyond its nation's borders. The Sahmyook Foods report took place during the 2024 Annual Council, held at the denomination's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, October 14.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sahmyook has become an example of "how to prioritize and integrate social responsibility into [the church's] activities," Korean Union Conference president Soon Gi Kang said.

Company leaders then shared how a mission focus can be implemented even outside of traditional church settings. Among them, Sahmyook international sales manager Minhyung Kim reported that company leaders "believe that by providing nutritious food, [they're] not just feeding bodies, but supporting overall well-being." Their main goal is to "take health to the world," he said, recognizing that physical well-being can be a pathway to overall wellness, including spiritual growth.

As South Korea's second-largest soymilk producer, the company sees nutrition as only one aspect of its work, Kim said. He explained that businesses can create meaningful social impact by prioritizing community service and education alongside profitability. "Most companies seek large profits, but Sahmyook has a purpose that drives us," Kim said. "We work to support education in South Korea and spread a message of wholistic health. This is our mission."

SAHMYOOK AND "I WILL GO"

With this focus, Sahmyook Foods has ensured that its far-reaching mission integrates the Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic focus, especially as the company seeks to support vulnerable communities.

In the area of education Sahmyook's support extends to 27 institutions across South Korea, including schools, universities, and other learning centers. By directing profits toward these institutions, Sahmyook Foods seeks to uphold a tangible commitment to improving educational access and quality, company leaders said.

LIVING THE MISSION

In an effort to foster a corporate culture that aligns with its spiritual values, Sahmyook encourages its employees to see their work not just as a job but as a calling—an opportunity to make a positive difference in the world.

"Our employees understand that their work goes beyond producing food," Kim said. "They're part of a larger mission to improve lives and spread hope. This sense of purpose energizes our team and infuses everything we do with meaning."

Currently more than 350 employees are personally engaged in community service initiatives, leaders reported. In South Korea employees actively participate in local projects, such as conducting home repairs for vulnerable groups and serving meals to seniors. Internationally volunteer teams from Sahmyook Foods travel to such countries as Cambodia, Mongolia, and Kenya, where they undertake projects such as constructing school facilities, building fences, and installing wells and toilets.

Additionally, Sahmyook Foods plays a significant role in disaster relief across Asia and other continents, providing aid when natural disasters strike, its leaders reported. The company offers both immediate relief and long-term support to affected communities, delivering assistance to those in need regardless of their background or beliefs.



Sahmyook Foods volunteers during a recent service initiative in Cambodia.

Photo: ADRA Cambodia

GC Secretary Calls Leaders to Redouble Efforts, Tackle Mission Challenges

Erton Köhler discusses windows of opportunity for missionaries.

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*



GC secretary Erton Köhler presents his report to the members of the Executive Committee on October 13.

Photo: Tor Tjeransen / Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)

The Secretariat report at the Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC) in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, on October 13 was "a precious time to share with you a picture of our church and its worldwide mission," GC secretary Erton Köhler said. Köhler and his team reported church growth and other figures, but went beyond statistics to review the genesis of Adventist mission, discuss the current state of missionary deployment, and share some of the mission possibilities and challenges.

WHAT STATISTICS SHOW

Accessions to the Adventist Church have fully rebounded after the COVID-19 pandemic, David Trim, director of the GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, said. In 2023 the church welcomed more than 1,465,000 new members. "In fact, 2023 saw the largest number of net accessions of any year in Adventist Church history," Trim said.

At the same time, more than 836,000 left the denomination in 2023 (excluding deaths), the third-highest figure ever recorded. Currently the percentage of members who leave is closer to 43 percent, he reported.

A STEP-BY-STEP UNDERSTANDING

Moving on to the genesis of Adventist mission, Köhler returned to the podium to emphasize how church leaders and members in the mid-nineteenth century went through several stages until they were ready to embrace the call to worldwide mission. He recounted how in 1874, church leaders voted to send J. N. Andrews to Switzerland as the first official missionary.

Despite meager resources and a lack of structure, the church moved forward in faith, Köhler emphasized. "No crisis should stop the advance of world mission. God is the owner of the church and the mission. He always opens doors for His mission to advance," he said.

MOVING MISSION FORWARD

In the last section of his report Köhler referenced Mission Refocus, an initiative of the GC to redirect more funds and resources to the worldwide mission field. This emphasis on frontline mission service has required financial adjustments at all church levels, he acknowledged, but it's already rendering tangible results.

This new emphasis has resulted, among many other initiatives, in the reopening of the Baghdad Seventh-day Adventist Church in Iraq, which had been closed since 2003. This was achieved thanks to a family deployed to serve in that area of the world, Köhler reported. "Mission Refocus is not a dream or a project anymore; it is a reality!" he said.

THREE MISSION WINDOWS

Köhler then delved into what he called "three mission windows" present in every church region around the world. They include the 10/40 window (a region of the world where most of the world's population lives but where Christians are a minority), the post-Christian window, and the urban window. "In your territory you may not have 10/40 window countries, but you do have large unreached or low-reached territories or people groups," he told Adventist leaders.

"It is time to reorganize . . . all our resources, and focus them on our mission," Köhler said. And when we tackle our mission challenges, God will send the resources we need. "Money must follow the mission," and not the other way around, he added. Thus, "we can move forward with boldness, trusting in the Owner of the mission."

Adventists in Kenya Celebrate 150 Years of Worldwide Mission

Event takes place at the site where the first missionaries in the country served.

Benson Okech Ogayo, Kenya Lake Conference, and *Adventist World*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Kenya Lake Conference (KLC), a church administrative region within the West Kenya Union Conference (WKUC) in the East-Central Africa Division (ECD), celebrated a remarkable milestone on September 28—150 years of Adventist mission around the world and almost 120 years of Adventist presence in Kenya.

The special Sabbath event took place at Gendia Primary School, the very site where the first Adventist missionary to work in Kenya began his journey in 1906, creating an atmosphere filled with inspiration and reflection, those present at the celebration said. The event not only honored a rich historical legacy but also showcased the enduring impact of faith, service, and community development that continues to thrive in the region, regional church leaders added.

ECD communication director Emanuel Pelote was the special guest, together with ECD associate secretary Robert Muhune and WKUC secretary Japheth Ochorokodi. The gathering also welcomed representatives from all the Adventist institutions within the KLC, including Kendu Adventist Hospital CEO Philip Gai, and Alvin Eliamani, general manager of the Africa Herald Publishing House. Additionally, frontline pastors, department directors, and church workers attended, contributing to the diverse representation at the gathering.

Adhering to traditional liturgical guidelines, the program was vibrant and uplifting, celebrating the significance of 150 years of dedicated Adventist missionary efforts around the world. At the same time, Ingalish Sati, Churchill Nyakinda, and Polycarp Akoko shared the inspiring history of the Gendia mission, emphasizing how the pioneering work of early missionaries laid the foundation for the thriving church community we see today in the area. Gai also recounted the rich history of Kendu Adventist Hospital, formerly known as Gendia Hospital, highlighting its vital role in the region's health care and spiritual mission.

Ochorokodi commended the KLC "for its steadfast commitment to missionary work," highlighting "the profound impact of their efforts in advancing the church's mission and addressing the spiritual and social needs of the local population."



ECD communication director Emmanuel Pelote preaches at the commemorative event in western Kenya.

Photo: Lake Union Conference, West Kenya Union Conference

The highlight of the event was Pelote's compelling sermon, attendees said. He passionately recounted the life of John N. Andrews, detailing the challenges and triumphs of this pioneering missionary. "Move beyond merely being church members and actively embrace your role as missionaries in communities," Pelote urged the congregation. He called for humility and a Christ-centered approach to leadership, encouraging all to allow Jesus to reign in their lives.

The September 28 event served as a reminder of the transformative power of faith and the importance of continued dedication to mission work, which has significantly contributed to education, health care, and spiritual growth in the region, regional church leaders emphasized. "As the mission in this area celebrates . . . Adventist work, it stands as a testimony to the enduring legacy of those early missionaries and the ongoing commitment of the Adventist community to uplift and empower the people of the area," they said.

Following Pelote's message, Robert Muhune reinforced these themes. He challenged the congregation to deepen their faith and distinguish between mere attendance and genuine discipleship. Muhune invited attendees to step forward, pledging to transform their lives by committing to the true path of faith and resisting worldly distractions, church leaders reported. "This call to action underscored the event's significance as not simply a celebration but a renewed commitment to the mission of the church in the years to come," they said.

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

Mission Focus



GC Adventist Mission director Gary Krause discusses the state of Adventist volunteering.

Photo: Photo: Tor Tjeransen / Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)

Missionary Deployment Unveils Changes, Possibilities

Adventist Mission leader describes emphasis on frontline work.

"Recently Montgomery County in Maryland was named the most religiously diverse county in the United States," Adventist Mission director Gary Krause said on October 13. Addressing the General Conference Executive Committee (EXCOM) members at the 2024 Annual Council, Krause reminded church leaders that the General Conference headquarters—the venue for the annual business meeting in Silver Spring—is located within the boundaries of the county.

"Within about a 20-minute drive of this building you'll find at least 10 Hindu or Jain temples . . . and at least 13 mosques and Islamic centers. In fact, just up the road from us here is an international Muslim TV station."

Because of forced displacements, voluntary across-borders migration, and internal migration from rural to urban areas, diversity of ethnicity and religion has substantially increased in many places, Krause explained.

A RATIONALE FOR MISSION REFOCUS

According to Krause, the current situation provides a rationale for the Mission Refocus that the Adventist Church faces today in the 10/40 window (a region of the world where most people live but where Christians are a minority), the post-Christian window, and the urban window. Almost every church region has been impacted by these windows to some extent, he said.

