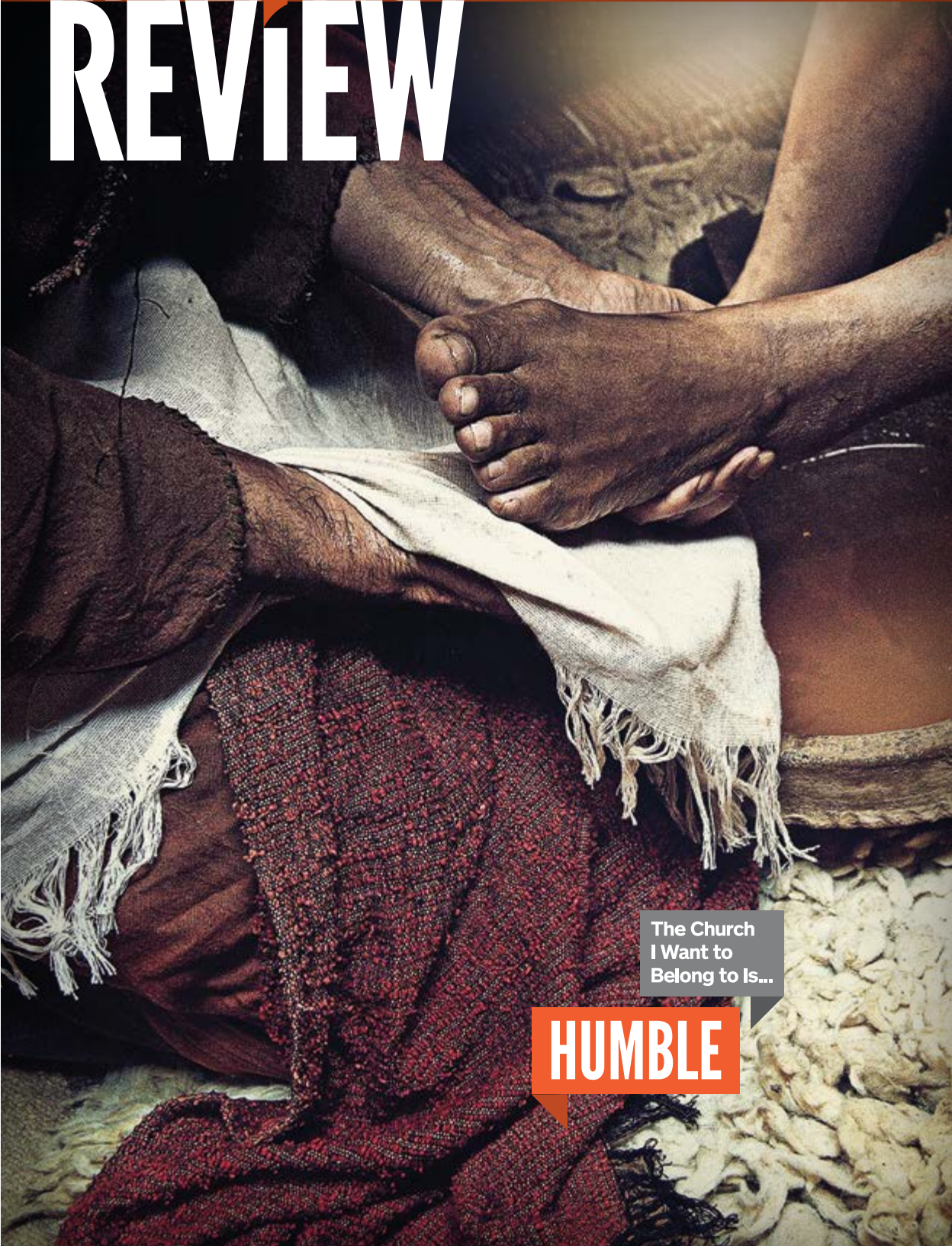


ADVENTIST REVIEW

**AUGUST 2020: INHERIT THE EARTH + GOD'S HAND
IN HISTORY + PICKING UP THE BASIN AND
THE TOWEL + SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS + HUMILITY
AND JUSTICE FOR ALL + COMING HOME**



The Church
I Want to
Belong to Is...

HUMBLE

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a large quantity of bright orange oranges. The person is wearing a red garment, which is visible in the background. The oranges are piled together, filling most of the frame. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the oranges and the skin of the hands.

LIFE

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The Church
I Want to
Belong to Is...

HUMBLE

FEATURES

-
- 18 **HUMBLEST MAN ON EARTH** | LAEL CAESAR
Was Moses that great at being humble?
-
- 22 **THE CONSTANT CATALYST** | DIXIL RODRÍGUEZ
Creatures make mistakes. All the more reason to trust our Creator.
-
- 26 **HUMILITY IN LEADERSHIP** | PARDON K. MWANSA
Are leaders there to lead, or to serve?
-
- 28 **GRACE UNDER PRESSURE** | KEN FLEMMER
Lectures aren't always the most helpful answer.
-
- 30 **HUMILITY IN FOLLOWERSHIP** | JOHNETTA B. FLOMO
When it's time to roll up our sleeves
-
- 32 **PICKING UP THE BASIN AND THE TOWEL** | GERALD A. KLINGBEIL
Will we know when we're humble?

“True leadership is not a matter of power. It’s also not a question of strategy or careful calculation. Biblical leadership calls us to serve—not to determine or direct. Like Jesus, we are called to lead humbly and tread carefully.”

34

ARTICLES

36 OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

MERLE POIRIER
It was just a little pill.

38 INHERIT THE EARTH

Three young adults discuss humility: how to recognize it, how to practice it.

42 HUMILITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

KRYSELLE CRAIG
Christians know about discrimination. But do we know what to do with it?

44 THE PATH OF DISCOVERY

ELLEN G. WHITE
Not everything we believe came perfectly formed on stone tablets. Indeed, we may have more to learn.

48 I WANT TO BREATHE

WASHINGTON JOHNSON II
A wake-up call for all who believe that racial equality is a thing

50 GOD’S HAND IN HISTORY

JUD LAKE
The First Battle of Manassas in America’s Civil War revealed much more than military strategy.

54 WHO ATTENDS ADVENTIST SCHOOLS? AND WHY?

AIMEE LEUKERT
As a church, we invest a lot in Adventist education. Who benefits most?

60 NEW LIFE

FRED CHILESHE
The man thought he had nothing to live for.

62 I CAN BREATHE

GARY BLANCHARD
As long as evil is in the world, we have to stand against it.

36



NEWS | OPINION

- » New Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists Now Online
- » Seventh-day Adventist Church Unveils Its Strategic Focus
- » G. Alexander Bryant Named North American Division President
- » On National Television, AdventHealth CEO Discusses COVID Care, Masks, and Disney Opening
- » 107,000 Meals and 245,000 Pounds of Washed Clothes



EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**
THE QUIETEST OF VIRTUES

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 47 **HOUSE CALL**
- 68 **CLOSER LOOK**
- 70 **VOICES**

COLUMNS

- 41 **INTRODUCING THE WHY**
JIMMY PHILLIPS
- 59 **THE LIFE OF FAITH**
ANDY NASH
- 67 **JOURNEYS WITH JESUS**
JILL MORIKONE
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**
LAEL CAESAR

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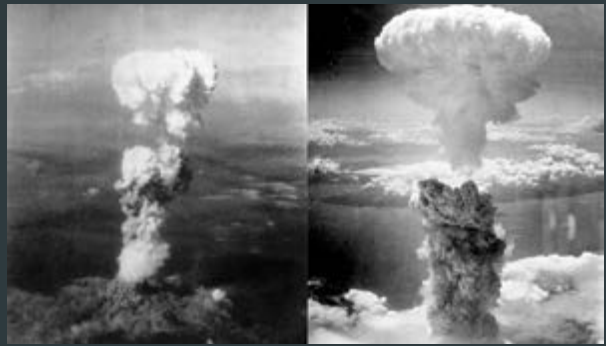
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 G. Alexander Bryant Elected President of North American Division
- 2 "Where Was the Justice?"
- 3 AdventHealth CEO Interviewed on National Television
- 4 Children's Sabbath Schools Practice Distance Learning
- 5 Overcoming Pandemic Challenges in India

75 YEARS AGO



The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. The Review covered it briefly, the first time in the August 23, 1945, issue. A statement written by Adventist evangelist Clifford A. Reeves appeared on September 6, 1945. We share just a portion of it.—Editors.

With dramatic suddenness the world has been hurled into the Atomic Age. Nature has been forced to yield one of its most forbidding secrets. There has fallen into the hands of mankind something of the powers of Omnipotence. The incredible atomic bomb, with its terrifying consequences of awful havoc, seems to open to man the possibility of destroying himself utterly and making this planet uninhabitable. So great are its destructive possibilities that the president of the United States warns that "the atomic bomb is too dangerous to be loose in a lawless world." . . .

Today, even irreligious newsmen and commentators are frequently using such terms as "the crisis of civilization" and "the end of the world." They tell us that life has now become a race with catastrophe. The atomic bomb has hastened Allied victory. But it is more important that we see it as a harbinger of that greater victory to be celebrated when Jesus comes. If we have grown cold or indifferent or backslidden, the atomic bomb should blast us out of our complacency into a new awareness that we are nearing the day of the Lord.

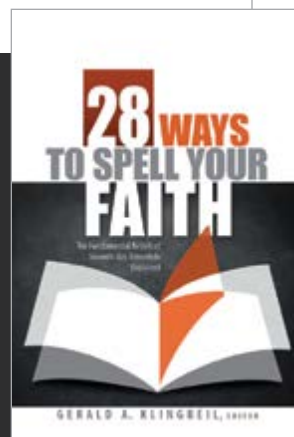
DISCOVER

THE JOY OF BIBLE STUDY

Joy is one of the emotions that we seem to emphasize least when we think and talk about reading the Bible. Spiritual nourishment—yes. Deep convictions about eternal truths—by all means. Encouragement and direction—we need that too. But joy?

When we make time for God to speak to us, when we see how the dots are connected, when we begin to recognize the intricate bigger picture in Scripture—that's when things begin to happen.

As you begin reading these engaging chapters focusing upon Adventist fundamental beliefs, you will discover not only spiritual nourishment, truth, and encouragement, but also joy—the joy of spending time with God's personal message for humanity.



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BILL KNOTT



We are building counterculture here.

The Quietest of Virtues

It is the age of braggadocio, and we are never sure whether to laugh incredulously at all the empty posturing, or weep for all we've lost—like modesty and grace.

The airwaves crackle with boasts that only yesterday were deemed unspeakably preposterous. Politicians, athletes, entertainers and 3-year olds stare unblinkingly at us and say what ego always wants to say: "I am the best. There is none like me."

And so we fault poor parenting, big salaries, and omnipresent television cameras for coarsening the culture, for reducing the humility we once admired to what gets said by those who finish second or clutch congeniality awards. When "man is the measure of all things," we quickly see how cheap and tawdry all things seem. Our beach is overrun by surging hubris, and we ache for understatement; graciousness; the self-control that can allow another to go first.

Cue the church—the one place left on Planet Earth where humility still finds a home, a resting place, a value. The founding ethic of this community Jesus built deplores the boast, the taunt, the cruel jest. It prizes anonymous deeds of kindness only heaven sees; values tender words that rebuild broken hearts; urges service to the ones the world tramples and forgets. The church of Jesus is, by definition, a sanctuary for losers—for all the mixed-up,

broken men and women who may never stand atop an earthly podium, but whose permanent, ineradicable value is enshrined in the heart of God. He gathers in, He said, the poor, the disabled, the dispossessed, and sets them at His banquet table (Luke 14:21). And so must we.

That's just the reason we must always guard the way we think and speak about Christ's church. Against the tide of endless chatter about performance, personalities, and politics borrowed from the culture, we can say aloud—again—that those who advertise themselves are selling what we do not want. We should set a guard for narcissists who flatter us with words designed to bring them glory. We can find the godly resolve to say "No" when leaders take the credit for the harvest God has ripened—those who build their résumés and reputations on all the selfless acts a hundred thousand saints have quietly performed.

This is a time for telling different stories than the ones our culture roars. We are building counterculture here, a wall against a corrosive tide of arrogance and self-assertion, and evidence suggests that we can't labor fast enough. Our pulpits should preach patience and hiddenness, of seeds that grow in secret, and of a Father who watches even sparrows fall. We need more lessons about the uneconomical searching for lone lost sheep,

instead of smugly counting those within the stadium or fold. Our kids can learn that no external sticky star can ever match the inner prize of knowing that "your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:4).*

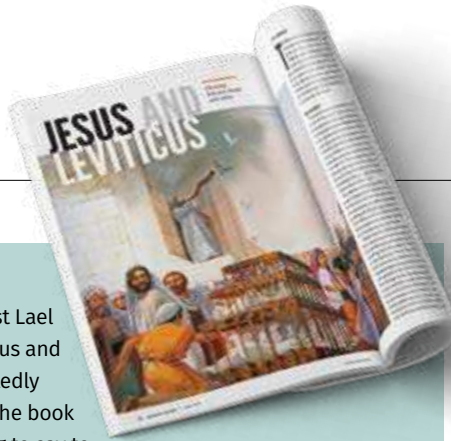
It requires collective courage to insist on these things, and to build again within this movement the habits—strategies—for making certain that "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" take root, grow up, set flowers, and bear fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23). Not only is there no law against such things: there's a positive commandment that we cherish them. "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Humility is not an accidental virtue we acquire casually along the way. If it is ever true that we are humble, individually or as a people, it will be because we speak of it and preach of it and underline it as a virtue we insist on—"encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

Because this is the call of Christ to all who are members of His body, the church I want to belong to is . . . *humble*.

Bill Knott

* Bible texts in this article are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 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.



SPOT ON

We read with great interest Lael Caesar's commentary "Jesus and Leviticus" and wholeheartedly concur with his position: the book of Leviticus has something to say to us today. The antipathy toward Leviticus is part of modern Christianity's war on God's law, as though the gospel negates the law of God.

This antipathy should have been resolved long ago for Seventh-day Adventists. Ellen White wrote: "The law and the gospel cannot be separated. In Christ mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The gospel has not ignored the obligations due to God by men and women. The gospel is the law unfolded, nothing more nor less. It gives no more latitude to sin than does the law" (*From the Heart*, p. 289). These principles still apply. The moral law statutes and judgments still apply. Where Scripture commands an animal sacrifice, there we are to lift up Christ's death on the cross. Ellen White was shown in vision that at a time when trouble was coming upon the earth just before the close of probation, "We [Adventists] went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully" (*Early Writings*, p. 33).

What is "more fully"? "That the obligations of the Decalogue might be more fully understood and enforced, additional precepts were given, illustrating and applying the principles of the Ten Commandments. These laws were called judgments" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 310). The statutes and judgments are the "more fully" of the Ten Commandments. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a message to give "more fully."

Ron Dahlke

Walla Walla, Washington

WE CAN BE MORE WELCOMING

"I've appreciated the articles by Bill Knott and Stephen Chavez to help our members not lose sight of the friendliness and understanding that should permeate

all our churches.

When I became an Adventist Christian at a very young age, my mother and I attended our first worship service. It was a small church in São Paulo, where we

have today more than 1,000 churches. It was a great contrast to the cathedrals where no one paid any attention.

I will never forget the welcome, smiles, and kindness of members. They made us feel at home, helped us find a seat, introduced us to other members, and read the stanzas of the hymns. We had no idea how to do it.

That inspiring service still stays with me in my ministry; I've tried to convey to our members how important it is. I've also wanted our church to open its doors, as Stephen Chavez said, to the marginalized, disenfranchised, and other groups who need to find refuge. As a former youth director, our young people need to feel accepted and loved in our churches.

Leo Ranzolin, Sr.

Estero, Florida

Stephen Chavez's article "Jesus Said, 'Come'" is a readable and convincing article about how to make everyone feel safe, worshipping with Adventists without having to "behave like us, think like us, or look like us." It harmonizes with Jesus' teachings throughout the Gospels.

The article is well worth reading again and again.

R. Lynn Sauls

Naples, Florida

The mix of people and the inclusion of atypical Adventist parishioners is an inspiration.

LAWRENCE G. DOWNING, VIA EMAIL

The June 2020 *Adventist Review* with the cover title “Welcoming” capitalized on the opportunity to address stories we’ve all heard: A visitor comes to church, baubles dangle from her ears; gaudy bracelets, one stacked upon the other, adorn her arms. A gate-keeper sidles up to the woman and with piety dripping like water from a leaky faucet, says, “I thought you should know that in our church we believe in modest dress. We don’t wear jewelry.” This ends the conversation and the desire ever to return to that church.

The article “Jesus Said, ‘Come’” takes the discussion further and addresses the matter of intention. It well made the case that a congregation has the opportunity to intentionally create a welcoming church. Glendale City church supports your thesis. I have attended the church and presented to the congregation. The mix of people and the inclusion of atypical Adventist parishioners is an inspiration.

Lawrence G. Downing
via email

HEAVY RAIN

“Forecast: Heavy Rain” was right-on! Extraordinarily well stated. And so timely. Thank you, *Adventist Review*, and Dixil Rodríguez.

Duane Rollins
Elwood, Indiana

DON'T TRY, DO!

I thank and praise God every morning I can get out of bed.

I take exception with the word “try” used by Stephen Chavez in the closing article of the June 2020 issue. When I used the word “try” in front of my mentor years ago, he said: “Terry, I don’t want to hear that word out of your mouth

ever again. You’re a winner, and winners don’t try, they *do!*”

I’ve not found the word “try” in His Word, and I believe our Lord and Savior continues to be a winner in every respect!

Alive and active at 73.

Terry Nobbe
via email

COMMENTS FROM ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT RACISM IF I'M WHITE?

Beautiful read! Thank you.

Beverly Rachel, *via web*

NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IS NOW ONLINE

Congratulations and praise God! We look forward to ready access of more stories of the development and worldwide spread of our message as the Lord uses human servants in this family of God.

Lloyd and Sheila Schomburg, *via web*

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION BIDS FAREWELL TO ITS PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY

President and Mrs. Jackson, thank you so much for your years of leadership. We have prayed for you often and will miss having you as our North American Division president. God’s blessings as you retire.

Don and Louise Driver, *via web*

A DEEPER REALITY

Well, don’t get all light and fluffy on us, Cliff! Seriously, though, “can this quantum phenomenon, or some variant thereof, explain how something in the classical realm, such as Jesus crying out, ‘It is finished,’ could be instantly conveyed ‘through every world and through heaven itself?’” Probably not. But why not? It’s intriguing. Quantum physics really humbles us in so many ways.

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, *via web*

New Release:

Digital Discipleship & Evangelism Guide

By Jamie Domm

A practical guide for using technology to spread the gospel.

