

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

**MAY 2019: WHEN GOD SAYS NO + HIGH DIVE  
HEART-STOP + GOD'S SECRET WEAPON +  
IS THIS REALLY LOVE? + TWO ARE BETTER  
THAN THREE + RAFT MONKEYS + THE SILENT KILLER**

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# TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Fact or Fiction?
- 2 Vegans Have Highest Disease-fighting Biomarkers
- 3 ADRA Project Serves Orphans in Cameroon
- 4 A Beginner's Guide to the "Daniel Fast"
- 5 Christians and the Earth

## EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO IN ADVENTIST REVIEW:

"The highway of history is littered with the wrecks of believers who became unbalanced, fanatical, or discouraged in their eagerness for the Second Coming. Cult leaders such as David Koresh and his Branch Davidians became desert extremists. Some fanatics dropped out of the Christian faith altogether. In light of the apparent delay in Christ's second coming. . .

"My wish for all of us is that we will grow up into Christ in an ever-deepening way, and be blessed with the joy and satisfaction of knowing Him as our Savior and seeing Him return in glory."

—Leslie N. Pollard, in "The Thin Line," *Adventist Review*, August 30, 2001.





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BILL KNOTT



*Let's covenant to not reward the partisans who scorn the processes of dialogue and negotiation.*

## The Bond of Peace

*"He's the kind of man who would plant dynamite in the San Andreas Fault."*

Forty years ago, it was a laugh line shared among a gaggle of college students about a peer of ours who seemed to revel in the prospect of the dissolution of social order and political structures. No one in their right mind, we assumed, would truly welcome a cataclysm that would undo the progress of generations or the relatively peaceful lives of millions.

A biblical generation later, however, I'm no longer laughing. Decades of terror and disruption around the globe from zealous ideologues and unhinged anarchists have grimly reminded us that there are people who actually celebrate division and chaos. They see opportunities for themselves and their causes in the pain and confusion they instigate. From jihadist warriors to neo-Nazi White supremacists, there's no end of men or movements willing to don a suicide vest or pit one tribe against another to advance the causes to which they have dedicated their lives—or deaths. In a world where the spirit of compassion has all but dried up, a man with a lit match can appear to be a leader.

And if such causes—and such thinking—never infiltrated the church of Jesus, we might simply assign the awfulness to that ever-growing list of signs that we are nearing the end of the world.

Not only will the love of many “grow cold,” as Jesus predicted, but the anger of many will grow hot—very hot—as they assess the gap between their singular vision of God's church and the reality of a Body frequently bruised and bleeding, sometimes from self-inflicted wounds.

So it is that we hear thundering denunciations—from both progressives and conservatives—of those who differ in ideas or practice. The rhetoric of partisanship, once chiefly the hallmark of political campaigns, has invaded both the pulpit and the blog. On any given Sabbath you may hear your chosen diet criticized by a preacher who seems to believe that the devil inhabits the dairy case—or that you are a cold and heartless person if you don't join the protest march demanding a guaranteed higher minimum wage in your community. A dozen websites glory in their anger: God is purifying His church, they insist, and you should join the remnant of the remnant; or you should be suspicious of everyone in leadership.

What all this unwise heat betrays is how little we have understood the spirit of Jesus or the record of the church He founded. While we rightly celebrate the book of Acts as a history of world-changing evangelism, it's also an insightful story of how the followers of Jesus grappled with the challenges and controversies of their era. When the widows of Greek origin were unfairly denied

their portion of the church's shared goods, a Spirit-led process of assessment and inclusion led to the appointment of the first deacons, almost all of whom shared Greek ancestry. When division arose over whether the gospel could, in fact, be preached to Gentiles and these converts incorporated into the Body of Christ, a months-long process of conversation and compromise led to the wisdom of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15.

The same Scripture that teaches us to go, teach, make disciples, and baptize also insists that we make “*every effort* to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3, NRSV, emphasis supplied).<sup>1</sup>

So let's covenant to not reward the partisans who scorn the processes of dialogue and negotiation by which the Spirit often leads His end-time people. The hallmark of believers eagerly expecting the return of Jesus is that they live the love He showed to His squabbling disciples, to Samaritans and Syrophonicians, Gentiles, and even Pharisees. It's the glory of His church that its members listen respectfully to each other, speak gently to each other, and find the will to negotiate their differences.

“There is no law against such things” (Gal. 5:23, NRSV).

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I was thrilled to read about the events of 50 years ago. It was a very special year for young people.

LEO RANZOLIN, SR., ESTERO, FLORIDA

## BRING BACK AN ADVICE COLUMN!

Thank you, Merle Poirier, for reminding me of Miriam Wood's excellent advice column in the *Review* in the 1980s, when I was a young pastor's wife. How down-to-earth, honest, humble, and godly were her responses! Back then I could hardly wait to read more sage advice and saintly comment from her pen, which was filled with sanctified wisdom and humor. Isn't it time for someone else to take up where Miriam left off? Let me be the first to endorse such a column in *Adventist Review*.

**Tabitha Abel**

*Chiloquin, Oregon*



## BLESSING

What a blessing *Adventist Review* online has been to me. Thank you to all who have had a part in the production of the many offerings. The quality, content, and spiritual inspiration are just so good! Blessings!

**Tim Buske**

## EXCELLENT READING

The February 2019 *Adventist Review* provided some excellent reading for mind and heart. Two articles, "The Letter" and

"Learning Forgiveness From the Amish," bring attention to the fact that forgiveness, love, and sharing is Christ's method of Christianity in action.

**Natalie Dodd**

*Ohio*

## LOOKING BACK

Stephen Chavez's "A Glance Back" (March 2019) asks, "Are we passionate about the causes that animated us back in the 1970s to 1990s?"

For me, it's even much more so, wearing the third angel's message on my sleeve, as it were, urging a number of Sunday pastors to study and preach Revelation 14. Yet in all this I must retain a gentle spirit of tenderness and love, so that they will want to see me coming back; no bridge burning.

**Richard Burns**

*Cleveland, Tennessee*

## OVER THE YEARS

I was thrilled to read about the events of 50 years ago. It was a very special year for young people.

I was in the South Brazil Union Conference as youth director, and with my colleagues we led a caravan of 130 young people and staff through Europe to attend the first and only World Youth Congress in Zurich, Switzerland. We were in Rome when Americans first landed on the moon.

But the most gratifying experience was to see 12,000 young people from Czechoslovakia display a beautiful pageant with lights that electrified the whole audience. Ted Lucas was General Conference youth director, and in 1970 he retired and John Hancock took his place. R. H. Pierson, then General Conference president, wanted to



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SANDRA WEST, VIA WEB

make the church more international and I was elected associate youth director.

**Leo Ranzolin, Sr.**  
*Estero, Florida*

### AN ADVENTIST ESSENTIAL

Last fall I attended a women's conference in Northern California where Dixil Rodríguez was one of the speakers. My sister and I are avid *Adventist Review* readers. The magazine has been an inspiration to our family. We were greatly touched by her words at the conference.

The *Adventist Review* has amazing writers and editors. It is a life changing magazine. We are so glad we can now listen to the podcasts and hear the voices of our favorite authors. Thank you for your ministry.

The stories Rodríguez writes are from the heart. It is beautiful to open the magazine and see her columns.

We pray for everyone at the *Adventist Review*. This is a ministry you share with all of us.

**Sandra West**  
*via web*

## IN A FEW WORDS...

### CLIFF'S EDGE—THE ADVENTIST BIGOTRY THEORY (AND OTHER ERRORS FROM WITHIN)

Satan knows his time is short, so he is pulling out all his deceptive tricks to take as many Adventists as possible with him. It is time to fully trust God, His Word, His unfailing love, and His saving grace with all our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. It is also time to spread to the world, near and far, the great love of God and the redeeming sacrifice of His Son for each one of His creations, so that everyone has the opportunity to learn what it means to keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus. Now is not the time for disunity and unkindness. Jesus is coming soon; praise the Lord!

**Lynnette McDermott, via web**

### ADVENTIST STUDENTS SELECTED TO PRESENT AT TOP ENDOCRINOLOGY CONFERENCE

A God-given way to reach the world with the gospel. May he give us the courage to us it!

**Onalapo Ajibade, via web**

### TRUSTING GOD IS GOOD FOR YOUR PSYCHE

While God doesn't promise to solve all our problems, or to prevent all our difficulties or tragedies, or to protect us from all evil or danger, He does promise to be with us. He cares about us in a personal way as we seek Him and lean on Him in faith for strength, wisdom, understanding, and acceptance. He also cares enough to allow us to question Him. With that eventually comes a measure of peace and comfort as well as solutions for the best way to deal with difficult or even tragic situations. God doesn't cause these difficulties or tragedies, nor does He specifically allow them, but He will help us deal with the sometimes-terrible natural manifestations of the sinful world in which we live, even though some of the pain remains. I have seen that demonstrated during my lifetime.

**Dan Burrington, via web**

## YOUR TURN

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

# Need More

# Faith?

Faith may be closer  
than you think...

*Faith is the assurance  
of things hoped for,  
the conviction  
of things not seen.*

HEBREWS 11:1

Mike Tucker,  
Speaker/Director



## SUMMER SCHEDULE

May 24-25	Lumberton, MS – Gulf States Camp Meeting
May 31-June 1	Lincoln, NE – Kansas-Nebraska Camp Meeting
June 14-15	Westfield, WI – Wisconsin Camp Meeting
July 5-6	Theodore, SK – Man-Sask Camp Meeting
July 19-27	Newfoundland, NL – Newfoundland Camp Meeting
August 3	Quebec, QC – English Camp Meeting
September 21	Greenville, NC – East Carolina Camp Meeting

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**“As a church we have felt very comfortable saying we’re the hands and feet of Jesus, but we feel a little less comfortable in saying we’re also the voice of Jesus.” Jonathan Duffy, ADRA president**

# NEWS



ADRA staff from more than 125 countries recently met to discuss strategies and plan for the future.

## **ADRA'S 2019 ANNUAL COUNCIL GEARS TOWARD GROWTH, EMBRACES NEW PURPOSE**

**ORGANIZATION DIRECTORS DISCUSS HOW TO BE MORE  
RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY.**

BY KIMI ROUX-JAMES, ADRA INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**E**ach year the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) facilitates two weeks of working group sessions with roughly 200 staff members from its 131 country offices.

The annual assembly of ADRA's directors and associate directors convened in Sweimeh, Jordan in February 2019 to discuss areas of improvement regarding finance, development, partnership, programs, and marketing, and to ad-

dress how ADRA can be relevant to the needs of an ever-changing society.

### **MOBILIZING EFFECTIVE LEADERS**

A leadership summit kicked off the meetings, introducing three pillars of thought for ADRA's leaders to consider in the coming year: to create clarity, generate energy, and thrive.

“Creating clarity asks ‘why’ we exist as an organization, and helps provide a focus on delivering our mission,” said Korey Dowling, ADRA's vice president for people and culture. “Once clarity exists, we generate energy asking ‘how’ we can drive organizational culture and create employee engagement. Last, we unleash a thriving culture of leaders by growing people personally, professionally, and spiritually.”

Participants were also introduced to an array of workshops and plenary classes. Leading experts and specialists spoke on topics of spirituality, influential leadership, employee relations, diversity, work ethics, and mentoring, to name a few.



Karla Cole, director of annual giving at ADRA, attended a creative workshop focused on storytelling, in which Bill Knott, executive editor of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, was the presenter. “I found the storytelling workshop to be a unique way to inspire our fundraising strategy,” she said.

**“WE STRIVE FOR ALL PEOPLE TO LIVE AS GOD INTENDED WITH JUSTICE, COMPASSION, AND LOVE—THREE DESCRIPTORS THAT WILL BECOME ADRA’S NEW MOTTO.”**

“Storytelling is what the teller says, but also what the listener hears,” Knott said during his workshop. “A story can be internalized by the hearers to make it their own and be changed by it.” He added that every culture uses stories, and that stories have the power to let God speak to each individual and their personal narrative.

“These workshops helped me see what possibilities I can apply in our country office,” said Prisca Chileya, assistant emergency management coordinator at ADRA in Kenya. “I hadn’t been exposed to this information before, and it’s

helped me to think differently on how to do business. I have so many ideas running in my head about what we can do to help schoolgirls and the environment.”

### IMPACTING THE FUTURE

ADRA president Jonathan Duffy closed out the two-week session by unveiling ADRA’s new logo, purpose, and motto, and revealed a new global advocacy campaign being launched by ADRA.

“Two years ago ADRA surveyed the country offices to get a sense of who ADRA is,” Duffy said. “We discovered that ADRA is great at developing long-term programs, emergency response, human rights; but we lacked in our faith identity, and how we work is misconstrued.” Duffy further explained that ADRA has three things in its favor: the agency is fueled by faith, has an extensive network of 20 million people connected to the church, and is locally led and dependable.

These findings led to ADRA coming up with its new purpose, according to Duffy, which he shared: “Serving humanity so that all may live as God intended.” Duffy also added that ADRA is different from other humanitarian agencies because “we strive for all people to live as God intended with justice, compassion, and love—three descriptors that will become ADRA’s new motto.”

Along with the new purpose and motto, ADRA’s new logo was described in detail by Salvador Montes de Oca, ADRA’s associate director of design.

“The feet of the people have been removed, making the logo more prominent. The color is also now a near-green color,” said Montes de Oca. Another change he shared was that country names will not be associated with ADRA. “The brand is now ADRA across the board, to be more unified,” he said.

At the end of the presentation each country office received an ADRA style guide on a USB drive, and a teal-colored T-shirt imprinted with ADRA’s new purpose statement.

### A CALL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Duffy also announced ADRA’s new global advocacy campaign called “Every Child. Everywhere. In School.” The campaign aims to collect 1 million signatures by July 2020 through grassroots efforts in partnership with the Adventist Church.

The 131 ADRA offices pledged support for the campaign, and some offices have already taken to social media to spread the message.

“As a church we have felt very comfortable saying we’re the hands and feet of Jesus, but we feel a little less comfortable in saying we’re also the voice of Jesus,” Duffy said. “Right now there are 262 million children who don’t have access to education, and for them to have that access is the key to unlocking the many inequities they face, such as childhood marriages.”

ADRA then commenced its joint meeting with the Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN), which ran for an additional week. ▀



During the eHuddle meeting in San Diego, California, attendees were given time to discuss ideas from the general presentations about how their churches can more effectively reach people.

PHOTOS: ENNO MÜLLER, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

## IN NORTH AMERICA, EHUDDLE EVENT REINVIGORATES PASSION FOR EVANGELISM

**PARTICIPANTS INVITED TO IMPROVE ON SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH METHODS AND TRY NEW ONES.**

BY ENNO MÜLLER, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

**F**or two and a half days, February 18-20, 2019, evangelism directors of conferences and union conferences, church administrators, pastors, innovators, and other leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America gathered at eHuddle in San Diego, California, United States, to share, learn, and dialogue on how the North American church can more effectively reach people in an increasingly secular culture.

More than 200 people attended the eHuddle event, sponsored by the North American Division (NAD) Ministerial Association, though more were able to benefit from the presentations during the first two days via video live stream on Facebook. During the meeting, more than 30 presenters shared tried and tested ways—often referred to as traditional soul-winning methods—to reach out to their communities, while others shared innovative, creative, and new approaches for how they engage their local communities and churches.

The eHuddle meetings also featured roundtable discussions after the presentations.

“For this year’s event, we wanted

to address two needs that we see in our churches. First, we focused on how churches can grow young and ensure retention of young people. Presentations were shared about how to disciple children and help them make a serious decision for Jesus,” said José Cortes, Jr., event organizer and associate director of the NAD Ministerial Association. “Second, we engaged with the epidemic of dying and plateauing churches in our division. We are concerned about the health of our churches and therefore wanted to address these issues.”

Various presenters spoke on these two themes, sharing practical solutions and ideas on how they were addressing them in their local context. In one presentation Tim Gillespie, lead pastor of the Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church in Redlands, California, spoke about how his church helps remote churches connect to Crosswalk. The satellite congregations reap the benefits from the programming at the main church.

During his presentation Gillespie challenged the audience: “We live in a time in which Uber is the largest taxi company in the world,

yet it doesn’t own a car. Airbnb is the largest hotel chain, but it doesn’t own a room. Perhaps we need to rethink the model of church in our current time.”

The presentations and ideas shared at eHuddle were “incredibly helpful and informative,” according to David Dennis, president of Southern New England Conference. “This event can be best described as a café of ideas,” Dennis said. “I see what ideas are being tried, and it inspires me with new ideas and helps my team to reflect on our evangelistic efforts. What I learn here influences the training of our pastors and churches.”

Like Dennis, Tom Evans, president of North New South Wales Conference in Australia, sees value in this event. “Bringing my team to eHuddle gives them exposure to the world’s best practices. Each of them comes from a different context, and so each of them is blessed, moved, and motivated in their own way by listening to various presentations,” Evans said. “We need to consistently search for new and relevant avenues and methods in ministry. I like how eHuddle creates space where projects can be refined and developed.”

Many attendees of this year’s event said they left invigorated by the ideas that presenters shared. First-time attendee Vanston Archbold, Jr., general field secretary for the Southwest Region Conference, said, “I am inspired by what others are doing. I have the same amount of resources, and this encourages

## “HE KILLED MY FAMILY, BUT I FORGIVE HIM”

**VAS PEJCI NOVSKI FOUND GOD AND THE ADVENTIST FAITH IN THE WORST YEAR OF HIS LIFE.**

BY FRANK CAMPBELL, CANADIAN ADVENTIST MESSENGER AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**M**arch 14, 2019, marked one year since the day that Vas Pejcinovski’s wife, son, and younger daughter were murdered. In that year he learned to cope with his immense grief; consoled Victoria, his eldest child and only surviving child; became a baptized, born-again Christian; and forgave the accused killer.

The Ontario, Canada, electrical contractor lost his wife, Krissy; his only son, Roy, a 15-year-old star hockey goalkeeper; and his youngest child, 13-year-old Vana.

How did Vas Pejcinovski make the improbable journey from triple bereavement to salvation and forgiveness?

### POT, PARTIES, AND PRIDE

Pejcinovski’s evolution began with the music, dancing, and drugs common to many youth in Toronto’s Greektown. He was more attracted to partying than to praying. When Krissy Kapanova migrated from Bulgaria, she and Vas found a mutual attraction. They married twice—at City Hall in December 2000, and in church the following month. They had three children, whom they both loved.

Vas emphasizes Krissy was a good woman. She strove to show she loved him and labored to strengthen their marriage. But the fine art of spousal affection escaped him. Even fatherly love did not come easily. The value of reciprocating Krissy’s affection could not compete with his pursuit of the biggest houses, the best cars, the finest wines, and the classiest clothes.

“I led a sinful life,” Vas confesses. “The underlying theme of my life was pride.”

In late 2014 Vas discovered that Krissy was having an affair. His pride was hurt, seemingly beyond repair. He recounts how he spent the next four months in search of opportunities for revenge. He sought every possible way to inflict pain on the woman he had sworn 14 years earlier to love, cherish, and protect.

### LEARNING TO FORGIVE

Then, in early 2015, from the recesses of his mind, he heard a voice advising him to look into the mirror and reflect on his own conduct. That very day he did. By day’s end, he had forgiven his wife, and he told her so. Although not yet a born-again Christian, he recognized, as did Krissy and others familiar with the affair, that such forgiveness, and his overall change in attitude and behavior, could represent only a miracle from a powerful and gracious God.