The Mission Refocus windows are mission challenges but also mission opportunities, Krause said. He shared some data about frontline missionaries, including 2,500 Global Mission pioneers, 79 so-called tentmakers in the 10/40 window, and 774 Adventist Volunteer Services volunteers.

Yet there's much more that could be done, Krause said. As an example, he mentioned that VividFaith, the church office that connects prospective volunteers with volunteer positions around the world, has a list of more than 17,000 interests, but less than 800 volunteer opportunities. "Imagine the creativity, the youth, the energy, the ideas represented by that 17,000. Imagine if that number were unleashed into service! What a difference to churches, schools, communities, evangelistic programs, health initiatives, struggling entities in your region of the world. But for whatever reasons, we're not harnessing that gold mine of young, eager, willing talent," Krause lamented.

A MISSIONARY SHIFT

As world church divisions adjust their budgets to assign more funds to frontline missionaries, the world church is processing names of missionaries willing to tackle the greatest challenges. Some regions are also enlisting the assistance of other regions. "Eight sponsoring divisions and unions are funding missionaries and mission initiatives in 10 other divisions and unions," Krause reported.

One of the first Mission Refocus missionaries to go into the field is Robert Folkenberg III, who in November moved with his wife and young daughters from Canada to Denmark to focus on church planting in that secular post-Christian window.

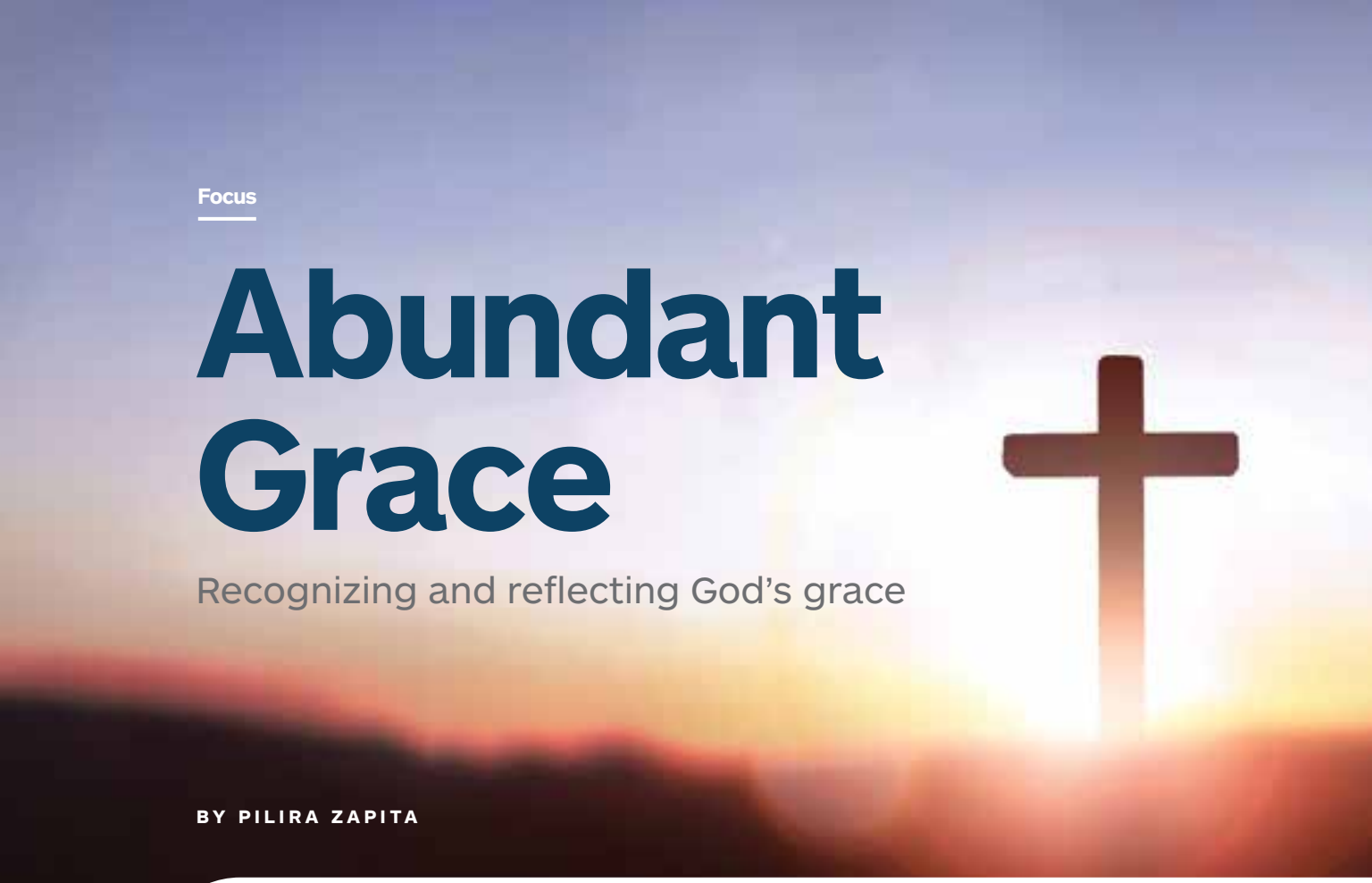
Prior to this, Folkenberg was a church planter for four and a half years in Squamish, British Columbia, a community known for its high levels of secularism.

Folkenberg explained that through this experience, he and his family have become "very passionate about the potential and power of church planting." Now, with God's help, they expect to repeat that experience in post-Christian Copenhagen, he said.

Focus

Abundant Grace

Recognizing and reflecting God's grace



BY PILIRA ZAPITA

I was once asked during an interview, "If you had to choose one theme to preach on, what would it be?" I instantly replied, while my eyes welled, "God's grace. No competition. Grace."

Years before this interview, grace may not have featured as promptly as an answer. God took me through a paradigm shift to get me to where grace takes prominence in my life.

MY JOURNEY

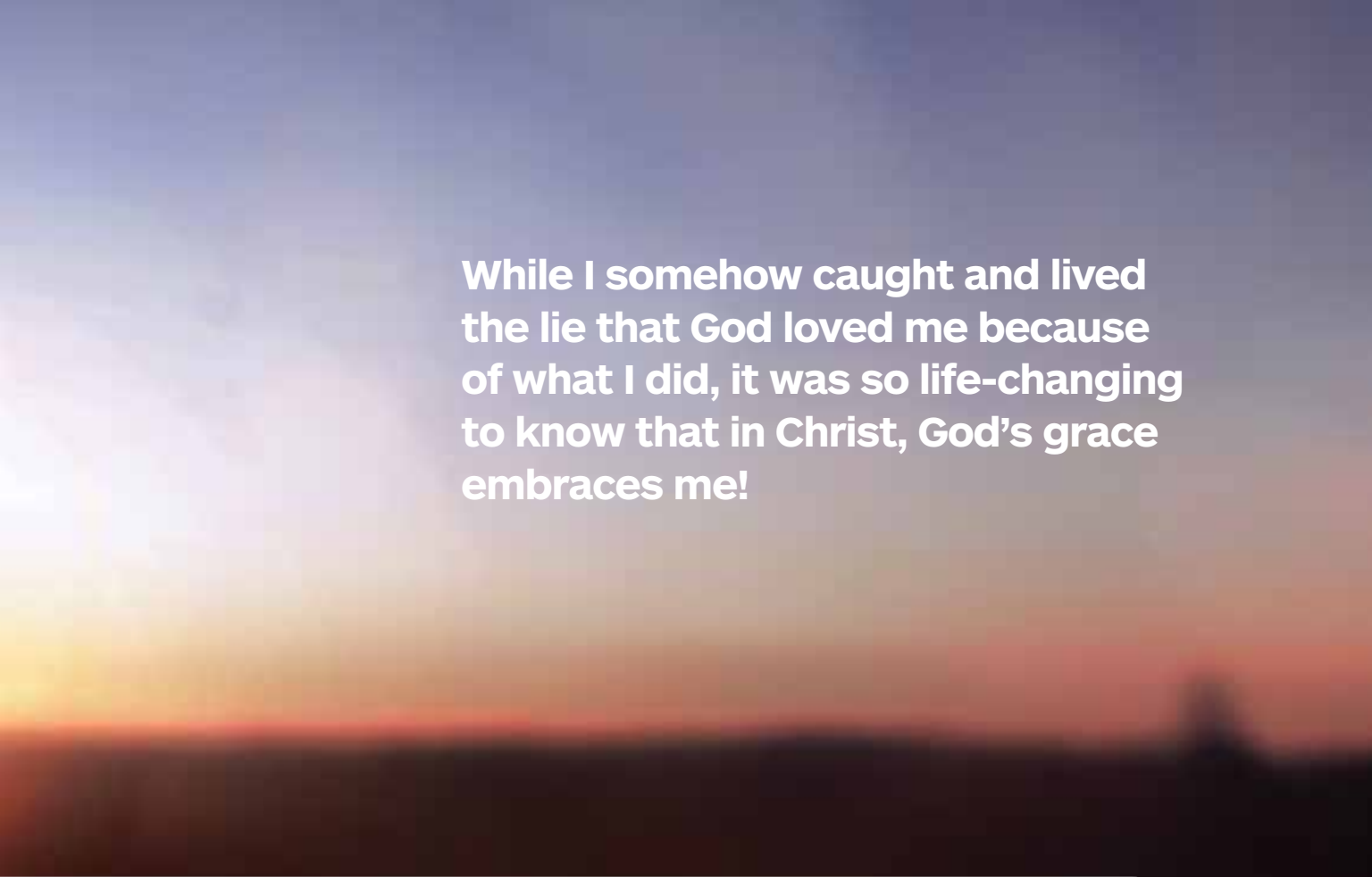
I'm Pilira, and I'm a recovering legalist. When God started me on this current journey, Paul's epistle to the Romans had already changed my life. This shift happened quite unexpectedly.