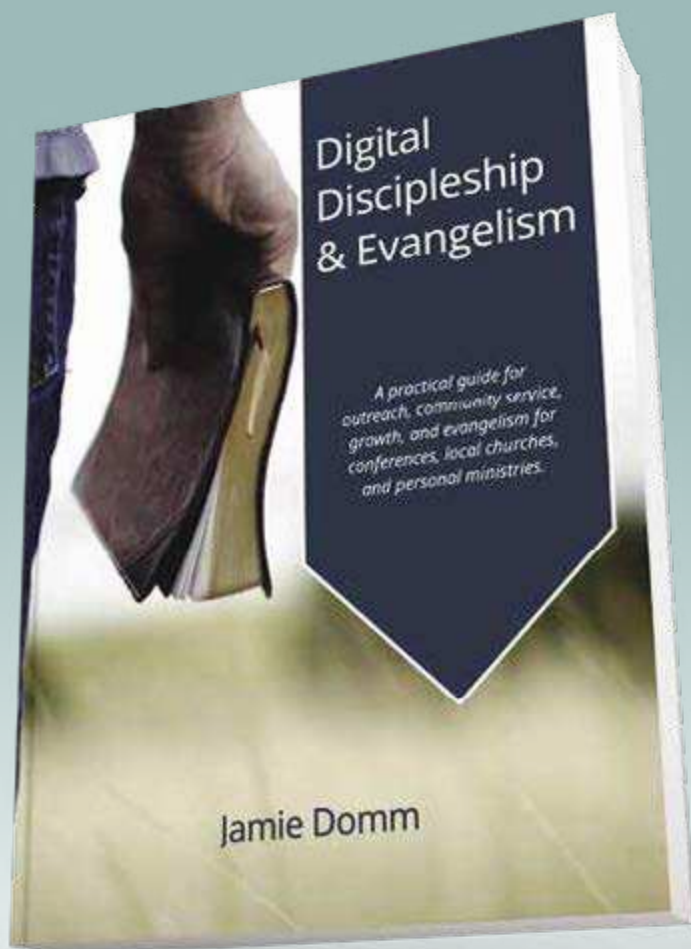
The North American Division has released its first guide to digital discipleship and evangelism! This book is a practical guide for outreach, community service, growth, and evangelism for conferences, local churches, and personal ministries. It digs deep into content evangelism, effective writing for online audiences, and practical tips for community care and engagement. This comprehensive resource is packed with practical “how-to” nuts and bolts that will help you establish or grow your digital ministry.

Learn more & get the book at SDAdata.blog/book

Print: **\$19.95***

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*Quantity discounts are available.



“I am first indebted to God for His call to ministry, and second, to those who have poured into my life over the years.”

**—G. Alexander Bryant,
president, North American Division.**

NEWS



The new *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* is now online after its July 1, 2020, official launch.

NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS NOW ONLINE

NEW RESOURCE TELLS THE STORY OF ADVENTISTS AS NEVER BEFORE, SAY PROJECT COORDINATORS.

BY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH OFFICE OF ARCHIVES, STATISTICS, AND RESEARCH

Did you know that the first woman authorized to practice medicine in Mexico was a Seventh-day Adventist? It was Lillis Wood Starr, who served as a missionary to Mexico.

Did you know that the current world church system of organization was originated by Asa T. Robinson, a pioneer missionary to southern Africa and Australia? He preached his last sermon at the age of 95. Its title? “The Blessed Hope.”

Did you know that the first patients at what is now Songa Adventist

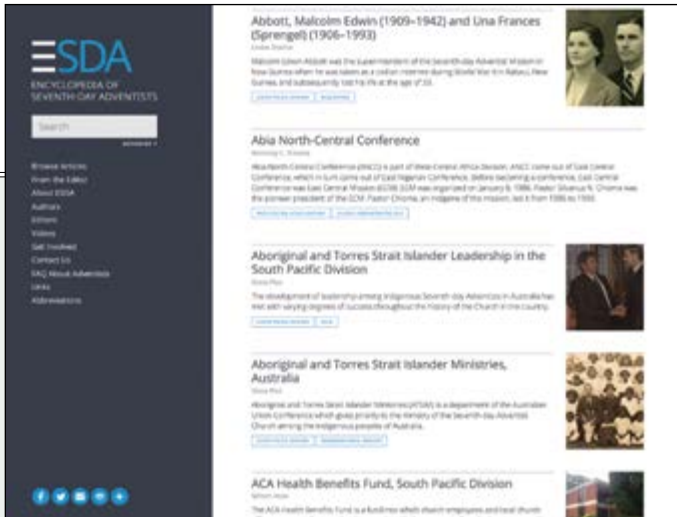
Hospital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were treated by John Sturges and his wife, Viola, on the veranda of their thatch-roofed hut?

Did you know that one of the first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to Papua New Guinea was a Fijian, Peni Tavodi? He died, while serving there, after a fatal snakebite.

Or did you know that it took the first Adventist missionaries to the far west of China up to 60 days of travel each way? For the first dozen

years Adventists had a presence in China, missionaries worked only in the eastern part of the country, relatively close to sophisticated port cities, which had connections by ship to the Western world. Arthur Allum and Merritt Warren were the first to travel deep into China, and, having set up a mission station at Chongqing, in Sichuan, in the country’s west, after six months they traveled east again. With their wives, Evaline and Wilma, they then spent several weeks journeying back to Sichuan.

These stories and thousands more are found in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s first online reference work, the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (or ESDA), which launched July 1, 2020.



WHAT IS ESDA?

The *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* is the fruit of a five-year project (to date) of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. It launched with 2,100 articles and 3,200 photos, most of them never before published. ESDA online is a free resource that will be regularly revised: at least another 6,000 articles will be added, along with many more photographs, plus video, audio recordings, and original documents. In addition, existing articles can be corrected and augmented. While a version will eventually appear in print, the ESDA online, which is constantly being updated, will be both more flexible and more accurate than any printed work could ever be—and easily available to anyone with a cell phone, unlike bulky (and expensive) multivolume books.

WHY ESDA?

The old *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* was published in 1966; the second revised edition appeared in 1996. The worldwide Adventist Church has experienced dramatic shifts in that time, not least in global

membership. The old *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* was written by a small group at the church's headquarters in Washington, D.C., representatives of a church that was still largely of European descent. Furthermore, since the 1990s, Seventh-day Adventist historical scholarship has been almost transformed. Finally, numerous errors in the old *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* have been identified, while many more sources have been discovered.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church thus needed a new “go to” reference work, reflecting the astonishingly diverse and truly global church of the twenty-first century. There was also need of an online encyclopedia that allows all the possibilities of the digital age.

One concept for such an online work was conceived in the *Adventist Review* office, and the current encyclopedia has drawn on some ideas from it. Adventist scholars have produced short reference works, but they relied on the old encyclopedia for their information, and the works were not available online.

So it was that in 2014 the executive officers of the General Conference asked the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR), located at the world headquarters, to produce a replacement for the venerable *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. David Trim, director of ASTR, came up with a plan for a truly global and online encyclopedia, which the world church funded. Because it was to be an entirely new work rather than a revised edition, it was given a new title: the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*.

It has been prepared by hundreds of researchers and authors and dozens of editors from around the world, writing on the institutions, organizations, and first church members and church leaders of their own nations and people groups. All articles have been peer reviewed, which has expanded the number of Adventist scholars, administrators, and church members who have contributed to the project.

Trim has overseen the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* as editor, while the role of managing editor was filled initially by Benjamin Baker, and, since 2018, by Dragoslava Santrac. According to Trim, Santrac made a key contribution by her energy and enthusiasm.

ESDA GOALS

ESDA's stated goals are:

- Supply reliable and authoritative information on Adventist history, crucial events and themes, organizations, entities, institutions, and people



I Will Go, the strategic focus plan of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for 2020-2025, was launched at a livestreamed event on July 3-4, 2020.

ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

- Strengthen Adventist identity in a fast-growing worldwide movement, heightening awareness of distinctive doctrinal and prophetic beliefs

- Provide a reference work for those new to the Adventist faith, mature in the faith, and not of Adventist faith, to learn about all aspects of Adventism

- Bring out the role of denominational organization in fulfilling the church's mission

- Highlight the missional challenges still remaining in order to "reach the world"

- Reflect the nature of the world church today, both in subject matter and in those who write and edit the encyclopedia

THE FUTURE

According to Trim, although *ESDA* online launches with more than 2,000 articles, there are more than twice as many articles that still need to be written. World church funding will continue for another two years. Trim also states that many of those who've written articles to date have found the experience faith-affirming, even transforming. He appeals to Adventist scholars of all disciplines, not just history, and to any church member who is passionate about Adventist heritage, to contact the *ESDA* office if they are willing to write or review articles. Many more interesting, encouraging, chastening, *inspiring* stories from Adventist history are waiting to be told. 📌

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH UNVEILS ITS STRATEGIC FOCUS

PLANS FOR THE NEW QUINQUENNium WERE OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED AT JULY 3-4, 2020, LIVESTREAMED EVENT.

BY BETH THOMAS, FOR ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

In a special livestreamed event July 3-4, 2020, the Seventh-day Adventist Church unveiled its strategic focus for 2020-2025. The next five years will focus on mission through the Reach the World: I Will Go initiative, church leaders said.

Initially set to launch at the 2020 General Conference Session in Indianapolis, plans for presenting the initiative to the world church had to be adjusted because of the coronavirus pandemic. So it took place in a weekend celebration, broadcast on Hope Channel, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Facebook page, and other social media platforms.

I WILL GO: AN IMPORTANT TOOL

I Will Go is "a tool to help the church be more focused and effective in performing critical tasks. This strategic plan is rooted in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28, which calls Jesus' followers to go and make disciples of all nations," according to the initiative website.

Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson said that through this focus, church leaders hope to see "a worldwide, massive involvement of all our church members in their evangelistic and witnessing commitment during these last days of earth's history."

The plan was developed by the Future Plans Working Group Strategic Planning and Research Over-

sight Committee, chaired by Michael Ryan, a former general vice president of the Adventist Church, after consulting with divisions.

Gary Krause, Office of Adventist Mission director, offered a concise overview of the initiative focus:

"The plan is summarized in 10 key objectives—four mission objectives, three spiritual-growth objectives, and three leadership objectives. But another key objective has been added: 'Holy Spirit objectives: to be defined as the Holy Spirit leads.' This is an acknowledgment that although we have made plans as good stewards, we need to be open to the Holy Spirit fine-tuning or adding to our mission priorities."

According to David Trim, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research director, almost unprecedented research informed the direction for this new initiative.

Of the surveys given to church members in all 13 world divisions in 2018, there were 63,756 responses to questions dealing with personal spiritual practices, local church environment, and a range of biblical beliefs. This data enables church leaders to get a finger on the pulse of the church and know how to best encourage spiritual growth and commitment, leaders said.

Research efforts will continue through the next five years to evaluate the plan's effectiveness. 📌



G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president

PHOTO: DAN WEBER, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

G. ALEXANDER BRYANT NAMED NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PRESIDENT

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH'S GENERAL CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VOTED BRYANT INTO THE OFFICE ON JULY 9, 2020.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

On July 9, 2020, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's General Conference (GC) Executive Committee met virtually to receive the name of G. Alexander Bryant, the recommendation for division president, from both the North American Division's nominating committee and executive committee. Bryant was confirmed in a vote of 153 to 3.

Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference president and, as policy indicates for the vote of division president, chair of the NAD nominating committee and executive committee held on July 6 and July 7, said, "I'm looking forward to a renewed focus on the three angels' messages, and I believe that Elder Bryant can help lead in that great adventure, because that is what is entrusted to each of us. [He] is a mission-focused individual. He

is someone who is a careful listener to people. He will take [these cares] to the Lord and ask for guidance. . . . I believe that God can use him in a very, very special way."

Bryant said in response to the vote, "I am first indebted to God for His call to ministry, and second, to those who have poured into my life over the years. I am deeply humbled by the confidence Elder Wilson, our chair, and the NAD and GC executive committees have placed in me with this assignment.

"This task is too big for one individual or office," he said. "It is abundantly clear to me that it takes all of us working together to advance God's kingdom. I deeply covet your prayers."

He added, "I ask for my wife and for myself—that you would continue to lift us up daily as we will

you. . . . Hopefully, by our efforts together, we can hasten the coming of the Lord through our mission work throughout our territory and beyond; and Jesus will come and we can go home."

Wilson affirmed the decision for NAD president, saying, "Alex, we will place you in prayer—that God will be with you and Desiree and your family as you take up these new responsibilities. . . . I know he will have a tremendous evangelistic imprint on North America for the future, and it'll be a privilege to collaborate with him on that."

All world division executive officers serve as elected officers of the GC, and their nomination and election by the region they represent must be approved by the General Conference Executive Committee.

The division's nominating committee is termed a standing committee. It was appointed by the NAD executive committee in 2015. During the past five years the nominating committee has recommended the names of individuals to the executive committee for a vote in order to fill division vacancies.

Following a process disclosed earlier, the division's nominating committee met on July 6 and selected the name of Bryant, which was presented and voted on by the NAD executive committee on July 7. Bryant's name was sent as a recommendation to the GC Executive Committee. All meetings were held virtually via Zoom with a previously used electronic voting process.

Bryant replaces Daniel R. Jackson, who served at the NAD headquarters from his election in June 2010 at the GC Session in Atlanta, Georgia, and his reelection in 2015 in San Antonio, Texas, until his retirement on July 1, 2020. The search process for a new executive secretary has begun.

Glenward Alexander (“Alex”) Bryant most recently served as executive secretary of the NAD and associate secretary of the GC, positions he’s held since October 2008, when he was elected at the GC Annual Council in Manila, Philippines. Bryant was reelected at the 2010 GC Session. While serving as the division’s secretary, Bryant conducted leadership seminars, training, and orientation of conference executive officers; organized a division-wide diversity summit; coordinated the digitalization of the NAD Secretariat; and conducted annual evangelistic series.

Before coming to the NAD, Bryant served as president of the Central States Conference in Kansas City, Kansas.

Bryant graduated with a double major in theology and business administration from Oakwood College (now Oakwood University) in 1982.

He began his ministry that same year in Springfield, Missouri, and Coffeyville and Independence, Kansas. In 1986 Bryant was ordained, and he continued his education by earning a Master of Divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in 1988. The Cen-

tral States Conference voted Bryant to serve as youth/Pathfinder/National Service Organization director, temperance director, and superintendent of education in 1990. He became president in 1997.

In addition to pastoring several churches early in his career, Bryant also served as a student missionary to Japan for one year. During his college years Bryant’s administrative abilities helped him serve as the Adventist Youth director at Oakwood College and president of the Black Students Association of the Seminary (BSAS) at Andrews University.

Bryant is the second African American elected to serve as NAD president. Charles E. Bradford, the division’s first president, was also African American. Previous division presidents include Alfred C. McClure, Don C. Schneider, and Daniel R. Jackson.

Bryant is married to the former Desiree Wimbish, who served as associate superintendent of education for the Potomac Conference, superintendent of education for Central States Conference, and as former principal of the V. Lindsay Seventh-day Adventist School in Kansas City, Kansas. Desiree serves as assistant director and projects coordinator for Adventist education in the NAD. The Bryants have three adult children and three grandchildren. ♣

For a video interview with Alex Bryant about his education, early years in ministry, and his hopes for his role as NAD president, see vimeo.com/436307082.

“It is abundantly clear to me that it takes all of us working together to advance God’s kingdom. I deeply covet your prayers.”

—G. Alexander Bryant



AdventHealth CEO Terry Shaw

ON NATIONAL TELEVISION, ADVENTHEALTH CEO DISCUSSES COVID CARE, MASKS, AND DISNEY OPENING

TERRY SHAW PRAISES HIS TEAM AS HE SHARES THEIR PROACTIVE APPROACH TO CARING FOR PEOPLE.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

In a national television interview aired on July 12, 2020, AdventHealth CEO Terry Shaw stressed the hospital network's thorough preparations and the quality of care of the teams he leads during an unprecedented surge of COVID-19 across the U.S. state of Florida and beyond. In a live interview on the CBS News show *Face the Nation*, Shaw focused on the proactive steps AdventHealth has taken, as he lavished praise on what he called the "amazing job" of the organization's clinical teams.

"I'm thankful that we've had several months to learn how to treat the disease," said Shaw when reacting to host Margaret Brennan's question on the current state of preparations. "We are much better prepared in July than what we were in March. We have adequate personal protective equipment [PPE]. We have a stockpile of ventilators, and we have an amazing clinical team that has taken best practices from around the globe and put them into our treatment protocols."

Shaw went on to explain that following those strict protocols, the number of COVID-19 patients in intensive-care units across the dozens of AdventHealth hospitals in Florida has been cut in half. The same can be said about the number of people coming to AdventHealth hospitals who need a ventilator. "Because of those things, our death rate has also been cut in half in that time," he told Brennan.

When asked about the peak of hospitalizations, Shaw said he believes that Florida hasn't reached the peak yet. He called people to follow advice about wearing masks and keeping social distancing. "COVID gets passed from one person to the next, and we can all do a better job making sure that we are caring for one another by just wearing a simple mask and staying six feet (from a distance perspective) from the next person," Shaw advised.

SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT

Shaw made clear that the positive results AdventHealth is currently achieving are not the result of

chance. AdventHealth teams learned all they could to develop and improve their protocols but were also supported by the organization's early commitment to get ready.

"In March and April, we spent an enormous amount of money on PPE, and we continue to stockpile PPE that we so desperately need right now," Shaw said. He added that AdventHealth is getting shipments of broad-spectrum antiviral medication remdesivir, so they "have enough to continue to care for people."

A MULTISTATE SYSTEM

During the July 12 show, which included interviews with U.S. surgeon general Jerome Adams and others, Shaw emphasized the multistate nature of Adventist health care. He said they are working with institutions in Colorado to bring clinicians to support Florida's staff needs. This is critical to keep the level of care, he said.

"It's very important that you have the ability to move staff around within the state," Shaw said. "[We developed] a staff redeployment program that allowed us to move critical resources around our organization, both within the state of Florida and from out of the state to Florida, or vice versa, based on where spikes were coming, and where people would be needed the most."

Every move, Shaw emphasized, was made to focus on how to better care for people.

ADVISING WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

Shaw's interview took place on the same day Walt Disney World Resort, near Orlando, Florida, opened its doors to the public after weeks of closings. Many experts wonder whether this was a wise decision at a time when cases have skyrocketed in the area. AdventHealth is providing advice and support to Disney's plan for reopening. Brennan's last question to Shaw sought to get his take on it.

"As a health-care provider, my job is to help people do things safely," Shaw answered. "Based on the way Disney is approaching this, limiting people in, doing all the screenings that they are doing . . . I wouldn't hesitate to go to Disney as a health-care CEO, based upon the fact that they are working really hard to keep people safe."

Adventist Review executive editor Bill Knott said that he enjoyed the interview. "I appreciated Shaw's responses that explained clearly the hospital system's need for careful planning, as well as the importance of strategic deployment of needed personnel around the [AdventHealth] system." According to Knott, Shaw handled the questions and issues with confidence.

Face the Nation is a weekly U.S. news program airing Sundays. Created in 1954, it is included on the list of the longest-running news programs in the history of television. It usually features interviews with prominent officials, politicians, and authors. ▀

107,000 MEALS AND 245,000 POUNDS OF WASHED CLOTHES

**IN BRAZIL, ADRA'S MOBILE TRAILER COMPLETES
FOUR YEARS OF SERVING PEOPLE IN NEED.**

BY AYANNE KAROLINE, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

A mobile service unit sponsored by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Brazil reached four years serving the needy on June 26, 2020. During those four years the trailer has served more than 20,000 people, organization leaders said.

Launched in 2016 as a project to assist communities affected by disasters, it has been on the ground to help victims of natural disasters across the country, including landslides in São Paulo. More recently it has underpinned the agency's efforts against COVID-19.

In four years of operation it has visited more than 40 cities, served more than 107,000 meals, and helped wash 245,000 pounds of clothes.

RELIEF IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

"ADRA Brazil's trailer was created to bring relief in the midst of suffering," said Fábio Salles, ADRA Brazil director. "Natural disasters are common in Brazil. In the midst of the despair of having lost everything, the services offered guarantee basic care for those affected."

Salles explained that the basic assistance provided includes

food, clothes, and psychological support.

"During the pandemic, with the increase in poverty and unemployment, our truck continues to guarantee the essentials to maintain the dignity of the most humble Brazilian families," Salles said. "'Love on the Go' is our trailer's slogan. It is love with justice and compassion," he explained.