In the three years after 2015 Vas became more intentional in his pursuit of spirituality and righteousness. “Three years after I heard that voice was when I got on fire for the Lord,” Vas says. He listened to sermons on YouTube and borrowed a Bible from a longtime friend and business partner, a Christian of Greek Orthodox persuasion.

He reflected on the true healing that results when one forgives. “When I forgave my wife, I became happy, and I wanted to be healthy. I stopped smoking.” He shows photographs to show that he lost 60 pounds.

The relationship with his children was transformed. His marriage was not repaired, but although they lived apart, his relationship with Krissy changed from bitterness to friendship from that day until the day her life was stolen.



Ivan Williams (left, foreground), NAD Ministerial Association director, leads a panel discussion as Dan Serns, evangelism coordinator for the Texas Conference, and Donnete Blake, pastor of the New Dimension Seventh-day Adventist Church in New York, participate.

me to figure out what I can do in my field. Others are doing it, and that gives me the courage that I can do creative ministry as well.”

The meeting this year encouraged attendees throughout the NAD to try new things. At the same time it also served as a reminder that evangelism is not the same in every community, organizers said.

“It is important to find a way to create relationships and connect with people in the community,” said Ivan Williams, director of the NAD Ministerial Association. “This requires an understanding of what their needs are.”





Vas Pejcinovski (right), seconds after being baptized by Jayson Levy, pastor of the Agape Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pickering, Ontario, Canada. Pejcinovski said finding God and Bible truth are helping him to cope with the loss of his former wife, a son, and a daughter.

PHOTO: CANADIAN ADVENTIST MESSENGER

## A TRAGIC DAY

On a bleak and chilly spring morning in Ajax, in the Durham region of Ontario, Vas and his daughter Victoria lost more than half of their family. The night before, Vas had driven Roy to his team's hockey game. Neither the boy nor his father knew this would be Roy's last performance as his team's champion goalkeeper. Near midnight Vas dropped his son at his mother's house. It was the last time he would see him alive.

On that same Tuesday night Vas had summoned a taxi to take Victoria from her mother's home to spend the night at a friend's place. That move, ironically, was how Victoria was spared.

Wednesday morning Victoria called her mother to remind her to pick her up, but she received no answer. Then she called her father. He called Krissy's phone and also got no answer. He called Roy's phone. No answer. He tried Vana's. Again, there was no response.

An uneasy feeling came over him. "I called 9-1-1 and started making my way there." By the time he arrived, police had already installed yellow tape indicating that Krissy's home had become a crime scene.

Vas declares mournfully, "It was the worst day of my life." For the next week, he says, he was asking, "God, why?" After all, he had "taken up the Bible." In addition, feeling that he had been a bad

father, he "had started trying to teach [his children] the truth about heaven and hell." He adds, "My boy was the one who was asking questions."

On the day of the viewing, Vas was "weak and scared." He recalls, "I did not want to see my boy in a casket. But the strength the Lord gave me that day was the first miracle. I was able to stand for seven, eight hours greeting about 4,000 people. I ran out of tears, and after the first couple of hours I was the one consoling people."

## THE MEANING OF FORGIVENESS

One of the most remarkable outcomes of that tragic event remains the act of forgiving the man who had decimated Vas's family. How and when did fury give way to forgiveness? "It was not a specific day or time," says Vas. "I don't think I was angry ever. I was sad because I missed them. Anger or hate never seeped in."

Vas has completely forgiven the accused murderer, while holding him responsible for his crime. Sure, he said, "it was a dark day" and "a chunk of me was ripped out" and "nothing can take the pain away." He still struggles not to think back on that day, because the loss and the pain are still real. But with the help of "a network of friends," Vas and Victoria are, day by day, finding greater peace in God.

## LOVE, THE ADVENTIST FAITH, AND BAPTISM

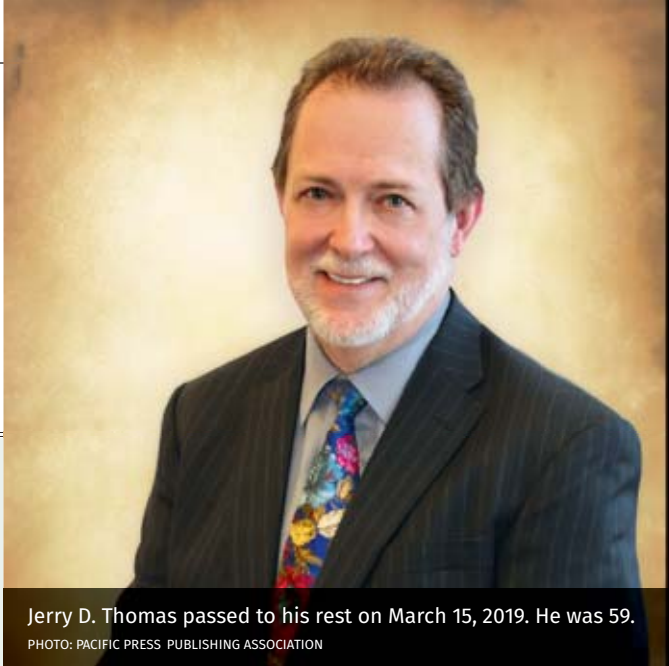
While listening to sermons online, Vas was impressed by preachers who took their teachings directly from the Bible. There was one whose approach seemed especially biblical. That preacher offered to provide the addresses of Bible-believing churches to anyone who was interested. Vas provided his coordinates and received a list of churches in his area.

Vas says he chose Agape Temple church for two reasons. It was the one closest to his home, and, given his familiarity with the Greek language, he knew that *agape* means "love." So he made contact with the church' pastor, Jayson Levy.

In December 2018 Vas was baptized by Levy and accepted enthusiastically into fellowship at the Agape Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pickering, Ontario.

Pejcinovski recently marked the first anniversary of the worst day of his life. His burden, while still painful and unfair, is lightened somewhat by the God-given strength to forgive the unforgivable. It's also mitigated by the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins, by the hope of the resurrection, and by his fellowship in a little church in Pickering that has come to be known as Agape, or the "love church."

Love, fellowship, and forgiveness are important to Pejcinovski. As he put it: "Forgiveness is not an event; it is a state of mind." ■



Jerry D. Thomas passed to his rest on March 15, 2019. He was 59.

PHOTO: PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

## JERRY THOMAS, ADVENTIST AUTHOR OF NEARLY 60 BOOKS, PASSES TO HIS REST

HE IS MOST KNOWN FOR HIS DETECTIVE ZACK SERIES AND THE MESSIAH PARAPHRASE.

BY PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION AND NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

**J**erry D. Thomas, author of nearly 60 books for children and adults and longtime Pacific Press editor, passed away on Friday, March 15, 2019, from complications from a blood clot. His works include the best sellers *Messiah*, *Blessings*, and *A Thoughtful Hour*. Thomas also created and wrote popular series such as Detective Zack, Great Stories for Kids, and Shoebox Kids. He was 59.

“His ability to convey spiritual topics in precise, easy-to-understand language touched many lives,” said Miguel Valdivia, vice president of product development for Pacific Press Publishing Association in Nampa, Idaho, United States.

Before coming to Pacific Press, Thomas served as a Bible teacher at Highland View Academy (HVA) in Hagerstown, Maryland. Colleagues, friends, and former students have expressed sadness at his passing on social media. Many have also shared their appreciation for “PT” (Pastor Thomas) and his compas-

sion, humor, and insightfulness during his years at HVA.

“I will always remember PT as an important part of my adolescence. He was a great teacher and a truly wonderful human being,” said HVA alumnus David Fales.

Sandra Skeggs Ringer, also a former student, said, “He was my high school class sponsor before becoming famous. I babysat his children on numerous occasions. As a parent, my children read his books and met PT at Oshkosh [Pathfinder Camporee]. As an adult, I have been blessed by his book *Messiah*.”

Thomas started working at Pacific Press in 1991 as an associate book editor; later he became the editor in charge of the trade books team. During those years Thomas developed what perhaps remains his best-known work, the Detective Zack set, an adventure mystery series for young readers that revealed Bible truth in a captivating narrative.

Thomas went on to write or de-

**“His ability to convey spiritual topics in precise, easy-to-understand language touched many lives.”**

**—Miguel Valdivia, Pacific Press Publishing Association**

velop nearly 60 books, including *Messiah*, a paraphrase of Ellen G. White’s *The Desire of Ages*. *Messiah* was published in 2002 with the approval of the Ellen G. White Estate; it became a best seller in various formats. More than 500,000 copies of *Messiah* have been sold. In total, Thomas’s books have sold more than 1.5 million copies through the years.

“Jerry touched our lives through his words and actions,” said Laura Sámano, *Guide* magazine managing editor, on Facebook. “He believed in the people he hired, and he supported us. He was a friend to us in his own quiet way. More than just a creative author, Jerry was a good person. He was authentic. His passing is a loss to Adventism, to the world of writing, and to the Pacific Press editorial family. I’m grateful to have worked alongside such a talented author and kindhearted servant of the Lord. I will miss him dearly.”

Thomas left Pacific Press in 2003 to work as communication director for the Southwestern Union Conference church region in Keene, Texas, where he remained until October 2008, when he was invited to come back to Pacific Press as vice president of the editorial department.

“He will be missed by his coworkers for his kindness, his unwavering support, his great talent, and his exceptional wit,” Valdivia said.

Thomas is survived by his wife, Kitty; children, Jonathan, Jennifer, and Jeremy; and four grandchildren. ▀

## WEIMAR INSTITUTE GRANTED ACCREDITATION FOR SIX YEARS

ACCREDITING AGENCY AFFIRMS THE SCHOOL'S ADVENTIST LEGACY OF HEALTH AND SERVICE.

BY WEIMAR INSTITUTE MEDIA

**W**eimar Institute, an Adventist institution known for its health evangelism and service achievements, recently gained academic recognition through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) for a period of six years, retroactive to January 2018.

In addition to noting the “clearly articulated mission and vision of health evangelism,” the WSCUC evaluation team cited Weimar Institute’s campus community, assessment, and institutional research in its report.

Weimar’s Total Community Involvement (TCI) program, based on the world church’s Total Member Involvement initiative, was also recognized. This weekly service program builds sustained community relationships and meets community needs in a practical way.

In particular, the committee commended the TCI program for its “transformational impact” and noted that it is “rooted in the mission, tied to institutional student learning outcomes, and contributes to civic good in the region.”



Weimar Choir, during a performance at Weimar Seventh-day Adventist church. Weimar Institute was recently accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) for six years. PHOTO: WEIMAR CAMPUS CHURCH

While Institute leaders acknowledge the honor of this recognition, they also see significance for students. “This greatly benefits our students in terms of credit transferability and degree recognition,” notes Weimar Institute president Neil Nedley. “We additionally rejoice in what this means to our church, to us all as Adventist brothers and sisters in Christ,” he added. “Our world church’s uniquely Adventist legacy of health and service captured the attention of the WSCUC evaluation team and has again been affirmed as valuable to the world around us.”

Weimar Institute leaders are focused on future growth and expansion of facilities and services to current and prospective students. Plans include the completion of additional housing by Au-

gust 2019, the addition of a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing (BSN) for the fall 2019 semester, and ongoing preparations for a future wellness center.

Weimar Institute is a self-supporting Seventh-day Adventist college located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada of northern California. Since 1978 its vision has been to heal a hurting world—a goal shared by its students, faculty, and staff from nearly 50 countries. Home to the NEWSTART Lifestyle Program, Weimar Institute also includes the Weimar Natural Foods Store, Weimar Academy, Weimar Elementary School, and Weimar Farms. These industries and organizations provide students with educational and work-study opportunities while positively impacting the local community, leaders said. ▀





## CAN YOU BUY YOUR WAY INTO HARVARD OR HEAVEN?

**HOW THE RECENT COLLEGE ENTRANCE SCAM IN THE U.S. REMINDS ME OF SALVATION.**

BY DWIGHT K. NELSON, NEW PERCEPTIONS TELEVISION

**T**he elite college entrance scam that broke into the news cycle a few weeks ago continues to be a stunning morality tale of the you-can't-buy-your-way-into-heaven-or-maybe-even-Harvard truth. Turns out cheating your way in doesn't pay either. Not in the long run.

Look, most of us can sympathize with a parent's desperation to pursue a stellar education for her child (actresses Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman are the first to be charged with soliciting this scam). But to buy your child's admission, to cheat on entrance tests and buy off college coaches' support—that is simply a bridge too far.

It turns out that the perpetrator is college entrance coach William "Rick" Singer, who promised his clients "he had the inside scoop on getting into college, and anyone could get in on it with his book *Getting In: Gaining Admission to Your College of Choice*. 'This book is full of secrets,' he said in chapter 1 before dispensing advice on personal branding, test-taking, and college essays. But Singer had even bigger secrets, and those would cost, according to some sources, up to \$1.2 million," according to *USA Today*.

Not surprisingly, Singer had well-heeled clients who were so eager for their children to make the cut

**The ancient Book declares, "Be sure that your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). A truth as old as the human race, and one worth learning sooner rather than later.**

that they shelled out the "bribe" money and condoned their child's entrance tests administered by proctors in on the take. According to the *USA Today* story, "a 204-page affidavit from an FBI agent laid out a scheme involving proctors changing test results, fabricated credentials and even doctored pictures to make nonathletic students appear to be accomplished athletes."

According to the same source, transcripts of recorded conversations between Singer and his parent clients reveal that some "parents seemed to get cold feet before Singer assured them that he'd done this kind of thing hundreds of times. 'Let me put it differently: If somebody catches this, what happens?' Caplan [a prospective parent] asked him. 'The only one who can catch it is if you guys tell somebody,' Singer said. 'I am not going to tell anybody,' Caplan said. They both laughed."

But nobody is laughing now. Singer recently pleaded guilty "to racketeering, money laundering, tax evasion, and obstruction of justice in a federal courtroom in Boston."

The ancient Book declares, "Be sure that your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). A truth as old as the human race, and one worth learning sooner rather than later.

But a piece of more good news—the gospel moral invites our reflection. The truth is, we really *can't* buy our way into heaven. And why would we want to? It turns out the entrance fee has already been paid. In full. By the nail-scarred One who promises: "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). That would be like a parent discovering somebody has not only paid their child's entrance fee but has already assured their entrance! No shenanigans necessary. No backroom deals to cut. No cheating at all. Just a quiet, trusting faith in the One whose invitation remains unchanged.

What shall we say to that? How about, "Thank You, Jesus"? 🙏



**LAY-LED FOUNDATION HELPS PEOPLE OVERCOME ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTIONS.** *La Fundación Pasos de Esperanza* (Steps to Hope Foundation) in Chile has been established to help people suffering from alcohol and other drug addictions. Working with an existing rehabilitation center and run by Adventist members in Chile, the program offers natural treatments and spiritual support. Future plans include opening a foundation-owned rehabilitation center in the town of Buín, near Santiago, Chile. Nearly 60 Adventists are involved in the initiative.



**ADVENTISTS RESPOND TO MASSACRE IN CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND.**

Adventists reached out to the Muslim community in the wake of the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque shootings on March 15, 2019. Approximately 100 Christchurch Adventists and pastors visited designated sites to pay tribute and left flowers at Christchurch Hospital, where many of those injured had been treated. Adventist high school students raised funds to aid victims and their families.



**GLOBAL YOUTH DAY PARTICIPANTS ADOPT PEOPLE AND CAUSES.** On Saturday, March 16, 2019, Adventist young people around the world mobilized for Global Youth Day 2019. The theme for the annual service Sabbath was “Adopt.” Among global activities: youth in northern China adopted a nursing home; teens ran anti-gambling drives in Italy; young people in Mongolia distributed water and food; volunteers in Turkey adopted orphanages; young people in Johannesburg, South Africa, adopted a river that needed cleaning.



**ADRA ROMANIA BUILDS ITS 300TH HUMANITARIAN HOUSE.** Jonathan Duffy, president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and Ștefan Tomoiagă, president of the Adventist Church’s Romania region, recently inaugurated the 300th humanitarian house built by ADRA in Romania. The new home, part of the project and initiative “Rebuilding Hope,” was presented to a family that lost its home in a fire. The program supports families that have lost their material assets because of fires. Its efforts are carried out with the help of local volunteers and some from abroad.



**RISE UP AGAINST ABUSE RALLY HELD AT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY.** The first-ever Rise Up Against Abuse Rally was held on the campus of Andrews University on March 7-10, 2019. Sponsored by the campus offices of University Wellness and Diversity and Inclusion, the rally was the official launch of the new Rise Up Against Abuse initiative, designed to help people use awareness, education, intervention, and prevention to take decisive actions against all forms of abuse. More than 225 people registered for the rally, which featured numerous abuse survivors, advocates, and presenters.



**IN DENMARK, ADVENTIST TEACHER REINSTATED.** A Seventh-day Adventist high school teacher in Denmark, who was fired for refusal to attend an open house event on a Saturday, has had his claim against dismissal upheld by the Danish Equal Treatment Board. The board’s judgment that the school was in breach of the Equal Treatment Act made headlines in several Danish news services, as well as the *Ankestyrelsen* (National Board of Appeals). The leading newspaper for ethics and religion, *Kristeligt Dagblad*, ran the story on its front page.



**STUDENT PROJECT AIMS TO REDUCE IRON DEFICIENCY IN HAITI.** Melissa Molina, a physician assistant student at AdventHealth University, an Adventist school in Florida, is heading up an initiative to reduce iron deficiency in Haiti. Inspired by her passion for nutrition, Molina is now providing education in Haiti on a product called the Lucky Iron Fish. The product is a small iron utensil that is used during the cooking process. It infuses the meal with natural iron and is reusable, making it an affordable way to increase iron in the diet. Molina recently met with cooks at several orphanages to demonstrate how to incorporate the tool into their cooking.



# THE SILENT KILLER

TOXIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GOD



## GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

It happened during prayer time in church. The preacher started his prayer like most prayers begin. “Our dear heavenly Father,” he prayed, “thank you for being our Father.”

That’s when everything around her stopped. She sat there, suddenly being transported back into a dark, aching past. Unsolicited memories flooded her mind. She remembered the bruises. She heard again the irrational shouting. She felt the uncontrollable fear. She smelled his alcohol-infused breath as he was closing in on her. She tasted her tears. She remembered the horrible shameful things that happened in the dark.

*Father?* A wave of nausea swept over her. She knew instinctively that she didn’t want to have anything to do with a heavenly Father. Silently she got to her feet and walked out of the church, tears covering her face.

### GETTING USED TO TOXICANTS

I recently learned a new word. “Toxicity,” according to *Merriam-Webster*, refers to “the quality or state of being toxic.”<sup>1</sup> It’s the degree to which any substance (or mix of substances) can damage an organism.<sup>2</sup> Most of us are aware of such classic toxicants as asbestos, formaldehyde, arsenic, or lead. We may have even heard of the poisoning effects of mercury, BPA in plastic, or chlorine.<sup>3</sup> Many of these toxicants appear naturally in our environment, and in small enough amounts do not represent a health hazard. But even good things that we need for our daily survival can become poisonous when consumed in the wrong dose. Human beings die if they do not receive enough hydration. Too much water, however, can also lead to death because of electrolyte imbalance, causing brain cells to swell and block the regular flow of blood.<sup>4</sup>

Some people have a higher threshold relating to toxicants in their environment, while others have a lower threshold. Chronic toxicity is the development of adverse effects as the result of long-term exposure to a toxicant or other stressor.<sup>5</sup> Slowly but surely the toxicant affects our bodies negatively, ultimately leading to death.