I am a third-generation Adventist who grew up on *The Bible Story* and *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. My maternal granddad was an Adventist pastor, and my dad was raised by his uncle, who was also an Adventist pastor. My parents were committed Christians and church leaders who loved Jesus and people. The central artwork in our lounge was a portrait of Christ with a crown of thorns, which, despite its sad expression, kept alive the truth of Christ's love and sacrificial death. In our dining room was a plaque reminding us, at every mealtime, that "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal; the silent listener to every conversation." Because I have always loved words, I never tired of reading it, and naturally, its impact on my life was not lost. Unfortunately, though, I did not quite see it as Christ the loving companion and friend, but more like "Be careful what you say! He's listening!" All in all, since childhood my young heart was drawn to God. I loved Jesus so much and really wanted to please Him.

I garnered a lot of scriptural knowledge over the years, but without realizing it, I was, nevertheless, drawn into the world of legalism, with its exclusivist, critical, judgmental, and holier-than-thou attitude. Not that I was a horrible person. I just often thought, *How God must love me because I'm such a good Adventist young woman!*

Slowly God started challenging my self-righteousness and condemnation of other people that I thought were not good enough because they did not match me in every belief and practice. These piece-by-piece stirrings of grace climaxed when an Adventist pastor and scholar from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, in Kenya, came to our church for a weeklong series on the book of Romans. He challenged us from the start that "if you understand this message I'm sharing with you, your lives will never be the same again!" Now a grown woman, I responded with the cynicism I had developed over the years, even saying to my husband, "It's the same old same old. What will he tell us that we don't already know?" I had no idea

Photo: Shuang Paul Wang / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images



While I somehow caught and lived the lie that God loved me because of what I did, it was so life-changing to know that in Christ, God's grace embraces me!

God was just about to shake the foundation of my theology!

By the time that week finished, a new season had launched in my life—an era of progressively unpeeling this incredible reality called grace! For a few months afterward I cried so much as I asked God, "How did I miss this?" I would later realize that some church literature and the lens of interpretation I had used, however well meaning, obscured the fact that the biblical story screams, "God is gracious and passionately in love with you!" The interpretation lens I used instead screamed, "Keep God's laws, and He will love you. If you are not good enough to earn His favor, He will reject you!" I somehow missed seeing the law as a fruit of relationship with God and evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence and power, not a way to earn His approval.

This experience opened my eyes to many new realities, but I can share only a few.

First, I am loved, accepted, and secure, and have assurance of salvation, in Christ. While I somehow caught and lived the lie that God loved me because of what I did, it was so life-changing to know that in Christ, God's grace embraces me! What a massive relief it was that I cannot earn my way to God, and I happily exchanged performance with grace. It started the lifelong process of true discipleship: learning, unlearning, and relearning, with the joy of watching God unpeel numerous lies I had come to believe about Him, myself, other people, the church, and the world over the years!

Next, I was drawn into the heart of Christ's farewell discourses in John 13-17. The change from work-centered to relationship-centered spirituality birthed in me a hunger for that union of abiding in Christ. It was not long before I realized the reality of Christ's words "Apart from Me you can do *nothing*" (John 15:5, NASB).[1] As God's Spirit brought me face-to-face with my vulnerable inner life, I discovered that my only hope was to lean on Christ's total sufficiency. Legalism had inadvertently taught me condemnation of myself and others, guilt, shame, and the underlying sense that I just was not and would never be good enough. Jesus started replacing that with forgiveness, hope, acceptance, honor, security, and dignity, recognizing that as long as I come to Christ in faith, I can be assured that *He* will forgive and cleanse me (1 John 1:9) and complete the good work He has started in me (Phil. 1:6).

AN UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCE

The paradigm shift that replaced an imperceptible legalistic religion with a relationship-centered spirituality had consequences I did not expect, beyond those that impacted me personally. One of

them was the deep compassion that God's Spirit evoked in me toward the "erring." Something shifted in me as I now saw myself as belonging in the same position as all "sinners" (see Rom. 3:23, 24), especially those some cast stones at through words, silence, actions, and nonactions. I had been blind to the extent of my self-righteousness and exclusivity. God started lending me His lens when looking at people, especially those experiencing complex issues because we live in a fallen and broken world. I started relating differently to those I had been taught, however inadvertently, to shun, avoid, and label. Some people thought, and still think, that I am too tolerant and condone sin. What they do not understand is that my heart was led to look beyond people's faults and see their priceless worth that is obscured by all life's brokenness. Our need of God's abundant grace is equal, and we can share this revolutionary gift as freely as God gives, and we receive it.

WHAT IS GRACE?

Some words and concepts associated with the Hebrew noun *khen*, and the Greek word *charis*, both often translated as grace, are favor, attractiveness, rejoicing, kindness, delightful, "God freely extending Himself . . . reaching (inclining) to people because He is disposed to bless (be near) them."[2] About Jesus, John writes, "For out of His fullness (abundance) we have all received [all had a share and we were all supplied with] one grace after another and spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing and even favor upon favor and gift [heaped] upon gift" (John 1:16, AMPC).[3] This is God's unlimited, expansive, free, and wholesome generosity poured out on the world.

THE SCANDAL OF GRACE AND THE PROBLEM OF "UNGRACE"

In a world full of "ungrace," as Philip Yancey calls it,[4] the idea of receiving something without merit sounds inconceivable, absurd, and unpalatable. The culture of the world, driven by a broad spectrum of ideologies and religions that demand works to earn something, finds the concept and reality of a gift that costs everything to the giver, and given freely to the recipient, laughable and impossible. Performance-drivenness seems inherent in many cultures and religions, and is often internalized through systemic processes that celebrate and reward those who work hard, and somehow punish those who seemingly do not. I am not aiming to critique this way of thinking and doing by saying this, but to emphasize how it is so inherent in life that accepting God's free gift of grace becomes very difficult. Yet Scripture very clearly teaches, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9, NASB).

Examples of "ungrace" among us are numerous, from the personal to the systemic. Some have argued that "ungrace" is even more prevalent among those who claim to follow Christ, for, as history has shown, when one believes God has endorsed or mandated something, one might also mistakenly think that hate-fueled division and passion that even kills, both metaphorically and literally, is justified. Yet many theologians have argued that grace is Christianity's best gift to the world. How do we reconcile this?

However "ungrace" manifests in all of us, it reveals our shared need of grace. The Bible claims that there is no one righteous (Rom. 3:10) and that our hearts can deceive us about our true condition (Jer. 17:9). These and many other biblical texts emphasize that the problem with our fallen nature needs more than behavior modification. Only Christ's redemptive grace and righteousness are sufficient to atone for both the internal and external battles we face daily—against spiritual pride, judgmentalism, anger, unforgiveness, and the underlying feeling that we must somehow earn God's approval.

WHAT DOES GRACE LOOK LIKE?

Let's briefly try to answer this question through the lens of how Jesus lived on earth, God in human flesh who was saturated with the presence and power of God's Spirit.

There seems to be consensus among scholars that the four Gospels target different faith communities and therefore contain different emphases. I propose, however, that they all emphasize and agree on how Jesus loved. His love was radical, inclusive, and outside-the-box, pulling the outcasts, marginalized, and ostracized into His circle (see Matt. 9:10-13; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 7:36-50; John 4:4-42): they felt comfortable around Him! While some scholars note that He did not target "politics" in the contemporary sense of the word, Christ's revolutionary life was very political. See how He got in trouble with the religious and political systemic powers of His day; it ultimately cost Him His life. This countercultural Christ revealed in the Gospels was the personification of God's abundant grace, and altogether the Gospels portray Jesus having His harshest rebukes, not on the erring, strugglers, and outsiders, but on those who had been

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made custodians of God's grace but had totally misrepresented Him. Instead of prioritizing relationships over rulebooks, mercy over moral demands, a loving community over a judgmental and exclusive one, they had distorted the picture of God. Jesus brought the healing view of God we all need to know and experience: God is abundantly gracious and inclusive!

HOW THEN CAN WE NOT SHOW GRACE?

I started this article by sharing my journey to grace-consciousness. It transformed my life, gave me dignity, removed an underlying sense of shame, and affirmed me to live life from the place of God's steadfast love. Over the years, though, as I deepen in my knowledge, understanding, and experience of God's grace, I realize how much grace will always matter to me. I note how impatient I can become with people who are where I used to be—legalistic, exclusive, judgmental, and critical toward those most in need of God's transforming grace. While my heart has increasingly bled with the horrible suffering, injustice, systemic oppression, pain, despair, poverty, sin, and evil in its numerous manifestations, I have realized my need for grace so that I can also be inclined toward those who are still on the journey of unlearning, learning, and relearning; those I believe should know better. As we are all on a journey, we are challenged to continually receive and give grace.

Currently I am living out God's call on my life to speak out against systemic oppression and social injustices, specifically through the lens of God's Spirit of wholistic life. Yet this same Spirit who ignites my passion to challenge ourselves as accountable to God on how we treat each other also calls me to embody grace toward those whose opinions I passionately disagree with. Grace does not mean critiques should not be given or left unsaid; otherwise, the strong biblical prophetic voices would not exist, nor would Jesus' prophetic voice toward the religious leaders of His time. Grace, though, while fervently offering a corrective, also fosters inclusive, all-embracing love, quite revolutionary in a world increasingly polarized by power and systems that perpetuate hate against the "other." If we remember that none of us will ever equal Christ's perfection this side of eternity, we will uphold and cling to God's grace, Christ's all-sufficiency, and the indwelling Spirit. Then, when we fail, forgiveness and restoration are never obscured, because we know that our performance will never earn us God's love. God remains abundantly loving, gracious, generous, faithful, and willing to forgive all who repent and accept His love. That grace-infused perspective, rather than a legalistic one that seeks the impossible goal of *earning* grace, is what I choose to embody for the rest of my life!