SPACIOUS AND PRACTICAL

The modified trailer truck has approximately 480 square feet (about 45 square meters) of floor space. It is divided into three compartments, each intended to meet the affected population's primary needs, according to agency leaders in charge of the project.

"The first section is used for preparing hot meals, with an output of up to 1,500 meals per shift," they explained. "The second is intended for washing and drying clothes, and can deliver about 800 pounds [363 kilograms] of clean clothes per day. The third is used to provide psychological support."

FOUR YEARS ON A TRUCK

Cristiane Alejo de Freitas Maximiano and her husband, Tiago, have been coordinating the truck services

“Being part of this mission has transformed me and my life.”



During the past four years the ADRA trailer has served the needy and the homeless in more than 40 Brazilian cities. PHOTO: ARTHUR HENRIQUE, ADRA BRAZIL

thanks to a partnership with ADRA Brazil. Cristiane said she has lived through several different realities along the way.

“I have spent time with victims of floods and landslides, and time with vulnerable people,” she said. “It made me reflect on my love and empathy for others.” Cristiane believes that by walking in other people’s shoes, we can better understand their suffering, then act in practical ways to alleviate it. “I understood the meaning of compassion,” she said.

Cristiane and Tiago take care of every task connected to the ADRA trailer, including the logistics and what happens inside. “Being part of this mission has transformed me and my life,” she said.

SERVING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

With the pandemic triggered by COVID-19, and the need to support many Brazilian cities, ADRA’s mobile unit has moved into action. In 20 days operating in Salvador, Bahia, the trailer volunteers served

more than 10,000 meals and washed 11,000 pounds (5,000 kilograms) of clothes for people on the streets. In the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, it served shelters where vulnerable people are isolated, offering 3,000 meals and washing more than 13,000 pounds (5,900 kilograms) of clothes.

The ADRA trailer is currently stationed in Espírito Santo, and is scheduled to stay until August to serve as an isolation center for those who are homeless and needy in the local community. 🍃



GOLDEN ANGELS LAUNCH SERIES OF “ROOM CONCERTS.” South Korea-based Adventist singing group, the Golden Angels, turned disappointment into a major witnessing opportunity. When COVID-19 ruined its schedule of concerts throughout South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan, the group turned into media producers—reading books, watching teaching videos, learning production, procuring equipment, and producing and uploading recorded videos called Golden Angels Room Concerts to their YouTube channel, with English, Chinese, and Japanese subtitles.



HELPING TO SAVE LIVES IN YEMEN. In a project serving 225,715 people, including 121,532 women, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is bringing public health resources and supplies to the population of Yemen, suffering one of the world’s greatest humanitarian disasters. With funding from the government of Canada, ADRA renovated and equipped three health units, including a fully functional laboratory, and is paying the salaries of health-care providers, including doctors, obstetricians, midwives, nurses, and nutrition experts.



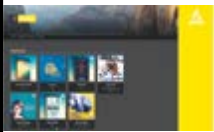
ADVENTIST SCHOOL GETS BEST INDIVIDUAL RESULT IN 30 YEARS. Norway’s Adventist Junior College (Tyrifjord Videregående Skole) regularly has good results. But this year, for the first time in 30 years, one of the 65 June 21, 2020, graduates received top marks in all subjects. Tonje Karoline Knutsen takes her studies seriously. But she gives high credit to the excellent teachers and social environment she experienced at Tyrifjord Videregående Skole. Moving there three years ago, she says, was the best decision she ever made.



PRAYER RELAY CAPS 100 DAYS OF PRAYER ACROSS INTER-AMERICA. For 24 hours straight, beginning before sunset July 3, Adventist churches across the 24 unions of the Inter-American Division (IAD) celebrated faithful prayer. Thousands of members and church leaders united virtually in praise and supplication at the climax of the division’s 100 days of prayer. Samuel Telemaque, NAD Sabbath School director, said, “We see this initiative as a catalyst for all the ministries of the church.”



TOP-OF-THE-LINE TRAINING FOR ROBOTIC SURGERY CLINICIANS. AdventHealth, one of the United States’ largest faith-based health-care systems, will extend its partnership with C-SATS, a platform providing anonymous personalized and near-real-time reviews of a surgeon’s work once the surgeon captures their robotic surgical procedures on video and securely sends them to C-SATS. AdventHealth was the first health system in the country to deploy C-SATS, and sees its added value for both surgeons and patients.



MORE THAN 1,000 PODCASTS ON FAITH, HEALTH, AND HOPE. In early July 2020, the Adventist Church’s South American Division (SAD) launched 7Cast, a platform that brings together podcast productions from church members, pastors, and church institutions. 7Cast was born with a similar goal as Feliz7Play, the SAD video platform: to share hope with people. One thousand free podcasts are available already, in 15 different categories, and on popular platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and Deezer.



NEW APPOINTMENTS VOTED IN GEOSCIENCE, AUDITING SERVICE. Ronnie Nalin was elected director of the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) by the General Conference Executive Committee July 9, 2020. He succeeds Jim Gibson, who has retired after more than three decades of leading the Loma Linda, California-based institute. The committee also elected Boris Cardenas as associate director for workflow and innovation of the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS). Nalin (right) is from Italy, Cardenas from Colombia.



HUMBLEST MAN ON EARTH

Is meek' the same as stupid?

It's altogether too difficult to dispute the uniqueness of Moses. As the human source of three great world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Moses and his greatness may be freely asserted. His humility, however, turns out to be more of a problem.

UNFORGETTABLE PARENTHESIS

Numbers 12:3 may well be the Bible's most unforgettable parenthesis, and for no positive reason. Many find it impossible to accept that the height of humility would be for Moses, considered the book's author, to describe himself as he does, "more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." And besides the oddity of such an action, there is adequate room to wonder about Moses as meek.

Beyond his domination of early Israelite history he is seen as a major figure in the New Testament: the healed leper must carry out Moses' instructions for ritual cleansing (Matt. 8:4); Jesus and His opponents all claim Moses' support in their argument about marriage and divorce (Matt. 19:7, 8). In Jesus' hypothetical, well-known story about the rich man and Lazarus, one thing is clear: it's about Moses (Luke 16:19-31). Mentioned 80 times in the New Testament, Moses is an undying hero. Except that he does die in the Old Testament (Deut. 34:5-7), only to rise again before the New Testament gets too far along, so he can show up to encourage Jesus before His passion—which Luke actually calls Jesus' exodus (Luke 9:28-36).

Moses' support is not in vain: Jesus conquers devil and hell, bursts out of the mountain, and soars to glory with a promise to return for His friends. Once the news gets out to "every creature under heaven" (Col. 1:23), priests and Pharisees, Jews and Gentiles, plebes and patricians all want to follow the Nazarene's way.

The Christian church holds its first deliberative council, seeking for process and practice that will be fair to all. James, presiding, reminds delegates of the pivotal presence and word of Moses for making things go right (Acts 15:13-21). All of which confronts us with a new question: are we even reading right in Numbers when we hear it say that this giant of a statesman, author, legislator, and nation builder was humanity's humblest ever?

The questions aren't done yet. For it may yet be

that Scripture's most remarkable lines about Moses relate to Jesus rather than to humility, to a prophecy in Deuteronomy rather than to a parenthesis in Numbers. Invoking that prophecy, Peter in Acts 3 and Stephen in Acts 7 both argue that Jesus is Jesus because He properly fulfills Moses' prediction of a coming prophet who would be like him: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him" (Deut. 18:15). Both Peter in Acts 3 and Stephen in Acts 7 state that this prediction is about Jesus: Jesus is like Moses.

BEGINNING TO ANSWER

We now have three points to ponder: (1) How can humility declare itself most humble? (2) Can we be sure, given his accomplishments and stature, that Moses was all that meek? (3) Why should heaven and the prophets say that Jesus is like Moses? That's the opposite of the directions of our Sabbath School songs: "I would be like Jesus. Be like Jesus, this my song, in the home and in the throng."²

One major way to begin addressing the multiplied queries would be vis-à-vis the superlative claim of Numbers 12:3. Answers to our multiple questions may have their best starting point in the unforgettable parenthesis: "Moses was the humblest."

The term *'anaw* ("humble") that Moses applies to himself in Numbers 12 was no coveted epithet among the "haves" of Old Testament times. Its possession did not contribute to superior status or constitute a position of power. Answering our first question, a pronouncement on humility in Numbers is not designed as a statement of greatness. That *'anaw* is sometimes confused with the closely related *'ani* ("poor," "afflicted") only underlines the fact that to declare oneself such is hardly to be heard as a braggart. To be *'ani* was to be the natural object of exploitation (see Ex. 22:22-24), so helpless in one's affliction that the Lord Himself must personally intervene to help and deliver (Ex. 3:7, 8).

And because *'anaw* itself never represents high

We claim to value humility now only because Jesus does, and we want to sound Christian.

social standing or popular esteem, considering the famous parenthesis a note of conceit happens only by detaching it from its contextual moorings. Taken in its original context, the text seeks to communicate Moses' indisposition about preserving his reputation. Or it pronounces upon his sheer inability to protect himself from slanderous verbal assault or rebellion against his divinely appointed authority. His personal dignity, his choice of spouse, his manner of leadership—all were subject to open attack and ridicule by his siblings and/or by hundreds of subalterns responding to strong urges to prove themselves superior to whatever he thought of them.

Moses' story, as recounted in the relevant chapters of Numbers, presents a report consistent with the lot and experience of the biblical *'anaw*, a group whose divine support and blessing never relate to their community status or their role in the society. Indeed, it is their need that evokes God's succor. Left to themselves they will be swept away by any onslaught of evil as they encounter people whose goal and practice is to "trample the needy and do away with the poor [*'anaw*] of the land" (Amos 8:4).

THREE MOSES STORIES

In Numbers 12, Moses' creative, assertive, extroverted sister—in the lead, with older brother Aaron trailing—unleashes a shameful insult against the man and his wife, stuffing her sad sentiments into an enveloped labeled "God's Service": "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he also spoken through us?" (Num. 12:2). If God had not told us explicitly, we would not know that Miriam's holy jealousy is just a cover for her racism: "Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite" (verse 1). Cush as location means Ethiopia. God Himself intervenes to severely discipline the gifted, prejudiced prophetess (verses 4-15; see also Ex. 15:20).

Moses is soon confronted with a new trial, this time the unnecessary and "evil report" (Num. 13:32, KJV) the spies bring back. Their "spy idea" was unnecessary and insulting to God because He had spied out the territory already (Eze. 20:6). He had long ago guaranteed the land of Canaan to Israel's great ancestor Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21), even explaining the schedule for taking possession (verses 13-16).

Yet the people cringe at Moses' wonderful announcement: "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us. See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it" (Deut. 1:19-21).

Comparing Deuteronomy and Numbers shows that though Moses and His gracious Lord accept responsibility for the commissioning of spies (Num. 13:1-16), they both knew it was wrong (disastrously so, it turned out). The faithlessness that inspired the idea of sending spies equally inspired their report. That same faithlessness riled up the congregation receiving the report, and inspired their desire to murder the ones who preferred to trust in God (Num. 14:10). Moses' humility only encouraged their bold faithlessness: he was either so nice or so naive that they knew he would eventually surrender before their clamor; they could threaten to stone him and all God's faithful, and he would back down; they could complain all night and his resolve would melt.

The rebellions keep piling on: the Numbers 16 attack is by the cream of the crop: "250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council" (verse 2). These are men who know their standing in society, and know they have huge followings on Twitter and Facebook, if not on Instagram and TikTok. They echo Miriam, though now Moses and Aaron are lumped together: they take too much on themselves; they lack proper respect for the capacity of others to do what they do; they think themselves superior to everybody else, "above the Lord's assembly" (verse 3). When God miraculously destroys these champions of fairness for all, their followers scream at Moses and Aaron, "You have killed the Lord's people" (verse 41).

Through these episodes of racist insult, bold faithlessness, and class warfare, Moses' attitude gives us a consistent answer to our second query: can we be sure of his humility? In each of these three cases—(1) his brother and sister, (2) the spies, (3) the famous

community leaders—it is God, even silencing Moses' compassionate pleas, who takes hold of the situation and metes out appropriate discipline.

In the first case, Miriam, God, and Aaron—the other parties present—all speak before Moses does. When we do hear his voice, it is in a cry to God, brief and intense, for mercy on the sister he loves, whom God has struck with a defiling skin disease: "Please, God, heal her!" (Num. 12:13). The Lord shuts him up: He will not have the incident quietly disappear. The congregation will know of the shameful thinking and behavior; of God's indignation; of Moses' meek silence; of his plea swept aside by the God who owns justice (Deut. 32:35) and will sometimes administer stern discipline even when those oppressed plead for mercy on their abusers.

The story of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their 250 famous colleagues offers just as powerful a witness to Moses' deferential character, though he is much more involved in the action this time, even passionately so (Num. 16:15). God shows again, by an unprecedented miracle of punishment, the level of His rage against rebels who confidently assault His order through abusing His servant Moses. When Korah and the gang of greats charge him with conceit, the best Moses can do is fall, facedown, to the ground (verse 4). At the story's decisive moment, we hear Moses' voice, crying out to God again, for mercy on scoundrels. God knows how deeply the poison of insurrection has already penetrated the entire congregation, and commands Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once" (Num. 16:21). Moses begs God not to kill everybody. God agrees, but gives a new command: "Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram" (verse 24).

Then Moses speaks up: "If the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows [these men], . . . then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt" (verse 30). God has said that rebellion is like witchcraft, and "arrogance like the evil of idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). Spiritual discernment lets Moses see witchcraft and idolatry here: the geniuses have elevated their self-importance above any possible worship of the true God.

In Moses' words we hear Jesus' voice denouncing scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ensconced "in Moses' seat," living church like a reality show, including respectful greetings (see Matt. 23:2, 5-7).

Jesus is not proud for delivering curses on those who have earned them: no, He is defining true humility: it is the opposite of what these religious authorities stand for, and Jesus is it. He invites: "Come to me," "for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matt. 11:28, 29).

ANSWERS FROM JESUS

Jesus answers all our questions about Moses.

1. How could the humble declare himself so? Because it was not celebrity status. We claim to value humility now only because Jesus does, and we want to sound Christian. Stars may be admired for their humility. But humility is no requisite for heroes. Christians should not confuse their Lord with the world, or His values with the world's, or humility with stardom.

2. Given his many great feats, can we be sure that Moses was humble? Is Jesus any less humble because He runs the universe and saved the world? The link between accomplishment and humility is more imaginary than real, allowing parents and siblings, kindergarten teachers and Little League coaches, to inflate their children and subjects with humble pride over nothing; allowing nonentities to impress their doting children with humble stories of when they were in their prime.

3. Why should the Bible say that Jesus would be like Moses? Because it is true. Because it enables correct identification. Because it gives opportunity for people of all ages to respect values that would not otherwise be esteemed. Because it validates meekness; because it elevates Moses, deservedly so; because it enlightens God's people and all people in relation to the great controversy between Christ, the humble, and Satan, the proud; between Christ, who gives and respects our power of choice, and Satan, who is both arbitrary and dictatorial; between Christ the Eternal Lover, and Satan the perpetual manipulator.

Now, with Moses' help, we know what to do when Jesus says, "Come," "for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28, 29).¹

¹ Meek" and "humble" are interchangeable in this article, as per the Bible versions: King James Version, New King James Version, and 21st Century King James Version all say "meek" where other versions say "humble." The terms help explain each other.

² "I Would Be Like Jesus," written by James Rowe in 1911.

The puzzle pieces may remain a bit scattered. In this case they do not have to come together in complete fashion to create the visual artifact of this familiar and ongoing story. The visual rhetoric is present in the language alone: “Then war broke out in heaven” (Rev. 12:7). Perhaps, for this specific story, a picture might not be worth *just* a thousand words. For as my finite human mind cannot imagine a war of such magnitude, I can appreciate the concise words and feel their weight as I am reminded of our present human condition *because of* war in heaven.

So many questions, turns, and intersections in sacred space. How could war begin in a place of harmony? Why would jealousy grow in an environment of peace? What poison fertilized this emotion?

I wonder when it began to take shape. What subtleties created the shredded corners of this idea? A word from the Father shared only with the Son, alone? The humble character of the Son, so loved by His Father, in a space where many outnumbered the One? Did the emotions remain so gradual that no one noticed for a time? How did Lucifer’s envy begin? At what moment did the emotion of envy grow deep roots inside him, intertwining with jealousy? Was there an opportunity when those roots could have been ripped out, self-determinedly removed? Perhaps to ensure a “point of safe return” into the peace and harmony of heaven?

The “point of safe return” (PSR) is a common acronym used with in-flight transport of patients. It is a marker to indicate that the aircraft has used more fuel than needed to return to the point of origin. You

are faced with a decision to turn back or press forward. Once the PSR is crossed, there is no option but to move forward and engage any skill learned to navigate through unexpected circumstances that might eliminate the chance to reach safe harbor.

The PSR is not to be confused with a “point of no return.” The PSR has at its core the premise of benevolent travel ahead: the aircraft is carrying precious cargo. Pilots do not cross the PSR to be heroes or martyrs. Instead, they are required to use every tool in their toolbox, every lesson learned to make the journey ahead to safe harbor. Benevolent travel must be devoid of hubris, pride, envy.

Lucifer crossed the point of safe return and opted for a point of *no* return. Envy and hubris were too deeply rooted for any chance to move forward in a benevolent, repented manner. In the development of discord, at the apex of oratory, was there any doubt that justice would be wielded?

In order for justice to occur, a conflict must be set in motion, and there was. The highest crime was committed: rebellion against the government of God. The uniqueness of the relationship between the Father and the Son was used to justify the depths of evil in the self-corrupted cherub and launch the cosmos into a cosmic struggle where battle lines were drawn, sides chosen, and *there was war in heaven*.

THE CASUALTIES OF THAT WAR

War. The powerful emotions that fueled the outburst of hubris in Lucifer were not present in heaven. Scripture does not tell of negative emotions as prevalent in heaven; they surfaced to



The Constant Catalyst

*In a struggle we didn't
choose, we have no choice
but to move forward.*



“You can’t change the wind,” he says. “So adjust your sails. Story of life.”

signal a problem. These emotions were foreign. How do you navigate through an emotion for which you do not have experience, know reason, or recognize method? Was, in God’s infinite wisdom, the implementation of an army to wage war already present as a contingency plan? The chaos of an internal battle in Lucifer became the catalyst for war and a definition of justice.

When war ensued, justice prevailed. Ultimately, Lucifer and his sympathizers were expelled from heaven: “You have been cast down to the earth” (Isa. 14:12).

Once again, my finite mind takes comfort in the idea that evil was defeated. But it was something of a Pyrrhic victory. Lucifer was not expelled alone. Angels were expelled. Collateral damage: familiar faces gone; spaces now left empty. “Their loss was felt in heaven.” And from that space outside the divine, the seeming abyss outside of heaven, the fallen were witness to creation, humanity, sin, human heartache, tribulations, broken dreams, losses, hope rebuilt, belief, the cross.

Today we keep living in pages of this story that began so long ago. A tragic *Bildungsroman*, an origin story for humanity, except for the insurmountable grace of God, which still fuels the journey home: the grace, miracles, blessings, hope, forgiveness, promises kept and coming—everything we need to see the story through to its denouement.

But the directional stability of our journey, that point of safe return, is complex. Why? The struggle against the unknown, unexpected, is often unrecognizable, yet very real and very present in our lives: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12). We are surrounded by the constant catalyst of doubt.