Toxicity, the quality or state of being toxic, is not limited to the physical realm. Ideas, values, relationships, or emotions can become part of a “toxic” mix, leading to bad decisions or destructive behavior. Jonestown and Waco have illustrated that toxicity can involve twisted and distorted religious ideas. The way we think about God (theologians call this our *Gottesbild*, or “image of God”) is another arena where wrong ideas and notions can lead to toxic behavior affecting others. Unfortunately, there is no easily accessible device that can measure “mind toxicity.” We can really see it only in the way we relate to ourselves and others.

### A TOXIC MINDSET

The book of Jonah tells us that God called Jonah to deliver a specific message to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2; 3:2). Jonah’s actual sermon was a no-frills, no-mercy message of judgment: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4).<sup>6</sup> Jonah was one of God’s bona fide card-carrying ninth century B.C. prophets whose ministry in Israel was well known and highly recognized (2 Kings 14:23-25). God had used him in the past; and He was intent on using him again on this special assignment.

Jonah, however, didn’t want to go. His attempt to flee “from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:3; the Hebrew literally reads “from before the face of the Lord”) was ill-fated from the beginning and ended in a dramatic deep sea dive (verses

## Jonah's understanding of God's goodness was limited to Israel. He could not fathom the possibility of grace for even the enemies of God's people.

4-15). Jonah just didn't want to go to Nineveh. He was not ready to share God's grace (even in the form of a warning about an impending judgment) with the brutal Assyrians who lived in Nineveh.

After God does not destroy the city at the end of the 40 days thanks to Nineveh's repentance, we witness a heated discussion between Jonah and his Lord. "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, One who relents from doing harm" (Jonah 4:2). Translation: *God, I knew Your soft heart and that You wouldn't follow through. That's why I wanted to go in the opposite direction in the first place. It's Your fault.*

What toxic mind-set does it take that a "man of God" (one of the official titles of prophets in the Old Testament, cf. 1 Sam. 2:27; 9:6) argues with God about His grace being applied to the enemy, the foreigner, and, perhaps, even the neighbor? What hatred needs to bubble maliciously in our hearts so that we cannot even fathom God's grace for those who have hurt us? We know from the historical records of that period that the Assyrians were cruel overlords. They were no softies. They were abusive and brutal and vicious—all that God is not. Yet they were also the object of God's love and grace.

Jonah's story offers a perfect window into a toxic mind-set that retributes evil with evil. God, however, never gives up on His prophet. His dialogical engagement contains rebuke, but it's a gentle rebuke. His questions are meant to start a conversation, plant a seed, and begin a transformation. The fact that we can read all about Jonah's misguided attempts to run away from God, and his successful mission to evangelize Nineveh, suggests that Jonah finally got it—and decided to write down his foolishness as a lesson for future generations of God's children.

### CAUGHT IN THE PAST

Another Old Testament narrative offers an even more in-depth look at toxic mind-sets. Moses had been gone for a long time. People kept looking at Mount Sinai, then at each other, and wondering if and when their leader would return to them. So one day they gathered around Aaron and asked him to make them something more visible. "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him" (Ex. 32:1).

Aaron was quick to comply—perhaps out of concern for his own life. This was not one of Aaron's most glorious moments. After receiving jewelry from the people, he fashioned a golden calf and declared: "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt" (verse 4).

We wonder why Aaron was so easily swayed. We also wonder why Israel was so transfixed on a visual representation of a god that fit their needs and their expectations. "Only a few days had passed since the Hebrews had made a solemn covenant with God to obey His voice," writes Ellen White. "They had stood trembling with terror before the mount, listening to the words of the Lord. . . . The glory of God still hovered above Sinai in the sight of the congregation; but they turned away, and asked for other gods."<sup>7</sup>

We wonder about depth of convictions in this story. What we see is not faith-based trust in divine leadership, but deep-seated underlying doubt leading ultimately to blatant idolatry. Israel was intellectually and emotionally still in Egypt. They had known the myriads of Egyptian deities. They had experienced the intoxicating emotions of Egyptian worship and rituals. A golden calf meant a mental and a physical shortcut back to Egypt. Worship could become a vehicle to the familiar. Instead of the radical worldview change implied in God's covenant with His people, they opted to "stay put."

Most of us cherish the familiar. We enjoy walking on known paths. We feel safe when we can order and understand our world. Israel experienced that as well, and again and again they yearned to return to Egypt (cf. Num. 14:4). But the call to follow God out of Egypt, the invitation to follow Jesus spoken directly by Him to His disciples, is not only a call to move geographically, it's an invitation to radical change and radical discipleship. Our toxic self-centered mindset and values need to disappear because

they are diametrically opposed to God's values and worldview. We grab—God gives. We crave power—God offers humility. We demand authority—God emphasizes servanthood.

### TOXICITY REACHING BEYOND OUR HEARTS

Both stories share a common denominator. Israel and Jonah struggled with their understanding of who God really was. Israel had seen God's mighty signs and wonders. They had witnessed the theophany at Mount Sinai—and shrunk back in fear (Ex. 19:18, 19). For them Yahweh was just the Israelite version of another powerful Egyptian deity that was to be feared. They seemed to have never understood that He was not only their Creator and Redeemer, but also their Sustainer, their Healer (Ex. 15:26), their Father—and their Friend (John 15:15). Intriguingly, it is right after the golden calf episode that God reveals Himself to Moses as “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the father upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6, 7).

Jonah's understanding of God's goodness was limited to Israel. He could not fathom the possibility of grace for even the enemies of God's people. He would rather die than offer forgiveness to a hated enemy. His theology informed his relationships and his actions. That's why the idea that we are God's “ambassadors” (2 Cor. 5:20) can be thoroughly disconcerting. How can I represent Him in a way that will draw others toward Him—instead of repelling them? Paul gives us a clue: “We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God” (verse 20). Reconciliation stands right at the beginning of healing.

### THE PATH TO HEALING

I don't like snakes. I have lived in parts of the world where snakes were plentiful. Many of these snakes were venomous. When a snake with neurotoxins bites there is only a limited window of opportunity to administer antivenomous serum. If not applied in time, the victim will die as a result of heart failure or breathing failure.

When our notion of God is full of toxins, we will espouse toxic waste that will affect people around us. We will represent Him in ways that may be

distracting, discouraging, or even disturbing. In fact, toxic theological waste has been one of Satan's favorite tools in history. What does the idea of an eternal purgatory say about God? What did the emphasis on the wrath of God with little reference to His grace do for the way people related to God?

Ellen White offers some intriguing insights on this: “It is the work of Satan to represent the Lord as lacking in compassion and pity. He misstates the truth in regard to Him. He fills the imagination with false ideas concerning God; and instead of dwelling upon the truth in regard to our heavenly Father, we too often fix our minds upon the misrepresentations of Satan and dishonor God by distrusting Him and murmuring against Him.”<sup>8</sup>

On another occasion she wrote: “The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin. Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and severity are under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall a prey to the tempter's power.”<sup>9</sup>

When we recognize our great responsibility as we represent Christ to those around us, we fall at the feet of Jesus. We grasp His grace personally; we become reconciled with God, then are transformed into reconcilers. We focus on God's goodness and let God do the transforming and healing in His time—in us and in those with whom we rub shoulders day to day.

Then, perhaps, instead of revulsion, perplexity, or heartache, our words, our touch, even the mention of our names, will offer a winning glimpse of Him who is invisible. 🦋

<sup>1</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/toxicity](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/toxicity)

<sup>2</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxicity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxicity)

<sup>3</sup> A good resource for understanding the effects of a specific chemical substance can be found in the ATSTR Toxic Substances Portal at [www.atcdr.cdc.gov/substances/index.asp](http://www.atcdr.cdc.gov/substances/index.asp).

<sup>4</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water\\_intoxication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_intoxication)

<sup>5</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronic\\_toxicity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronic_toxicity)

<sup>6</sup> Bible texts are from the New King James Version of the Bible Copyright (c) 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 317.

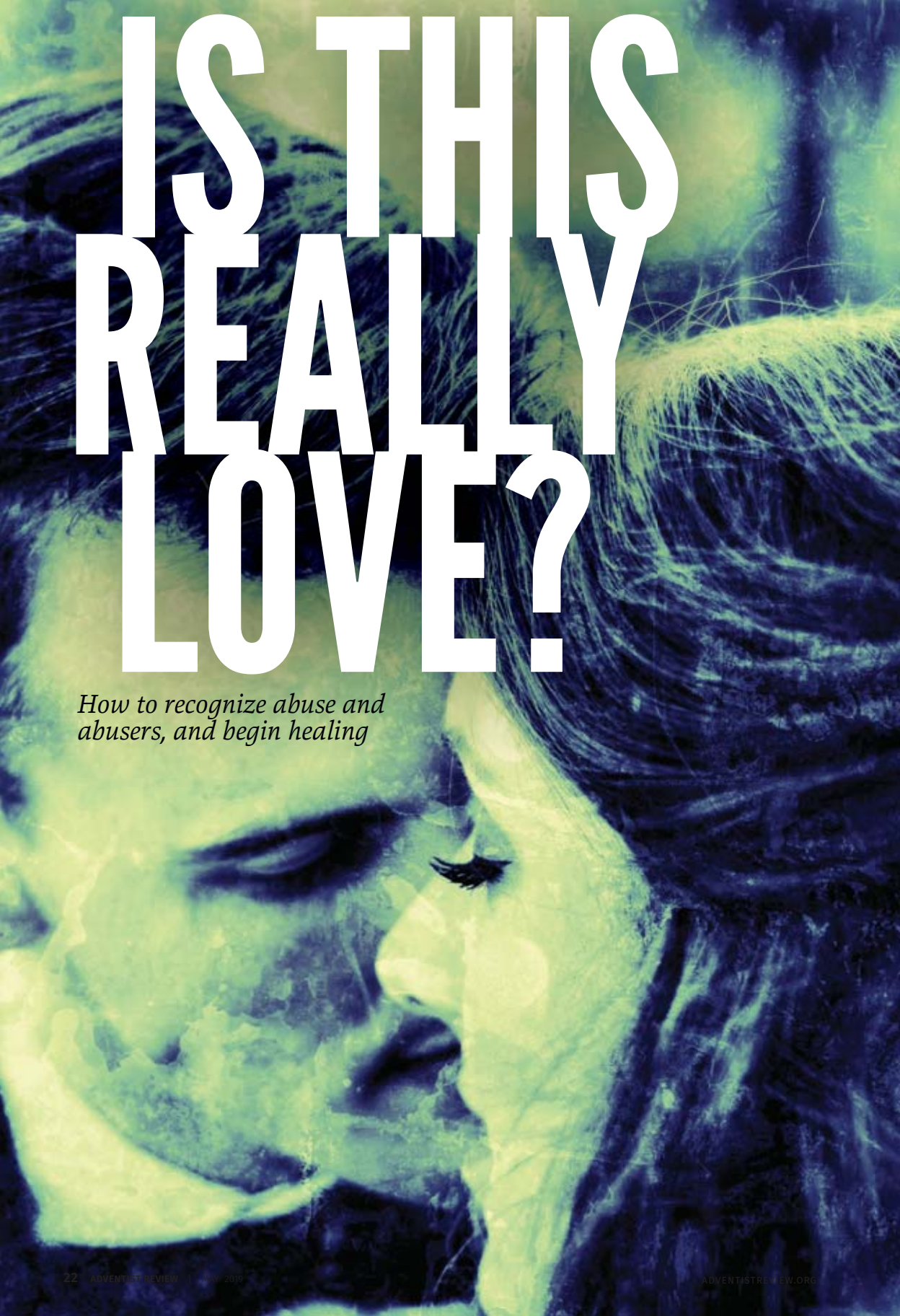
<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 116.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 163.

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**Gerald A. Klingbeil** is an associate editor of *Adventist Review* who yearns for the deep cleansing power of the Spirit scrubbing all toxicity from his life.





# IS THIS REALLY LOVE?

*How to recognize abuse and  
abusers, and begin healing*



## KAREN HOLFORD

**A**t first Mark was charming and romantic. He was a lawyer, church elder, and lay preacher. After a few amazing dates he proposed, and soon we were married. A month after the wedding I spent an evening with my friends. When I unlocked the door, he was waiting. He beat me for going out without him." Amy (not her real name) looked down and bit her lip. "I'm a doctor. Yet I missed all the signs."

For several years Amy experienced increasing levels of emotional, spiritual, physical, and intimate abuse. Mark blamed Amy. If only she had been more submissive, more perfect, more respectful, he wouldn't have treated her this way. One day her boss called her into his office and asked her what was happening at home. He helped Amy identify the abuse and find a safe way out of the escalating violence.

Amy sighed as painful memories flickered through her body as well as her mind. "I wish I'd noticed how angry he was when he didn't get his own way. I wish I'd challenged him when he insisted on listening to my phone calls and reading all my e-mails and messages. Everyone at church thought he was the perfect Christian. No one suspected how abusive he was until I secretly filmed his behavior."

### DANGER AHEAD!

As Amy discovered, it's not always easy to spot someone who is abusive. But there are warning signs. Avoid people who insist on having their own way, and those who become angry and irritable if they don't. When someone suggests a plan for the evening, see if they are open to your ideas. Say: "That sounds great, but I'd really like to do this instead." Watch how they respond. If he angrily insists on his own way, if she strives to win every argument, or if he belittles your opinions, they may have a tendency to be coercive and controlling.

Watch how someone responds when you, or somebody else, needs help. Are they spontaneously kind and generous, or do

they get annoyed at the interruption of their plans? Do they move toward people who need help with a positive, good Samaritan attitude, or do they turn away and walk by on the other side?

Katya wants a Christian husband who is kind, humble, honest about himself, and mature enough to take responsibility for his life. Whenever she's introduced to a potential partner, she asks: "Why is someone like you still single?" If he openly admits some past mistakes, describes his struggle to commit, or has a positive reason for being single, then she keeps on talking. If he blames his problems on others, criticizes previous girlfriends, or makes excuses for his behavior, she crosses him off her list.

### VULNERABLE BELIEVERS

We Christians are taught to forgive others, and this can make us vulnerable. Abused spouses taught to "turn the other cheek" and "forgive seventy times seven," stay at home and hide their bruised faces, isolate themselves from friends and family, and tell themselves that if they were only more obedient, or more submissive, it wouldn't happen again. Sadly, some of them have been beaten to death.

We strive to believe the best in others, not the worst; to be kind, self-controlled, patient, peaceable, long-suffering, and humble—excellent virtues that can blind us to significant, sometimes dangerous, defects in other people's characters, and prevent us from challenging those who treat us badly.

Some abusers look for kind partners: they are more likely to be compliant, and forgiving. Some Christians take on "challenging" partners as "projects," hoping to transform them. But idealistic hopes are no substitute for the specialist's help these "projects" need.

### IS THIS REALLY LOVE?

Jesus came to show us what love looks like in human form. He also asked tough questions about love. Do you love God above everything else? Do you love other

## Jesus came to show us what love looks like when it has a human body, a smiling face, and a compassionate heart.

people the same way you love yourself? Are you comfortable putting your needs last, making sacrifices for others, humbly sitting at the foot of the table? Do you lift others up? Are you as compassionate toward others as Jesus would be?

Paul traveled from city to city planting churches. Sometimes he stayed only a few days. He knew that by the time he left new groups they needed to understand Jesus' ministry and mission, believe in Him as the Messiah, and understand the process of forgiveness and salvation. In order to grow, they also needed relational skills to create a kind, loving, and forgiving community.

Paul scattered relational wisdom, like salt, throughout his letters. His yellow highlighter pen was the phrase "one another." It emphasized healthy relational principles: accepting and comforting each other; rejoicing with and honoring each other; helping, forgiving each other; living peacefully with and being thankful for each other; encouraging and protecting each other; valuing each other; being kind to and making sacrifices for each other. This is what real love looks like.

Paul challenged new Christians to love each other whole-heartedly. "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight" (Phil. 1:9). Care and attention flow both ways. No one is entitled to receive everything while another person is left lonely, aching, or neglected.

### LOVE VERSUS LONELINESS

In the beginning Adam lived in a perfect garden. He had no stress, pain, sadness, or death. He spoke to God face to face. Surely that would provide perfect companionship? But it didn't. This flawless paradise still lacked a major blessing: human companionship.

Adam needed another human being so that he could share God's love with her, and experience God's love through her. It is God's design for humans that we care for each other. No one should ever feel lonely and abandoned. Everyone should know, without a shadow of a doubt, how much God loves them, and that His love has many dimensions.

And loneliness is multifaceted. Each of Paul's relational ideals has a flipside: criticism, discouragement, abuse, controlling behaviors, abandonment, neglect, judging each other, ignoring each other's needs, violent anger, ingratitude, and contempt. These actions and attitudes damage our relationships, create aloneness, misrepresent God, and bring His character into disrepute.

If you want to know whether someone truly loves you, try measuring their love against the teachings of Jesus, His caring ministry, and Paul's letters. Search the New Testament for the "one another" statements, study the relational wisdom in Romans 12, and read Paul's poetic description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Ask yourself whether the other person generously and joyfully does these loving things for you. And if you want to know whether you are truly in love, ask yourself if you would freely and joyfully do these things for the other person for the rest of your life.

This kind of reflection isn't the perfect test of a healthy, loving relationship, but it's a good place to start.

### HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS START AT BIRTH

Research into the effects of early childhood experiences on our brains and behavior has helped scientists understand that babies need plenty of warm and positive interactions with loving parents. These experiences help them to develop secure attachments. They also strengthen the empathic and compassionate area of their brains that help them mature into kind and caring individuals. Watch the short YouTube video of *The Still Face Experiment* to see the reaction of a baby when a loving mother stops responding to her for just a few minutes.

When babies and toddlers regularly experience neglect, abuse, a lack of soothing comfort, and one-to-one attention, their brains become rewired in a way that limits their ability to empathize, and this can lead to a propensity toward violence ([www.wavetrust.org](http://www.wavetrust.org)).

Help children and teens to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Discover what makes them feel loved, and do it as often as you can. Be there for them; listen to them; forgive them warmly; be flexible; support them when they face challenges. When children experience secure, loving, soothing, and accepting relationships from birth, they are more likely to recognize healthy relationships, and less likely to try to fill those needs in unhealthy relationships.

Encourage young people to socialize in groups so they can watch how people interact, and look for friends who know how to build healthy relationships. Let your teens know that if they are ever in a potentially abusive situation, you will pick them up anywhere and be there for them without judgment.

### **ABUSED?**

If you're in an unhealthy relationship, recognize that what you are experiencing is not the self-sacrificial, kind, forgiving, and generous love that God wants you to experience. You may have been told that you are ugly, useless, inadequate, unlovable, that everything that's wrong in the relationship is your fault, and that you deserve to be punished. This is not how God expresses His love. As a start, try reading a love letter from God, compiled from Bible verses, at [www.fathersloveletter.com](http://www.fathersloveletter.com).

Take care of yourself and your children. Discover how to leave an abusive relationship safely. Find a trustworthy person who believes your story, someone who knows how to help people trapped in abusive relationships. It may be necessary to separate for a while and seek skilled professional help.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* makes provision for those who need to separate from an abusive partner, because it is intolerable and uncompassionate for spouses and children to stay in an abusive and dangerous relationship. Children who grow up witnessing abuse in the home are more likely to abuse others.