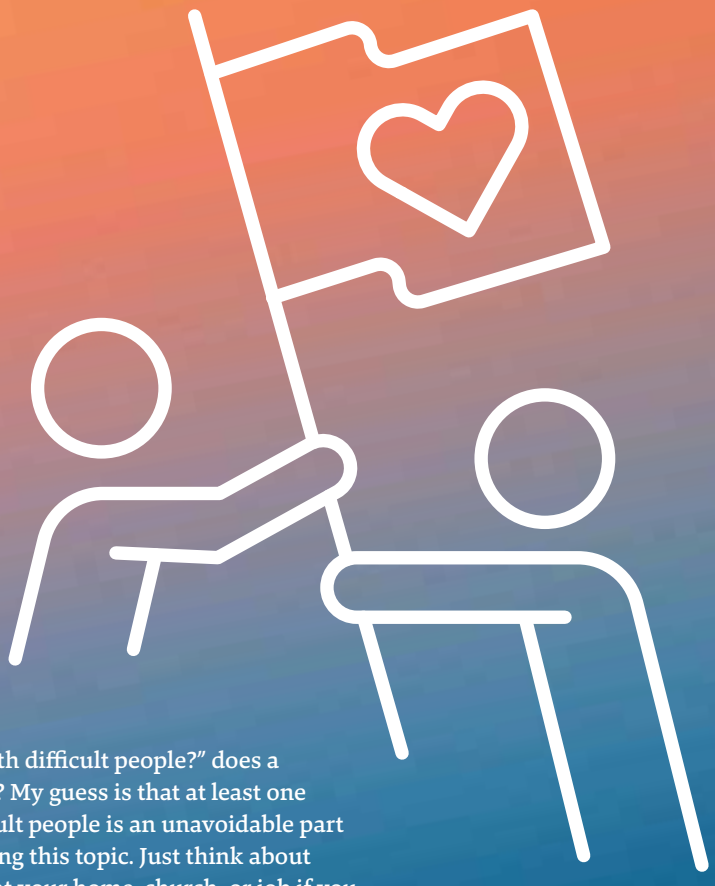
[1] Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.
[2] HELPS Word Studies, https://biblehub.com/greek/5485.htm.
[3] Scripture quotations credited to AMPC are taken from *Amplified Bible, Classic Edition*, copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
[4] Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* revised and updated (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023).

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If we remember that none of us will ever equal Christ's perfection this side of eternity, we will uphold and cling to God's grace, Christ's all-sufficiency, and the indwelling Spirit.

Extra Grace

Dealing with "difficult" people



BY K'DEE CREWS

When asked, "How do you deal with difficult people?" does a particular person come to mind? My guess is that at least one person does. Dealing with difficult people is an unavoidable part of life, so everyone can benefit by considering this topic. Just think about how different your relationships would be at your home, church, or job if you knew how to deal with difficult people.

Whenever relationships are discussed, it is always important to recognize that one cannot fix or control others. Therefore, this article will focus on what we can control as we explore seven practical steps to deal with difficult people.



1. SELF-EXAMINE

When dealing with difficult people, one must first look in the mirror and ask, "Am *I* the difficult person?" According to Pamela Meyer, author and expert on lying, we self-deceive about 10 to 200 times a day![1] We read in Jeremiah 17:9 that "the heart [mind] is *deceitful* above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" A common form of self-deception is projection. Projection is thinking that others have negative qualities that you yourself have. We may think others are difficult because we have projected our difficulty onto them. As a psychologist, I regularly find my clients projecting. They rant about a spouse, child, coworker, pastor, or even customer service agents they view as difficult, while they are clearly the one being difficult.

Jesus describes the importance of self-examination in Matthew 7:3: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (NIV). To be more direct: "Why do you label your 'brother' as 'difficult' and don't realize that *you* are being 'difficult'?" Jesus then admonishes His listeners in verse 5 to "first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (NIV). Work on your difficulty *first*, and then you can discern others' difficulties and how to deal with them. Pray Psalm 139:23, 24: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (NIV).

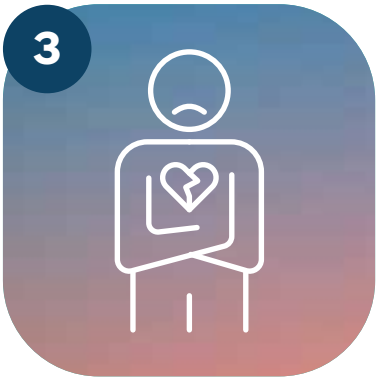
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2. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

People often say, "That *person* made me angry," or "*They* triggered me." This is not entirely true. They can influence how you feel, but no one can *make* you feel anything. Instead of blaming others, accept responsibility for your response and then ask, "What in *me* is triggered by this person?" The most emotionally mature are those who are self-aware and take responsibility for themselves. Even if your judgment of the difficult person is correct, there are things that *you* can own and change.

When you are triggered, do not give a difficult person power by reacting. Difficult people are powerless without your reaction. When I was young, my older brother would tickle my older sister and me. Because of my sister's hysterical reaction, he would (you guessed it) tickle her more. Observing this, I denied that I was ticklish when others would ask, or, with every fiber of my being, attempt not to laugh or squirm when they tickled me. By refusing to react, others lost power over me. The same applies to dealing with difficult people. Do not give them power by reacting, whether in the moment or later by dwelling on what they did or venting about it.



3. REDEFINE "DIFFICULT"

An essential step in dealing with difficult people is removing the "difficult" label you assigned. Labeling is a form of judgment in which we take one characteristic or action of a person and apply it to the whole person. A common label and buzzword today is "narcissist." People may have traits of narcissism, but to label someone as a "narcissist" portrays them as if this is the entirety of who they are. This is Satan's agenda, because labels condemn others to the fate of that label and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The same applies when we label others as "difficult." They might think, *I've been labeled as "difficult," so why change?*

Labels also tend to segregate people based on race ("blacks" versus "whites"), religion ("conservatives" versus "liberals"), political beliefs, and more. Likewise, segregation arises when people label others as "difficult." We should ask ourselves, What would Jesus do? Jesus fought against alienating labels in His time and saw people's hearts (see Gal. 3:28).

"The Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance [the difficulties], but the Lord looks on the heart [the deep wounds and brokenness]" (1 Sam. 16:7, RSV; cf. 2 Cor. 5:16).[2] Instead of an "us" (the nondifficult) versus "them" (the difficult) mentality, we must realize that we are all "difficult" sinners who have fallen short of His glory (Rom. 3:23), and the same underserved grace we have received we are to extend to others. Let's be like God and remove the label of "difficult," starting now. This article will now refer to "difficult people" as people who need extra grace. They are "extra-grace-required people," or EGRs.



4. CONNECT AND LISTEN

One major blessing of my job as a psychologist is listening to people's stories. As I see behind the curtain of their lives, empathy and compassion spring up within me, instead of judgment and frustration. Although you may not have the same opportunity to hear people's stories daily, everyone can connect, ask, and listen to others. Don't judge them, but listen and be patient. As James 1:19 says: "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

Bo Bennett, an author on critical thinking, has said, "If you want plenty of experience in dealing with difficult people, then have kids."[3] Like children, EGRs usually have underdeveloped emotional and social skills. Perhaps we need to view EGRs with new eyes, as precious children who need our love and care to continue their

development. In God's eyes we are all children, and He wants the children to come to Him.

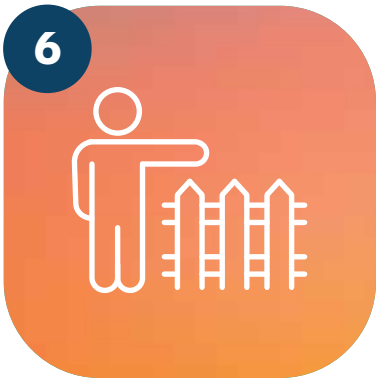
Connecting and listening creates not only empathy for the weaknesses of people but also opportunities to perceive their strengths. Jesus recognized both the weaknesses and strengths in people. He had compassion for their brokenness while also cultivating the good in them. We need to do the same for EGRs. Although someone may have interpersonal challenges, they may be gifted in other ways that can further ministry. There is a need for everyone in the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:12-27).



5. DEFINE THE DIFFICULTY

As you listen, instead of labeling, you can better define the problem interfering with your relationship. Several things may contribute to problematic interactions. Someone may suffer from a physical or psychological disorder or have a different personality, lifestyle, belief system, or culture than you. By identifying which of these options are causing the difficult interaction, you could then determine an appropriate solution.

Solutions are not one-size-fits-all. There are many variables. Much depends on your relationship with the EGR, whether with a family member, a church member, someone with authority, or a stranger. You should also consider the frequency of your interactions and your objective for the relationship. If the relationship is with a customer service agent you rarely see, and the main objective is to return a purchased item, then your approach would be very different than if the relationship is with your boss, with whom you interact frequently. Last, you need to consider what interactions the EGR is capable of. Are they capable of responding to requested boundaries? Too often people are frustrated at an EGR when it becomes apparent that they are not capable of acting differently. Let people teach you who they are and what they are capable of, and set your expectations accordingly.



6. SET BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are necessary for dealing with EGRs and for all relationships. A great guiding principle for boundaries in the Bible is revealed in God's character—a balance of justice and mercy (Ps. 85:10; Micah 6:8; Matt. 23:23). Human love is often imbalanced; we tend to emphasize one and neglect the other. When dealing with EGRs, most Christians fall on the side of too much grace (i.e., loose or no boundaries) until they reach their breaking point ("I've had enough") and then swing entirely to justice (i.e., rigid boundaries, such as cutting the person out of their life altogether). Balancing justice and mercy will depend on the person and the situation. Let the Holy Spirit, not your biased judgment, guide you in setting boundaries.