While the eschaton, in the divine plan for rescuing humanity, unfolds, we continue to be part of a story we *know* the ending to. As active parti-

cipants in this conflict, our daily struggles, victories, and losses are all sketched on pages, carefully written on, pages filled with text, pages turned, pages wiped clean. Still, even with the knowledge of how the story ends, humanity grapples with a variable that challenges the time and effort given to our individual character formation: freewill. Freewill coupled with doubt—and fear—is dangerous.

The Bible is filled with promises and encouragement for us to actively lose our fear, never doubt, pray for wisdom. The choices we make determine our place in this cosmic narrative. Our choices and actions affect others.

My experiential learning has taught me there is wisdom and empathy in assessing wreckage. You often end up asking: *What would I have done differently in the same situation?* Can we assess the wreckage of the war in heaven and choose to move forward, past the point of safe return to a point of safe harbor in benevolence, not hubris?

THE STORY OF LIFE

In the middle of the storm, the lighthouse failed to do the one job it was created for.

This was not a storm “unlike any other.” It was a squall, off the coast far enough for the captain to assess and maneuver the boat; far enough for nonseafaring individuals (such as myself) to panic.

After an academic conference, I join several of my peers (now tourists) on a journey to Roman Rock Lighthouse, off the coast in South Africa, Simon’s Town. The lighthouse was built on a single rock in the middle of the ocean. Indeed, an impressive lighthouse, but also a poetic image.

The trip past the coast was not meant to be eventful, just beautiful. Unique. The ocean pristine. As we move farther away from the coastline, conversations end, silence falls among us, as we

are swallowed into the scenic beauty of the sunlight glistening on the ocean, open space and a coastline getting smaller.

In a moment of brazen bravery, I venture to the upstairs viewing deck of the boat, feel the wind, see the waves crashing against the lighthouse, giving a glimpse of the great rock, the foundation of the lighthouse. It is magnificent! I feel the mist of waves on my face (or are those tears?) as I look ahead to where the ocean and the sky meet. Speechless.

Then I see it. Dark clouds. *Where have they come from?* I look at the coast we have left as the wind stirs and feels different, moving faster between everything and everyone. The captain, steady on his feet, leads us below and checks our life vests as the wind picks up speed. The design of the boat allows us to view the captain steering calmly but steady through tall waves. A two-man crew listens to his commands and execute orders immediately.

In tight quarters, six tourists from entirely different parts of the world sit quietly watching frothy waves roll past the boat. We move forward, making calculated turns. All crew members help the captain keep the directional stability of the vessel constant. I peek through the windows. The captain is steering the boat *into* the squall. Counterintuitively, the captain *engages* the wind, preserving the fuel by working within the peripheral effects of the squall. *He knows the territory. He knows where the real danger is below the waves. He is aware of the point of safe return.*

In the small space below, facing our own tolerance for uncertainty, common human emotions spill out: doubt, condemnation, hubris, fear. There is a question of capable governance of the boat. As we observe the scenery gone wrong, three of my colleagues speak up and say what usually is shared in small whispers to the wind itself:

"The captain should've warned us there could be a squall! He wanted the fee and is not invested in us."

"We are scholars, not average tourists! I have some nautical training. History is littered with stories of ocean wrecks by a captain like this one!"

"Lighthouses mark dangerous coastlines, hazardous reefs, rocks and safe entries to harbors, or they used to. This one is useless! He will probably run us into the rock we came to see!"

I observe those who remain quiet, rolling their eyes at the commentary. Me? I am praying, watching. As the captain steers us into the squall, the boat

cuts through the waves like a knife, using wind to propel us; adequate modifications to keep us safe.

We move forward trusting the experience of our captain, potentially traveling outside the margins of a safe perimeter, avoiding jagged rocks and reefs *he* is aware of. There is a stream of calm in the middle of the squall: the captain's grace. It isn't academia we need; it is intuition. It isn't extraordinary research in nautical travel we need; it is the memory of the terrain by a seasoned traveler.

As quickly as the squall arrived, it disappears. The cloudy skies no longer a threat, the captain invites us to step back outside and view the lighthouse, the rock it is built on is visible and impressive. I look at the fragmented group. Only three of us have returned to deck, while three remain below. The captain walks among us, nods, and when I thank him, he shakes his head.

"Story of life: calm passage, sudden chaos. Ocean of life no different," he says, pointing at colleagues below deck. "Never be a squall in another's life. Can't travel alone, so don't judge travelers ahead." He shakes his head. "You can't change the wind, so adjust your sails. Story of life."

THE DENOUEMENT

As we travel farther away from the memory of Eden, our need for justice increases, because in this story experiential learning becomes increasingly difficult. For humanity, the point of safe return was determined at the cross by the most benevolent act of all: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The unknown, unexpected, the unrecognizable, are all experiences that remain in the shadow of the cross. They have been conquered before we even try to engage in them. What is left for us are choices. The point of safe return is outside the margins of human accomplishments; in God's hand.

Even with a constant catalyst, there remains a necessity to shape our character to recognize the risks, wind, lack of spiritual fuel, wisdom to travel in chaos, empathy to recognize past wreckages of others and of our own! Pray to journey in wisdom but assert unquestionable faith to move forward in unknown distance. For now, the story continues. ▀

* Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), p. 19.

Dixil Rodríguez writes from Ohio.



HUMILITY IN LEADERSHIP

*What's a leader
without followers?*

Humility is defined as having or showing a modest or low estimate of one's own importance. It means that a person may have accomplished a lot, or have a lot, but doesn't feel it necessary to advertise or brag about it.

Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, was walking in an exclusive section of town when a wealthy White woman stopped him. Not knowing Mr. Washington by sight, the woman asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore. He then carried the wood into the house and stacked it by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see

Washington in his office at the institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend."

WE KNOW IT WHEN WE SEE IT

Humility is when we can, but choose not to; when we are, yet do not advertise it; when we can be listed, but are not. It is when we are educated, rich, in a high position in society—when everyone wants our signature—yet we don't make a big thing out of our success.

Jesus warned people to watch out for the church leaders of His time. "They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at the banquets" (Mark 12:38, 39).

Yet humility was so important that Jesus gave this counsel: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. . . . But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 14:8-11).

Humility is one of the qualities evident in those God called to be leaders. When God called Moses, Moses' feeling about himself was that of inadequacy (Ex. 3:11). After a demonstration

of some miracles aimed at convincing Moses that God would enable him to succeed, Moses simply said, “I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Ex. 4:10). God made one more attempt by assuring Moses that since God made man’s mouth, He would be able to help him. To this Moses responded, “Please send someone else” (verse 13). Scripture later described Moses as “a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3).

When Israel asked for a king, God consented to their request and chose Saul. When God sent Samuel to anoint a Saul as king, Saul’s response was “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?” (1 Sam. 9:21). On the day of his installation as leader, he wouldn’t even appear in public; he couldn’t be found. The Lord said, “Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies” (1 Sam. 10:22). The same feelings of inadequacy when called to leadership are what we find in Solomon and Jeremiah. They both said essentially, “I am only a child” (see 1 Kings 3:7; Jer. 1:6).

Lack of humility in leadership has caused the downfall of many. Kings Saul and Uzziah are examples (1 Sam. 15:17; 2 Chron. 26:10-15). No wonder the Bible says, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom” (Prov. 11:2).

HUMBLE, LIKE JESUS

The apostle Paul urged the believers in Philippi to have the “same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). He then explains: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (verses 6-8).

Here are three lessons from this passage:

First, it is not human or natural to consider others better than ourselves. During church elections many candidates think of themselves as superior or more qualified than others.

Second, humble leaders consider not only their

own interests, but also the interests of others.

Third, if Jesus, who was in nature God, could stoop down, then humble leaders should dedicate themselves to emulating Jesus.

Being humble, though, does not mean being weak, soft, or quiet. Jesus was not weak (see John 2:13-16; Luke 13:32, 33).

THE UNDERGIRDING PRINCIPLE

True humility is undergirded by the realization that “every good and perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). This is the attitude Nehemiah had when he said, “The God of heaven will give us success” (Neh. 2:20).

It was the same attitude that Daniel and Joseph had when they responded to kings with these words: “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (Dan. 2:27, 28). “I cannot do it, . . . but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires” (Gen. 41:16). Both leaders chose to speak of their wisdom as derived from God and not from self.

Those credited with great leadership in the Bible have very little to praise about themselves. While addressing God, Abraham said of himself, “I am nothing but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). Paul spoke about himself as “the least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:9), as “less than the least of all the Lord’s people” (Eph. 3:8). David, when he could have killed Saul, spared Saul’s life, referring to himself as a “dead dog,” a “flea” (1 Sam. 24:14).

HUMILITY IN PRACTICE

Humble leaders don’t lose any of their status or influence by being the friends of those who report to them. Presidents do not cease being such because they mingle with people on other rungs of society’s ladders, or at different levels on the institution’s totem pole. A chief administrator is still that if they are found helping with duties sometimes called menial. No college president steps down in status by riding in a bus with students or eating in the student cafeteria. Leaders do not have to keep people waiting outside their offices unnecessarily just to make themselves feel more important.

Great leaders are humble, remain humble, and finish humble. ▀

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GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

Humility in a crisis

Some of the most popular shows on North American TV are referred to as “reality TV.” In many of these programs, groups of people are put under difficult and extreme conditions to reveal the “survivors.” Contestants are encouraged to plot and scheme to “survive” to the next level. At intervals, group members could be voted out of the group. One of these programs popularized the phrase “You’re fired!” Those not expelled or tossed to the side seldom seemed to have any concern or empathy for those who were shown the exit.

These programs seemed to encourage bombastic, aggressively plotting, egotistical extro-

verts who lacked even a gram of humility. The dominant framework most often showcased was the person who ruthlessly and aggressively looks out for number one. Don’t expect to see a biblical model of servant leadership in most contestants.

CREDIBLE LEADERSHIP

Over my career I have held various technical, management, and leadership positions. I have worked for and with a wide range of leaders and staff. I have had an interest in organizational behavior, how people work, think, and behave in an organization that makes the organization stronger or weaker. Study after study concludes that servant leaders have broader spheres of influence, earn more loyalty, attract better talent, and are more respected than leaders who rely mostly on shameless bravado.

A quick illustration: In this information age, information is power. Some leaders hoard it, and those who need access to that information often have to plead for a slice. Other leaders freely share the information and knowledge they hold with those around them. I appreciate the latter. Humble leaders understand that sharing information builds stronger relationships and long-term success.

This should not be a surprise to followers of Christ. Scripture abounds in examples, illustrations, and words of guidance about humility, from kings and prophets to individuals whose names are unrecorded.

Micah 6:8 has been my go-to verse in talking about what the Lord expects and requires of His followers in meeting the needs

of suffering humanity. I've often focused on the first part—"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy." That bias grew out of 30 years of working with Adventist Development and Relief Agency and being exposed to serious disasters.

More recently, I have given more thought to the phrase "and to walk humbly with your God." The grammar gives these three phrases equal authority. They are not in order from more important to less important. They are of equal importance.

In recent weeks the world has been challenged by gross injustices and brutality that lack any hint of kindness. Micah says that we can only walk humbly with God when we have hearts brimming with compassion and humility that seek to understand and right injustice.

Jesus said, "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

He drove the concept further: "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Sadly, the words "humble" and "humility" have sister words that exude negativity: "humiliate" and "humiliation." Humility, however, contains many qualities: kindness, generosity, compassion, patience, and respect. A huge part of humility is an ability to consider with compassion the feelings and needs of others. This is often an unnatural human inclination. An environment and atmosphere of teamwork and cooperation is important for nurturing compassion and empathy in those who look up to us.

Do you remember your first job, your first day in a new workplace? The setting where you feel you have little to back you up, as you want to fit in, not make any mistakes, leave a positive impression? There's no such thing as arrogance on the first day of new job. "Servant" by definition suggests humility.

STEPS TO SERVE

The past few months have left many people feeling powerless, anxious, fearful, even angry. Lives have been upended by COVID, violence, and the aftermath they have produced. It's doubtful that many things will ever return to "normal." What then are some useful actions to consider as we serve with humility in this new situation?

Do not ignore anxiety. Anxiety can "freeze" us

The past few months have left many people feeling powerless, anxious, fearful, even angry.

and keep us from seeing opportunities and acting on them. Talk and pray with someone to rebuild trust and faith.

The unknown can paralyze. Most people crave facts and accurate information. Uncertainty is often more harmful than bad news.

A crisis can be a unifying force. Servant leaders are better equipped to engage, to review, to understand, and to act, not as heroes but as servants.

Do not focus on what's lost. I attend Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland. I miss our Sligo worship services and my Sabbath School class during this time of self-isolation. But I'm thankful that our Sabbath School has gone online and has tripled in the number of participants; our worship service has doubled. Clearly, there is a "new normal," some of which needs to be retained even when Sligo church's doors reopen.

Don't let isolation take root. Keep up contact. Voice is best, but even an "I thought of you this morning" e-mail is appreciated and gives a feeling of belonging. Persons in isolation may have rather boring days; you might have to do most of the talking.

Most mornings at the Community Services center I lead a short devotion for staff and volunteers. Almost every day the one who prays asks God to help us to be honest in all our dealings, to be fair, and, most important, to be kind. We remind ourselves that everyone who walks through the door—to ask for food to feed their family, for clothing, for a bar of soap—is not having a good day. Their day started with worry, anxiety, and possibly frustration. We, as humble servants, must hear and share with His children what our Lord knows they each need to hear.

This happens only when the Spirit fills each of us with a servant's heart.

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HUMILITY IN FOLLOWERSHIP

I work for God!

JOHNETTA B. FLOMO

Rex Gatto, president of Gatto Associates, LLC, defines followership as the willingness to cooperate in accomplishing defined goals while demonstrating a high degree of interactive teamwork. According to Gatto: “Effective followers are active participants [partners] in creating the leadership process. Followers permit leaders to establish and keep themselves in control of a situation that is productive, efficient, and people-oriented.”¹

I’m a Christian, and Jesus is my leader. When He began His ministry, He called Peter, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee to follow Him. Later, Jesus grouped His followers into twos—first the 12 disciples and later the 70—and sent them out to be His witnesses and to share His teachings. Like them, we, too, have been chosen and called to follow Christ.

At age 13, I accepted the call to become a follower of God. I was baptized and joined the Better Living Seventh-day Adventist Church plant in Monrovia, Liberia—a church that went on to “birth”

more than 12 other church plants. At age 16, I was awarded an intercultural academic scholarship to travel to the United States to complete my final year of high school. My local church pastor gave me, as a parting gift, a book titled *Who Am I? A Christian Guide to Meaning and Identity*, by Skip MacCarty. My pastor wanted to ensure that I didn’t lose my identity as a child of God in a “den of wolves.”

The words of the book molded my mind and helped me to understand who I am: a person created in the image of the Lord; and whose I am: a child of God. It brought me great joy, knowing that “the meaning of my life is in the potential I have through my individuality, to image uniquely the truth about God, and to share uniquely in His mission of peace. Thus, in my whole being, and throughout my entire life, in the development of my character and my labors of love for others, I can be glorifying Him. This is the purpose of my existence.”²

Christ expects every believer to allow the Holy Spirit to work



through them to produce disciples. Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit” (John 15:16). Christ never said, “Occupy the pews”; rather, He said to tell others of Him, that He loves them, that He died for them, and that He’s coming soon.

PREPARATION FOR MISSION

A few years after graduate school, I began working for Global Mission in what was then the Africa-Indian Ocean Division. I was responsible for identifying churches that needed help funding their church building projects. These responsibilities intensified my desire for mission and made me yearn to do more for my country of origin, Liberia.

One Sabbath afternoon, after singing the words to the hymn “Hark! the Voice of Jesus Calling,”³ a few friends, my husband, my mother, and I met to discuss how we could “be like faithful Aaron, holding up the prophet’s hands” in the Liberia Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. We discussed the formation of a nonprofit organization, the North America Liberia Adventist Association (NALAA),⁴ that my husband, John, and I have now been leading for almost 14 years. NALAA serves as an extended and supportive arm of Seventh-day Adventist churches in Liberia.

CREATED FOR HIS GLORY

As followers of Christ, we’re reminded that “God created man for His glory and called him by His own name. His name is the expression of His holy character and saving mission. And those who are called by God’s name are to reflect His character and share in His mission. In doing this, they glorify Him, which is the purpose of human existence.”⁵ We must be mission-driven, willing to work toward the accomplishment of God’s mission wherever we are. We have excellent opportunities to be a blessing to others.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord led our organization to conduct an evangelistic series in Liberia that resulted in 75 people giving their lives to Christ. We established a church in rural Liberia in the Borkeza district of Lofa County.

NALAA built a church that seats about 150 members, renovated several churches, provided pews for needy congregations, and established a scholarship program. As an organization, we’ve sponsored more than 60 students in Liberia.

Followers must consider themselves as those who serve rather than waiting to be served.

FOLLOWING WHERE HE LEADS

For several years now, we’ve had opportunities to serve local churches within driving distance of our home. The Lord led John and me to support the members of the Abundant Life Seventh-day Adventist Church and establish a church plant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For three years we commuted nearly every Sabbath from Baltimore, Maryland, leaving at 6:30 a.m. in order to arrive in time for Sabbath School. We had a 3-year-old at the time, and I was pregnant with my last child. Today, the Abundant Life Seventh-day Adventist Church has been reorganized into the Pilgrims Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Pennsylvania Conference.

In May 2019, my husband and I were impressed to leave our local church to support members who wanted to plant churches through outreach. Today, we’re excited to work in the Randallstown area of Baltimore as members of the Salt Adventist Group. Our goal is to open a Hope Life Center where people can experience the love of Jesus.

NOT WITHOUT TRIALS

Followership comes with trials. Tensions among members can result in distractions that hinder the work. Personal attacks and criticisms can cause frustration and discouragement. But one must be committed to doing the work of their leader, and we must rely on God to keep us steadfast in His grace.

“Our creation in God’s image suggests further that we will never know what it truly means to be human until we attain knowledge of Him in whose image we are created.”⁶ Thus, I’m “confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

May we be encouraged to be followers of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. 🍀

¹ Rex Gatto, “What Is Followership,” www.youtube.com/watch?v=eprx5C99blk.

² Skip MacCarty, *Who Am I? A Christian Guide to Meaning and Identity* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1979), p. 146.