Some useful resources are available at [www.enditnow.org](http://www.enditnow.org). This website has helpful information for those who are being abused, their pastors, and anyone who wants to support and protect people experiencing domestic abuse. Explore [www.restorerelationships.org](http://www.restorerelationships.org), created by a Christian organization dedicated to informing churches about domestic abuse and helping those who are experi-

encing abuse. Their site contains an excellent Bible study pack for men's groups on what it means to be a Christian man, thought-provoking videos, and sound advice.

Sarah McDugal provides a range of support to women who have experienced abuse ([sarahmcdugal.com](http://sarahmcdugal.com)).

### **BE A PROACTIVE PREVENTER**

Know how to recognize the signs of abuse and be the person who believes the victim, even if their spouse is a pillar of your community. Most victims of severe abuse live with the situation for two or three years before seeking help, and often speak to several professionals before receiving the help they need.

We need to stand up for those who are trapped in unhealthy relationships, protect them, and challenge their abusers safely and wisely. We need to be proactive about preventing abuse through regular relationship seminars, rigorous premarital counseling, providing newly married couples with trained marriage mentors, and setting up safe systems and protection for victims.

Men's ministries can mentor men who will lovingly protect and support the women in their lives. Women's ministries can empower women to recognize abuse and know how to respond safely and wisely. Help parents understand the importance of developing comforting, loving, nurturing, and playful attachments with their babies, toddlers, and children. It's often impossible to identify abusers and their victims in your congregation. Wives can abuse husbands and parents can abuse children. Make sure that good teaching, help, and support are available to everyone.

### **FUNNELS, NOT UMBRELLAS**

God continually pours His love on us. We are not called to be umbrellas, people who, through their words and actions prevent others from experiencing God's love. We are called to be funnels, filling ourselves up with as much of God's love as we can, and pouring it generously into the hurting and love-thirsty hearts of those around us.

How will we funnel God's love into the lives of those around us? 🍷

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**Karen Holford** is a certified family therapist and director of family ministries for the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists.



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# RAFT MONKEYS

When seashells were found in Spanish mountains where, according to the prevailing science, seashells should not be found, François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778) claimed that the shells were leftovers from mountain picnickers, or were dropped by pilgrims on their way to worship at a nearby shrine.

*Voilà!* With that answer Arouet explained away the recalcitrant data and saved the science.

Science, actually, overflows with inordinate phenomena, such as seashells in the mountains, that—contradicting, challenging, and not fitting the tradition—must be explained away.

For instance, a species of monkey, platyrrhines, live in South America that, according to traditional science, evolved from African monkeys called catarrhines. However, platyrrhines have existed in South America (the theory goes) for 30 million years. But supposedly the African and South American continents had been split for 80 million years. So how did the platyrrhines end up across thousands of miles of ocean 50 million years after Africa and South America were separate continents?

Unfortunately, rather than acknowledging “a sinful, unbelieving heart” (Heb. 3:12), the faithful found a way to preserve their Darwinian dogma: raft monkeys.

*Raft monkeys?*

Yes. The reason that platyrrhines live in South America when the inviolable tradition of common descent says they shouldn’t be there, is that they rafted thousands of miles across the Atlantic.

A book questioning the idea states: “They propose not that common descent might be wrong, but that monkeys must have rafted across the Atlantic Ocean,

from Africa to South America. . . . The ‘rafting hypothesis’ argues that monkeys evolved from prosimians once and only once in Africa, and . . . made the waterlogged trip to South America.”

Google “raft monkeys,” and you will find such headlines as “When Monkeys Surfed to South America.”

*Voilà!* With that answer the recalcitrant data, platyrrhines in South America, is explained and the theory saved.

Of course, at least two monkeys, a male and female (or at least one pregnant female) had to drift (sail? navigate?) across the Atlantic and acquire enough food and fresh water along the way (maybe the monkeys knew how to fish, capture rainwater, and follow the stars) in order to make a voyage that would have taken months.

Though ludicrous, the raft monkey hypothesis “explains” the contradictory data. Evolutionists do this all the time, actually: make up stories about supposed events millions, even billions of years ago, in order to explain bothersome phenomena.

But don’t creationists do the same? Yes, but we’re supposedly ignorant Bible-thumping buffoons, not sophisticated empiricists following scientific evidence wherever it leads.

And though being farcical with his seashell-eating picnickers in the Spanish mountains, Arouet was mocking the extremes that some go to in order to preserve their sacred scientific dogma. And despite propaganda to the contrary, the evidence against evolution is vast and expansive, platyrrhines in South America being one example of that evidence, and monkeys on rafts another of how far some will go to defend it. 🦋

CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



GOOGLE “RAFT  
MONKEYS” AND YOU  
WILL FIND SUCH  
HEADLINES AS  
“WHEN MONKEYS  
SURFED TO SOUTH  
AMERICA.”

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Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*.



**ARE BETTER THAN**



## Taking another look at counsel more than 150 years old

DEWITT S. WILLIAMS

**Y**ou must have heard of intermittent fasting (IF). It's become a popular plan of voluntary food abstinence focusing on *when* a person eats, instead of calorie numbers or food types. Perhaps the best-known approach is the 16/8: 16 hours of fasting; eight hours of eating anything anytime. There's also alternate-day fasting: 24 hours of fasting; 24 hours of eating freely. Besides these you could choose the 2/5 approach: fasting two days a week, eating five. One more, worth as much mention as the rest, the Warrior Diet: a 20-hour fast and one large meal consumed at night.

Learning of these suggested a question to me: is advocacy for two meals a day related to IF?

### TWO INSTEAD OF THREE

Here's a quote on eating habits that favors two over three: "Our *plain* food, eaten *twice* a day, is enjoyed with a keen relish. We have *no meat, cake, or any rich food* upon our table. We use no lard, but in its place, milk, cream, and some butter. We have our food prepared with but little salt, and have dispensed with spices of all kinds. *We breakfast at seven, and take our dinner at one. . . . I have within eight months lost twenty-five pounds of flesh.* I am better without it. I have more strength than I have realized for years."<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen days after the day the Adventist Church was organized officially, May 21, 1863, Ellen White had her first major vision on health. It was Friday evening, June 5, and the Whites were visiting Brother Aaron Hilliard's little farmhouse. They had just welcomed the Sabbath. Near the end of their prayer session Ellen placed her hands on James and pleaded for his health. All at once her thrilling exclamation, "Glory! Glory! Glory!" announced another vision. For 45 minutes she said nothing. Then she took her characteristic deep breaths, indicating that her vision was over. That vision was the nucleus of the Adventist health message.

Many church leaders and lay members embraced the new lifestyle called "health reform,"

which was outlined in Ellen White's vision. The regimen included a plant-based diet; freedom from caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco; plain food; and the two-meal plan. The health of workers and members who subscribed began to improve. But over the years interest among Adventists in a two-meal-per-day schedule has waned.

### SCIENCE GIVES VOICE

Hana Kahleova has reported on two studies on the relation between meal timing/frequency and weight gain. A small crossover study showed body mass index (BMI) increasing as meals increased from two to six.<sup>2</sup>

A subsequent comprehensive study included 50,660 individuals from the Adventist Health Study 2, all age 30 or older.<sup>3</sup> Its focus was on possible linkage between when and how often people eat and their BMI. Participants of various body types and sizes were involved, and their eating habits and health outcomes were monitored for an average period of seven years.

The study showed more weight loss/decrease in BMI for people who regularly ate two meals per day. Conversely, those who ate more than three meals a day increased their BMI, and the more meals they ate, including snacks, the greater the weight gain. Additionally, researchers found that skipping dinner altogether and having a long, 18- or 19-hour overnight fast contributed to weight loss. Other good eating practices included leaving five or six hours between breakfast and lunch and abstaining from snacks throughout the day.

Astonishing to some, perhaps, but Ellen White's counsel of 1863 already gave the basis for successful IF programs. Some IF programs advocate coffee drinking, indulgence in unhealthful foods and intemperate practices while enjoying the recommendation of many health professionals as the best treatment for diabetes and other diseases.

In 2015, 30.3 million Americans had diabetes, and 84.1 million (age 18 and older) had prediabetes. These numbers are increasing at alarming rates each year.

# Three years ago my doctor told me I had diabetes and prescribed mini meals throughout the day to keep my blood sugar steady and eliminate insulin spikes.

The first thing most physicians tell newly diagnosed diabetics is to lose weight, a struggle for most people. The two-meal daily plan helps most practitioners lose a significant amount of weight and maintain this loss. Anyone interested in a healthy, Adventist style IF program will need to follow certain paramount principles that Ellen White identified.

**Principle 1—eating time, and steady:** practitioners must choose the eating times for their two meals and stick to the schedule faithfully. They should establish the rest of their plans around these two fixed times. White’s household ate at 7:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. regularly for more than 40 years. So choose a time that’s good for you and stay with it.

**Principle 2—gap time, and plenty:** there should be at least *five hours* between your first and second meals.

**Principle 3—snack time, not:** despite the vigor of product advertising, “healthy snacks” is an

oxymoron. Big Pharma, uncaring health professionals, and the food industries push “healthy” or other snacking for the sake of something green that many value more than they do your health—and even their own, sometimes.

**Principle 4—rest time, for the insides:** just like you, your stomach needs—and deserves—a good night’s rest. Your last meal should be four to five hours *before* your bedtime. New IF research shows that the daily overnight fast of 15-19 hours restores blood sugar levels to normal. Food remaining in the stomach during the night causes the stomach to work the night shift and forfeit its needed rest.

**Principle 5—variety time, and simple:** treat yourself to a variety of simple foods at any meal. Sliced tomatoes, corn on the cob, black beans on brown rice—these will do more glorious good than many of the complex and refined products we purchase, with their additives and lab-designed colors for preservation and attraction. Eat delicious; eat simple; eat whole foods whole.

**Principle 6—drinking time—water, that is:** your body probably needs more fluid than your thirst cravings tell you. Work your thirst out with *water*: drink two glasses upon arising; drain six to eight glasses down during the day in between your two meals. The great “thirst quenching soda” story will give you at least 10 teaspoons of sugar and other chemicals per bottled serving. That will actually increase your thirst, making you want another serving.

Would you wash your dishes in teaspoons of sticky sugar? Why your stomach, then? In the Adventist Health Study women who drank the most water were at the lowest risk of a fatal heart attack, while those who drank the most nonwater beverages, such as fruit juice, soda, coffee, and tea, increased their risk of a fatal heart attack two and a half times. For men, the risk increased by 50 percent.<sup>4</sup>

**Principle 7—workout time, but not all-out:** exercise will help your digestion; a brisk walk—not a sprint—after a meal is especially helpful.

## MY TWO AND THREE STORY

Three years ago my doctor told me I had diabetes and prescribed mini meals throughout the day to keep my blood sugar steady and eliminate insulin spikes. He told me that there is no insulin



surge when small meals are close together. He said, “Eating four to six small meals a day actually raises your metabolism and helps to speed up your fat-burning system. That will help you lose weight.”

But the mini meals gave me heartburn and indigestion. And I kept gaining weight. I purchased a notebook to keep an accurate record of my blood sugar and weight. I learned how to prick my finger and use the blood sugar monitor. And, of course, I prayed a lot. Through my prayers and study, the Spirit of Prophecy statements about two meals a day caught my attention.

In February 2016, weighing in at 196 pounds, I set up my schedule to eat breakfast at 10:00 a.m. and my other meal at 5:00 p.m. Whenever I got hungry I drank a glass of water. I started losing weight. By July 2017 I had lost 30 pounds. Affected by my children’s concern at my frail look, I tried to regain a few pounds.

I have been a vegetarian since 1983, but I’ve always had a sweet tooth. But now that I was following Ellen White’s health counsel, I decided to go all the way: I eliminated table sugar from my diet.<sup>5</sup> The sugar challenge was harder for me than adopting the two meals. Over time I’ve learned to love blueberries, dates, grapes, and other fruits that satisfy my sweet tooth. Now it’s an occasional slice of fruit pie instead of sweets (especially chocolate) after every meal.

At my last doctor’s visit my hemoglobin A1C was 5.4. Those who understand these numbers will recognize that I no longer have diabetes. My bloodwork in all areas is normal. A daily 10,000-step routine outdoors in the fresh air, weightlifting about three times a week, and copious use of water—my only drink now—are the most conspicuous elements of my new lifestyle. My experience leads me to opine that much diabetes treatment addresses symptoms, blood sugar, rather than cause, an overworked, unrested stomach and digestive system. When these organs get the rest they need the body is in much better condition to heal itself by the laws God built into it.

After more than 30 years of taking cholesterol medicine, and about 15 years on high blood pressure medicine, I no longer take these prescription medications. According to my doctor I will always have diabetes, but it is in remission. Now he pum-mels me with questions about health in Ellen

White’s writings and the Bible. He tells me, “I can’t believe that something as simple as two meals a day and cutting out sugar can produce such good results; it’s counterintuitive. But keep doing whatever you’re doing. It’s working for you.”

## NOTHING UNIQUE

What has worked for me works, has worked, and will work for others too. Some aspire by strength of personal will. Some, with me, give thanks to God for His grace and enabling strength to choose something better, something facilitating what He wishes for all: “Above all things . . . prosper and be in health” (1 John 3:2, KJV).

The good news for me is that His grace is totally available to help me enjoy this new quality of life as I approach my eightieth birthday. I intend to keep calling on Him to facilitate my healthier, freer, easy-to-maintain, practically superior lifestyle: less kitchen time and effort; lower cost; no diabetes prescriptions.

So what do you think? Is two better than three? It is for me. And besides any personal testimony, research reports that validate the full health reform Adventist lifestyle keep coming out. It’s not just something for three or two people. Ellen White wrote: “If Seventh-day Adventists practiced what they profess to believe, if they were sincere health reformers, they would indeed be a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to [men and women].”<sup>6</sup> She also wrote: “Always bear in mind that if you would give it a trial, *you would find that two meals are better than three.*”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), vol. 4a, pp. 153, 154. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>2</sup> H. Kahleova, L. Belinova, H. Malinska, et al., “Eating Two Larger Meals a Day (Breakfast and Lunch) Is More Effective Than Six Smaller Meals in a Reduced-Energy Regimen for Patients With Type 2 Diabetes: A Randomized Crossover Study,” *Diabetologia* 58 (2015): 205, doi.org/10.1007/s00125-014-3411-9.

<sup>3</sup> Hana Kahleova et al., “Meal Frequency and Timing Are Associated With Changes in Body Mass Index in Adventist Health Study 2,” *Journal of Nutrition*, Sept. 1, 2017, vol. 147, no. 9 (Sept. 1, 2017); 1722-1728.

<sup>4</sup> J. Chan, “Water, Other Fluids, and Fatal Coronary Heart Disease,” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 155, no. 9 (2002): 827-833.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938), p. 328: “From the light given me, sugar, when largely used, is more injurious than meat.”

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 575.

<sup>7</sup> E. G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 173. (Italics supplied.)

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# A DAD'S MOST MEMORABLE MOTHER'S DAY

**JAY LINTHICUM**

**B**eing a single dad, when it comes to Mother's Day I have a different perspective. Although it's probably not all that much different from those of other single dads. Mother's Day in our house pretty much just comes and goes. One less holiday to worry that you might forget to get the card or buy the flowers.

I don't recall my son ever asking why he didn't have a mother or "Where's *my* mommy, Daddy?" My son lost his mother when he was very young, and for most of his 30 years we have scouted the world alone. Like two puppies trotting through the fields of life, ears a-floppin' and tails a-waggin', oblivious to much of the world around us, enjoying each new butterfly and new wonder in its turn.

## **TWO MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES**

Once or twice in his childhood the thought actually occurred to me to ask my son if he ever missed his mother. I don't remember what he said. So I guess there was nothing of any memorable consequence in his answer. Perhaps he never really



# In one of those miraculous moments I heard myself say nonchalantly, “I’m kind of like both a mommy and a daddy.”

felt a great loss. Everything we had together evidently fit whatever he thought we needed.

There are only two occurrences that I can remember when Jonathan became intimately aware of his missing mother, at least those that I noticed. One, surprisingly, was when he was grown and in medical school. As a medical student he had various and sundry out-of-the-way places about campus where he would go to study when he needed to be quiet and alone to focus and concentrate. He would find cubbyholes, quiet unused rooms, a particular set of study carrels, and other remote and little-trafficked destinations. Each “hideout” would be selected on any particular day based on either his mood at the time or the particular subject matter to be studied.

Once, while studying in one of these small rooms, someone appeared and began stacking boxes from a nearby room that was being prepared for repainting. Idly inquiring as to what was in the boxes, my son was informed that they were the university autopsy reports. Somewhere, from an instant and deep and foggy mental recess, he remembered hearing that his mother had died there, so he asked, “How far back do they go?”

“It’s all of them,” was the reply.

After being told, “Sure, it’s OK if you look

through them,” it took him but a moment’s time and he was holding his mother’s autopsy report in his hands. He came home that night and shared with me his feelings. He said he had to take a walk afterward. Feeling “dazed” is the wrong word. “Pensive” is probably better. It was all there. Her height, her weight, the color of her hair and eyes. When he came to the part that said “lactating female,” he said he thought, *Hey! That’s me!*

The other time I think he became aware that he didn’t have a mother was when he was much younger. He was about 5 years old, and it was Mother’s Day in the Vallejo Drive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Glendale, California. Children were invited to come to the front of the church to receive flowers to take back to their mother. For the first time ever I think Jonathan was a little confused as to what to do when all the other children started out of their seats and headed toward the front of the church. As the other children flowed toward the flowers, my son put down his sewing card,<sup>\*</sup> stirred from his seat, hesitated, and with a slightly puzzled look on his face, glanced around at the other children and families as if he had just discovered something he’d never noticed before.

In one of those miraculous moments when Dad is surprised that he actually happens to say the right thing at the right time, I heard myself say nonchalantly, “I’m kind of like both a mommy and a daddy, so you could probably go and get me a flower too if you want.” So he did. He went up front with all the other kids, got the flower, came back, handed it to me, hopped onto my lap, got busy with his sewing card—and church and life went on.

I’m sure I was the only daddy who got a flower in church on that Mother’s Day.

The memory of a flower-holding dad with a little 5-year-old boy sitting peacefully on his daddy’s lap threading a sewing card makes that Sabbath of long ago a dad’s most memorable Mother’s Day.

So happy Mother’s Day to all you mommies—and some of you daddies too. 🍀

\*A 6” x 8” cardlike religious artwork containing a picture of a biblical character or scene. Small holes, through which a large colored shoe-string device can be threaded by the child, outline the picture.

**Jay Linthicum**, a retired teacher from Loma Linda Academy in California, lives in northern Idaho.



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**M**y son Jeremy was an itty-bitty thing when he first started going off the diving board at just 5 years of age. He'd barely gone off the shorter diving board 10 times when he decided to try the high dive, which quickly became his favorite. In the line of big kids he looked so small, nervously biting his fingernails while he waited his turn.

After years of having to follow behind Jeremy in the baby pool, walking on my knees in the warm water, I was finally off the hook. I soaked in the comfort of the hot tub with a view of the diving

# HIGH DIVE HEART-STOP

*Above all, we want our kids to be safe.*

boards as he repeatedly leaped off the high dive.

Relaxed by the warm water, I leaned back and watched my little guy when his turn came. Climbing the 10-foot ladder, Jeremy was almost to the top when his hands slipped. In horror, I could do nothing but watch as he fell backward, his hands stretching out toward the railings, just out of reach, his head aiming toward the cement below. Halfway to the ground his feet slipped in between the rungs of the ladder, his body did a sudden flip, and he landed on the cement with a sickening thud.

Though I had been paralyzed with terror as I watched him fall, I was instantly on my feet, wrestling my way through the water, up the steps of the hot tub, racing toward him.