In the same way, we must find a balance between justice and mercy; we are to find a balance in caring for others *and* ourselves. The guiding principle for this in God's Word is to love our neighbors as *ourselves* (Mark 12:31). We cannot love others if we do not love and care for ourselves. Compassion fatigue and burnout are inevitable without regular and routine self-care. Even Jesus needed to set boundaries of self-care when dealing with the EGRs of His time (e.g., argumentative disciples, accusatory leaders, needy broken people, etc.). Jesus often retreated from the multitude to the wilderness (Luke 5:15, 16), the mountainside (Matt. 14:23), or a solitary place (Matt. 14:13; Mark 1:35). He also found refreshment among safe, trusted friends. As Ellen White points out: "Jesus had often found the rest that His weary human nature required at the house of Lazarus, in Bethany."[4] Setting and communicating boundaries is only half the battle. The more challenging half is then enforcing and reinforcing boundaries.[5]

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7. SEEK COUNSEL

Since there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the diversity of EGRs you will encounter, you will need to seek support and counsel. First, seek counsel from God. Through prayer, Bible study, and experience, the Holy Spirit can guide you. Second, seek counsel from objective, trusted individuals.

When I was in seventh grade, my best friend was confiding in me about her mental health issues, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts. She made me promise that I wouldn't tell a soul. Her struggles weighed so heavily on me that I began to exhibit signs of depression. Taking notice of this, my sister asked me what was wrong. The dam I had held back for so long broke as tears poured down my face. I'll never forget my sister's response: "K'dee, you are not responsible for your friend's struggles and life." My sister validated my desire to care for my friend while permitting me to set boundaries in caring for myself. It was as if Jesus Himself were speaking to me, saying, "I see your caring heart, K'dee. But I am her Savior, not you. Give her over to Me." I then shared my friend's struggles with a trusted adult at school, and not only was a huge weight lifted off my shoulders, but my friend's needs were better met.

God calls us to help others, but we are not responsible for them. Do what you can, and give the rest to God and others.

The value of the prize determines the volume of the pain you are willing to endure.

MY TESTIMONY

In conclusion, I want to share a personal story of the power of utilizing God's principles to not just deal with but love an EGR.

In high school I was bullied and often a loner. Although these were challenging years, they shaped me to be empathic, and kindled a desire to befriend outcasts. In graduate school I experienced my most challenging friendship with an EGR. The local Adventist community graciously tolerated his presence at social gatherings, but no one wanted to be his friend. I will admit that I even struggled to continue our friendship at times. One day this friend opened up to me about his childhood. He shared the neglect and abandonment he had experienced and how he now purposely tested others to see if they would also abandon him. He said, "K'dee, I know I have tested and pushed you away. And somehow you have never left me. I understand God's unconditional love more because of your friendship. You have no idea how much it means to me. I'm sorry for being so difficult. I just don't know how not to push anymore."

Friendships with EGRs are not easy, but they can be extremely rewarding. I still cherish that dear friend and am thankful for what such relationships have taught me about God and His love for us. My husband often says, "The value of the prize determines the volume of the pain you are willing to endure." You were worth the pain of the cross. The healing my friend experiences because of God's love through me is worth the pain of a challenging friendship. I hope you will accept the challenge to love, care, and bring healing to an EGR. May God bless you with the patience, compassion, grace, justice, and love that will equip you to thrive in dealing with and loving EGRs!

[1] See Pamela Meyer, *Liespotting: Proven Techniques to Detect Deception* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011).
[2] Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.
[3] See, further, Bo Bennett, *Year to Success: When It Comes to Success, There Are No Shortcuts* (Sadbury, Mass.: Archieboy Holdings, 2004).
[4] Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), p. 57. For further insights on self-care in ministry, read the chapter entitled "Danger From Overwork" in Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), pp. 243-246.
[5] For further insights on boundaries, see Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

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Global View

A Planet in Need

No one knows exactly how many planets are in the universe, but astronomers estimate that our galaxy, the Milky Way, alone contains more than 100 *billion* planets![1] Adding to this number, scientists tell us there are at least 100 *billion* galaxies in the observable universe, so the number of planets could even be in the *trillions*! These numbers, however, are based on observations of a small part of the universe, so the true number of planets is likely far greater.[2] Amazingly, in addition to planets, astronomers estimate there are about 100 *billion* stars in the Milky Way alone, with approximately 200 *billion trillion* (200,000,000,000,000,000,000,000) stars beyond.[3]

Photo: titoOnz / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

Somewhere in the midst of this sparkling universe, God came down and created this speck of a planet we know as "Earth."

"Let there be light," He said, "and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). After filling this world with light and life, His crowning act was to "create man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27).

Everything was perfect—until it wasn't. Choosing sin over their Creator, our first parents plunged this planet into suffering and sorrow; the first and only planet to experience the separation that rebellion brings.

HE CHOSE EXTRA GRACE

With unnumbered inhabited worlds at His command, Christ could have simply extinguished this one tiny, rebellious planet instantly—but He didn't. Instead, He chose to show extra grace to His difficult creatures by coming to this ungrateful planet where He would live and die that we might one day live forever with Him.

So, one night as the stars He created shone high overhead, the King of the universe was born in a stable full of animals and laid in a feeding trough. It was to no golden throne that He came to reign. He was "despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isa. 53:3).

Throughout His life Christ showed patience, compassion, love, and extra grace to all. Even as those He came to save nailed Him to the cruel cross, the words, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do" came from His quivering lips (Luke 23:34).

Hanging between heaven and earth, one of Christ's last acts of love was to remain on the cross while all the demons of hell swirled around Him, tempting Him to withdraw His unfathomable grace from those who were spitting in His face and go home to His Father—but He didn't. Showing extra grace until the very end, Christ gave His life so that all who choose Him may live.

UNITED IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Ascending to heaven, Christ did not forget those He came to save. Father and Son are united in the plan of salvation.

"The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy intelligences, all waiting to do His will. Through channels which we cannot discern He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. But it is in this speck of a world, in the souls that He gave His only-begotten Son to save, that His interest and the interest of all heaven is centered. God is bending from His throne to hear the cry of the oppressed. To every sincere prayer He answers, 'Here am I.' He uplifts the distressed and downtrodden. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. In every temptation and every trial the angel of His presence is near to deliver."[4]

A NEW COMMANDMENT

Amazing grace! But there is more. The night before His death, Jesus told His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35).

One of the most powerful ways of revealing love is by showing grace to others. Is there someone you know—a friend, family member, coworker, someone at church, a neighbor, even a stranger—who needs extra grace from you today? It can sometimes be difficult, but let us remember our Lord's promise: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Throughout His life Christ showed patience, compassion, love, and extra grace to all.

Brothers and sisters, as we step into a new year, I invite you to join me in taking the opportunity to ask God for the extra grace that we all require, and to allow Him to use each one of us to extend His marvelous grace to a world so desperately in need.

[1] Big Think, "How Many Planets Are There in the Universe?" *Big Think*, accessed Oct. 3, 2024, https://bigthink.com/starts-with-a-bang/planets-universe/.
[2] NASA, "Billions and Billions of Planets," *NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory*, accessed Oct. 3, 2024, https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/billions-and-billions-of-planets/.
[3] "How Many Stars Are in the Universe?" accessed Oct. 3, 2024. https://bit.ly/HowManyStarsintheUniverse.
[4] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn. 1898, 1940), p. 356.

Ted N. C. Wilson is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Additional articles and commentaries are available on X (formerly Twitter): @pastortedwilson and on Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.



Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

Ellen G. White and the Mandate for Adventist Mission

A visionary blueprint for global evangelism

If one word can describe Adventism, it is "mission." The entire Advent movement was driven by a commitment to proclaiming that Jesus was coming soon. This missionary spirit inspired many early Millerites to sell their possessions in order to spread the good news of Jesus' imminent return. They believed that if Jesus were to come in just a few years, the world needed to hear about it.

After the Great Disappointment on October 22, 1844, the small Sabbatarian Adventist group maintained the Millerite enthusiasm for Jesus' soon return, even though many Millerites abandoned their belief. Gradually the Sabbathkeepers understood that this message was meant to be shared with the entire world. The three angels' messages of Revelation 14, God's final appeal to His earthly children, became the driving force behind all their actions.

Ellen White, a key founder of the movement, emerged as the most influential force guiding the missionary mandate of the early Sabbath believers. Her visionary leadership inspired the church to adopt effective strategies for spreading the three angels' messages globally. As a result, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown into a worldwide community of believers, with more than 22 million members worldwide.

FROM ANTI-MISSION PEOPLE TO A GLOBAL MISSIONARY VISION

It may be surprising, but early Sabbathkeeping believers did not prioritize mission work immediately after the Great Disappointment. They adhered to the "shut door" doctrine of the Millerites, which stated that no others could be saved after October 22, 1844. This belief was based on the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25, where the door was "shut" when the bridegroom (Jesus) appeared, leaving some outside. As Miller explained, the shut door signified "the closing up of the mediatorial kingdom and finishing the gospel period."[1] This understanding persisted for several years.

By the early 1850s Sabbathkeeping Adventists shifted from a "shut door" to an "open door" missionary understanding. James White wrote in the *Review and Herald*: "This OPEN DOOR we teach, and invite those who have an ear to hear to come to it and find salvation through Jesus Christ. . . . If it be said that we are of the OPEN DOOR and seventh-day Sabbath theory, we shall not object; for this is our faith."[2] But it was Ellen White's prophetic guidance that gave the church a fourfold missionary mandate that became a blueprint for its successful mission, a model still implemented by Seventh-day Adventists today.