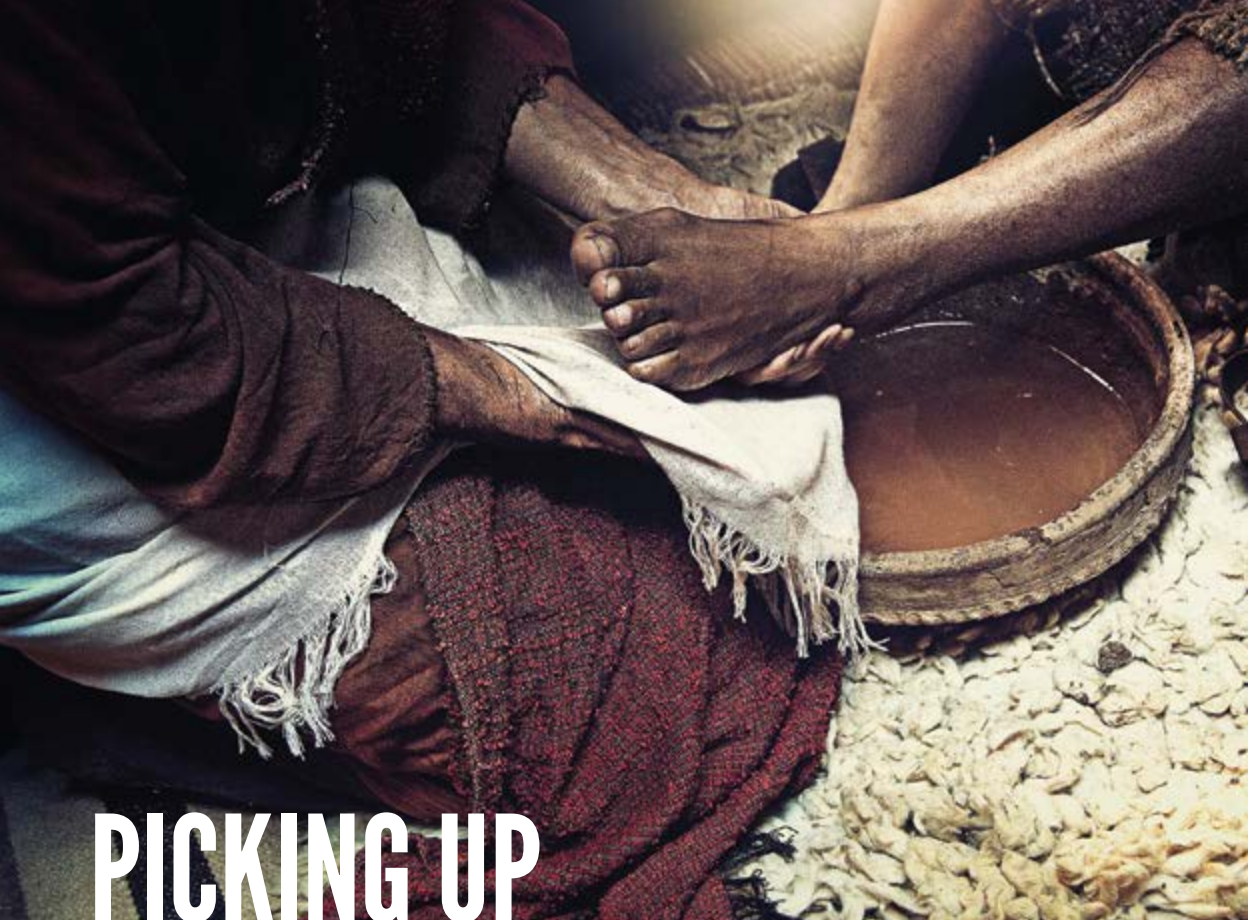
³ “Hark! the Voice of Jesus Calling,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), no. 359.

⁴ Visit www.nalaasda.org to learn more about NALAA.

⁵ MacCarty, p. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

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PICKING UP THE BASIN AND THE TOWEL

Have you ever tried not to think about something? Try it. For the next minute, try not to think about your favorite food, what the weather is like—anything—but about a large hairy pink elephant. After reading this, try not to think about the large hairy pink elephant at all. Difficult? In psychology, this phenomenon is known as the ironic process theory.¹ As soon as you try not to focus on something, it becomes impossible not to.

Humility is a strange animal. It doesn't boast; it seldom shouts; it naturally avoids the spotlight; it never self-promotes—yet most of us feel mysteriously drawn to a humble person. But as soon as we try to focus on humility it seems to disappear.

Pride sits on the opposite end of the spectrum—and Scripture has nothing good to say about it. God hates pride (Prov. 8:13), for it lies at the heart of the rebellion that transformed a perfect universe into the battle zone of a cosmic controversy.

The Bible tells us that ambition and pride were the underlying motives leading to Lucifer's fall, aptly described in Isaiah's oracle depicting the fall of the king of Babylon (Isa. 14). The highly evocative language of the passage suggests that Isaiah's prophetic vision went beyond historical events to metaphysical realities, pointing back to the fall of a created celestial being that coveted God's authority and wanted to be like God.² "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,

BY GERALD A. KLINGBEIL



**Slaves
washing feet
could be
ignored.**

**Jesus
washing feet
cannot be
ignored.**

I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14, NKJV).³ Pride and self-exaltation caused Lucifer, the son of the morning, to rebel against His Creator.

This article, however, is not about pride, but humility, even though both opposite attitudes sharpen each other’s contours. English author C. S. Lewis describes this “crossover” in his *Screwtape Letters*, the imaginary and eloquent advice given by a supervising devil, called Screwtape, to his nephew Wormwood, guiding him in his destructive work with a human upon whom young Wormwood focuses his devilish attention: “Catch him at the moment when he is really poor in spirit and smuggle into his mind the gratifying reflection, . . . ‘I’m being humble,’ and almost immediately pride—pride at his own humility—will appear.”⁴

ONE MOMENT IN TIME

Few events in the life of Jesus speak so eloquently to the character of our Savior as the moment when He stooped down, picked up a basin and a towel, and washed His disciples’ feet. This demeaning task was usually done by slaves. It wasn’t a symbolic wetting or a gentle rub. Following a day of walking

on dusty and dirty roads, the disciples’ feet needed a proper washing. The rabbis tell us that touching feet was regarded as menial slave work and was usually assigned to Gentile slaves or women.⁵

Intriguingly, John’s is the only Gospel that includes this story in his account of the Passion narrative (John 13:1-17). Did John see something that escaped the attention of the other disciples? Did the enormity of Jesus’ action impress his youthful mind, leaving an ineradicable mark?

Let’s try, for just a moment, to travel back about 2,000 years and join Jesus and His disciples as they shared a last supper prior to His arrest. Jesus had preached and healed and taught for more than three years. He knew (see verse 3) what awaited Him and had told His disciples repeatedly that His death and resurrection were part of the divine plan.

Now, however, He takes off His outer garments, picks up a towel, pours water into a basin, and begins to wash the feet of His disciples. Slaves washing feet could be ignored. Jesus washing feet cannot be ignored.

Simon Peter’s reaction seems to be exemplary for the larger group: “Lord, are *You* washing my feet?” This question requires translation, for we struggle to hear the tone in the written Word. Peter is really saying, *How can You, my Rabbi, my Master, my Hero, my Messiah, kneel before me and wash my filthy feet* (verse 6)? Peter is confused. Jesus, kneeling before him and scrubbing his feet, doesn’t make sense.

Jesus’ gentle answer recognizes the incongruity of the situation. In spite of His best efforts, there were many things the disciples hadn’t yet understood. But, like prophecy, they would better understand them when they saw them in the rearview mirror.

Peter still did not understand. His answer, “You shall never wash my feet” (verse 8), only considered the arguably important categories of honor and shame. Jesus changes the tone. He is now in executive mode. “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (verse 8, NKJV). It’s either all or nothing.

Following a familiar pattern, Peter finally appears to get it, for he wants to be scrubbed all over. “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,” he says enthusiastically (verse 9, NKJV). But that’s not what Jesus means. His focus is not on cleanliness. Jesus’ response aims at changing mindsets. He knows about the one who had already sold the Master to the highest bidder (verse 11). He knows what awaits His disciples in the near future. He

knows that atonement requires a sacrifice.

“Do you know what I have done to you?” asks Jesus once He has finished washing the feet of His disciples (verse 12, NKJV).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

That’s a good question. Do we know, as we participate in the service of humility? Have we made space for humility in our hearts? Are we willing to kneel, metaphorically and in real life, before the people in our lives and wash their feet—even when there is tension and strife and conflict?

Here are four possible implications for the mindset of Jesus to become more visible in our families and faith communities.

1 The basin and the towel challenge us to recognize that we are part of a community of equals. Jesus (and later Paul, cf. Gal. 3:28) never made distinctions based on gender, race, educational level, or the size of our offering. Paul invites us in Philippians 2:5-8 to imitate the mindset of Jesus. He chose to serve. He chose to become one without a shining reputation. He chose to become one with us. Humble Jesus challenges us to humble our hearts and serve one another unreservedly.

2 True leadership is not a matter of power. It’s also not a question of strategy or careful calculation. Biblical leadership calls us to serve—not to determine or direct. Like Jesus, we are called to lead humbly and tread carefully. Too many leaders invest themselves completely into their task. That sounds like a wonderful idea. It smells and tastes like sacrifice and commitment. While God wants clear commitment, He wants even more: full surrender. Less of me and more of Jesus reduces the potential for conflict, for hurt egos, and competing personalities. As a leader in God’s church, am I willing to trust God to get it right—even without my giving Him a helping hand by pulling strings in the background?

3 What do the basin and the towel tell us about the structure and processes of our faith community? Is humility relevant when we consider administrative structures, leadership elections, or policy decisions? How can we incorporate the value of humility practically into our councils and committees? How can we go beyond words and practice the mindset of Jesus in contexts in which

we may not all share the same opinion? These questions challenge all leaders to their core. Structure is seldom neutral; structure has often grown organically, and growth can be painful. Humility in our reflection about structure helps us to overcome the sometimes limiting shape of tradition.

4 Finally, how do humility and the example modeled by Jesus inform our thinking about mission? Too often we consider mission as “our task”—and it surely is. Jesus’ command to “make disciples” in Matthew 28:19 is directed to His church. He challenges His followers to leave their comfort zones and engage with a world whose values are often (though not always!) diametrically opposed to God’s values.

A biblical understanding of mission, however, begins with the realization that our mission is, first and foremost, God’s mission. A wise and seasoned administrator of an Adventist institution told me some years ago that “institutions have no memory.” He wanted to tell me that while we are committed to give our best to join in God’s mission, we need to recognize that we are not the lynchpin of His mission. God doesn’t *need* me to make a difference in the 10/40 window, but He invites me to join Him in this effort. A sense of our “humble mission” will, in fact, offer us some new breathing space and freedom.

Rather than trying our best not to think about large hairy pink elephants, we will need to get busy with something else that will move the focus of our thoughts. Will we ever know that we are truly humble? Probably not, for we will be too busy carrying basins and towels with Jesus as we serve side by side. 🦄

¹ Jamie Dana, “Don’t Think of a Pink Elephant,” online at elevatecounselingaz.com/dont-think-of-a-pink-elephant/.

² The doctoral dissertation of José Maria Bertoluci, “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy Between Good and Evil” (Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1985), offers strong evidence that the language used in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 transcends the earthly realm and points to a much larger context, i.e., the beginning of the cosmic conflict.

³ Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Collier Books, 1982), p. 63.

⁵ See Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, *New American Commentary* 25B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), p. 79, note 22, for a number of relevant references.

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Child Impact International is a supportive ministry of the Adventist church that takes children based on need and educates them in an Adventist mission school.

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OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

*One tiny pill
taught a big lesson.*



She was just 4. My daughter had an ear infection, or something that needed medication. We'd just returned from the pharmacy with the prescription. The pediatrician had asked if my daughter could take pills. While she'd never done it before, I answered, "Sure, why not?" I mean, how hard could it be?

The time came for her to take the small pill. We stood in the kitchen, me on my knees in front of her small face. She listened carefully as I described exactly what she was to do.

"Put the medicine way back on your tongue—as far as you can reach. Then drink the water." I handed her the cup of water as I gave the directions. My husband and her sister gathered around to watch. This was going to be a momentous achievement! We were ready to high-five and congratulate her on how grown-up she was.

In went the pill. Up went the cup. In went the water. And just as fast, out it came as she spit the entire contents of her mouth directly into my face.

Shocked, I stood up quickly and reacted even more quickly. "No! You're supposed to swallow the water with the pill!"

Heavy sigh. I hadn't added that part to the instructions. My fault. I'll be clearer. So, again kneeling in front of her, I addressed the solemn little face with the large watchful eyes. This time I was careful to add, "And swallow the water with the pill."

In went the pill. Up went the cup. In went the water. And out it came, full barrel right in my face. This time I wasn't as sanguine. I'm sure I raised my voice a notch, reemphasized the directions, and delivered a new pill.

In went the pill. Up went the cup. In went the water. And for a third time, I was completely soaked. You'd have thought I had learned that kneeling in

I knew that if I didn't leave the room, I might do something I would really regret.

front of her wasn't the wisest choice. But I had not. Unfortunately, my anger peaked. I yelled something at her and literally stomped out of the room, down the hall, to my bedroom where I slammed the door. It wasn't my best moment. But I knew that if I didn't leave the room, I might do something I would really regret. I don't remember the rest of the evening, but the medicine obviously didn't get taken. One thing I do remember: I did not apologize.

I walked into the kitchen the next morning to see the pill bottle sitting on the counter. I realized that we were going to have to do it all over again. That's when I heard a happy voice behind me. "Hi, Mommy!" My daughter emerged around the corner, carrying our large umbrella from the hall closet, just about as big as she was. "I'm ready to take my pill. I thought you might need this," she said, smiling.

I can't tell you how small I felt that morning. I was the adult, the one who should have the most understanding, with the best ability to sort through problem situations. In my superior attitude I had lost my temper, demonstrating in the process the worst possible example to a child. In turn, she came in complete forgiveness, a smile lighting up her eyes, bringing something that would help me in the situation. I've never been more humbled. Nor have I ever forgotten that moment. I dropped to my knees, embraced her, apologized, then called the doctor. We would need a new prescription—liquid this time, please.

"And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt. 18:3). ♣

Merle Poirier is operations manager for Adventist Review Ministries.

The virtue of humility may be in decline. How many cite Jesus' beatitude "Blessed are the meek" (Matt. 5:5) as the secret to their prosperity, celebrity status, or professional success? Yet humility is a major value for the Bible's God, as known from His Son, who spoke that beatitude. We spoke to three young adults about how they see the role of humility in our church and society.

Our three participants are Alex Ajayi, former director of Adventist Christian Fellowship, a student group that meets at Johns Hopkins University; Ebenezer Armah, who recently received his master's degree in biomedical engineering at Johns Hopkins University; and Jessica Flores, an elementary school teacher with a passion for education and human rights.—Editors.

What do you think of when you hear the word "humility"?

AA: My mind goes immediately to Communion and foot washing. It may seem like an archaic ritual, but to me it's a powerful object lesson. It's impossible to wash somebody else's feet while harboring self-serving thoughts. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing.

EA: I think of humility as a way of life in which one does not believe that he or she is inherently better than others.

JF: I instantly think of someone being selfless, and the example that comes to mind is Jesus. He, the Creator of the universe and giver of life, came to earth to be human and serve those who were not on the same level or status that He was. He washed His disciples' feet and took the cross, even though He didn't have to. These examples remind me that humility is understanding how small we humans are, and how big our God is.

What do you think Jesus had in mind when He said, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5)?

EA: Only those who have a humble heart will make it to the earth made new. The Christian walk requires us to look beyond ourselves and see the world in the context of God. In God's eyes no one is better than others. What makes a difference is the relationship built with the Savior.

People with proud hearts usually think they made it because they have better traits than others. With this mindset, accepting the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb is impossible. And without the acceptance of the atoning sacrifice of God, one cannot experience the earth made new.

AA: Common sense would tell us that the strong, or those



INHERIT THE EARTH

*Meekness and humility
in today's society*

who are aggressive, inherit the earth. Jesus refutes that, and instead tells us to put ourselves after others and after Christ, letting Him fight our battles when they must be fought. Christianity didn't spread because it put people to the sword (though many died in its name), but because of the power of meekness.

JF: I think of meekness as being submissive to one another and to God. In this verse Jesus is highlighting how important it is to be submissive to one another out of love, but also how to be submissive to God.

We humans tend to think of submission as a bad thing, as something that's wrong. But in terms of our spiritual walk with God, submission is good. Submission to God means that we yield to His will for our lives and submit to God because His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Submitting to God means we trust that our lives are filled with stepping-stones, molding us into the persons we need to be so that we can live a purposeful life.

How much is humility valued in today's society? Give an example or two.

EA: Humility is not valued. Growing up, we are bombarded with stories of people who reached the pinnacles of achievement. In sports, only those who score the highest number of points are recognized. Recognition is not usually given to the players who supported and assisted on the field. In academia, only the ones with the highest GPAs are recognized. In business, people with the highest salaries are recognized. In politics, and even in the church, much attention is given to eloquence and the one with the highest number of followers/church members. The lack of recognition for normal (average) persons leads people to see humility as weakness.

AA: I think society pays lip service to humility, but naturally rewards egotism. Celebrities who are seen as humble are fawned over, and politicians in the U.S. are expected to adopt an everyman persona. But it's difficult to become either without an incredible amount of schmoozing. Ecclesiastes 3 says that there's a time for everything, and I think that



includes self-promotion. The challenge for Christians is to do so while maintaining a humble heart.

JF: I think our society has moved toward a more selfish approach, especially in work. We hear of stories of people trying to get promoted no matter whom they have to step on in order to get there. We see how unethical practices are used in major corporations and Federal agencies.

Was Jesus humble? Yes or no? If so, in what ways did He demonstrate humility?

AA: Is this the question you use to weed out people from appearing in the *Review*? I'm afraid that if I say no, one of my relatives will smack me for blaspheming.

In all seriousness, yes, He very much was. The way He operated was quite unorthodox for a rabbi, and He conducted His ministry without much of the pomp and circumstance that would usually have been expected from someone in His position. Even His beginnings were humble. He was born in a shed and raised in Nazareth, of all places. As someone who also grew up in a small agricultural town, this gives me some hope.

JF: Jesus demonstrated His humility by giving His life for all of us, even though we may or may not choose Him.

EA: Jesus was very humble; Philippians 2 demonstrates that. He was in His very nature God, but He did not see it as something to hold on to, especially if it got in the way of saving humanity. God could not die; Jesus had to become human in order to save us. We, the objects of His love, rejected Him when He was here on earth, and He still went on to die. That's true humility.

What about other Bible characters? For whom was humility a defining characteristic? How was it demonstrated?

JF: Paul was humble. When you look at his early life, you see how he studied under these great teachers. He left his position and status to do God's work.

AA: One of the things I love about the Bible is how every biblical character either starts out with an understanding of humility, or is forced to eat a huge slice of humble pie. Whether it's Paul being struck blind on the road to Damascus, or David losing his infant son, anybody with an outsized ego has to be put in place before God can use them.

EA: Joseph in his dealings with his brothers

portrayed humility. Abigail in her dealings with David on behalf of her husband, Nabal, showed real humility.

But permit me to talk about a character who is the defining characteristic of what it means not to be humble. The story of Joash portrays the opposite of humility (2 Kings 11, 12). Having been saved miraculously from the hands of Athaliah, he went on to think he was special and ended up killing the son of the priest who helped to save him. We are who we are through the miraculous hand of God. When we begin to think that we are better than others, the slippery slope begins.

How is humility in today's social context (poverty, racism, gender inequality, etc.) a useful tool in fixing society's problems?

JF: Humility comes with a mindset of selflessness. That's what Jesus was trying to teach us throughout His ministry. If we truly cared about one another the way God intended, there wouldn't be poverty, because we'd be willing to feed hungry individuals and take in those who are homeless. If we were selfless, we would treat others the way we would want to be treated. The only thing that matters is living as God calls us to live.

EA: Humility can fix today's problems by orienting people to the fact that we are the same, created by God with a common destiny. Most of the strife and unrest is a result of certain people thinking themselves better than others. Humility would make people more empathetic.

AA: America today is ruled by selfishness. Individualism and freedom of choice are essential tenets of Christianity, but they are meant to be tempered by love and compassion. When we take Christ's principles out of the equation and replace them with shallow pop-culture morality, individualism turns into an excuse for narcissism and cruelty.

The good news is that Christ offers another way. We may live in this society, but we don't have to become products of it. When Jesus came to this earth, many of His followers expected Him to lead them to victory over their oppressors. But rather than take up the cause that the world laid out for Him, Jesus acted on His persecutors' behalf, praying for them and redeeming those society considered irredeemable. His way is ultimately more beautiful than anything this world has to offer. ♣

UNITY, OR WAR?

Unity: The state of being one or joined as a whole.”

I first saw this billboard on Route 741 near my office just outside Dayton, Ohio. There was no corporate logo, just white text and a black background.