"He's dead, he's dead, he's dead," my heart chanted.

## A WHOLE NEW APPRECIATION

Jeremy had been a long-awaited child. Infertility had kept our home empty of children for eight

years of marriage. I had felt like Hannah when my promised son arrived through adoption. Soon our world revolved around him. His giggle gave us joy; his smile was a ray of sunshine. The worst fear of my life was that something would happen to him, and that day my nightmare had come true.

Parenting has expanded my understanding of God, yet it has left me bewildered at God's gift to us of freedom of choice. How can He let us do as we want, knowing that our choices can destroy us or cause Him to lose us entirely? Yes, sometimes we succeed; sometimes we make Him proud. But does He ever watch us with terror in His heart, as I watch Jeremy as a mother?

Though I was certain my baby was dead, by the time I reached Jeremy he was trying to sit up, crying as one of the lifeguards leaned over him. She took him to a bench and checked him out, asking him questions and peering into his pupils. Other than a few scratches on his legs where they'd been caught by the rungs of the ladder, he was whole.

Knowing what I know now about the danger of concussions, I should have packed my little boy up then and there and taken him home. But Jeremy wanted to swim some more. So we returned to the kiddie pool, where he stayed glued to me as he had when he was a toddler.

It wasn't long, though, before Jeremy assured me that he wanted to go off the low diving board. As he padded over to the diving board and waited in line, it was all I could do to keep from calling his name and forcing him to come back to safety, back to where I could protect him from hurt and harm.

He stood in line, so small between the confident teenagers.

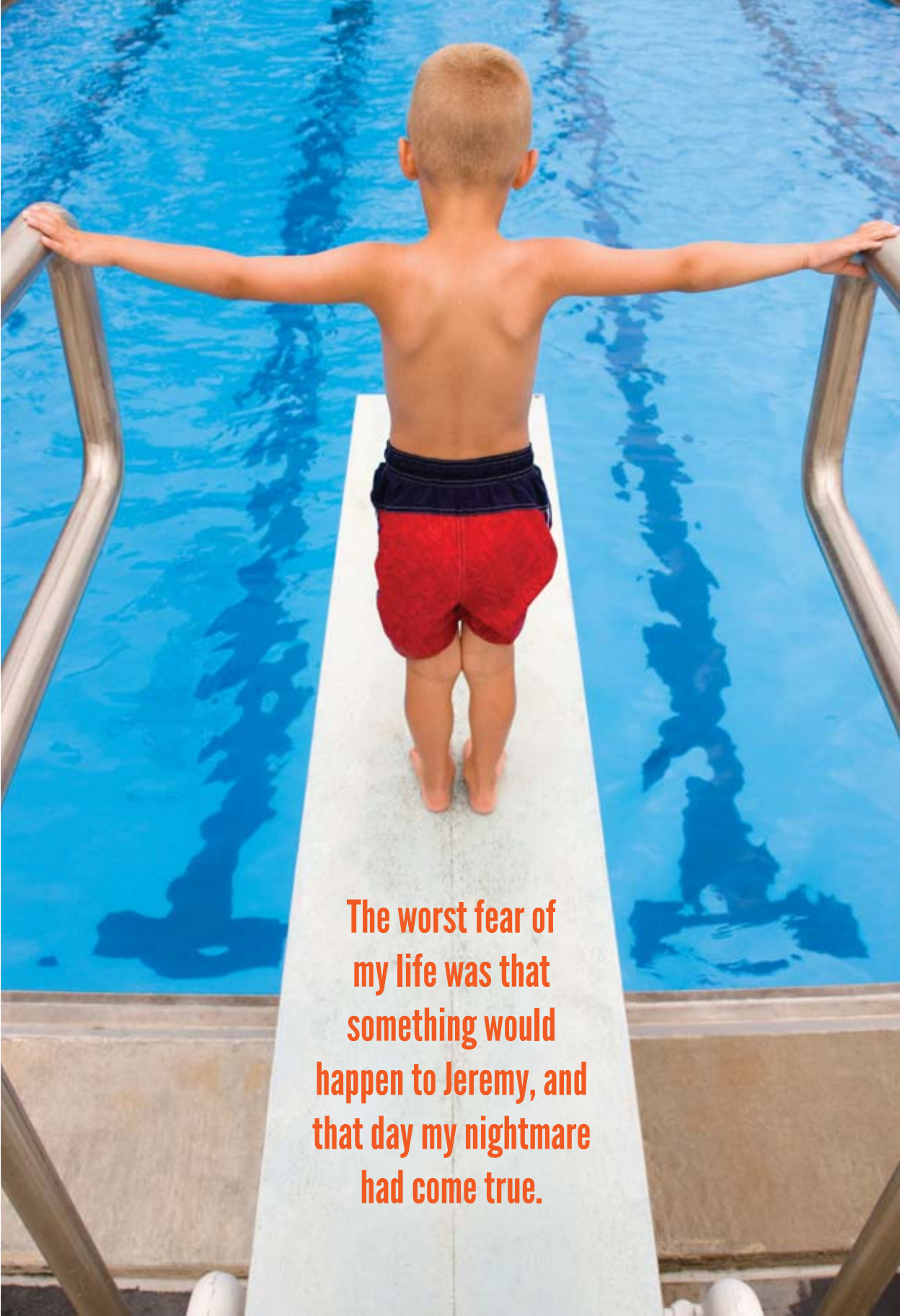
## NOT AGAIN

What astounded me was that after two low-dive jumps, he was again at the base of the high-dive ladder, wiping his palms deliberately on the legs of his swim shorts before he climbed, his little hands gripping the railings tightly.

I watched Jeremy, wondering how God must feel when He looks at His children making their own choices in this risky world, my mama-heart in my throat, proud and terrified. ♣

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**Becky Colvin** is a teaching aide at Three Sisters Adventist Christian School in Bend, Oregon.



**The worst fear of  
my life was that  
something would  
happen to Jeremy, and  
that day my nightmare  
had come true.**





HENRY OSSAWA TANNER, DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART, DEACCESSION FUNDS

**W**e women often find much of our lives and identities wrapped up in our role as mothers. Whether in anticipation of motherhood, in the throes of raising children, or adjusting to an empty nest, our children are always close to our hearts.

The Bible details stories about women and mothers that are real and at times heartbreaking. Throughout those stories we find our stories.

### **SARAH**

Sarah laughed when she overheard someone say that she would have a child. Yet we find her listed in heaven's hall of faith (Heb. 11:11).

As an old woman, Sarah, well past the age of childbearing did conceive and bear a son. And how fitting the name she and Abraham chose for this long-awaited child. Isaac means "laughter." Imagine the joy that she and Abraham must have felt when their promised son was born.

While we may sometimes doubt, even laugh, at God's promises, He is faithful.

### **HAGAR**

Hagar went from being a slave, to being mother of the son everyone thought would be Abraham's heir, to being a single mother cast out of her home with no means of support. Reading her story, we feel her desperation as she sat weeping, a bowshot away, the Bible says, from Ishmael, whom she thought would die because of her inability to provide for him.

But "God was with the boy as he grew up" (Gen. 21:20). And while Hagar was running away from Sarah's harsh treatment, God came to her and promised to make her son the father of a great nation. Hagar's response? "You are the God who sees me" (Gen. 16:13).

God sees single moms. He knows your struggles to provide all that your children need. Just as He was there for Hagar, He is there with you.

### **BATHSHEBA**

Bathsheba is often remembered for her part in David's great sin, but she was just a pawn in those events. Attracting the attention of the king of Israel turned out to be the beginning of a painful chapter in her life.

Yet the tact and quiet discretion she possessed and displayed when it mattered (1 Kings 1:5-40) must have impacted her son's development.

Of all David's sons, Solomon is the one in Scripture who most showed a heart to serve God. We may find ourselves in less-than-ideal situations. Even if we played a part in those situations; even if we feel like pawns being adversely

## **GOD'S SECRET WEAPON**

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*Mothers' essential role in our homes and churches.*



affected by the poor choices of others, God can redeem terrible situations and save our children.

#### **RAHAB**

Rahab's singular decision changed the course of her family. We first find her living in the city of Jericho, saving the lives of the Israelite spies, requesting protection for her family when the city was destroyed.

We next find her in the genealogy of Jesus as the great-great-grandmother of King David. Rahab is a wonderful example of how mothers can influence their family's story, how our decisions can shape future generations.

#### **LEAH**

Leah experienced a deeply troubled marriage. Her pain is reflected poignantly in the names of her sons. Her firstborn, Reuben, she named saying, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now" (Gen. 29:32). With her next son we hear the pain still: "'Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.' So she named him Simeon" (verse 33). The voice of her pain has still not subsided in her third son's name: "'Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.' So he was named Levi" (verse 34).

When marriage isn't ideal, and the pain at times seems unbearable, God understands and feels our pain. Years and much heartache would pass before Leah's sons reconciled with their father, their brother Joseph, and God, but in the end God brought redemption to Leah's painful story.

#### **EVE**

Eve experienced the pain of having a child turn away from God, as well as the agony of having one child murder another. How she must have lamented her choices in the Garden of Eden.

When we look back, and the knowledge of our mistakes weighs us down, destroying our faith and peace, look to the One who loves us and is in the business of forgiving and redeeming both us and our children. Just as God works in our hearts, He'll work in the hearts of our children, loving them and drawing them to Himself.

#### **JOCHEBED**

Jochebed lived in a crisis situation, yet she was creative and courageous in saving her son's life.

She had only 12 years to train Moses in the ways of God, yet she had a lifelong influence on her son. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:24, 25).

God is with us when we face crises. He honors our desires and efforts to raise godly children.

#### **MANOAH'S WIFE**

Samson's mother is known in Scripture only as "Manoah's wife." Yet hers is another story of God's redeeming power. The Bible tells of the careful instructions followed by Manoah and his wife as they raised their special son promised by an angel.

Samson was the epitome of a strong-willed child, often bent on following his own path despite his parents' pleadings. Those choices eventually led to his captivity and blindness. But that physical blindness led to Samson's spiritual eyes being opened.

When we experience anguish as a result of our children's poor choices and see them have to deal with the consequences, know that God understands the pain of a mother's heart.

God gave His only Son to redeem His children—our children. He will never stop seeking us.

#### **MARY**

Young and inexperienced, Mary found herself not just a mother, but the mother of the Son of God. What an awesome responsibility! Mary did all the mundane little things that go with caring for a baby, a toddler, a curious little boy. Did she understand the magnitude of the work that she was doing?

Like most mothers, she probably felt weary and inadequate at times. Under her care though, Jesus grew in both "wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

God understands the joys and challenges of motherhood. Motherhood expands a woman's heart in ways she never thought possible. It is the most challenging job she will ever have. The power of her influence is as far-reaching as eternity.

May our prayers cling to our children as well, knowing that our love for our children is just a tiny glimpse into God's heart and His love for us and for our children!

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Leslie Olin writes from St. Peters, Missouri.



PHOTO BY KELLY SIKKEMA ON UNSPLASH

## THE WONDER OF MOTHERHOOD

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*The important role of raising children for the kingdom*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

*Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. Eph. 6:2,3, KJV*

Mothers, do not forget that God requires you to give your children constant, loving care. He does not want you to be a slave to your children, but He does want you to teach them to live for Him. Day by day give

them lessons that will prepare them for future usefulness.

One lesson that you will have to repeat over and over again is the lesson of obedience. Teach your children that they are not to rule, that they are to respect your wishes, and yield to your authority. Thus you are teaching them self-control. . . .

The work of the mother who has a close connection with Christ is of infinite worth. Her ministry of love makes the home a Bethel. Christ works with her, turning the common water of life into the wine of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

*As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you. Isaiah 66:13, NIV.*

By gentleness and patience, seek to win your children from wrong. Seek God for wisdom to train them so that they will love you and love God. When it is necessary to refuse them their desires, show them kindly that in doing this you are seeking their highest good.

Love and cherish your children; but do not allow them to follow their own way, for this is the curse of the age in which we live. Show them where they make mistakes, and teach them that if they do not correct these wrongs, they can never be given a place in the mansions that Jesus is preparing for those who love Him. In this way you will retain their love and confidence.<sup>2</sup>

*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Prov. 31:26, KJV.*

Whenever the mother can speak a word of commendation for the good conduct of her children, she should do so. She

should encourage them by words of approval and looks of love. These will be as sunshine to the heart of a child and will lead to the cultivation of self-respect and pride of character. . . .

Children have sensitive, loving natures. They are easily pleased and easily made unhappy. By gentle discipline in loving words and acts, mothers may bind their children to their hearts. To manifest severity and to be exacting with children are great mistakes. Uniform firmness and unimpassioned control are necessary to the discipline of every family. Say what you mean calmly, move with consideration, and carry out what you say without deviation.<sup>3</sup> . . .

When children love and repose confidence in their mother, and have become obedient to her, they have been taught the first lessons in becoming Christians. . . .

In view of the individual responsibility of mothers, every woman should develop a well-balanced mind and pure character, reflecting only the true, the good, and the beautiful.<sup>4</sup>

*Let love be without dissimulation. . . . Be kindly affectioned one to another . . . ; in honour preferring one another. Rom. 12:9, 10, KJV.*

Christian courtesy should reign in every household. . . . The wife and mother may bind the hearts of her husband and children to her own by the strong cords of love, if in her intercourse with them she will manifest unvarying love in gentle words and courteous deportment. . . .

[The true wife and mother] will perform her duties with dignity and cheerfulness, not considering it degrading to do with her own hands whatever it is necessary to do in a well-ordered household. . . .

When the mother has gained the confidence of her children, and taught them to love and obey her, she has given them the first lesson in the Christian life. They must love and trust and obey their Saviour, as they love and trust and obey their parents. The love which in faithful care and right training the parents manifest for the child faintly mirrors the love of Jesus for His faithful people.<sup>5</sup>

*Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. Prov. 16:24.*

The mother should cultivate a cheerful, contented, happy disposition. Every effort in this direction will be abundantly repaid in both the

**The love which in faithful care and right training the parents manifest for the child faintly mirrors the love of Jesus for His faithful people.**

physical well-being and the moral character of her children. A cheerful spirit will promote the happiness of her family and in a very great degree improve her own health.

\* \* \*

In the children committed to her care, every mother has a sacred charge from God. "Take this son, this daughter," He says; "train it for Me; give it a character 'polished after the similitude of a palace,' that it may shine in the courts of the Lord forever." . . .

There is a God above, and the light and glory from His throne rests upon the faithful mother as she tries to educate her children to resist the influence of evil. No other work can equal hers in importance. . . .

The mother who appreciates this will regard her opportunities as priceless. Earnestly will she seek, in her own character and by her methods of training, to present before her children the highest ideal. . . . Diligently she will study His Word. She will keep her eyes fixed upon Christ, that her own daily experience, in the lowly round of care and duty, may be a true reflection of the one true Life.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In *Review and Herald*, Jan. 24, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> In *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 14, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 532.

<sup>4</sup> In *Health Reformer*, August 1877.

<sup>5</sup> In *Signs of the Times*, Sept. 9, 1886.

<sup>6</sup> *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 374-378.

These excerpts are taken from *Reflecting Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), pp. 184, 186, 189-191. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



## Child Impact International

PO Box 763, Ooltewah, TN 37363

**email:** [support@childimpact.org](mailto:support@childimpact.org)

**phone:** (423) 910-0667

[childimpact.org](http://childimpact.org)

# CHILDIMPACT INTERNATIONAL

Previously Asian Aid USA

**Child Impact International is a fully supportive ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist church and a member of ASI.**

**Its outreach is to take children based on need and sponsor them in an Adventist Mission school.**

**Child Impact operates in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and supports a project in Papua New Guinea.**

**Child sponsorship is a very effective outreach as the children are given an education and introduced to Jesus. The impact is wider as the child's family are given hope and the mission school gains financial support.**

**Key outreach for Child Impact International includes:**

## Child sponsorship

You can sponsor a specific child or contribute to our **Un-sponsored Child fund**. Sponsors receive correspondence and a school report from their child.

## Orphanages

Child Impact supports three Adventist church orphanages in India including Sunrise home which it funds 100%. These homes give **HOPE!** to those who have no hope.

## Special Needs schools

Child Impact fully funds a Blind school and Deaf school operated by the church in India. These schools serve rural India which is very poor and give these children an education would never have. You can make a big **IMPACT** supporting these schools.

## Operation Child Rescue

In Bangalore, India, Child Impact, through its **Operation Child Rescue** program funds and manages a rescue operation and rescue home for trafficked girls rescued from the sex trade. The problem is overwhelming but this program makes a difference in their lives.

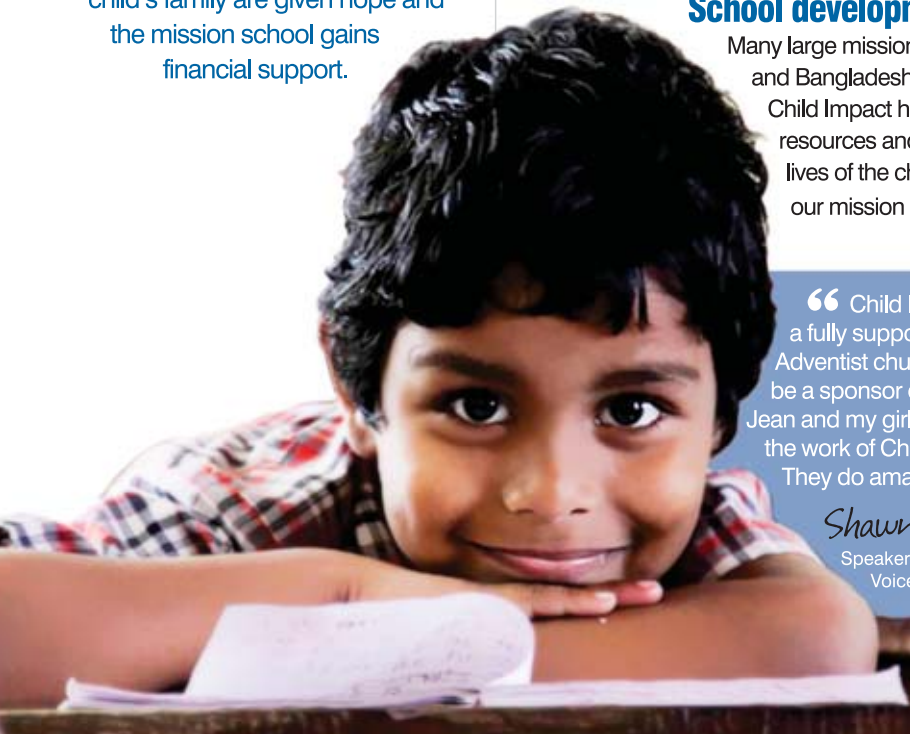
## School development

Many large mission schools in India, Myanmar and Bangladesh are struggling financially. Child Impact helps these schools with resources and equipment that impact the lives of the children and give resources to our mission schools.

“ Child Impact International is a fully supportive ministry of the Adventist church. My family are excited to be a sponsor of a child with Child Impact Jean and my girls have visited her and the work of Child Impact in India. They do amazing work! ”

*Shawn Boonstra*

Speaker/Director  
Voice of Prophecy





# URGENT APPEAL

Child Impact International needs \$85,000 to fund these special homes and schools in 2019.

These children are the poorest of the poor with special needs.

Could you make this a mission gift for 2019?

## Special Needs Schools

Blind and deaf children in rural India in most cases have no hope. In most cases they are trapped at home doing menial chores or working as farm laborers.