ELLEN WHITE AND THE FOURFOLD MISSIONARY MANDATE

The first mandate marked the beginning of publishing work. In November 1848 Ellen White had a vision in Dorchester,

Photo: Ellen G. White Estate

The Western Health Reform Institute opened in Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S.A., in 1866, one of the four Adventist missionary mandates.

Massachusetts. Following the vision she urged her husband, James, to start printing "a little paper to send out to the people." She foretold it would be "like streams of light that went clear around the world."[3] In July 1849 James White published the first volume of the *Present Truth*. A year later he launched the *Advent Review*, which soon merged with *Present Truth* to become *The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. At that time publications were the most advanced form of communication. Consequently, the *Review and Herald* became an essential evangelistic tool, spreading the "present truth." Today the paper continues as the *Adventist Review*, read by millions worldwide, embodying that vision of "streams of light" reaching around the globe.

The second mandate was the push for an official organization. As people began joining the movement, the need for organization became evident. By the 1860s organizing was necessary to hold property, address theological issues, support traveling preachers, and conduct mission more effectively. Ellen White emphasized the need for "order" and "system" in God's work on earth to carry forward "the last great message of mercy to the world."[4] On May 21, 1863, the Sabbathkeeping Adventist group organized into the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, with mission at its core.

The third mandate was the development of the Adventist health ministry as a practical tool to support Adventist mission. In the early 1860s Ellen White had two visions emphasizing health and lifestyle. Her 1863 vision revealed the need for health reform, while the 1865 vision advised integrating health into the mission of the church. "The health reform, I was shown, is a part of the third angel's message and is just as closely connected with it as are the arm and hand with the human body," Ellen White wrote.[5] Furthermore, she advocated building health institutions to heal people wholistically—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Today Adventist health ministry is a significant part of the church's identity and mission and is the largest Protestant health system globally.

Ellen White's fourth mandate was her push for Adventist education. The discussion about Adventist education began with the need for trained missionaries. In 1869, when a newly formed group of Adventists in Europe requested a minister, the church realized its lack of qualified personnel. This led to establishing its Missionary Society, aimed at spreading the third angel's message through missionaries, papers, books, and tracts.

Ellen White also appealed for young people to learn other languages and work as missionaries. In 1872 she published "Proper Education," a tract advocating the establishment of Adventist schools to train and send missionaries.[6] In 1874 Battle Creek College was founded to prepare missionaries. "It is not for the purpose of making a show, or for reputation, that we desire this," an announcement was shared in the *Review*. "We believe the Lord is coming soon, and this is one great reason why our people should prepare themselves to sound the message everywhere."[7]

THE IMPACT OF THE FOURFOLD MISSIONARY MANDATE

The fourfold methodology of the Seventh-day Adventist mission, initiated by Ellen White, played a significant role in the growth of the Adventist Church. The publishing ministry, the official organization, the health ministry, and education were all mandates for mission. These pillars became the blueprint for Adventist missionary work worldwide, resulting in a global Seventh-day Adventist movement.

The fourfold methodology of the Seventh-day Adventist mission, initiated by Ellen White, played a significant role in the growth of the Adventist Church.

The church continues to use the fourfold model today as its mission remains central to its vitality. However, it is the missionary spirit of each Adventist member that can make the ultimate difference in missionary success. As Ellen White stated: "Go to work, whether you feel like it or not. Engage in personal effort to bring souls to Jesus and the knowledge of the truth. In such labor you will find both a stimulant and a tonic; it will both arouse and strengthen. By exercise, your spiritual powers will become more vigorous, so that you can, with better success, work out your own salvation."[8] This enduring commitment to mission keeps the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its members spiritually alive and active in their global outreach efforts.

[1] William Miller, *Evidence From Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1843: Exhibited in a Course of Lectures* (Troy, N.Y.: Kemble and Hooper, 1836), p. 192.
[2] James White, "Call at the Harbinger Office," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 17, 1852, p. 95.
[3] Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 125.
[4] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 191.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 486.
[6] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 131-160.
[7] G. I. Butler, "What Use Shall We Make of Our School?" *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1874, p. 45.
[8] Ellen G. White, "The True Missionary Spirit," *Review and Herald*, July 10, 1883, p. 433.

Theodore (Ted) N. Levterov is an associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate.



Faith in Action

The Last Step of Faith

Baptism, doubt, and a miraculous healing

The flashing light on the church's answering machine drew me to the far side of the room. It was a hospital chaplain. An elderly woman with an Adventist background had been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. She wanted to ensure she was right with God before the terrible disease took her life.

Scrawling Linda's details onto a slip of paper, I began what would turn into a multiweek mission to contact her. She simply would not pick up the phone. I called the chaplain, who insisted on her interest, and her daughter, who said the same. The inability to actually speak with her, however, indicated otherwise.

While driving home on a Sabbath afternoon, I was impressed to try Linda one last time. She finally picked up the phone.

"You say you're the Catholic priest?" She had not heard me correctly.

"No, ma'am, I am the local Seventh-day Adventist pastor. Your chaplain contacted me, and I'm hoping we can have a conversation about your request for baptism, if that's still your intent."

Linda was home with her daughter. Not wanting to miss the connection again, I quickly devoured my Sabbath lunch and drove to her place.

Linda and I discussed her life story, her relationship to Jesus, and her history with the Adventist Church. Although she knew all the doctrines, she had never chosen to surrender her life to Christ in baptism. She shared her joys and regrets as I shouted questions into her ear. Linda was so hard of hearing that her phone and television

Photo: PeopleImages / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

were cranked up to the highest setting, vibrating the very foundation of the building from her apartment on the fourth floor.

For more than a month my calls had been ringing through a phone she could not hear. After an hour in her little home, my voice was raw, but my spirits were up.

AN INSURANCE POLICY?

Linda's condition was so serious that we scheduled a midweek service, filled the baptistry, and planned a simple program for her and her family. That Wednesday I shared a heartfelt exposition of Luke 15 and the prodigal son, emphasizing that it's never too late to come home. While I was speaking, Linda leaned over to her sister and said loudly, "I have no idea what he's saying." I wrapped up my remarks and prayed a blessing upon her, and we prepared to meet in the baptistry.

I had done my best to lead her to Jesus and clear her for baptism, but was she really sincere? Did she think this was just a cheap insurance policy to alleviate her eternal concerns? Questions lingered in my mind.

Linda was so weak she could not take the last step into the baptistry. With her consent I embraced her as gently as I could and lowered her frail body into the water. After baptizing her and raising her up out of the water, Linda stood silent as a statue, slightly hunched over with her eyes closed. "Linda . . . Linda, are you OK? Linda, how do you feel?" Those in the pews grew concerned. "I'm soaking wet!" she exclaimed. While Linda stated the obvious, it was the first time I had ever heard that at a baptism! After warm expressions and pictures taken to commemorate the occasion, I locked up the church and went home. Again, questions swirled.

We can never fully understand what is happening in someone's heart, and these "thief on the cross" situations add a layer of complexity (see Luke 23:39-43). I always want to believe the best of someone's intentions without diminishing the sacredness of the rituals Jesus Himself prescribed for us. It's a delicate balance that we strike in good faith. I hoped I did the right thing.

DISSOLVING DOUBTS

A couple of days later I reached out to Linda's daughter. "Has anyone told you?" she asked.

"Told me what? Is everything OK?" Knowing Linda's condition, I assumed the worst.

"Pastor, our mother can hear again!"

The next day I visited Linda to see for myself. Sure enough, I sat on her couch, and we had a conversation that didn't strain my voice. The TV was turned to a reasonable volume. The phone rang, and she answered it. She was able to have a conversation with her grandchildren, perhaps hearing some of their voices for the first time.

His grace was sufficient—both for Linda and a poor preacher like me.

"Linda," I remarked, "it's incredible that God has given you some of your hearing back."

"Pastor," she smiled, "He didn't give me *some* of my hearing back. He gave me *all* of my hearing back!" Despite the miracle she experienced, Linda had persistent doubts. How could she know for sure that God had forgiven her sins? I opened my Bible to Luke 5, and together we read the story of Jesus' compassion upon the paralyzed man whose friends were so eager to bring him before the Savior. After Jesus declared the man forgiven, the Pharisees accused Him of blasphemy. His response was just what Linda and I needed to hear:

"'Which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Rise up and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the man who was paralyzed, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house'" (Luke 5:23, 24).

That afternoon God dissolved both of our doubts—mine regarding my judgment and her sincerity, and hers regarding the failures of her former life. Together we prayed and, with tearful eyes, praised Him for His power to heal both physically and spiritually.

Within a few weeks I was officiating Linda's funeral. That's right—our good and gracious Lord chose not to heal her lungs from years of smoking cigarettes; He healed her ears. Instead of reversing her advanced illness, He allowed her to communicate with her loved ones as she prepared to say goodbye.

As I stood before Linda's family, friends, and the chaplain who had referred me to Linda in the first place, I had the privilege of sharing about Jesus' incredible love from Luke 5 and how He still has the power to heal and forgive. His grace was sufficient—both for Linda and a poor preacher like me.

Jarod Thomas is an ordained minister serving two churches in suburban **Detroit, Michigan, United States**.

Sabbath

Time and rituals

Q Does Colossians 2:16 teach that Christians do not have to keep the seventh-day Sabbath?

A Most Christian communities use Colossians 2:16 to argue that the Sabbath commandment was abolished. That conclusion is not supported by a careful reading of Colossians 2:16.

INTERPRETATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

As we approach the text there are several things that we should keep in mind. First, the Bible does not teach anywhere that the Sabbath commandment was to be abolished. On the contrary, Isaiah and Jesus both indicated that it would continue to be observed in the future (Isa. 66:23; Matt. 24:20). Second, Jesus and His disciples observed the Sabbath commandment (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14; 16:13). Third, according to Colossians 2:17, Paul is discussing matters that were a shadow of what Christ would do for us. The Bible never describes the Sabbath as a type of the work of Christ. The fact that it was instituted for the human family before there was sin in the world (Gen. 2:2, 3) excludes that possibility.

POSSIBLE READINGS

Scholars have come up with different interpretations of Colossians 2:16 that do not undermine the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. A brief list of some of the different options will illustrate our point. One of the most common and defensible interpretations is that the term Sabbath refers to the ritual Sabbaths that were associated with the feasts and that were differentiated from the weekly Sabbath (Lev. 23:33-44). Others have argued that the term Sabbath should be translated "week," which is linguistically correct, designating the Feast of Weeks. And it has been argued that the Sabbath in Colossians 2:16 designates an improper and false observance of the Sabbath under pagan influences or the oral Jewish traditions on Sabbath observance. Some of these suggestions are better than others, but the point is that claiming that Colossians 2:16 can be read only as a rejection of the Sabbath commandment is incorrect.

RITUAL ACTIVITIES DURING SACRED TIMES

Scholars have also shown that when the sequence "feast, new moon, or Sabbath" is found in the Old Testament, it designates the sacrifices brought to the Lord during those sacred times (e.g., 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:12, 13; Isa. 1:13, 14). This is particularly the case in Numbers 28-29, where the calendric offerings are listed according to the time they were to be offered: Sabbath offerings (Num. 28:9, 10); new moon offerings (verses 11-15), and offerings during the feasts (Num. 28:16–29:40). The "eating and drinking" in Colossians 2:16 would then refer to the ritual activity of the offerer in eating portions of some of the sacrifices (Lev. 7:15). This interpretation finds support in the Greek phrase *en merei*, used in Colossians 2:16, usually translated "in respect to, in regard to," but that should be translated "as part of" or "in the part of," indicating that the reference is to something that happens during the sacred times and not the times themselves. Based on these observations, Colossians 2:16 may be translated, "Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in eating and drinking or in *any other* part of a festival, new moon, or Sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ's." This interpretation integrates very well with Colossians 2:16, 17 by making clear that the reference is to the ritual activities performed during the sacred times and not to the sacred times themselves. The plural relative pronoun "which things, these things" in verse 17 would therefore be designating the ritual activities that were a shadow of the work of Christ.* ◎

* For further study, see Ron du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2008); Roy Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017); and Ekkehardt Mueller and Eike Mueller, eds., *The Sabbath in the New Testament and in Theology* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2023).

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Health & Wellness

Building Strength Without the Gym

Simple solutions for a sedentary lifestyle

I have a sedentary office job and no access to a gym. How can I improve my muscle strength?

Optimal muscle strength is essential for overall health and well-being, particularly for people with sedentary lifestyles. Resistance training, which involves exercises that make muscles work against a force, is one of the most effective methods to build and maintain strength. The good news is that resistance training doesn't necessarily require gym equipment or expensive memberships. With a few simple strategies and consistency, even those without access to a gym can enhance muscle strength and enjoy the numerous health benefits it provides.

Sedentary individuals are at a higher risk of developing muscle imbalances, poor posture, and joint problems. Resistance training improves muscle strength, which leads to better posture, increased flexibility, and greater joint support. Stronger muscles help burn more calories even at rest, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

Muscle strength is vital for maintaining functional independence, especially as people age. Strong muscles contribute to better balance, reduced risk of falls, and improved ability to perform such daily tasks as carrying groceries, lifting objects, or even climbing stairs.

For the many who don't have access to a gym, resistance training can still be effective with bodyweight exercises, using household objects or such simple equipment as resistance bands. Before starting any exercise program, check with your health-care provider to prevent injury or aggravation of preexisting conditions. Here are some ways to improve muscle strength from home.

1. Bodyweight Exercises: Exercises such as squats, lunges, push-ups, and planks can target major muscle groups without needing equipment. These exercises use the weight of your own body to create resistance, building strength over time.

2. Resistance Bands: Lightweight and affordable, resistance bands come in different difficulty levels, allowing for progression as strength improves. Bands can be used for bicep curls, leg presses, and shoulder raises.

3. Household Objects: Everyday items, such as water bottles, books, or backpacks filled with items, can serve as makeshift weights.

4. Isometric Exercises: These exercises involve holding a position for a period of time, such as a wall sit or a plank. Isometric exercises are excellent for increasing muscle endurance and strength, particularly for people just starting out.

One of the keys to improving muscle strength is consistency. Aim for at least two to three resistance training sessions per week. Over time, gradually increase the intensity by adding more repetitions, sets, or resistance.

In addition to the physical benefits, resistance training improves mental health by reducing stress and anxiety, boosting self-confidence, and enhancing mood. Regular strength training promotes better sleep, increased energy levels, and overall vitality.

In conclusion, you don't need a gym to build muscle strength. Simple, accessible forms of resistance training can profoundly impact physical and mental health, especially for those with sedentary jobs. And for your best physical, mental, and spiritual wholistic health, "cast all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7, NIV)

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

Photo: kseniachernaya



"May I Tell You a Story?"

BY DICK DUERKSEN

The Christmas Voice



He had waited months for Christmas, cutting a notch in the log beside his bed every morning, just to remind himself that he was almost 12 years old. "Twelve is when you become a man," Pa had told him, and Victor was ready, even though he still had a full month before the big day! His birthday was coming, and then Christmas!

Victor was up every morning before the sun, hustling to do the chores his mother had assigned. "Feed the chickens. Collect the eggs. Feed the dog. Bring in enough wood to keep the fire going." And more. Much more.

Only a couple hours each day were truly "his." Those he saved for exploring up in the New Mexico mesas with his dog, Patch.

There were ancient ruins on top of the tallest mesa, the one his Navajo and Zuni friends called El Morro, *The Castle*. They often used a narrow crack to climb the mesa and explore the crumbling red sandstone walls on its top.

He knew what he wanted for Christmas. Mom had given permission for him to have a genuine Native American bow and arrow set, the one that was hanging on the back wall at Old Tom's trading post in the small village of Ramah. He had held it once when he had gone to town with Pa.

On his birthday morning he cut the last notch, a deep one with a "12" etched beside it. "Now I am a man," Victor said, smiling happily.

"Now that you're a man, you ought to be able to get the chores done even faster," laughed Ma. Then Pa handed him the envelope he'd been hiding in his coveralls for at least a month.

Inside was a thin sheet of paper. At the top was the name and address of his uncle down in Albuquerque. At the bottom was his uncle's signature. In the middle was his own name, "Victor," and the words "Ten Dollars."

"Is this a check, Pa?"

"Sure enough! Your uncle sent it to me a couple months ago and told me to hold it till your birthday. Said he hoped you might be able to find something worth buying with it."

Photo: Mikhail Nilov



He knew what he wanted for Christmas.

Victor slipped the check into the special hiding place he had carved between two logs beside his bed. He took it out often, imagining trading it for his new bow and arrows.

Waiting for Pa's December 12 trip to Ramah was about the hardest thing Victor had ever done, but that morning Victor raced to hitch the horses to the wagon, snuggle two large blankets onto the seat, and tie 20 canvas gunnysacks to the wagon bed. Ma's trading post list was long, but all Victor could think about was his Christmas bow and arrows and the "ten dollars" in his pocket.

The road to Ramah was just wide enough for the wagon to bounce between the pine trees. Victor had to jump off often and move a thick branch out of the way. His arms ached, he had splinters in his hands, and he was just plain tired before they camped for the night.

When they arrived at the small village of Ramah, Victor cared for the horses and hurried to join Pa in the trading post.

Pa wasn't there, and neither was Old Tom. Both men were out back, looking at the sky.

A STORM IS COMING

"Haven't seen it like that since the big blizzard a couple years back," said Old Tom. "You better get back home before the wind blows your wagon full of snow." Old Tom called to his wife, who was just finishing with Ma's shopping list. "Mabel, come out here and look at the sky! We've got a blizzard a-comin'!"

Old Tom was right. The southern sky was slowly being covered by a cloud that promised far more than a good rain, and icy wind was rocking the wagon.

Victor was so busy stacking bulging gunnysacks into the wagon that he forgot to even look for the bow and arrows. Every time he slowed down, either Pa or Old Tom would hand him something else to load into the wagon.

Victor untied the horses while Pa said goodbye to Old Tom, then shouted, slapped leather on the horses, and headed out of town. He didn't even think of the $10 check until they came to the first row of pines outside of town.

Too late now, he thought. *Guess I'll just have to wait till next year.*

"Wish we could wait the storm out in Ramah, son," Pa said. "But Ma's alone with your sister, and she'll be needing the goods in the wagon."

Victor thought about that a minute, and urged the horses to go faster.

The first snowflakes blew in with the sunset, and before long the wagon was just a white mound bouncing through the trees. Thick, freezing snow blew sideways, hiding the road beneath its icy blanket. Victor called encouragement to the horses and dreamed of Ma's wood stove.

The horses seemed to know where they were going, so Victor let them lead. But once in a while he pulled them back on course.

Then a flash of lightning showed him a terrible truth. He had pulled the horses in a very large circle. They were just now crossing tracks the wagon had made about an hour ago.

Photo: suerob / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

Victor turned to tell Pa they were in trouble, but Pa was asleep, slowly freezing on the wagon seat beside him.

"God," Victor shouted loudly, "Please wake Pa up!"

Victor knew about blizzards, and he knew about God. His favorite scripture was the twenty-third psalm, and even though it didn't talk about snow or blizzards or about Pa being asleep, Victor quoted the part about how the Shepherd would be with you as you drove your wagon through the valley of the shadow of death.