I chuckled when I saw the image. Not in a laugh-out-loud way, more like a shake-your-head-because-the-irony-is-thick way. This year is perhaps the most *disunified* our country has been in years, and this 14- by 48-foot vinyl wrap felt like an attempt to bail water from the Titanic with a measuring spoon.

As I read it, I pondered how Christians should prioritize unity, particularly in times of chaos.

Let’s start with a key premise: God is not the author of strife or disunity. The Bible says, “War broke out in heaven” (Rev. 12:7), started by a prideful angel who didn’t want to be like God in character, but like God Himself (see Isa. 14; Ezek. 28).

After losing this first war, the angel-turned-demon brought the battle to our newly created earth, where Creator and creation were in perfect harmony; that is, until people were deceived by the satanic serpent. The same divide that took place in heaven had come to earth and has existed ever since.

As clearly as we know the beginning, we also know the end: “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev. 21:3).

God never intended anything other than perfect relational unity; and one day soon He will restore it forever.

So the question is, what happens in between?

SOMETIMES WE NEED A SWORD

The message that attended Jesus’ first coming revealed His intent to begin cleaning up what was broken in Eden. This was relayed in the angels’ proclamation to the shepherds, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth *peace*” (Luke 2:14).

Yet, Jesus Himself seemed to contradict this message of peace and unity, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34).

How are we to understand what seems a blatant contradiction?

Peace exists only when two opposing sides agree to unite over a set of mutually accepted terms. Until these principles are agreed on, there can be no peace.

As Christians, we must keep this at the center of our approach to unity. We can never sacrifice or compromise any aspect of the “everlasting gospel” that we have been called to take to the world simply for the sake of getting along.

Ellen White said it like this: “If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.”*

The darkest times in the history of the Western world—appropriately known as the Dark Ages—were not defined by secularism, but by a mixing of truth and error. Ironically, an image of this same power will achieve near worldwide unity. This is foretold in prophecy: “The whole earth was filled with wonder and followed the beast” (Rev. 13:3).

If we must choose between unity and truth, we must always choose the latter—no matter how clever the billboards are. 🗡️

* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911, 1950), p. 58.

Jimmy Phillips is network marketing director for Kettering Health Network.

INTRODUCING
THE WHY
JIMMY
PHILLIPS



PEACE CAN EXIST
ONLY WHEN TWO
OPPOSING SIDES
AGREE TO UNITE
OVER A SET OF
MUTUALLY
ACCEPTED TERMS.

KRYSELLE CRAIG

Bully: noun. One who is habitually cruel, insulting, or threatening to others who are weaker, smaller, or in some way vulnerable.

Do you remember your childhood bully? Mine was the boy next door. He seemed ever ready to meet my defiant ideas with pushing and the occasional kick. We didn't agree on much. I was independent and vocal, though small and quite skinny. He thought he was in charge and believed his height and more developed frame secured that position. When I dared to challenge his ill-conceived notions, he responded with rage, thinking he could subdue me with physical displays of superiority. I was glad when his family moved out of state, but it took me quite some time to understand why our

interactions were so volatile and how to address the more clandestine forms of bullying that have sought to sift me during my lifetime.

VARIATIONS ON BULLYING

The seemingly natural response of humans to bullying is a desire for justice, a restoration that balances power between parties. Today, all people live with the reality of the effects of sins, both inherited and committed. Humanity is on a never-ending quest to make right what we make wrong.

Maybe you didn't have a bully. Perhaps you were the bully. We don't often like to think of ourselves in this role, but we may fit the description on occasion.

Have you ever actively avoided someone who

HUMILITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL



just didn't fit in? What about laughing at that highly inappropriate joke? Perhaps you were embarrassed by someone and punished them with stares or silence. Maybe you take the opportunities to subtly redirect those you don't care for to other spaces so you don't have to sacrifice your comfort.

We imagine bullies to be large, aggressive figures who cause major disruptions. In reality, our unjust microaggressions can create an acerbic tone of exclusivity that corrodes the very fabric of what we were created for—relationship. Some of the most successful bullies are everyday Christians who forget that at any time Christ may visit them as the person they want to be around the least. It's likely that you've been a bully.

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matt. 25:40).

ANSWERING BULLYING

Jesus came to this world to restore the connection between us and God that was interrupted by sin. God makes every effort to connect with us, but we make Him feel unwelcome with the destructive patterns we employ to avoid confronting fear and pain. Emotional, mental, and psychological damage or entrenched hypocrisy leave us blind,* preventing individuals from being able to see who Christ is and the benefits of accepting His love.

When we don't trust God enough to receive His love, it becomes difficult to offer love to others, especially others who don't fit in with our human plans. This cycle of shutting out and shutting off love—God, that is (1 John 4:8, 16)—encourages us to place ourselves ahead of others and ahead of Him. Instead of pouring out our gratitude at the feet of Jesus, we find ourselves brandishing the terrible sword of bullying from the top down in the name of Scripture and holiness, as shown in Jesus' encounter with one woman's righteous accusers (John 8:1-11).

This is antithetical to Christ's example of humility. He gave up a heavenly throne for us to have the option to join Him. Instead, in return, He was bullied to death. But the reconciliation He offers to be children of God for all eternity shows its compelling worth as we willingly extend ourselves to others and "serve one another humbly in love" (Gal. 5:13). Giving preference to another over ourselves is a reflection of the love

of Christ (see Rom. 12:10); but it also gives us freedom from the sin of worshipping the false god of self. This is humility.

HUMILITY

Humility: noun. Freedom from pride or arrogance.

Humility helps mend many fractured interpersonal relationships by finding common ground. Sharing and understanding that which makes meaning for everyone provides a way of validating the contributions of all.

Though uncomfortable at first, open communication, authenticity, and relational intimacy demand that we confront the reality of a deep-seated truth—we are *not* always right. By facing the fact that I've been a bully, I give myself the option to choose humility now: humility enables me to stand free from pride or arrogance before others by embracing, accepting, loving, and acknowledging their worth, and that Jesus' blood has paid for our common right to humanity and a heavenly inheritance.

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10).

In our unadorned spirituality we can experience God's complete acceptance. He is always ready and waiting to forgive us no matter how many times we seek forgiveness. So why not admit that we stand in need?

Significantly, forgiveness has been understood to mean abandoning any hope of improving your past. We cannot change who we have been. But according to Acts 5:31, we can accept God's gift of repentance and forgiveness for when we have gone wrong, and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to change our behavior to resemble Christ's more closely. The scales of justice are balanced when we accept the weight of our guilt and give it to God. In exchange, He will give us a new way forward (Isa. 43:19). His new mercies every morning assure us that His love for us is constant, not measured by our past sins. His grace shows the path forward. It is the right and just path. And what does it require? Humility: "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 6:8).[♣]

* See Isa. 59:9, 10; Matt. 15:14; 23:16; Rev. 3:17.

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THE PATH OF DISCOVERY

Adventists have been blessed by the guidance and counsel of Ellen White. While her writings have been used to amplify our understanding of the Bible, some have used them as weapons to silence opposition or win arguments. The following excerpts indicate that Ellen White understood that searching for truth will always be a useful vocation.—Editors.

1889

Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's Word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussion.

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. . . . When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what. . . .

When God's people are at ease and satisfied with their present enlightenment, we may be sure that He will not favor them. It is His will that they should be ever moving forward to receive the increased and ever-increasing light which is shining on them. The present attitude of the church is not pleasing to God. There has come in a self-confidence that has led them to feel no necessity for more truth and greater light. . . . God wills that a voice shall be heard arousing His people to action.¹

1890

We do not claim that in the doctrines sought out by those who have studied the word of truth, there may not be some error, for no man that lives is infallible; but if God has sent light, we want it; and God has sent light, and let every man be careful how he treats it.²

1890

The truth of God is progressive; it is always onward, going from strength to a greater strength, from light to a greater light. We have every reason to believe that the Lord will send us increased truth, for a great work is yet to be done. . . .

Much has been lost because our ministers and people have concluded that we have had all the truth essential for us as a people; but such a conclusion is erroneous and in harmony with the deceptions of Satan; for truth will be constantly unfolding.³

*Learning from God's
Word never ends.*

ELLEN G. WHITE

1892

Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the Word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God.⁴

Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. . . . However long men may have entertained certain views, if they are not clearly sustained by the written Word, they should be discarded. Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed. . . .

We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.⁵

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.⁶

We must not for a moment think that there is no more light, no more truth, to be given us. We are in danger of becoming careless, by our indifference losing the sanctifying power of truth, and composing ourselves with the thought, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing' [Rev. 3:17.] While we must hold fast to the truths which we have already received, we must not look with suspicion upon any new light that God may send.⁷

1900

In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began "at Moses and all the prophets" and "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27. But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form.⁸

1903

If it were possible for us to attain to a full understanding of God and His Word, there would be for us no further discovery of truth, no greater knowledge, no further development. God would cease to be supreme, and man would cease to advance. Thank God, it is not so. Since God is infinite, and in Him are all the treasures of wisdom, we may to all eternity be ever searching, ever learning, yet never exhaust the riches of His wisdom, His goodness, or His power.⁹ 🍀

¹ Ellen G. White, "The Mysteries of the Bible a Proof of Its Inspiration" (1889), *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, pp. 706-709.

² Ellen G. White, "Open the Heart to Light," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Mar. 25, 1890.

³ Ellen G. White, "Candid Investigation Necessary to an Understanding of the Truth," *Signs of the Times*, May 26, 1890.

⁴ Ellen G. White, "A Promise of Increasing Light," *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1892), p. 34.

⁵ Ellen G. White, "Search the Scriptures," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 26, 1892.

⁶ Ellen G. White, "Christ Our Hope," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 20, 1892.

⁷ Ellen G. White, "The Missionary: Fragments," *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1892), p. 390.

⁸ Ellen G. White, "Things New and Old," *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), pp. 127, 128.

⁹ Ellen G. White, "Mysteries of the Bible," *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903, 1952), p. 172.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

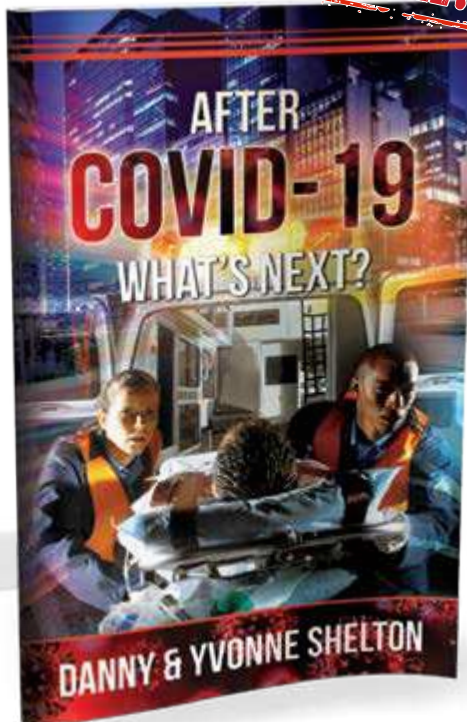
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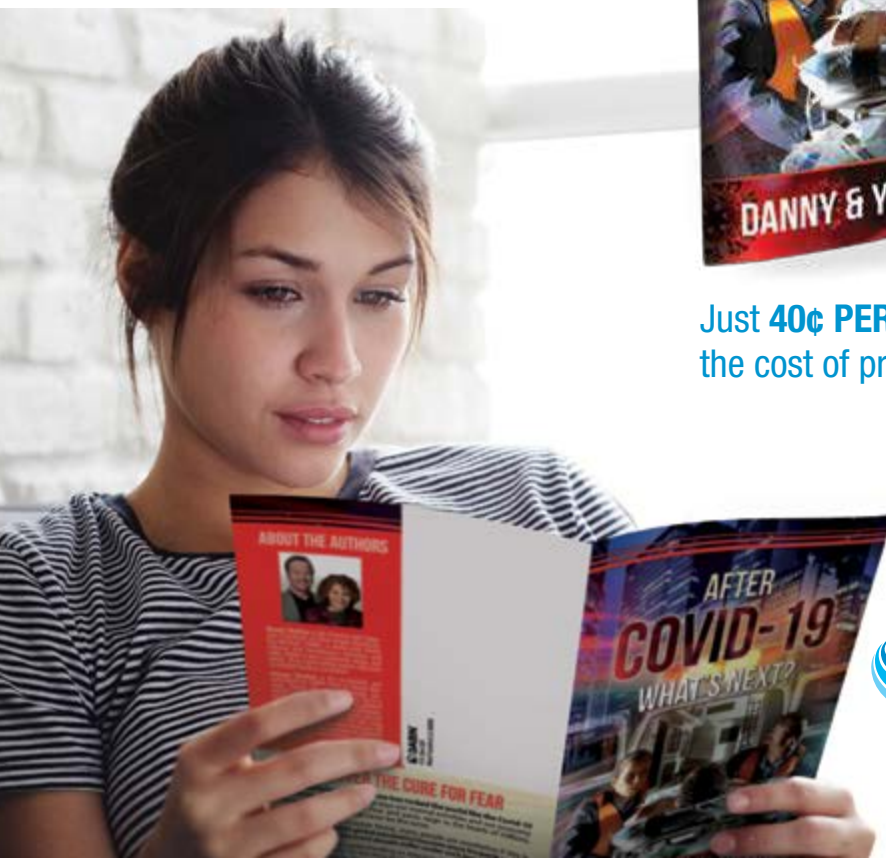
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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

PHYSICAL DISTANCING . . . BUT SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS!

Love is prudent.

Q: I see doctors and pastors on the Internet who challenge the need for quarantine and social distancing. They say that quarantine was historically only for people who were sick, so if we don't have COVID-19, we shouldn't be "locked down." Are quarantine and social isolation really necessary for our health?

A: Navigating the Internet is challenging. Separating fact from opinion is daunting. We live in a prophetic "age of confusion." In response to your question, we present biblical and historical perspectives of quarantine.

Most authorities cite the Bible as the most ancient documentation of restricted social interaction to limit the spread of disease. Leviticus contains divine instructions for evaluating and physically (socially) distancing individuals thought to be harboring potentially serious contagious diseases. Such people were barred from associating with others for seven days, and if their situation remained unresolved over that time, a second seven-day separation was enforced.

Coincidentally, in those days 14-day physical distancing was not a novel, human concept but rather a biblical prescription. Should an individual be *diagnosed* or *confirmed* to be acutely infected, they would be disallowed free access to society and required to broadcast aloud that they were "unclean" whenever in a public space (see Lev. 13:1-46). Furthermore, ceremonially unclean individuals could not congregate or be involved in communal worship activity.

Despite claims to the contrary, the most reliable evidence is that COVID-19 is a serious contagious disease. For a while, how it was spread was largely unknown, testing for infection was inadequate or unavailable, and the infectiousness and number of

asymptomatic carriers was merely speculative; everyone became a potential case! So, to interrupt the spread, it was prudent to apply social distancing and various forms of preventive hygiene, as the Bible also describes and prescribes (see Lev. 15).

In today's language, persons in biblical times who were *suspected* of disease were "quarantined," and *confirmed cases* were placed in "medical isolation." Both involved physical (social) distancing and meticulous hygiene. Moreover, quarantined or medically isolated individuals were disallowed from the Hebrew equivalent of going to church.

The Bible describes the concept and practice of quarantine, but doesn't give it a name. The word "quarantine" (from *quarantina*, or "40 days") was coined in Venice in 1448. Before that time, ships were held offshore for 30 days (*trentena*) to curtail the spread of the bubonic plague (Black Death). The "trentena" was not completely effective since the plague's time course from infection to death averaged 37 days; thus, we have "quarantina." As people learned more and "knew better," they "did better." Today, we can ignore history or learn from and prudently build on it. For example, we now can be physically distanced but still socially connected—a win-win.

God cares for us; we care for others; we don't put them at unnecessary risk. While protecting others, we protect ourselves. It's inconvenient and costly, very costly, sacrificially costly. Yet Christ's followers are motivated by love and compassion for all, especially the most vulnerable (see Matt. 25:31-46). After all, *aren't we* our brother's and sister's keeper? ♣

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



I WANT TO BREATHE

How will that happen?

I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, 100 years from the beginning of the American Civil War and five generations removed from slavery.

OUR HERITAGE: SLAVERY AND MORE

For the United States, slavery remains an albatross: from 1619, when 20 African slaves arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, through the profound words of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, that “all men are created equal”; and on to the war that began April 12, 1861. The nation slaughtered itself over the question of slavery: 620,000 dead; our worst-ever toll of casualties. On the other hand, many slaves were freed for the first time in American history, though their unfulfilled promise of 40 acres of land and a mule made it pseudo freedom at best.

After the war, Southern states immediately passed laws called Black Codes, which in essence perpetuated the system of slav-

ery by restricting freedoms and forcing African Americans to work for low wages. Former slaves also faced increased lynching, voter suppression, and denial of education.

Fast-forward to the 1960s, during which some of the hurdles that crippled progress among enslaved African Americans continued to plague the nation through Jim Crow laws that enforced local and state segregation. They resulted in African Americans experiencing substandard living, mortgage loan inequities, unequal pay, and disproportionate inadequate healthcare coverage.

Many African Americans, including my grandfather, father, and three uncles, served valiantly in two world wars, although in segregated units. Back home they continued to experience incessant discrimination and segregation in various forms—school systems, public transportation, restrooms, drinking fountains, and many other commercial establishments.

Segregation seemed to be sewn into the American fabric like baseball and apple pie.

Beyond this, some elected officials worked feverishly to maintain the notion of “separate but equal.” Alabama’s governor George C. Wallace in his 1963 inaugural address touted, “Segregation now, segregation forever,” to an enthusiastic crowd that applauded his message.

Sadly, many of these same issues are evident in 2020. George Floyd’s death on May 25, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, captured the world’s attention as one of the most inhumane acts we have seen: a police officer’s knee forcibly positioned on Floyd’s neck as he calls out some of his last words, “I can’t breathe”—words that have become a platform for social justice advocacy and protest.

WAKE UP, WORLD!

Floyd’s death is a wake-up call for the United States and beyond, prompting thousands to protest current and past horrors of injustice and oppression. A better, brighter future requires being intentional and purposeful about creating a hospitable environment for all. Our children and grandchildren will judge our present actions. Let us show that we can stand united on principle.

I challenge men and women of every ethnicity to be true to themselves, to speak truth to power, to be the voice for those without a voice. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote from a Birmingham, Alabama, jail, April 16, 1963: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” How shall we support the cause of righteousness and justice?

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

1. *Begin by taking a stand on our knees.* Prayer moves mountains, tears down walls, and builds bridges of hope. God’s “got the whole world in His hands.” We must both pray and work with Him for the positive change each heart and all the world so desperately need.

2. *Demonstrate compassion to all humanity.* Jesus says, “Love the Lord your God with all” of you, and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37, 39). Such love will not judge and punish anybody because their hue is different. There is no room for racial intolerance in God’s family:

“There is no room for Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

3. *Exercise your right and civic duty to vote.* Voting honors those who sacrificed to achieve passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which dismantled many barriers to constitutionally guaranteed voting rights.

4. *Be change agents.* Start with building strong, sustainable relationships with key stakeholders—police departments, state and local government officials—well in advance of crises. Mahatma Gandhi admonished: “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” Without change we risk complacency and stagnation. On the other hand, change agents are ready to create new and better things.

5. *Advocate for justice.* The Boston Tea Party was a political protest against an injustice imposed by England: “taxation without representation.” As a result, the Constitution’s First Amendment now guarantees that “Congress shall make no law” abridging the freedoms of worship, speech, and of the press, as well as the people’s right “peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Silence may have its place, but so does the voice in favor of justice.