**CHILDIMPACT**  
INTERNATIONAL  
Previously Asian Aid USA

### Bobbili Blind School

Located in rural India, this school gives over 150 children a special education. Most can then attend college and find work ● Their families are given hope and feel very proud

### Kollegal Speech & Hearing School

Located in rural India over 125 deaf child gain a special education.



## Orphanages



### Sunrise Home

Many children are abandoned and parentless.

Many live in remote towns, railway stations or where they can find cover.

Sunrise Home is located in a rural setting with 10 acres of farm land which provides food for the home and practical work experience.

Sunrise Home gives the homeless a home.

Sunrise Home maintains a strong, loving Christian environment.

This home gives these children a home, an education and a future.

Sunrise works carefully with law enforcement and government to rescue truly homeless children.



**ARE YOU  
IN A TOXIC  
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH GOD?**

**It can happen, and it's not His fault.**



## ALMA GARCIA-ABASCAL

**T**he question of whether our personal relationships are healthy is ever-present in our society today. How many times have you stood in a checkout line at the grocery store and seen this question gracing a magazine cover: “Are you in a toxic relationship?” We are given advice and tips about how to get out of toxic relationships with partners, or how to fix those types of relationships with family and friends. However, is it possible that our most important relationship—our relationship

with God—might not be a healthy one? When was the last time we thought about that?

### HOW CAN ANYTHING WITH GOD BE TOXIC?

One reason we don’t check in with ourselves about such a notion is that we don’t think of the possibility of such a thing as a toxic relationship with God. After all, God is love, and He is perfect. There is no way that having God in our lives can result in the negative effects that toxic relation-



# We live in a secular world; and to say we believe in God sounds to some the same as saying that we believe in Santa Claus.

ships are known for. We can accept that, except that it means we err by missing one painful truth: often enough it is we who are the toxic ones in the relationship.

I found myself in a toxic relationship with God. I had seen the lives of others hardened and burdened by toxic relationships of various sorts, and have even lost a few friends to toxic relationships. When I found articles on the topic, I usually skimmed over or scrolled past them completely, feeling that I already knew what signs to look for. But when I finally found an article asking if I was the toxic one, something about it gave me pause, and in reading it I came to a realization. While my current human relationships were healthy, I was in fact being toxic toward God. I began to see how the same could be true of many of my fellow Christians.

## **TAKE A GOOD HARD LOOK**

It is actually frighteningly simple to fall into a toxic relationship with God. It is important to understand that toxic behaviors are not always obvious to the ones committing them, especially if the other person in the relationship doesn't call us out about them. Have you heard our gracious God saying that to you? Maybe not. So how can we check ourselves?

## **NOT PUTTING GOD FIRST**

One of the easiest toxic behaviors to exhibit is denying God first place in our lives. If someone were to ask, "Who or what is the most important thing in your life?" as Christians our answer is most likely God. But is He really? Most of us include God in our "most important" list, but don't mention Him first on that list. That seems to be the more honest answer.

Even those who do mention Him first could be all talk and no action. Do we spend most of our free time praying, reading the Bible, talking about God to others, and reflecting on our relationship with Him? Or does most of our day go toward browsing the Internet, scrolling through social media, and surrounding ourselves with material things and concerns? It is hard to step back from that, especially in a world that is so focused on everything but God. But taking baby steps toward prioritizing God as number one is a simple way to move toward having a healthier relationship with Him.



## NOT REALLY CARING

Living our lives not paying attention to how our decisions affect our relationship with God is a toxic habit. For some of us, “I’ll skip church this week” may be so easy to say and do. Going out or just lazing about the house can feel like a lot more fun than listening to someone lecture for an hour. The more times we do it, the easier it becomes, until one day we realize that it has been weeks or months since we last attended church. Lying, being disrespectful to others (especially parents), and generally behaving in a way that God disapproves hurts our relationship with God. Saying that we can pray about it later or “God will forgive me; it’s not as if it’s a big deal,” is lying to ourselves about real consequences. Yes, God forgives us when we ask Him, but we shouldn’t take advantage of that grace, behaving habitually as if His forgiveness is a small thing: “God cannot be mocked: a man reaps what he sows” (Gal. 6:7).

## BEING A FAIR-WEATHER FRIEND

A bad habit many can fall into is being a fair-weather friend to God. They act as if they love Him and feel great about Him only during good times. But when bad times come (and they always do), He is easy to blame. Stated differently: some ask for God to be in their lives only if there is trouble; they ignore Him when everything is fine. As Christians we are in a relationship with God all the time. We do not get to pick and choose when we want Him around. In our relationships, don’t we care when people pretend to be our friends when they need something, or are friends only until things get rough? Then why should we act this way with God—with the one whose relationship is most important? It is not fair to God. Moreover, we seriously limit the richness of our lives if we aren’t having Him in all parts of it—on good days and bad.

## LETTING OTHERS COME BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

In the Christian walk, there might be times when it’s difficult to stay loyal to God, especially if our friends and family don’t share our beliefs. We live in a secular world; and to say we believe in God sounds to me the same as saying that we believe in Santa Claus. Our world is encased in so much tragedy and cynicism that belief in an all-good, all-powerful Creator and Savior seems naive.

And constantly being belittled for that belief by others can make some pull away from God. This is especially true when the arguments against believing seem logically persuasive.

Part of the reason that constantly defending ourselves against naysayers is so hard is because we don’t always have answers to their questions. This uncovers a deeper issue: how can we defend our beliefs if we do not know the root of those beliefs? How can we defend our relationship with God if we do not know Him well enough? Our relationship with God must be focused and strongly rooted to withstand all of that. And it’s difficult to get to that point when our relationship with God and knowledge of His Word are not top priority.

## NOT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OURSELVES

Playing the blame game with God is a great way to twist our relationship with Him. Blaming others for our mistakes is something humans have always done. It’s easy to blame God for life’s problems, for God is not in the business of defending Himself or retaliating. So this damages our relationship with Him in two ways. First, it is not healthy to be in a relationship with someone who, in our eyes, is the root of all our problems. Second, by blaming God as the origin of these problems, we neglect their true source. With that mindset, we are unable to resolve them in a healthy way, for we are denying the fundamental truth: God is not to blame for our problems.

It’s time to take stock and see if you are indeed in a toxic relationship with God. If you are, you may not *actually* be having a relationship with God. You may be calling yourself a Christian without the true value of what that relationship really entails. Just as any toxic relationship can be damaging to one or both parties involved, being in a toxic relationship with God is damaging. God loves every one of us. His relationships with us are important to Him. He wants us to be happy, healthy, and loving. Don’t let your relationship with Him embody anything toxic. He loves us too much for that. Ask Him for help and guidance in all things, communicate with Him constantly, and allow Him to be the best and most important part of your life. 📌

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**Alma Garcia-Abascal** is an education major at La Sierra University in Riverside, California.



called us—individually and as a church. With that in mind I share my reflections on what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist. This article cannot cover everything that could be said, but I hope it proves a good starter for deeper reflection.

### **GROUNDED IN THE LOVE OF JESUS**

The bedrock of our spiritual identity is Jesus' great and steadfast love for us. Jesus loved us while we were still His enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10). Without His love no one would be interested in God's salvation. Without His love we would have no consciousness of our need for His forgiveness, or any desire to become more like Him. It's only Jesus' great and persistent love that leads to our conversion—one of the most amazing miracles in the universe. Only through His love and grace are we called children of God and heirs of His salvation.

This fact is extremely important for our spiritual identity as Seventh-day Adventists. Why? Because Jesus' love creates a spiritual identity in us that nothing else can achieve. Knowing He loved us first provides that deep and joyful gratitude that is characteristic of every genuine Seventh-day Adventist Christian. The experience of God's forgiveness is something we cannot earn. We can accept it only with childlike faith. This fills our hearts with hope. As His children we can know that we are saved and have eternal life, offered to us in Jesus Christ alone (1 John 5:10-13).

This spiritual identity is grounded not in what we have

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST?**

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*A short theological reflection*

**W**hat does it mean to be a Seventh-day Adventist? At times we are tempted to define who we are by what we *do*. We revel about those areas in which we excel and are successful. By focusing on the things we do or don't do, we easily lose sight of the most foundational factor of Adventist identity—our rootedness in God. It seems that our deepest identity is derived not so much from what we do, but from *who we are*. Who we are leads to *how* we will live.

Seen from this perspective, our identity is rooted first and foremost in God because He has

done for Him, but in what He has done for us! Ellen White put it this way: “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel’s message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy.”

Thus our Adventist identity is rooted in Jesus Christ and His great love for us. What He has done for us enables us to respond in faith to His initiative. From this spiritual fact arise a number of other typical Adventist characteristics.

#### **FAITHFULNESS TO GOD’S WORD**

Only those who have experienced Jesus’ transforming love and forgiveness have the desire to follow His Word obediently. Jesus’ love always leads believers to a thankful attentiveness toward God’s commandments and His will. Such mindfulness about what God has told us will not be selective. It includes the fourth commandment that reminds us of our Creator (Ex. 20:8-11). We Adventists remember our origin every Sabbath. We are not the product of blind chance; we have our beginning in God’s deliberate will. We are created in the image of God.

Just as God rested on the seventh day of Creation week, we, too, follow His example and keep the Sabbath holy. The Sabbath reminds us that our human dignity and worth is not dependent on our performance or on what we are capable of doing, but is grounded in God’s gracious will that we should be.

Our obedience is not limited to the fourth commandment. Seventh-day Adventists take seriously *all* of Scripture and are people who desire to live according to *all* that Scripture says. Such attentive mindfulness toward God’s Word is another important feature of Adventist identity. However, obedience is never the path to salvation. Rather, joyful obedience is the path of all who have been saved by God’s undeserved grace alone. God’s command-

**This spiritual identity is grounded not in what we have done for Him, but in what He has done for us!**

ments are the shoes in which our love for God walks and finds its faithful expression. Hence, “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10).

#### **A SPECIAL UNDERSTANDING OF TIME**

For Adventists, the Sabbath is also implicated in the biblical understanding of time. It is the first time factor in our anchored identity. Seventh-day Adventists are men and women who are blessed through the Sabbath. The Sabbath shapes in distinctive ways our weekly rhythm of work and rest. The Sabbath reveals to us that fellowship with God is more important than any work we do.

Even before Adam and Eve were able to do anything, they spent time with God on the first Sabbath of Creation week. Out of this holy time with God everything we do gains its significance. The Sabbath leads us to set our daily priorities right, and it reminds us that no matter how diligent and industrious we are, something of our work always remains uncompleted. Thus the Sabbath reminds us that we ultimately live by God’s grace alone.

The Sabbath experience shapes Adventist identity in manifold ways. It points us to a lifestyle of *shalom*. *Shalom* living means living in harmony with the Creator God and His creation. It tells us that at the beginning there was harmony between God, nature, and humanity.

The Sabbath also points forward to the future: it reminds us that we belong to God and that in our attentiveness of keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest our love and faithfulness toward God become visible. Thus, the Sabbath becomes a sign that we belong to the only true God.

It is precisely for this reason that the Sabbath will play an important role in the final events of earth’s history when God’s character is contested

## God's commandments are the shoes in which our love for God walks and finds its faithful expression.

and our loyalty to God is challenged. This end-time significance of the Sabbath is closely connected to the second aspect of our Adventist understanding of time that is significant for our identity.

The second formative time factor for Adventists is prophetic time in Scripture. The time prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation provide us with a unique perspective of world history. Here God grants us a glimpse into the great controversy between good and evil. Here we are told how history will unfold, especially as it relates to the salvation of God's people.

This prophetic view of time gives Seventh-day Adventists an understanding of the signs of the times and the special significance of the times in which we live. It shows our place in history and thus gives meaning to our lives. This prophetic understanding of time has Jesus Christ at its center. It does not focus on sensationalism, nor is it driven by extraordinary curiosity. Rather, it drives us to proclaim more urgently to those around us that Jesus' coming is close at hand.

This prophetic understanding of time helps Seventh-day Adventists to deal responsibly with the talents and gifts God has given us. As God's good stewards, those who want to be ready when Jesus comes, we are diligent and careful with what God has entrusted to us. This means that Adventists practice a lifestyle of modesty and moderation in which we gladly avoid any wasteful or extravagant way of life.

Adventists promote and practice a healthy lifestyle, because we recognize that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. We are cognizant that our physical health easily affects our spiritual wellbeing. This attentiveness leads us to refrain conscientiously from all health-damaging things and practices.

Being aware of the times in which we live, and

motivated by our gratitude to Jesus makes us also generous. We joyfully return our tithe and offerings to Him who is the giver of all good gifts (Mal. 3:8-11). Seventh-day Adventists love to help people in need, irrespective of their religious background, their gender, or the color of their skin. Because we have experienced in our own lives the amazing peace that grows out of God's forgiveness, we are people who are eager to foster peace and are willing to grant forgiveness and to work for reconciliation.

In all we do we try to follow the example of Jesus who during His earthly life and ministry spent significant time to heal the sick and restore to health those who were suffering. We seek the wellbeing of those around us, because "Christ's love compels us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

### AN ATTITUDE OF HOPE

Carried and sustained by Jesus' love, Adventists are eager to overcome the power of sin through the "blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11). In preaching "the everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6, KJV), we demonstrate that we are a people of hope. We are propelled by the hope of Jesus' soon coming.

Because Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead, we have the hope of a resurrection of all believers. Those who have died in faith in Jesus Christ now rest in their graves until He comes again. The trumpet of God will sound and the dead in Christ will rise first. "After that we who are alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess. 4:17).

As people who have experienced the reconciliation and peace of God, Seventh-day Adventists are men and women of hope. We follow the example of Jesus and seek to solve conflicts nonviolently. Christ's love becomes visible in our lives. Even though we don't know the exact day Jesus will come again, we live in such a way that we are ready at any time to meet Him when He comes.

Christ's love remains the starting point, the center, and the *telos* of Adventist identity. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness" (Ps. 115:1).<sup>♣</sup>

\* Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), pp. 156, 157.

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# SOFT SAND

There's a photograph near the library at the university. The photograph simply shows two outstretched hands ready to make contact—as if someone were falling and stretched out their hand and were about to get “caught” by another. I have purposely never read the caption. Often what is not “said” makes the point.

\*\*\*

I remember sitting on a sandy beach under a palm tree observing people. In front of me walked a father and son, treading the line on the sand where the waves just tickle your toes, reminding you that there is a great ocean out there. The little boy, maybe 5 years old, walked slowly, looking at waves, stooping down waiting for the waves to reach him, laughing when he tried to catch the water that escaped his hands. Just as they walked in front of me, the little boy fell. While watching the water come and go, a misstep.

The father, in calm and slow movements, helped the crying boy back to his feet. He placed an arm around his son and said, “Don’t cry. I’m right here.” The father explained *why* the boy fell: “Look, the sand here just soaked up the water from the waves so it became softer, and that made it easier to lose your footing. We’ve all stepped on soft sand, buddy. It may happen again, so be careful where you walk.” Then, as if to extend a precious detail to this child’s learning experience, the father stood up and extended his hand. “Hold on to me. I won’t let you fall.”

I remember wondering, *God, is that what You do with me? What if I cannot see You, God? Whom do You send to help me up?*”

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As I crouch in the corner of the room, I realize the luxury of light. Here we are, 50 students, one professor, and a campus police officer, hiding in the west side of the library, dark rooms designated for heavy protection. First thing on today’s agenda: a shooter drill. The alarm is very loud. Across the room from me are two young women, one who is crying. I crawl toward them and hear one of them say, “Just breathe.” *One of the students is having a panic attack.* The police officer approaches, but he is late. Amid the dark, voices of whispering students bring some semblance of order in chaos, helping their classmate.

“Try to focus on something. Can you see on the right, the window? There’s a picture of the hands.”

“Yeah, good idea. Focus on that religious picture.”

“No. It’s motivational, like climbers helping one another to the top of the mountain.”

“Or Jesus reaching out to us?”

The voice of the panicked student surfaces: “If it’s Jesus, where are the scars? You know, the cross thing?”

Silence.

“Maybe He sent someone to help catch someone,” says the officer, gaining agreement from all.

As the quiet conversation continues, the panicked student’s breathing slows down, and I remember soft sand. A child has fallen. In my mind’s eye I see outstretched hands surrounding us at this very moment.

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SEARCHING  
THE OBVIOUS  
DIXIL  
RODRIGUEZ



THE FATHER STOOD  
UP AND EXTENDED  
HIS HAND. “HOLD ON  
TO ME. I WON’T LET  
YOU FALL.”



EVAN NESTERAK / CC BY 2.0

## THE WIZARD AND LEVITICUS 19:18

White supremacists clash with police at the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017

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*Anyone can quote Scripture.*

**JOHN MCVAY**

**N**ot long before the tragic events of August 12, 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, Black and Latina reporter Ilija Calderón from Univision News did an interview with Ku Klux Klan (KKK) imperial wizard Chris Barker and his wife, Amanda, on their North Carolina property. Barker’s group, the Loyal White Knights of the KKK of Pelham, North Carolina, would later participate in the Charlottesville

White supremacist protest.

A short video of the interview opens with Calderón watching the all-too-familiar hoods and burning cross, KKK rituals. Then Barker notes that this is the first time in 20 years that a Black person has been allowed on his property. He calls Calderón a “mongrel.”

She describes herself as a “Black person and an immigrant,” to which he responds,

“Yeah, exact same thing.” Calderón asks, “Are you gonna chase me out of here?”

Barker retorts, “No, we’re gonna burn you out.”

A bit later, Calderón asks, “Are you a hate group?”

Barker and his wife respond, “No.”

So Calderón asks, “How do you define yourself?”

Barker answers, “We define ourselves as a Christian group,” and together with his wife declares, “We don’t hate anyone.” Barker expands, “We tell the Bible—what the Bible says.” To paraphrase: “We read the Bible just the way it was written. We take it at face value. We believe. We do exactly what it says.”

Calderón tests that assertion by responding, “The Bible says that we were all born equal.”

The KKK imperial wizard pounces: “No! Wrong! Leviticus 19:18 is what you’re saying: ‘Love thy neighbour.’ It says, ‘Love thy neighbour of *thy* people.’ My people are White. Your people are Black.”<sup>1</sup>

Barker’s obvious conclusion? “You are not my neighbor. The Bible asks me to love only my own kind of people. It does not ask me to love you.”

### **EVERY CHRISTIAN A BIBLE STUDENT**

Is he right? Is KKK imperial wizard Chris Barker correct in his understanding of Leviticus 19:18?

Grudgingly, we must admit that he is reading that particular passage quite literally. In its immediate context Leviticus 19:18 is not a broad rule to love everyone everywhere. It is more focused than that. It is an exhortation to love your own. Barker is, from one point of view, doing just what he says he does: “We tell the Bible—what the Bible says.”

Imagine that you are conducting an interview with Barker, and the interview turns to his interpretation of Leviticus 19:18. What would you say to him? How is it that he is actually terribly twisting and misrepresenting the Bible when he seems to be attending rather closely to its words?

Before I suggest answers to that question, perhaps I should share why I am exploring this case study. I am doing so to make this point: Careful Bible study is something every Christian should be prepared to do. Though we sometimes attach the academic label “hermeneutics” to this task, it

## Careful Bible study is something every Christian should be prepared to do.

is one we must all perform. It is not a technical, obtuse, and challenging task reserved for Ph.Ds. It is a necessary and unavoidable one. We must all be alert to the possibility that we may be twisting Scripture, all the while professing our dedication to take God’s Word as it reads. And we must not be taken in by seemingly correct but actually warped views of the Bible sometimes offered by others.