In the middle of the psalm, a voice told Victor to stop and build a fire. *That will wake up Pa,* the voice said.

The horses, now as confused about directions as Victor, were glad to stop.

REMEMBER THE CHECK

One evening Victor's Navajo and Zuni friends had shown him how to find dry fire branches beneath the limbs of piñon pines. "There will always be dry branches here; just be sure you carry matches," they had told him.

Victor wrapped another blanket around Pa, and jumped off to look for dry branches under a piñon pine beside the road.

The wind fought with him as he stacked dry branches for a small fire. But when he reached into his pocket for matches, his pocket was empty!

Try Pa's pockets, the voice said.

Deep in the right-hand pocket of Pa's coat Victor found three wooden matches. One was broken in half.

OK, Victor thought, *I've got wood and matches.* "Now, where can I find dry paper to start the fire?"

The voice spoke again.

Remember your $10 check?

"No. Not the check!" Victor shouted into the swirling snow. "It's my Christmas present!"

Is the check dry?

Victor dug his hand into the pocket, thinking he might *never* get his Christmas bow and arrows. Then he saw Pa had slumped down on the seat.

"Forget bow and arrows," Victor told the voice. "Help me get the fire started to save Pa."

He dug far down into the pocket before he felt the dry paper of his Christmas present. Now he could start the fire.

The first match flamed up, and then went out before he could light a corner of the check. The second match was soggy and worn out. The third match was only half-size, so Victor scratched it very carefully on the sole of his boot. It flamed bright orange and quickly began devouring the check. Victor slipped the burning paper into the sticks and shouted to the voice.

"Help me get Pa!"

It was tough work, but soon Pa and Victor were huddled together close beside the hot fire.

"Where are we?" Pa asked sleepily.

"I don't know."

"God knows." Victor could barely hear Pa's thin voice. "Ask Him."

"Even when I am walking through the valley of the shadow of death," Victor paraphrased the verse as loudly as he could, hoping God was near enough to hear, "You are with me."

Walk into the trees on your right, the voice spoke.

Victor stood, patted Pa's shoulder, pulled his hat down tight, and walked toward the trees.

At that very moment the storm broke, showing the light of a full moon. The break lasted only a few seconds, just long enough for Victor to see the forked top of an old lightning-scarred ponderosa pine tree. Victor knew that tree. It was just off the corner of their own land! If he could get to that tree and then walk 10 paces toward El Morro, he would run into their own wire fence. From there, home was about a mile away!

"Pa!" Victor shouted as he ran back to the fire. "God has given us the best Christmas gift ever. We're going home!"

Dick Duerksen, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States**.

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Christmas Behind Barbed Wire

Finding joy in the midst of hardship

Editor's Note: The original version of this story was featured in the Youth's Instructor*, December 22, 1953, and was written for an American audience. It has been adapted not only for space and content, but also for the international reader.*

"Isn't it beautiful, Daddy?" Millie's voice bubbled with excitement as she pointed to the decorations in their small room. It was Christmas, and his daughter was trying to bring some cheer into their otherwise dreary surroundings.

Daddy smiled and nodded, his heart heavy with both pride and sorrow. This year, in this prison camp far from home, they were far from everything that once seemed normal.

It had been more than four years since Millie, her older brother Dick, and their parents had left home to become missionaries in the Philippines. They had been there for less than a year when war broke out. The first bombs fell, and suddenly, their mission turned into a nightmare. The family was split apart—Daddy was sent to one prison camp, and Millie, Dick, and Mother to another. For four long, terrifying months they were separated. But finally, Daddy managed to persuade the authorities to reunite them in Manila, and they had been together ever since.

Together—but imprisoned.

Their current home was a compound in Manila, where they lived with about 30 other missionaries. Food was scarce, danger lurked everywhere, and the weight of war pressed down on them every day. Yet somehow, life continued.

Millie, Dick, and the other children did their best to find joy in small things. One day Millie came running into their tiny quarters, her eyes bright with excitement.

"Mother, do you have a magnet?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, I think so, dear. But why do you need it?" Mother asked.

"All the children are using them to find nails!" Millie explained, "Dick is getting some boards from an empty barracks, and he says Daddy can use them to make a table and chairs. Isn't that just super, Mom?"

Mother smiled and handed her the magnet. "That's a wonderful idea, Millie. Why don't you start looking right here between the floorboards?"

The children busied themselves with their small projects while Daddy worked to make their quarters as comfortable as possible. He built rough furniture for their room and even constructed a small cook shack just outside the barracks. It was nice to have a place to prepare any special food they might find, though such finds were rare. Mostly they subsisted on a thin rice porridge and whatever greens they could scavenge.

As Christmas approached, the mood in the camp became more hopeful. It wasn't the festive season they had known before the war, but everyone was determined to make the day special.

Mother had been saving bits of rice lugao (a type of porridge) from their meals. Slowly she gathered enough to make a small treat—a cake of sorts. She added a tablespoon of precious sugar, a few coconut gratings, a little lime juice, and a pinch of salt. It wasn't much, but in the confines of their world, it was a feast.

HUMBLE BUT PRECIOUS

On Christmas morning the family woke up with a mix of anticipation and hunger. The

Illustration: Mugi Kinoshita



guards seemed to sense the holiday spirit and allowed the prisoners a brief respite from their usual routines.

"When do we eat?" Dick asked for the hundredth time. His belt was tighter than it had been before the war, not because he was growing, but because he had lost weight. Thoughts of a special meal occupied his mind more than any presents.

Finally, the family gathered around their rough wooden table. On each plate was a small portion of rice, so thin it almost ran into the herb salad. The soup, made from a few mung beans, water, and a touch of garlic, was hardly filling, but they savored every drop.

When the meal was finished, Mother brought out the "cake." It was small, hardly enough for four people, but each piece was cherished. They ate it slowly, savoring every crumb.

After the dishes were cleaned, they turned to enjoy the presents gathered in a corner of the room. Each was small and humble, but precious beyond measure.

Mother handed Daddy the first gift—a calendar she had spent weeks making. The main part was fashioned from an old shirttail, and a neighbor had drawn a picture on it. She had sewn red and blue rickrack around the edges. Daddy held it in his hands, feeling the love and effort that went into every stitch. He prayed silently that they would be free before the year on the calendar had passed.

Dick's present to Mother was next. He and Daddy had been working on it in secret—a mop stick, crafted from scavenged wood. Mother's eyes filled with tears as she hugged them both. "Now I won't get any more splinters from scrubbing the floor," she said, her voice choked with emotion.

Next, Millie received her gift—a small panda bear that Mother had painstakingly sewn from scraps of cloth. Its eyes were made from buttons taken off an old shoe, and it was stuffed with cotton from Mother's sleeping pad. Millie hugged the bear tightly, feeling the warmth of her mother's love in every stitch.

Finally, it was Dick's turn. He unwrapped his gift with eager hands, and his face lit up with joy. It was a baseball—just what he had wanted. Daddy had traded for it with a fellow prisoner, and though it was worn and scuffed, to Dick it was perfect.

But there was still one more present. A tiny package wrapped in tissue paper.

"It's for Daddy," Millie said shyly.

Daddy opened it carefully, revealing a single sugar cube. Tears welled up in his eyes as he looked at his little girl. He remembered how a kind woman had given it to Millie days ago. He never imagined she would save it for him.

"Thank you, sweetheart," Daddy said, his voice thick with emotion. "But we'll share this."

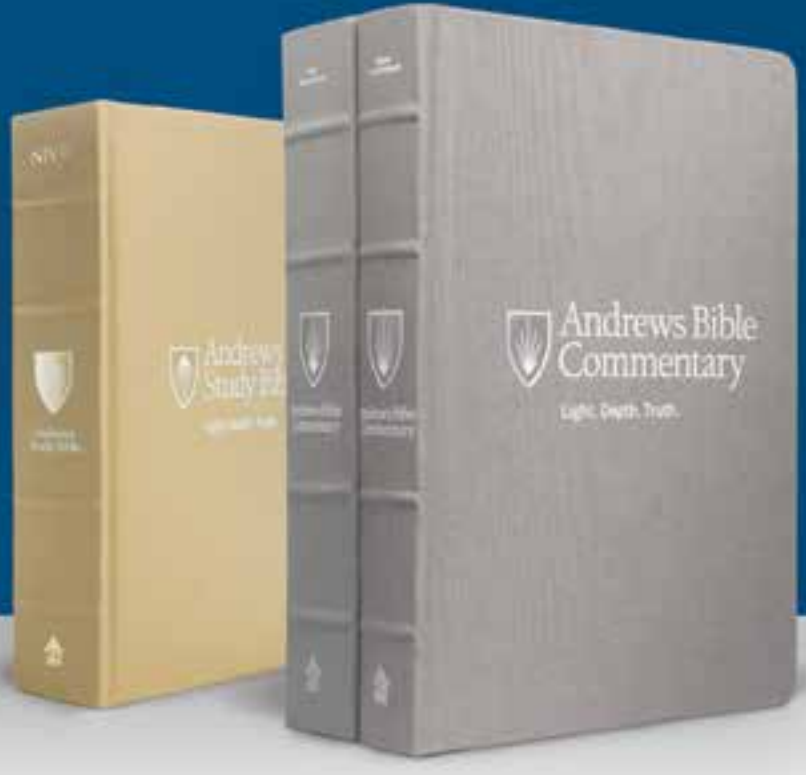
They divided the sugar cube into four tiny pieces, savoring their Christmas candy. It wasn't much, but it was enough.

And so, with a sugar cube, a baseball, a mop stick, a panda bear, and a calendar, they made it the happiest holiday they could remember.

Romilda Guthrie Hummel wrote this story in 1953 when she was 16 years old and a junior attending San Diego Academy in California, U.S.A.

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