6. *Seek unity within our nation.* Setting aside divisive thinking and behavior, we must work together to honor the words of the nation’s Great Seal, “E pluribus unum”: “Out of many, one.”

7. *Dialogue,* publicly and privately, in order to obtain a better understanding of the history of pain, hurt, and fear inflicted by systemic injustice in America. While this may require difficult conversations and protest at times, attentive, reflective listening by all is essential to achieving the most favorable outcomes.

8. *Commit ourselves to love and work together through God’s almighty power.* We are preparing to enter His kingdom, where we will all stand together, an innumerable multitude “from every nation and tribe and people and language” (Rev. 7:9). That thrilling sight reveals the fulfillment of Isaiah’s wonderful vision in which “nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore” (Isa. 2:4). 🍀

Washington Johnson II is assistant director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists; and a captain in the United States Navy.



GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY

What inspiration says

Coronavirus, global pandemic, mandatory shelter in place, social injustice, protests, pros and cons of face-masks, the new norm, future waves of virus outbreak, and on it goes. We are truly living in an extraordinary period of history. If there was ever a time for believers to look heavenward for divine intervention, it is now.

And a single battle during the Civil War in the United States reminds us that God's hand is more involved in our world than we may sometimes realize.

ADVANCE AND RETREAT

During the afternoon of July 21, 1861, the First Battle of Manassas took a sudden and dramatic turn.

Throughout most of the day Northern troops had experienced relative success in attacking Southern troops entrenched by the stream called Bull Run near Manassas, Virginia.

By 3:30, however, things started to go rapidly downhill for the North. The commanding general, Irvin McDowell, put his last hopes in the two brigades of Colonel William T. Sherman and Colonel Oliver O. Howard. As Sherman sent his brigade up the hill, regiment by regiment, they suddenly broke in disorder and began to retreat. Soon Henry House Hill was full of Union troops retreating from the field, some in orderly fashion and others in a wild panic. Howard sent

his troops up Chinn Ridge, only to be repelled by fierce Confederate fire and flee back down the ridge. By 4:30 the entire Union army was in retreat, and the battle was over.

The North reeled in shock and despair. The public outcry was: “How could this have happened?” “What caused our troops to become suddenly panic-stricken and leave the field?” Reports from the battlefield were varied and inconsistent. But all agreed that whatever initiated the retreat, the end result was a disaster. Historians have studied official reports of the battle and concluded that the retreat was most likely caused by Union troops feeling overwhelmed by Confederate countercharges.

There was so much mass confusion toward the end of the battle that no one can be absolutely sure what exactly happened. Five days afterward, the *New-York Daily Tribune* proposed an interpretation that many of that day accepted: “The secret of that panic will perhaps never be known. All essay to explain it, and all fail.”¹

ANOTHER EXPLANATION

On August 27, 1861, a little more than a month after the battle, Ellen White explained in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* that although “the sudden falling back of the Northern troops is a mystery to all,” they didn’t realize “that God’s hand was in the matter.”

Her interpretation of the retreat was unique. Based on a vision given her in Roosevelt, New York, on August 3, she identified the origin of the panic. “Northern men were rushing on,” she said, but “just then an angel descended and waved his hand backward. Instantly there was confusion in their ranks. It appeared to the Northern men that their troops were retreating, when it was not so in reality, and a precipitate retreat commenced. This seemed wonderful to me.”²

Interestingly, at the moment of demoralization among the Union troops, Confederate Colonel William W. Blackford was atop Chinn Ridge with a cycloramic view of the battlefield. He later recorded this vivid memory in his published war journal:

“But now the most extraordinary spectacle I have ever witnessed took place. I had been gazing at the numerous well-formed lines as they moved forward to the attack, some fifteen or twenty thousand strong in full view [the actual number of Union troops on the field was much less, around

The old spiritual, “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” is worth singing again as if for the first time.

12,000], and for some reason [I] had turned my head in another direction for a moment, when someone exclaimed, pointing to the battlefield, ‘Look! Look!’ I looked, and what a change had taken place in an instant. Where those ‘well dressed,’ well-defined lines, with clear spaces between, had been steadily pressing forward, the whole field was a confused swarm of men, like bees, running away as fast as their legs could carry them, with all order and organization abandoned. In a moment more the whole valley was filled with them as far as the eye could reach.”³

The panic that caused the retreat was apparently identified by Ellen White but graphically detailed by Blackford. She saw the backward wave of the angelic hand; he observed its effect on the Union troops. She witnessed the confusion in the ranks; he saw “a confused swarm of men, like bees.” She observed a “precipitate retreat”; he was surprised at the complete loss of military organization as the army ran off the field.⁴

GOD’S ACTIVITY IN HUMAN ACTION

This fascinating vignette of angelic involvement in the first major battle of the American Civil War is a feature that Adventists have appreciated over the years. But the real heart of the testimony lies in the explanation given to Ellen White about the angelic intervention. Immediately following the description of the angel, she wrote: “Then it was explained that God had this nation in His own hand, and would not suffer victories to be gained faster than he ordained, and would permit no more losses to the Northern men than in His wisdom He saw fit, to punish [the North] for their sins [of compromising with Southern slavery].”⁵

In her explanation we find Ellen White’s most significant theological statement about the American Civil War. The angelic intervention was the context in which she understood how God would

involve Himself in the entire war.

The angel on the battlefield was thus an illustration of how God “had this nation in His own hand” and would guide the ultimate outcome—a Northern victory. This victory would come slowly and painfully, however, for God “would not suffer [allow] victories to be gained faster than He ordained.” As one studies the Union patterns of wins and losses throughout the war, it’s obvious that as the emancipation of the slaves gained momentum, so did Northern victories.

Twice in this testimony Ellen White stated that God had this nation and its destiny in His hand.⁶ When Adventists and all other Northerners feared the fate of the nation during this hour, she assured Adventists that God had this nation in His hand and was in control of its future.

This theological assertion has a wider application than to just the Civil War period of American history. During the Revolutionary War period, for example, one could say that God blessed the patriots with military success and in His providence established the United States. Decades later, when divine patience had reached its limit with American slavery, divine punishment came in the form of the Civil War. The nuanced idea is that God will bless or punish this nation as His providence deems best, because He has its destiny in His hand.⁷

To be sure, Ellen White’s theological assertion finds its true meaning in the biblical teaching that God holds all the nations of the world in His hand (Dan. 2:21; Ps. 24:1; 75:7).

When God intervened in David’s battles with the Philistines and gave him victory, the new king exclaimed, “The Lord has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood” (2 Sam. 5:20, ESV).⁸ He called the place of the victory “Baal-perazim,” which means “Lord of breaking through” (1 Chron. 14:11, note, ESV). David recognized that God’s hand overwhelmed his enemies like a flood breaking through a dam, and He would establish His kingdom in its present geopolitical situation.

As God broke through David’s battles to establish his kingdom, broke through the battles of the Civil War to deliver the slaves, broke through the battles of World War II to rid the world of the Nazi regime, so He will break through and address the pandemic, social injustice, and intense geopolitical crises we find ourselves in today. He has the destiny of this nation, the destiny of the whole

world, in His capable hands. The old spiritual “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” is worth singing again as if for the first time.⁹

Even more encouraging is the fact that God has each individual human life in His hand. The psalmist offers this testimony: “I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them” (Ps. 34:4-7, ESV). These encouraging words assure us that when we cry out to the Lord, He will help us in our troubles, and even, if necessary, send an angel to intervene.

Ultimately, the greatest way God has intervened in this world and our individual lives is through His Son as expressed in the words: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, ESV). This is the supreme act of divine intervention! God sent His only Son into this world to die on the cross and offer the gift of eternal life to “whoever” accepts it. When you and I embrace this gift, our lives are truly in His hand—now and for eternity!

Long ago, Ellen White pulled back the curtain between the visible and invisible at the outset of one of the most crucial moments in American history and showed how God had this nation in His hand. Her writings still speak today and point human hearts to the promises of Scripture, where God assures us that He has the whole world, as well as our individual lives, in His hands. 🍀

¹ “The War for the Union,” *New York Daily Tribune*, July 26, 1861, p. 6.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 267. The word “wonderful” should be understood as “astounding.”

³ William W. Blackford, *War Years With Jeb Stuart* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1945), p. 34.

⁴ See Lee Ellsworth Eusey (“The American Civil War: An Interpretation” [master’s thesis, Andrews University, 1965], p. 60), who first researched the First Battle of Manassas in light of Ellen White’s vision.

⁵ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 267.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The above paragraphs are adapted from my book *A Nation in God’s Hands: Ellen White and the Civil War* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2017), especially chapter 5.

⁸ Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁹ See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/He%27s_Got_the_Whole_World_in_His_Hands on the enduring nature of this classic.

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WHO ATTENDS ADVENTIST SCHOOLS? AND WHY?

*Tracking the
intersection of
school choice
and Adventist
culture*



As principal of an Adventist elementary school in southern California, I often crossed paths with other school administrators at conferences, meetings, or workshops. After we exchanged routine pleasantries, the most commonly asked question was “So how’s your enrollment this year?”

This question, while casually lobbed, was wielded like a razor-sharp sword, cutting quickly into the heart of one’s efficacy as a principal. My response, I learned, would either cause my colleagues to nod with respect or raise their eyebrows in concern.

I always chafed at this snap judgment and began to feel quite defensive about my student population. Like most Adventist schools in the early 2000s, enrollment concerns dogged us; eighth-grade graduating classes were slowly dwindling; and even smaller kindergarten classes were coming in.

WHO’S TO BLAME?

Are we the problem? I often mused to myself. *Are we doing something wrong?*

Well-meaning parents and school-board members seemed to think we were. “Perhaps if you had a more robust after-school program,” some suggested. “The school down the street is full to overflowing; they just added drama and photography to their curriculum,” noted others.

Was that it? If we changed our course offerings or bought more computers or taught dual-language classes—would our enrollment suddenly increase?

From this context I began my study about Adventist culture and school choice. My experience as a school administrator led me to believe that there was *something else* involved in parents’ decisions over where to enroll their children. For some Adventist families no sacrifice was too great to send their children to an Adventist school. For other Adventist families the local public school seemed to satisfy all their expectations. What was the difference? What made Adventist education necessary for some and expendable for others?

I hypothesized that Adventist *culture* played a significant role—that beyond tuition costs and educational offerings, something about one’s identity in the Adventist Church affected school choice. There are instruments that measure church attendance and religious dogma, but I needed something to gauge the knowledge of Rook strategy and haystack-building techniques.

That index could then be examined in parallel with K-12 enrollment decisions.

So I started on this path to explore the relationship between culture and school choice. The first step required me to formally establish the existence of a cohesive culture among Adventists in North America. In order to use it as a variable, I had to find a way to quantify Adventist culture. The world of academia demanded more than just my gut feeling or nostalgic anecdotes about Rook games and academy banquets.

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

I chose to use cultural consensus analysis, a methodology employed by social scientists and anthropologists, including William Dressler and Francis Dengah. This approach allows researchers to assess the degree of shared knowledge within a community, thereby determining the extent of agreement among its members.

I began by asking a sample of Adventists across North America to *free-list* characteristics or behaviors that they might see in traditional Seventh-day Adventists who lived according to the prescribed Adventist culture. Answers ranged from a vegetarian diet to Sabbath preparations to modest dress to an interest in music performance. These items were reduced to a cohesive list of 27 traits.

The process next required a second sample for a second task. Again, all were active and involved Seventh-day Adventists from across North America. These participants were asked to *rank-order* the 27 items that had been derived from the first sample’s responses. I sent them all cards with a trait written on each one and instructed church members to order them from *most likely* to least likely to be seen in a traditional Seventh-day Adventist.

The results of these two tasks provided the data necessary to run an inverted factor analysis, which produced an eigenvalue ratio of more than three to one. This value gave empirical evidence for a cohesive cultural domain among Seventh-day Adventists in North America. This alone was an achievement worth celebrating, or at least give a moment’s pause.

The ramifications of this discovery should not go unnoticed; that there is indeed statistically established proof of an Adventist *culture* is hugely significant and can provide a springboard for a multitude of other studies exploring different aspects of Adventist culture and lifestyle choices.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of respondents whose children attended a K-12 Adventist school—stratified by income.

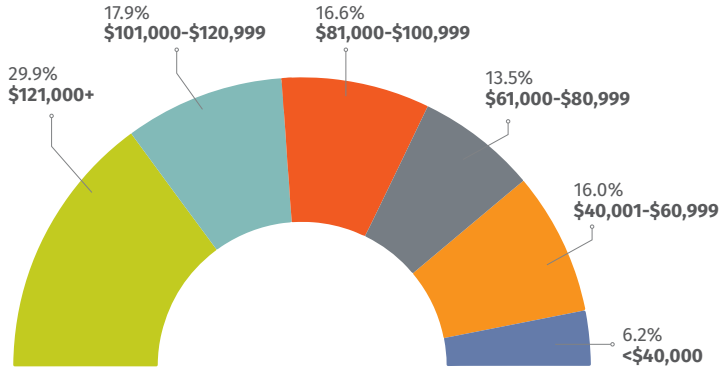


FIGURE 2

Percentage of respondents whose children attended a K-12 Adventist school—stratified by respondents' own educational context.

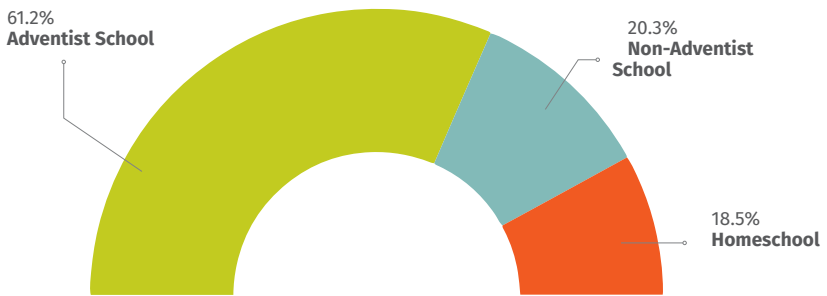
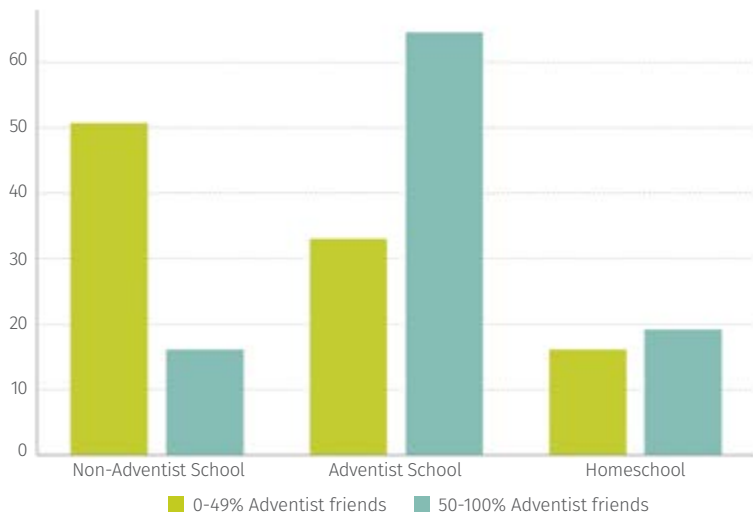


FIGURE 3

Percentage of respondents' school choices stratified by social network.



(For a more complete explanation of the methodology and findings, see scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd/142/ for the entire study.)

Because of my original intent to look at school choice, I took the Adventist cultural scale developed through the cultural-consensus-analysis process and embedded it into a survey instrument along with two additional validated scales: general religiosity and Adventist doctrine. The survey targeted Adventist parents who had K-12 school-aged children and was disseminated digitally in the summer of 2018 through social media, ministerial newsletters, church websites, and online church bulletin announcements. The survey was open for roughly one month, in which time more than 1,000 parents responded.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

School Choice and Finances. While the bulk of the survey involved questions about religion, doctrine, and culture, the instrument also included basic demographic queries, including ethnicity, zip code, and annual income. Correlating socioeconomic status with school choice had not been the primary research question, but because tuition costs are so often part of discussions about Adventist education, it seemed worthy of time and attention.

The results from this study demonstrated that among Adventist families in North America who make between \$40,000 and \$120,000, there is no significant correlation between a family's socioeconomic status and school choice. In fact, based on data from the survey, more families in the \$40,000-\$60,000 bracket chose Adventist schools than those who earned between \$61,000-\$80,000! (See Figure 1.)

Simply put, money may still be a factor in school choice. But according to this study, it is certainly not the most significant cause for enrollment decline in K-12 Adventist schools.

School Choice and Culture. The survey instrument had 13 questions that focused specifically on Adventist culture. These questions were developed based on statements taken from the aforementioned initial tasks of cultural consensus analysis. With the use of a Likert scale, respondents were asked to respond on a spectrum of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on such statements as:

- I make it a priority to keep the Sabbath day holy, both in activity and in worship.
- I live healthfully, which includes not eating

or drinking harmful things.

- In my household we prepare for the start of Sabbath on Friday evenings, both in thought and in activity.

With the data collected, I was able to stratify Adventist culture into roughly three divisions: high culture, medium culture, and low culture. Respondents who fell into the "high culture" category answered very positively in survey questions that dealt with Adventist culture.

My findings indicated a correlation between the three distinctions of Adventist culture and school choice. Respondents who scored low in Adventist culture tended to put their children in non-Adventist schools. Adventists "in the middle of the road" more often opted to put their children in Adventist schools. Those who had high Adventist culture scores had a greater likelihood of choosing to homeschool their children.

There are profound implications from these empirical results. It could be posited that the sociopolitical climate in North America today has given way to much polarization. The gap between conservative and liberal political parties, for example, appears to only be widening; those on the left are even more staunchly in that camp, while those on the right seem to be firmly entrenched there as well.

I've traveled across the country for my work with the Center for Research on K-12 Adventist Education, and my perception is that this polarization is mirrored in the religious landscape, including our own Seventh-day Adventist faith community. Churches abound that speak out strongly against women's ordination and alternative lifestyles, in much the same way churches that meet in warehouses and serve coffee at the bar before services are thriving.

Without turning this into a political discussion, I suggest that Seventh-day Adventist church members are indeed leaning more into either side today—more intentionally, more vocally, and more adamantly—than they were 50 years ago. Our schools, therefore, are *too* Adventist for those in the "low culture" bracket and *not Adventist enough* for those in the "high culture" bracket.

Furthermore, as members position themselves more strongly with the right or left, the population in the middle inevitably shrinks. And if—as results from this study show—church members in that middle window are the ones who consistently

Memories of academy banquets and music tours and vespers seem to linger at least long enough so that one generation desires to pass it down to the next generation.

choose Adventist education for their children, then it certainly provides one explanation for why enrollment in our schools has shrunk over the past couple decades.

School Choice and Community. A large part of the Adventist culture is the community to which we belong. We are indeed card-carrying members of a people separated from one another by just two or three degrees. We all have heard stories or have our own personal anecdotes of visiting a new church and realizing that you attended academy with the pastor's spouse or finding out that your son's third-grade teacher was your own former junior high student. The Adventist Church is made up of a tight-knit community. And this study indicates that those social ties are strongly correlated to school choice.

Figure 2 shows that if parents attended a K-12 Adventist school for at least some of their educational experience, they are almost three times as likely to enroll their child in an Adventist school as they are a non-Adventist school. There is clearly a connection of history and legacy here; memories of academy banquets and music tours and vespers seem to linger at least long enough so that one generation desires to pass it down to the next generation.

Another finding that speaks to the strength of community context was derived from a question about social network: "What percentage of your friends are Adventist?"