Recalling and applying important, basic Bible study principles is key. Here’s one: We must interpret any passage of the Bible in the light of its context.

### **CONTEXT, NOT PRETEXT**

As we read the context of Leviticus 19:18 we come quickly to Leviticus 19:31, “Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.”<sup>2</sup>

We might say to Chris Barker, “I notice that you are a KKK imperial wizard. Leviticus 19:31 tells me that I should not listen to wizards. So I’m not going to listen to you.”

But to use the passage that way may be to fall into Barker’s own too narrow and overly literalistic way of understanding the Bible (and to borrow from his harshness as well!). Keep reading a little further, and you will come to Leviticus 19:33, 34: “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Is the Bible’s command to love one’s kin, one’s

## One's neighbor includes not only those close at hand, people who look and act like me.

neighbor, to be interpreted restrictively, as a command to hate everyone else? The context—Leviticus 19:33, 34—denies that interpretation.

Applying another basic Bible study principle here, we should interpret any passage of the Bible in the light of the whole. Compare scripture with scripture. We need to search the Bible to find passages that deal with the same theme or idea as the one we are studying, building a biblical résumé for our theme.

### HOW DO WE READ IT?

What about this idea of loving one's neighbor? Does it occur elsewhere in the Bible? It certainly does. It does not take us long to come to Jesus' own reading of Leviticus 19:18 in Luke 10. It comes in the form of repartee with an attorney who asks, "Teacher, . . . what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (verse 25).

Being a good teacher, Jesus invites His new pupil to answer the question himself: "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" (verse 26).

"He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself'" (verse 27).

Jesus answers the attorney's question by telling one of His greatest and best-loved stories. It is not a story about how one Jew loves and cares for another Jew. Instead it is a story about how two Jewish men—a priest and a Levite—fail to do so, ignoring the needs of their fellow Jew who

has been attacked by thieves and left for dead.

Then along comes a Samaritan, someone from a different, alien culture. Someone naturally inclined to mutter "He got what he deserved" under his breath as he hurries by. Instead he stops and cares for the man, medicating and bandaging his wounds. Turning his donkey into an ambulance, the Samaritan delivers the man to the closest thing he can find to an emergency room and pays the man's health-care expenses.

Jesus' story ends with a searching question: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" (verse 36). Which one, Jesus asks, truly fulfills the dictum of the Torah in Leviticus 19:18 to love one's neighbour?

The Jewish attorney, unable (it seems) to speak the word "Samaritan," demurs with his answer: "The one who showed him mercy"

To which Jesus responds—to the attorney and to us—"Go and do likewise" (verse 37).

### GOD'S MESSAGE, TODAY AND ALWAYS

Two people read the same passage. Two radically different interpretations and applications of it. KKK wizard Chris Barker sees in Leviticus 19:18 a call to love his own and only his own. Others are to be ignored and driven out whether hated or not.

Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, hears in Leviticus 19:18 an expansive call to love one's neighbor. One's neighbor includes not only those close at hand—people who look and act like us—but also those at a distance, a cultural and racial distance. The stranger. The other.

Jesus draws everyone—Chris Barker included—into the circle of the divine command "Love your neighbour as yourself."

So whose interpretation should we follow? Chris's or Christ's? That of the KKK wizard or that of the King of kings and Lord of lords? 🍌

<sup>1</sup> "Univision Noticias journalist Ilia Calderón Confronts an Imperial Wizard of the KKK," YouTube video, 02:22, posted [August 2017], [www.youtube.com/watch?v=My99imFzeWw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=My99imFzeWw).

<sup>2</sup> Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## Foods and Medicines

**Q:** I follow the “grapefruit diet” to lose weight (fat). But my skeptical daughter says that grapefruit and some of the supplements I take can cause problems with my medicines. Is this true?

**A:** Your daughter is correct. Some “things we ingest” (TWIs), such as foods, beverages, herbs, and supplements, may affect how prescribed or over-the-counter medications work. We strongly encourage discussing all of your medications, supplements, and herbals with your doctor and pharmacist, who need to know what you are taking so they can advise you accordingly.

Amazingly, most medications and TWIs have unnoticeable or insignificant interactions with each other. The potential problem is that while medications are assumed to be given appropriately, and in safe doses for legitimate medical indications, they may interact with TWIs by increasing or decreasing their potency, or may augment or mask side effects. Medications may also affect a person’s nutrition by altering the absorption, utilization, or elimination of vitamins, minerals, and other food components. Additionally, herbal supplements (e.g., ginseng and Saint-John’s-wort) can negatively interact with other medicinal compounds.

If you are taking medicines for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, anxiety, allergies, or irregular or abnormal heartbeat, your grapefruit diet may be problematic, depending upon the specific medication, the amount of grapefruit in the diet, and your own genetics. Grapefruit, pomelos, and tangelos typically let more of the drugs they interact with enter the blood.

For example, your “grapefruit diet” can cause increased absorption and blood levels of certain statin drugs (used to lower cholesterol), increasing

your risk for liver and muscle damage that can lead to kidney failure. On the other hand, grapefruit (as well as oranges and apples) may cause less Allegra (fexofenadine) to enter the blood and decrease its effectiveness.

Grapefruit can be part of a nutritious diet, but even small amounts (six ounces of juice) affect how certain medications work for 24 hours. Grapefruit may reduce insulin resistance and promote lower all-day calorie intake, but similar weight loss is seen with water or grapefruit or grapefruit juice taken 20 minutes before meals.

You are commended for moving to a healthier weight; this is good, even though there is debate about the benefits of the “grapefruit diet” per se. A comprehensive lifestyle modification with sound nutrition, exercise, sleep, and water—yielding to the

Holy Spirit for promptings and power—is a wise and wholesome investment of time and energy.

### Medication Safety

**Tip:** Always talk with your doctor before taking something new.

Read labels and package inserts, directions, and warnings for possible interactions. Ask your pharmacist or doctor if you don’t understand something. *Do not* take capsules apart, mix medicines and supplements together, crush medicines, or dissolve medicines in food or drink unless you are directed to do so. These actions can change how the medications work. *Never* take medicines with alcohol (we advise that no one ever consume alcohol).<sup>\*</sup> A full glass of water is best, unless told to do otherwise.

<sup>\*</sup> See [www.adventistreview.org/no-safe-level-of-alcohol-consumption-another-compelling-and-robust-confirmation](http://www.adventistreview.org/no-safe-level-of-alcohol-consumption-another-compelling-and-robust-confirmation).

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### MEDICATIONS AFFECTED BY CONSUMING GRAPEFRUIT

Amiodarone (Cordarone®)	Lovostatin (Mevacor®)
Atorvastatin (Lipitor®)	Nifedipine (Procardia®)
Bupirone (Buspar®)	Sertraline (Zoloft®)
Carbamazepine (Corbatrol® Tegretol®)	Sildenafil (Viagra®, Revatio®)
Fexofenadine (Allegra®)	Simvastatin (Zolcor®)

# POSTMODERNISM: AN ADVENTIST CELEBRATION?



**JONATHAN MARTIN**

**P**ostmodernism and how to reach postmodern people with the three angels' messages remains a mystery to many Adventists. As I have studied the topic, however, I have wondered at my own findings: might there be affinities between the Adventist message and the postmodern worldview? Take for example, their common rejection of (1) impersonal laws and institutions as sufficient to uphold true society; (2) impersonal, individualistic, legal views of moral perfection; and (3) transcendent, dualistic views of humanity.

On the other hand, the postmodern world still suffers from a pride that needs to be penetrated

just as much as the pride of past generations. The biggest obstacle we may be facing is the fact that we, Laodicea, have our own pride problem.

**REJECTION OF IMPERSONAL LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS**

Understanding postmodernism requires turning away from simplistic characterizations. For example, it is often repeated that postmoderns reject institutions and authority. However, the enthusiasm of postmoderns for highly involved social democratic "big governments" ought to give us pause to reconsider. There is more going on than



# Christ is incapable of standing aloof from His creatures.

meets the eye. In keeping with our imagined transcendent nature as rational beings, modernist political philosophers taught that laws, not people, should rule society. Human beings were not supposed to be emotional, passionate, and relational creatures. Cold Kantian moralistic reasoning or Bentham's utilitarian ethical logic justified moral living without appealing to divine intervention. What they and modern Christian critics failed to consider properly was whether or not real people could keep the high-minded laws they proposed—if they could be devised in the first place.

The assumption was that once the right laws were in place, human morality guaranteed their keeping. Those lacking the enabling goodness, unable to control their passions and emotions, would be subject to the wrath of the righteous state. Philosophy and theology being the sport of the privileged, it was natural for them to despise commoners for whom living nobly seemed to present such a struggle.

At the heart of modernism lay a dualist distinction between the inferior (emotion, passion, etc.) and the superior (hard-nosed logic). The ideal governmental model was neutral, impartial, indifferent administration, government for the self-satisfied and self-righteous few whose personal wealth and prestige protected them from the trials that would test their goodness. The conceit thrived so long as the majority was denied a voice. The project failed when the coming of democracy exposed it as grounded in unrealistic transcendentalism.

Postmodernism rejected this impersonal, transcendent approach to government. It is no accident that the postmodern revolution has coincided with the proliferation of governments wielding

executive powers. It has also coincided with the enfranchisement of lower and marginalized classes and with postmodernism's view of humans as profoundly relational creatures with desires, emotions, and passions that are not evil in and of themselves. Postmoderns are enthusiastic about authorities that draw on utopian dreams and promise change for the better. They are attracted to the government model of the benevolent ruler who takes care of the flock. They seek a utopian authority that can promise them love, security, and peace on earth. They still desire a rule of law, but only within an egalitarian context where benevolent government makes laws easy to keep and guarantees fair outcomes. Modernist, heroic, self-satisfied, dualist humans saw no need for this. For them law means what it says even if its frigid interpretation starves you to death.

It is interesting to ask: Which of these two views of government most coincides with Adventist understandings of the kingdom of God? Clearly the second, is it not? Though Adventism's major emphasis on the impersonal-law aspect of the kingdom may obscure this fact sometimes. A guest at our typical evangelistic meetings may be forgiven for seeing God's kingdom as very much an impersonal rule of Ten Commandments. But Christ's rule is hardly objective. He is incapable of standing aloof from His creatures, indifferent to their desires, demanding that they fend for themselves and be obedient. Rather, God rules by intimacy: standing at the door; knocking; wanting to come in and share a tête-à-tête (see Rev. 3:20). Only the extravagant benevolence of this intimate sharing makes it true that His rule is "easy" and "light" (see Matt. 11:30). On the face of it then, there is no reason that a postmodern should not be enthusiastic about the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

## **SPEAKING TRUTH TO POSTMODERNS**

Affinities between Adventism and postmodernism may be much greater than we realize. But this is not to say that they are a perfect match. God's kingdom is not an impersonal rule of laws, but it is also not a lawless rule of passions. It is not hard to see why a rule of passions can be just as cold and heartless as an indifferent rule of laws. We live in a world of incredible heartache where each one's quest for their own passions and fulfillment means that love and even family are not



forever. Vulnerability is celebrated but also imperiled, its victims as disposable as the plastic bottles that pollute our oceans. Consider the millions of voiceless victims sacrificed in the name of a person's right to pursue their goals and dreams. Postmodernism's cult of personal happiness and fulfillment does not consistently manifest soft-hearted innocence and compassion: issues such as abortion expose its Achilles' heel, and rather than follow and echo the world, Adventism is privileged with countercultural truth that speaks precisely to postmodernism's tragic flaws.

There is a kingdom, here and coming, where our individual passions and desires will be harmonized with a perfect rule of law and order, and where all will achieve fulfillment and personal happiness while being completely protected by a perfect law. In this kingdom none need ever fear that their passions and desires are the source of another's pain. The war between community and self has ended here. There are no more mini dictators, each one fighting against every other for as much glory and self-exaltation as we can achieve and trampling those who get in our way. Instead, perfect trust in the One who makes all things beautiful in His own time liberates us to forget ourselves and joyfully live only for the glory of God, knowing that in His glory we find true harmony and fulfillment together, in community rather than in alienation.

### SHARING THE TRUTH THEY NEED

While the transcendental modernist view of human nature is essentially based on pride and self-sufficiency, postmodernism suffers from a similar disease. While fascination with Eastern religions makes lip service to humility fashionable, the cult of self-esteem and positive thinking is equally fashionable. "If you believe in yourself all your dreams will come true," we are told. The Bible truth that we are depraved sinners deserving of nothing in this life but suffering and death (Rom. 3:10-18; Luke 18:13) is simply not expressed in polite society. But it is the only context in which the amazing grace and love of God can be truly appreciated and understood: "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Rom. 5:20).

When I share with people that we are all equally weak and morally depraved and selfish (Jer. 17:9), it opens a door to the gospel that no amount of external law-pushing or emotion-based talk about

God's unconditional love and grace alone seems able to open. Vividly seeing our own selfishness brings home the gospel of God's unearned love and makes it real. Whereas rules alone make us defensive and argumentative, and grace alone makes us apathetic and indifferent, understanding that we are all clothed in filthy rags, deserving of nothing, yet given everything gets past the natural defenses and hits the heart every time.

Postmoderns are very aware of the evil in the world all around them. What they lack is the insight to understand that this evil comes from each of us. When we look at ourselves honestly in the light of the problems of this world, we see the blood on our hands. We are the ones whose consumerism, materialism, selfishness, and indifference are destroying the world. Our occasional good deed may make ourselves feel better, but we are desperately selfish and we have a world of hurt around us to prove it.

Adventist inefficacy in reaching this secular postmodern generation may in fact be caused by our failure to appreciate how desperately unworthy we, as Laodiceans, are. There is probably no guarantee that either type of Adventist Church—contemporary postmodern or more traditional—has less or more true heartbroken repentance. At times it seems that the only things that move us are (1) some tear-jerking performance or show or (2) some opportunity for personal vindication that includes condemnation of the other. Our dull, self-righteous hearts still balk at God's simple message of forgiving grace: we'd rather be entitled to it. Why wouldn't God love me? Saying that Jesus loves us evokes too often the same response as saying that the sky is blue.

### CONCLUSION

The postmodern world waits for religion that is not based on pride or empty sentiments. It waits for the demonstration of heartfelt repentance, such that even after grace has improved us and substantially cleaned up our lives, we still see ourselves as beggars deserving of nothing (Luke 17:10). We would then find that Jesus' love and grace do impact us more and more with the joy that we have vainly sought to find through our own self-esteem-based religion. Others would take notice that we have been with Jesus. 🍀

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**Jonathan Martin** is a barrister-at-law in Saskatchewan, Canada.

# Dear Ava

*A soon-to-be father shares ideal  
with his soon-to-be daughter.*

**JARED THURMON**

Dear Ava:

Your mom and I can't wait to meet you. We chose your name for a few reasons. We wanted a biblical name, and we wanted it to be short and start with an A. So we thought of Ava: it is a short form of the word "chava," which means "life" or "living one," and is the Hebrew form of Eve, the most beautiful woman who ever lived.

We waited a long time to have you join us. For many years we didn't feel we were in a place where you could grow up with all of the advantages that we wanted for you. Now we finally feel that we are in that good place. You will grow up with us on a farm, where you can play with animals and grow your own food. We wanted you to grow up in a place like so many have in history—among the hills and chirping birds; enjoying cool breezes with the responsibility of caring for creatures that depend on you.

Ava, I'm looking forward to teaching you how to get the most out of life. We were created to love, not only to be loved. I want to show you that the law of life is embedded into everything around us. Trees breathe what we exhale and absorb all the impurities so that they can give us fresh air in turn. As you learn from nature, you may start to recognize things that aren't right in the world around you. You will quickly see that there are two ways of thinking that compete with each other in the world: love and selfishness. Ava, always choose love.

We humans have been on this earth for only a few millenia. Though popular culture, media, and public education may tell you that you came from a monkey and have no purpose, don't believe that. You came from the hand of God, and you're destined to live forever some day!

Your mom and I believe that we humans were created by Jesus.



## Keep your eyes on Jesus. He is your friend. He will never leave you; never betray you; never stop loving you.

There was a big battle in the universe, and heaven's family was broken. But then Jesus became one of us and redeemed us. He is now our representative, friend, and ambassador in heaven. He has promised that one day soon He will return to save those who want to be saved. Ava, even if your mom and I sleep in the dust before this great event, the good news is that He has promised to give life again to all who believe in Him. He is on your side, so don't ever be afraid.

Ava, you need to know that the world you will grow up in will be very different from the world I grew up in. And the world I grew up in was very different from the one your grandparents grew up in.

Humanity has become very confused on many issues. I can't even predict what life will be like just a few years from now, say, on your fifth birthday. Life was intended to be simple. We were created to live in the midst of a garden eating delicious fruit, playing with our friends, running with lions and hippos, and never being sick or sad.

But Ava, the world is a different place today. Selfishness is believed to be the better way by many in the world, and because of that, bad things happen. There may be times when you feel alone, and you hurt. Some think the answer to those feelings is drugs or alcohol, but it's not, so stay away from both. Some think the answer to the meaning of life is survival of the fittest, fastest, thinnest, prettiest, or richest. But Ava, don't be tricked into thinking that any of that truly matters.

Don't ever forget you were created for something special; you are destined for greatness. You will one day soar with eagles, eat exotic fruits on other planets, and laugh with friends while visit-

ing them in other galaxies. You will run and not get tired. You will play and not get hurt.

Ava, you're entering a world that tells girls they must look a certain way in order to be liked. The world will try to make you think there is only one way for others to like you. Don't fall for this deception. The world will present unkind ideas about how boys and girls should interact. I pray I can show you the best example of how a boy is supposed to treat a girl by how you see me treat your mom. There is no excuse for anyone ever to yell at you, or touch you in any way that makes you uncomfortable. Never feel ashamed for believing that your body is beautiful and sacred, and that everyone should respect you as much as you respect yourself.

Ava, I'm going to teach you to respect yourself. I'm going to teach you how to be self-sufficient, to be temperate, to be a great saleswoman, and how to give an amazing presentation. I want to teach you how to influence people, run a company, think strategically, and make a profit. But those are secondary to teaching you how to be kind, candid, generous, patient, and loving. So I pray you will have the courtesy of Rebekah, the candor of Abigail, and the courage of Esther.

But Ava, there will be times you let yourself down or are let down by others. Don't despair; we all make mistakes. Just get back up and try again. Failure is your friend, not your enemy. Never be afraid of trying and failing.

Ava, keep your eyes on Jesus. He is not who the world says He is. He is your friend. He will never leave you; never betray you; never stop loving you. When you get impatient, look to His patience. When you get discouraged, look to His courage. When you get fearful, look to His fearlessness. When you feel weak, rely on His strength.

You're going to be tempted to look in all directions but His. But Ava, I promise: if you turn your eyes upon Jesus and look into His wonderful face, the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and His amazing grace.

I love you.

Dad

(The guy who, if Jesus doesn't return by that time, will be your boyfriend for the next 18 years, or until I approve of your next boyfriend.)

---

**Jared Thurmon** is liaison for strategic partnerships with Adventist Review Ministries.



# GOD-CENTERED

Being in the public eye is not for sissies. Oh, it might look glamorous; it might seem appealing; but the reality is far different. It's a tremendous responsibility. God calls all of us to represent Him to the world, to be His ambassadors, each within the sphere of our influence. But what if that influence extends beyond one's own family or friends? What if it reaches to the community at large, to the church, or even to people you've never met?

What then?

These are questions I wrestle with in the quietness of my heart, when the world is shut away and it's just Jesus and me. I can't live my life to please others, for if I did that I would no longer please Him. Do I serve Jesus, or people? If I serve Jesus, that means a decision I make or something I say might be directly opposed to what someone else wants me to do. *God, am I strong enough for that? What if I am strong enough, but the spirit with which I communicate is wrong?*

For a leader—or for anyone really—God doesn't look just at the action, He looks at the intent of the heart. Motive. Such a little word with so much impact. Why do I make decisions? How much of myself, of my own pride and stubbornness, is tied up in what I do? *God, would You show me my heart?*

From a human perspective it's a whole lot easier to serve people. At least at first. Later on it becomes difficult, for no matter how much you give or do, it never seems to be enough. I should know. I've tried.

Recently Greg and I spent some time with friends by the ocean. I love to hear the surf pounding the shore, to see the blue expanse of nothingness, to feel the sand beneath my toes. A few yards from the shore stood a rock. As I watched, the waves constantly changed, but that rock never moved. No matter what came against it, no matter the fury of the water, it remained the same. *Is that my answer?* God-centeredness—both for the leader and the follower, for the watcher and the one being watched. As a leader God calls me to center myself in Him, so that nothing will move me from His purpose and plan. Not human applause, nor criticism, nor fury. Nothing can separate me from Him and from His purpose.

God-centeredness is also for those who follow. I've seen people's lives destroyed, wrecked by gossip and criticism, by idolizing others to the exclusion of Jesus. We're not called to look at people; in fact, we're never called to look at people. Only Jesus. If we look to Jesus, the decisions others make won't mislead us, and they won't disappoint us. We'll be centered in Him.

Are leaders human? Absolutely.

Are followers human? Of course.

Regardless of the call of God on our lives, let's center our lives on Him, then represent Him to the world. For He is the only secure rock. 📌

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**Jill Morikone** is general manager for Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS  
WITH JESUS  
JILL  
MORIKONE



**WE'RE NOT CALLED  
TO LOOK AT PEOPLE;  
IN FACT, WE'RE  
NEVER CALLED TO  
LOOK AT PEOPLE.  
ONLY JESUS.**



PHOTO BY LEON BISS ON UNSPLASH

## WHEN GOD SAYS NO

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*Pray and wait.  
What else is there to do?*

**T**he storm had stopped and left a steamy, early-June night. The city seemed to sparkle. I had given birth only hours before. Now I knelt alone on the couch overlooking the window. No baby in my arms. The pain in my heart was throbbing, keeping me awake.

I heard a baby crying in another room and the sound seared my heart. Tears streamed down my face. I couldn't even bring words to my pain. All I could say, again and again, was "God, heal my son. Heal him."

### AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

We were so excited—after eight years of marriage and numerous fertility treatments we finally found out that we were expecting.

I felt like Hannah in the Bible; God had blessed me with a child who would be used in His service.

Being pregnant was an amazing feeling. Little Charlie kicked me constantly and was always moving around. I talked to him on my way to work and on the way home. I loved having my little buddy with me.

I went into labor three weeks early. I started crying when they laid him on my chest and I heard Charlie cry for the first time. He stared at me with big, violet eyes. His color looked good. But the more my husband, Steve, and I looked at his face, the more we noticed something strange. His nose and his mouth were white, making it look like he was wearing a mask. When I commented on it the nurse took him away immediately.

After Charlie was examined in the nursery, a doctor came to tell us that Charlie was covered in a membrane called collodion. It was so tight over him that his eyelids were inverted and his fingers were curled. They told us that the membrane would peel off, that he might blister all over, and that infection was a huge risk. They were sending him by mobile intensive-care unit to the nearest children's hospital, 30 miles away, where he would be admitted to the neonatal intensive-care unit in critical condition. His condition was so rare that it occurred in one in 600,000 births.

They brought Charlie to me to say goodbye, but I couldn't touch him or hold him. He looked so small and alone. My heart was so heavy that I just wanted to be alone. I believed that God could heal my son, but I knew that He might not. But why wouldn't He?

He had blessed me with this amazing gift after waiting so long. How could God not heal him?

### THE LONG WAIT

The next morning I went down to the children's hospital and saw Charlie. They had him in an incubator, connected to tubes and wires. He was completely covered in goo and white gauze, like a burn patient. The only part visible was his face and head. He was a golden color. They said his liver enzymes were up, but they couldn't put him under a special light because of his skin condition.

Steve and I staggered shifts so that we could be with Charlie and hear whatever the doctors might say. They knew his condition was ichthyosis, although they didn't know what kind. The doctors there were unfamiliar with the condition because it was so rare. Charlie had his bandages changed every three to four hours. It took almost an hour to redo them. During this time it was easy to see the condition of his skin. It looked as if he were covered with plastic wrap. Bands of membrane were so tight that he couldn't open his fingers. Every area was monitored to make sure that infection didn't set in.

The doctors became concerned as Charlie's weight kept dropping. They told us they might have to insert a feeding tube. I prayed that God wouldn't allow anything further to happen to him.

One night the doctors told us that Charlie had one more feeding to take a decent amount of formula or they were going to use a feeding tube. He had barely eaten anything for several days. I left devastated. I awoke at 3:00 in the morning, knowing that they were probably putting the feeding tube in right then. We finally called the nurse, who said that Charlie had finally eaten his full amount and that we wouldn't have to deal with a feeding tube!

God had answered our prayer.

### WAITING ON GOD

After 12 days we were able to take Charlie home. He still had collodion all over him. Doctors told us to wait until it was all off to see the condition of his skin. There was a chance that he might be a self-healing collodion baby. Although that wasn't common, I wanted to believe that it would happen. Charlie was in pain as the collodion membrane cracked and peeled.

By September the collodion membrane was gone, and we were able to see the true condition of his

skin. At first it appeared smooth and soft, but it wasn't long before it began to scale. His ears became impacted. His eyebrows were covered in hard, crusty scales that looked like scabs.

One night long after Charlie had fallen asleep I sat in the rocking chair in his room and watched him sleep. I cried. I knew that our son would never have a life that was free from pain and discomfort. God hadn't answered my prayer in the way I wanted so desperately. I wasn't praying for anything selfish. I didn't even want anything for me. I just wanted my son, who had never done anything wrong, to have a healthy life, to not be in pain and discomfort, not to be bullied and made fun of by others. Why hadn't God answered my prayer?

There are so many worse conditions that Charlie could have been born with. He could have had a worse form of ichthyosis that caused blistering instead of scaling. But somehow that didn't make me happy. I saw other mothers at the store and saw how healthy their babies' skin looked. I couldn't even speak with them. Their concerns about why their babies didn't sleep for long periods, or how much food they should be eating, paled in comparison to all my son was facing and would face the rest of his life.

Then one day it hit me. How weak my faith was! God doesn't promise a life free from pain. God promises only to be with us, every step of the way. God created my son, formed him in my womb, and allowed him to be born with this condition for a reason. One day in heaven I'll find out why.

God didn't spare His own Son. Jesus, the Son of God, came to suffer in a world of sin and be nailed to a cross, dying a slow, agonizing death. Why did I think that we sinful humans should be exempt from pain?

I don't know what God is doing. I can't see the end from the beginning. But I choose to trust Him anyway, every day. After a long day from work I come home to my son. I watch him push through all the obstacles he is facing with a smile on his face. He laughs and plays. He doesn't stress about the future. He doesn't seem to notice that he is different from other children. His innocence helps him to trust.

God allowed our son to carry this disorder. He has an amazing plan for Charlie's life, and I won't do anything to get in the way. ▀

---

**Elisabeth Hirtzinger** lives in Springfield, Ohio, with Steve and Charlie.



# MISSIONARIES TO AUSTRALIA'S OUTBACK

*Do the crows really fly backwards?*



CARTER REPORT  
**ADVENTIST  
HEROES**

A missionary is a person with a mission on a mission. By that definition Pastor and Mrs. Totenhofer were real missionaries, even though they never left the Homeland. They were sent by the Church to a mining town in the

remote Australian Outback. Broken Hill became their home during 1962. Not only did their evangelistic campaign change the lives of many non-believers. It changed the lives of two inexperienced former Avondale College students...



Do the crows really fly backwards in the Outback? The myth is that the air is so thick that the crows need to do so to keep the *dust* out of their eyes. But there was nothing mythical about the messages Ed Totenhofer preached during his mission. He proclaimed an old-fashioned Gospel designed to save old-fashioned sinners. The "Tots," as they were fondly called by their friends, were a dynamic loving couple, real missionaries on a mission for God.

They lovingly took John and Beverley Carter under their wing. They taught them by example how to care for God's flock. They also taught them the Science of Salvation. They were experts in what was quickly becoming a lost art. They showed them how to advertise to attract an audience, how to progressively reveal God's Truth, and how to lead lost sinners to the Savior. John and Beverley had received valuable

formal theological information at Avondale. Now they were learning how to reach and save struggling sinners in an indifferent world where religious clichés just didn't work.

In the Silver City where vast wealth had been discovered, Ed and Joy shared the riches of the plan of Redemption. John and Beverley Carter today confess they owe much to the Tots. They patterned their ministry after these genuine "missionaries." In a special and real sense, Pastor and Mrs. Totenhofer are still changing lives today. Every time John Carter preaches, whether it be in Russia, Ukraine, El Salvador, India, Australia, America, Cuba, or the distant Isles of the Sea, some old friends say they hear the Tots, whispering their message of saving grace. ❖

**We lovingly proclaim Pastor and Mrs. Totenhofer genuine Carter Report heroes.**

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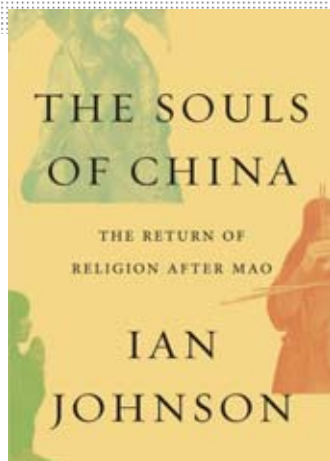
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# CLOSER LOOK



## China's Complicated Dance With Religion

Ian Johnson, *The Souls of China: the Return of Religion After Mao*, (New York: Pantheon Books, NY, 2017), 455 pages, hardcover, US\$30. Reviewed by Lael Caesar, *Adventist Review*.

**P**refatory material in Ian Johnson's 30-chapter book includes lines from the 2500-year-old *Book of Documents* that Ian Johnson uses as his manuscript's envelope by repeating them at the book's conclusion: "Heaven sees as my people see. Heaven hears as my people hear." That quotation is accompanied by another from the Bible whose first two lines read: "But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:16, KJ21).

Introductory pages also list a "cast of characters" whose brief bios cue the reader toward Johnson's conclusion, provided with little need for dogmatizing: spiritual reality does not go away because some ideology opposes it. The book's seven parts, following the markings of the old Chinese calendar, are in the end a primer on the invincibility of the human spirit and the durability of faith in heaven, Chinese *tian*, "a sense of justice and respect [that] is something higher

## In the Footsteps of a King

*In the Footsteps of King David: Revelations From an Ancient Biblical City*, Yosef Garfinkel, Saar Ganor, and Michael G. Hasel, Thames and Hudson, 2018, 240 pages, \$34.95 (hardcover). Reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Adventist Review*.

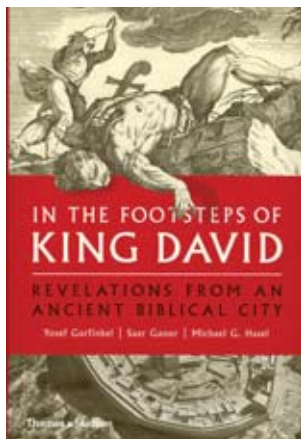
**D**uring the past 40 years much ink has been spilled challenging the historicity of King David and his descendants and the picture of an emerging central state that the biblical text suggests for this period. Archaeologists and historians date this period to the late eleventh and early tenth centuries B.C., also known as the transition period between Iron Age I and Iron Age II. *In the Footsteps of King David*, cowritten by three highly recognized archaeologists, tackles the topic based on their seven-year excavation of Khirbet Qeiyafa, a site located in the western part of the Upper Shephelah of Judah, rising above the Elah Valley, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. The site, mostly unknown prior to the discovery of the famous inscription on a pottery sherd in 2008, was excavated for seven years from 2007 to 2013. The excavators exposed about 5,000 square meters (or 54,000

than any one government" (398).

Page 154 tells how Yu Chenyuan lost an eye at work, pierced by a piece of glass. When his boss refused to compensate him the family sued. The boss sent ruffians to terrorize him and kill his wife. Mr. Yu fled for his life; he's been unemployed for five years.

I was reading in flight, and shared the paragraph with a woman in my row on the plane. She read and shook her head. I said: "He [Johnson] never makes judgments; just tells you what is." I returned to reading, and she to the movie running on her tablet. Three page-turns later Johnson comments: China's system of informants might be dismissed as just





square feet), corresponding to about 25 percent of the surface of the settlement (p. 32), offering them a clear picture of the history of its use.

The book is divided into nine chapters, which focus on the environs of Khirbet Qeiyafa (pp. 12-21), underscore the confluence of the Bible, history, and archaeology in the life of King David (pp. 23-51), describe the urban nature of the settlement including its fortification and gate systems (pp. 53-101), discuss some of the major finds (pp. 103-113), offer a translation and interpretation of the famous Khirbet Qeiyafa inscriptions (pp. 115-127), put into context the finds linked to the cult of the city prior to the construction of the Solomonic temple (pp. 129-161), examine the extent of David's kingdom in terms of the Bible and

archaeology (pp. 163-183), situate the construction of Solomon's palace and the first temple within the context of Iron Age II architecture (pp. 185-197), and, finally, draw appropriate links between the biblical text and the disciplines of archaeology and history. The volume is beautifully illustrated (with 80 black-and-white illustrations or photos and 26 full-color plates) and concludes with a brief appendix discussing the history of the site in the late Persian and early Hellenistic period (pp. 204-214), an extensive bibliography (pp. 218-228), and a subject index (pp. 230-240).

Those interested in biblical history will find this volume an engaging read that includes sufficient documentation to underline the serious scholarship lying behind it. At the same time it avoids the danger of dry jargon-filled academic discourse that doesn't connect with the reality of nonspecialist readers. While archaeology does not always corroborate the specific, in the case of Khirbet Qeiyafa it definitely validates the big historical picture found in the Old Testament. To quote the authors: "The excavations showed that at the end of the 11th century BCE an urban society and central monarchy began to take shape in the Kingdom of Judah. Khirbet Qeiyafa was a fortified city at the entrance to the Elah Valley, in a location that was of geopolitical importance for only a relatively limited period of time. This accords with the biblical tradition, which names one of the cities in this area as Shaaraim, which we can identify with Khirbet Qeiyafa" (p. 201). ♣

remarkable, "but it underpinned everything else; it was society's rotten core" (p. 160).

Johnson does offer judgments; he just doesn't rush to judgment. Bald anecdotes quietly blanket the reader, layer upon layer from angle upon angle—music, folk religion or indigenous versions of Christianity, social work, traditional medicine, politics, perhaps—smothering to cold, inevitable conclusion: then, after 160 pages, Johnson shares with readers the final gasp to which objectivity has brought them. Your resistance, along with his, to believing his inconceivable tale, has expired. The irony is that all along he has been describing an expiration: imminent death advancing systematically to snuff out a whole nation's life. The heroes he follows in this monstrous scheme of moral suicide are common people of uncommon

courage, gasping for air against graft and fraud, respiring without oxygen, by miracle, perhaps, refusing to die of suffocation.

China's totalitarian experiments from Chairman Mao to President Xi make world news headlines. Johnson's absorbing, minutely observant account details how the China beyond the headlines has survived every 25-man politburo initiative to either wipe out or compromise a people's soul hunger. His conclusion seems wildly optimistic, or just biblical: given its recent spiritual darkness, a rebounding China "might actually be at the forefront of [a] worldwide search for spiritual values" (p. 400). It must be Johnson's conviction about *tian*. Read him and share it. Whether or not, every minute of your reading will be worth it. ♣



## THE ANTIDOTE TO TOXIC RELIGION

Ever since Satan and his followers were cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), they have attempted to turn true religion—the worship of God and service to humanity—into something toxic. Examples of deadly forms of religion can be traced throughout human history. But themes of redemption and restoration are also clearly traced in Scripture, offered here as an antidote to the deadly influences with which we now have to contend.—Editors.

“Blessed is the one  
who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.  
That person is like a tree planted by streams of  
water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers”  
**(PS. 1:1-3).**

“With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God”  
**(MICAH 6:6-8).**

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you  
and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in  
heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my  
yoke is easy and my burden is light.”  
—**JESUS CHRIST (MATT. 11:28-30).**

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and  
with all your soul and with all your strength and  
with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as  
yourself.”  
**(LUKE 10:27).**

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it  
does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor  
others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,  
it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight  
in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always pro-  
tects, always trusts, always hopes, always perse-  
veres. . . . And now these three remain: faith, hope  
and love. But the greatest of these is love.”  
—**APOSTLE PAUL (1 COR. 13:4-13).**

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and  
faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows  
in their distress and to keep oneself from being  
polluted by the world”  
**(JAMES 1:27).**

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me,  
and I will give to each person according to what  
they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.  
Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they  
may have the right to the tree of life and may go  
through the gates into the city.”  
—**JESUS CHRIST (REV. 22:12-14).**



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## For Tough Times

I don't know about you, but for me these first several months of 2019 have been heavy. I started the year with a set of personal health challenges: migraines, insomnia, anxiety—all things I'm slowly working through. At the worst, though, all these things are more annoyances than anything else.

But these past few months, more than any other time I can recall, have been filled with so much illness, death, and senseless loss for people dear to me. My

heart feels incredibly, incredibly heavy from the weight of that. I know that in these last days it's supposed to feel as if the sunshine has been blacked out. But while we are still here, how, when days seem very dark, can we still light them?

I'm going to depart from the traditional structure that this section of the magazine is supposed to follow, and I hope to offer you something practical and tangible. First, when days are rough and times are difficult, never forget we aren't on this journey alone. To remember that, though, we must daily remind ourselves and make a conscientious choice to put our faith into action. One of the easiest ways to do that is to claim the promises, sing the songs, read the quotes, and keep them all at the forefront of our minds.

So permit me to share some of my favorite "helps" with you. I hope you can use this page as a reference of sorts. Clip it out, take a picture of it, print it from our Web site, google the music and listen to it, whatever you'd like to do. I pray that it helps you as we remember to pray for each

other, as much as we do for ourselves, and remember Who holds it all together in the good days and much as those that are bad.

### FROM THE WORD:

*Joshua 1:9*

"Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

*Philippians 4:6, 7*

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

*Matthew 11:28*

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

*John 16:33*

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

### SONGS:

"Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus," by Louisa M. R. Stead and William J. Kirkpatrick

"It Is Well With My Soul," by Horatio G. Spafford and Philip P. Bliss

"Rescue," by Lauren Daigle

"Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)," by Hillsong United

"None but Jesus," by Hillsong United

A closing quote: "Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now. Love mercy now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."—Inspired by passages from the Talmud

**"DO NOT BE DAUNTED BY THE ENORMITY OF THE WORLD'S GRIEF. DO JUSTLY NOW. LOVE MERCY NOW. WALK HUMBLY NOW. YOU ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO COMPLETE THE WORK, BUT NEITHER ARE YOU FREE TO ABANDON IT."**

—INSPIRED BY PASSAGES FROM THE TALMUD

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