Looking at Figure 3, one can clearly see the ramifications of community on school choice. If parents are surrounded by like-minded people, if 50 to 100 percent of their friends are Adventist, they are twice as likely to choose an Adventist education for their children. Conversely, those whose social circles are made up of fewer Adventist friends have a greater likelihood of choosing non-Adventist schools for their children.

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Common sentiment has been that enrollment numbers are tightly linked to the school itself—its offerings, its standards, its quality. If Adventist parents aren't choosing Adventist schools for their children, there must be something wrong with the

school, which, by extension, means that the solution can be found only in creating a fix for the school system.

The original premise for this study, though, was that trends in enrollment are not solely, or even largely, tied to the pros and cons of a single educational institution, but rather that these patterns could also be attributed to those who do the choosing—parents. Moreover, parents' decisions are possibly complicated by a host of internal factors, including their own educational context and demographics, as well as the religious and cultural norms that they espouse based on the strength of their identity with the church.

The results of this study, therefore, pose interesting questions for church and school leaders. What is at the heart of Adventist education? For that matter, what is at the core of the Adventist Church? How much is our culture tied into doctrine and matters of salvation? Are these cultural norms that we know so well an integral, necessary part of our community, or do they instead act as an insular wall and unnecessarily separate those who speak the jargon and know the unspoken rules from those who don't?

Should we, as a school system, perhaps take a more inclusive approach to education with the hopes of drawing in those from the "low culture" sector and appeal more broadly to the general public? Or should we even more strongly champion the cultural norms that have persevered from the days of our grandparents and great-grandparents and keep us intact as a community?

By holding Adventist culture up to an objective, concrete measure, this study managed to connect dots that had previously been held together by only anecdotal threads. It provides empirical evidence to suggest that not only is Adventist culture a real and tangible thing—it is also something that has an incredibly significant impact on the choices we make and the lifestyle we lead.

Leaders of our church should be encouraged to consider the ramifications of culture on the direction, mission, and goals of Adventist education for the future. 🍀

Aimee Leukert is a professor of education at La Sierra University.

COMING HOME

Here are three questions for you, followed by three lessons.

- Can you name the final story (chronologically) of the Old Testament, even though it isn't the final book of the Old Testament?
- What book of the Bible speaks powerfully to rebuilding, from brokenness to coming home?
- Who lifted his sights above earthly politics to eternal realities?

The answer to all three questions is the same: Nehemiah.

In this year of brokenness and politics, we find three important lessons in the story of Nehemiah—the final story before the coming of the same Messiah for whom we wait.

1. "I was cupbearer to the king" (Neh. 1:11). Living in the midst of palace intrigue, Nehemiah could have filled his mind with politics. There was plenty of it. (Nehemiah's king, Artaxerxes, took the throne by assassinating his older brother—after their father, Xerxes, was assassinated.) Nehemiah's very job description (sipping from the royal cup to see if he would die) was steeped in intrigue. Yet Nehemiah's mind and heart belonged to another place—the faith and homeland of his ancestors: Jerusalem. Where are our minds and hearts right now? Do we need to lift our eyes from temporary things to eternal things?

2. "I said to the king, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?'" (Neh. 2:3). Nehemiah showed his true feelings. Like Esther before him in the same royal court, Nehemiah wasn't too proud to pour out

his heart, even to a Persian king. This transparent act was rewarded surprisingly with royal permission to go home. With whom might we need to talk candidly right now? And how might God bless the open longings of our hearts?

3. "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace" (verse 17). After many years of brokenness, Nehemiah called his people to rebuild their city, their homes, their lives. When we get knocked flat, it can be tempting just to accept the new normal—to live in disrepair. In the tumultuousness of year 2020—filled with sickness, quarantine, and distance—some of us might feel lackadaisical, unmotivated, and empty. Will we be the ones to stand up and call those in our circles to rebuild? Will we be the ones to help others repair their broken walls? to come home?

"When the Lord brought back his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream! We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, 'What amazing things the Lord has done for them.' Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us!" (Ps. 126:1-3, NLT).*

These are only three of the many beautiful lessons in the book of Nehemiah. Give yourself the gift of reading this final Old Testament story for yourself. Then turn the page to a new story, called Matthew, which tells of more wise travelers from Persia to Judea, seeking to repair their own brokenness. ♣

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WHERE ARE OUR
MINDS AND HEARTS
RIGHT NOW?
DO WE NEED TO
LIFT OUR EYES
FROM TEMPORARY
THINGS TO
ETERNAL THINGS?



NEW LIFE

In desperation, he saw only darkness.

He had death on his mind. He had written to his therapist of his intentions. He had also written to his wife, telling her that he was going to the land of no return. His mind was made up.

He would run an electric current through his body and be gone within seconds. To make sure his wife wouldn't be harmed by touching his body with the electric current still running through him, he would allow the current to run for only three minutes. That way his wife, or anyone else who found him later, would not be harmed. But why would anyone so determined not to harm loved ones end it just like that? For Doug it all boiled down to relationships.

Relationships are the stuff of which meaningful lives are made. A break in family rela-

tionships, a falling out with some neighbors, physical pain, and the general pain of living in a fallen and broken world—all that had driven him to the edge and sunk his last ounce of hope for a meaningful, joyful, and peaceful life. The onset of depression became a deadly catalyst to seal his date with fate.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

Unknown to him, a Seventh-day Adventist minister at the church on the next street had been planning to knock on doors as part of the Community Religious Survey. Through this survey I intended to know what people in the area thought about questions such as the purpose and meaning of life, moral absolutes, origin of life, and life after death.

On that particular morning I happened to knock on Doug's door. He answered all the questions quite thoughtfully. I noticed that he was particularly interested in the question about life after death.

I offered to lend him two DVDs from the Beyond the Search DVD Series: *Beyond Death* and *Beyond Hell*. In the following weeks Doug and I exchanged DVDs on a weekly basis. Each week that I went to his house I would ask him what he thought of the things he saw on the DVDs. Soon our discussions developed into weekly Bible studies.

One of Doug's neighbors, who had noticed my frequent visits, asked him, "Doug, who is that West Indies cricketer who comes to your house?"

"He's not a cricketer; he's a preacher." Doug explained.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

No sooner does someone begin making steps toward a changed life than the devil begins to throw wrenches into the works. Doug's wife, Jenny, felt uncomfortable that Doug, a nominal Anglican most of his life, should suddenly experience an upswing of interest in religion. She may have feared that he might become a nuisance, because aren't religious fanatics sometimes the source of some of the world's woes?

"Doug," she said one day, "if you continue these Bible studies, you might have to choose between me and religion." It was a challenge Doug hadn't seen coming. When people make major life decisions, the opinions of significant people in their lives are crucial. If a decision is going to make people in their lives unhappy—especially people as important as a spouse or a parent—they are likely going to put it off or abandon it altogether.

I had already seen signs of a life change that only the grace of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit could accomplish. But I had no idea how deep Doug's love for the Lord had become and how advanced the work of the Spirit had progressed until he told me how he had handled his wife's objection to his newfound faith. "That's an unfair decision to have to make, Jenny," he politely protested.

Ellen White wrote: "When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life."*

A few weeks later, during one Bible study, Doug confirmed what I had already noticed: "You know, Fred, Jesus has changed my life."

Doug had developed a renewed sense of purpose, a zest for life, a heavenly joy, and a peace that transcended understanding. I was witnessing what Paul had promised: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Jesus had won Doug's heart, and now there was no turning back. Jenny soon found out that when Jesus possesses someone's heart, they are not lost to the people in their lives, but are given back in a happier, healthier, more wholesome, and more useful condition. Doug's love for Jesus didn't mean

When Jesus possesses someone's heart, they are not lost to the people in their lives, but are given back in a happier, healthier, more wholesome, and more useful condition.

less love for his wife; it meant the opposite: more and deeper love for her.

Jenny began to understand that she had more to gain than to lose in Doug's becoming a Christian. She not only allowed him to continue the Bible studies—she began to sit in and listen. During the baptismal luncheon organized by the church for Doug and his family, Jenny leaned over and said to me, "Thank you for what you've done for Doug."

But Jenny needed only to remember her husband's words during his testimony earlier that day. "I've been asking myself, *Who sent Fred the day he knocked on my door?* I've come to this conclusion: It was the Lord! The Lord sent Fred to me."

I was just a messenger, an instrument in the Lord's hand.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

I wonder how many more Dougs are out there waiting for someone to knock on their door before they give up on life. How many people in our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces are looking for answers to life's biggest questions, searching for meaning and purpose?

What better way to find out than to open up and talk to people; reach out with acts of kindness and get to know where people are in their lives? We may be surprised, not only by what we find, but also by how God can use us to change someone's life forever.

"'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen'" (Isa. 43:10). ♣

*Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 77.

Fred Chileshe wrote this when he was the senior pastor of the Hillview and Swansea Seventh-day Adventist churches in Cooranbong, Australia. He and his wife, Kelebogile, have two sons.



I CAN BREATHE!

*Embracing the
antidote to evil*

GARY BLANCHARD

Yes, the wounds are still fresh. And because of this, some suggest we not get preachy or share Bible encouragement right now. It's true, of course: people of all colors, creeds, and cultures need to empathize more with one another.

But let's never forget that the Bible was designed to give us badly needed encouragement straight from our Creator's heart in times like these. "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might

have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

The devil is like darkness; he melts in the light. So let's turn the light of God's Word on him. We need more of God's Word, not less, as we contemplate what we all saw on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis. Police officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee mercilessly on the neck of George Floyd as Floyd gasped, "I can't breathe; I can't breathe," and cried out for his mother! Call it what you want—I call it evil. On May 25 evil looked into our eyes and did not blink.

A WORD FOR OUR TIME

So what does God's Word have by way of encouragement and direction in these sad times? What does God's Word say to our youth, young adults, and members who are afraid, grieving, and angry?

One thing I appreciate about the Bible is its relevance. In my 25 years of pastoral ministry *I've* often been irrelevant, but never the Bible! It speaks to every situation, and our current crisis is no exception.

God has at least three things to say to all colors, cultures, and creeds.

First, God's Word tells us that we are living at the very end of time. Jesus predicted that before He returned there would be problems with heartlessness. As He put it: "The love of most will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). Jesus predicted the kind of heartlessness we saw unleashed as George Floyd struggled for almost nine minutes, minutes hard to watch and believe.

Interestingly, though, Jesus goes on to say in the following verse: "But the one who stands

firm to the end will be saved" (verse 13). Jesus is clearly pleading with His people not to allow the coldness around them to extinguish their warmth, but to endure in love. In other words, the colder this world gets, the warmer our hearts need to be toward one another regardless of creed, color, or culture. What a challenge!

Isn't this enduring love the essence of what it means to be disciples? "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). We must not allow evil to jade us or persuade us; we must choose to love, even in a world gone cold.

Second, God's Word tells us that it's OK to be angry. Anger is an emotion that God has placed in all humanity. He Himself displayed it at times. Of course, God's anger, unlike human anger, always brings out the best in a situation (James 1:20).

Still, anger is a legitimate emotion. In fact, the apostle Paul essentially wrote: "Be angry!" Are you feeling angry right now? Then "be angry." But he goes on to say, "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26, 27). In other words, "be angry," but don't let this emotion, or any other emotion, become perverted and create a wedge for the devil to take control. Instead, channel it toward positive change and action.

I am proud of the many Adventist young people who are praying, protesting, and working to change policy in their local communities. This is what it means to "be angry, but do not sin."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church must be careful to march under just one banner, the banner of Christ. All that we do to diminish racism, injustice, and violence must be done in His name, by His methods, and for His glory.

Finally, God's Word tells us that racism, injustice, and violence, and all those who participate in these evils, will ultimately face the righteous and impartial Judge of all the earth. Every act thrown "under the carpet" will be dragged out and will face the scrutiny of God. Nobody is getting away with anything.

A SPECIAL MOMENT

Now is the time to repent, reform, and come under the cleansing and purifying blood of Jesus. Soon the long-awaited and often-ignored final judgment of God will arrive. Here's what the first

Our young people and members should rise up and condemn evil when they see it, and work to make positive change.

angel's message of Revelation 14 says we should do in preparation: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev. 14:7).

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't pursue justice now. Of course we should! This also doesn't mean that we shouldn't speak out when we see evil. We should! In fact, the apostle Paul says we are to "expose them" (Eph. 5:11). Our young people and members should rise up and condemn evil when they see it, and work to make positive change. But we cannot forget that we are behind enemy lines. Evil will haunt and stalk us until Jesus, the Prince of Peace and righteous judge, returns. But we Adventists have good news!

"Joy to the World" is one of my favorite Christmas songs. When I sing it, I often think of the Nativity and of Baby Jesus lying in a manger adored by Wise Men, shepherds, angels, Mary, and Joseph. But did you know that the song was written for the second coming of Jesus, not the first?

That's right! Isaac Watts wrote it to turn people's attention to the Second Coming! In fact, Watts got his inspiration from Psalm 98. In this wonderful and timely psalm, the writer appeals for all creation to sing with joy to the Lord. Why? The psalm ends with these words: "Let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity" (Ps. 98:9).

I long for that day, don't you? The dead will arise at the Second Coming and cry out, "I can breathe! I can breathe!"

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 🎯

Gary Blanchard is director of Youth Ministries for the General Conference.

FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE. MATTHEW 10:8

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THE COST OF A FRIEND

But I thought you were my friend. I swiveled my office chair so I could stare out the window, my thoughts far away. Sitting back, I closed my eyes and could envision my pink tennis shoes under my desk at work, my jeans and T-shirt in the closet. I'd bring them often, ready for the end of the day when my friend and I would go outside and briskly exercise. We'd talk about our day while I huffed and she glided effortlessly along. She was always in better shape than I was. *We hadn't done that enough.*

Then an issue arose, loyalties were divided, and our friendship was severed. Even though we didn't see each other anymore, I had sent one last e-mail. "I don't know if you would consider me a friend after today. . . . If, however, there's some part of you that is willing to reach out, I'd be happy. . . . YOU are valuable as my friend. Always know that. Always."

A response never came.

The days, weeks, months slipped by, yet the ache in my heart persisted. So much of what I knew, believed, and trusted in my friend turned out to be a lie. *How could I have missed that?*

A knock on my door brought me back to reality. I opened my eyes and focused on the person coming in. It was a guest, someone I hadn't met before. As the person greeted me with exuberance, I smiled. "Oh, Jill, I'm so glad to finally meet you. I just know we're going to be friends." I shook the person's hand and invited them to sit, politely listening as they told

me about their ministry. *What did they want? Was it friendship, or simply position, power, and a platform?*

I've heard it said that leadership is lonely. But I'd never experienced it myself. Until now. *Whom can I trust? If I open up, will I come to regret that later? How do I know it's for real or if I'm just being used?*

My mind travels to Jesus, our ultimate friend. In the garden, just before the cross, He called Judas "Friend" (see Matt. 26:50). *Really?* The man who was going to betray Him? Didn't Jesus know that? Of course He did, because He told the other disciples about it at the Last Supper. *That thought keeps my mind going awhile.*

The more I consider it, the more I'm convinced: I don't want to become cynical, to close off for fear of being hurt. My job is to extend grace, to be honest and transparent, to reach out and love. Regardless of the consequences, regardless of the other person's motives, regardless of the possibility of hurt. It takes an open heart, a willingness to learn, and the spirit of Jesus.

God, make me a friend to others. ♣

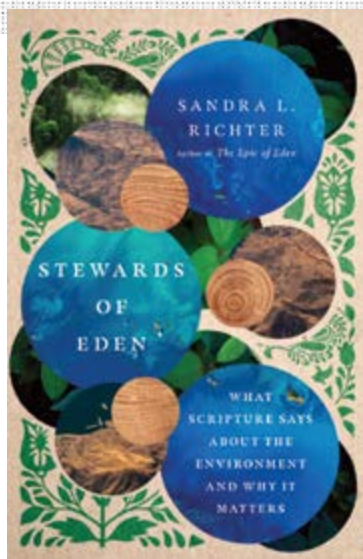
Jill Morikone is vice president and chief operations officer for Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



LEADERSHIP IS
LONELY. BUT
I'D NEVER
EXPERIENCED
IT MYSELF.

CLOSER LOOK



Stewards of Eden

Stewards of Eden: What Scripture Says About the Environment and Why It Matters, Sandra L. Richter. InterVarsity Press, 2020, 158 pages. Softcover, US\$22.00. Reviewed by Lael Caesar, *Adventist Review*.

Sandra Richter's work outlines her personal discovery of the biblical teaching on the value of God's creation, and two of the teaching's major moral consequences.

First, her obligation to share that truth with her spiritual community, remarkably uninformed on what the Bible says about the stewardship of nature. Richter the discoverer is Richter the Christian theologian who, at the time she wrote this book, was chair of the Department of Biblical Studies at Westmont College, and a member of the Committee for Biblical Translation of the New International Version of the Bible.

Second, the obligation to conduct a campaign on behalf of her God, on behalf of His Word, through informing all and sundry of the body of truth that she, an evangelical scholar, keeps discovering in the Bible about caring for the earth. It was more than just a message that God also cares.

Reviews and commentaries about books, films, or other items do not constitute endorsement by the editorial staff of Adventist Review Ministries.

Living in a Post-Christian World

Politics After Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World, David VanDrunen, Zondervan Academic, 2020. Softcover US\$29.99 (Kindle: \$19.99). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

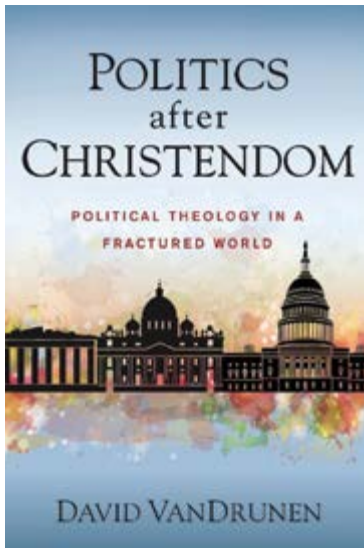
Politics After Christendom is a scholarly work. Once readers get past that, and the fact that it was written by a professor of Theology and Christian Ethics who is both an attorney and a theologian, the journey offered in this book is both challenging and faith-building.

The book's premise is that God's people throughout the centuries have always been "sojourners and exiles," always on the outside looking in. The author contends that when believers begin to be institutionalized, they cease relying on God to guide them into the future. The more they put down roots, the more they tend to create a society that seeks to impose its values on everyone else, believers and nonbelievers.

While examples can be cited from millennia past, VanDrunen's primary interest is in the West-

It was the terms of God's original covenant with *adam* (humanity); of what environmental faithfulness or otherwise means to every member of the human race, including widows and orphans; of the incomprehensibility of the New Testament and the new covenant without a clear understanding of Old Testament references to judgment and the day of the Lord. Richter came to see that, biblically speaking, her faith as an Evangelical Christian needed to begin with Genesis, Eden, and humanity's duty and privilege to care for the earth.

In 2005, when Richter gave her first public lecture on environmental stewardship, her cause was by no means as



ern church, especially since the Enlightenment. As Christianity continues to lose its influence to science and secularism, he offers an optimistic formula for remaining relevant in a society that seems to have less time for God.

His prescription is to remind ourselves of four principles.

The first is natural law, based on Creation, on which the values of right living are founded.

The second is based on Augustine's classical idea of "two cities," one inhabited by Christians and one by unbelievers.

The third is the biblical concept of two kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.

The fourth reality is God's desire to covenant with His people.

These principles form the basis of Christian interaction with the world in which we live. They create situations in which the church can't be satisfied living in isolation, seeking to vaccinate itself from the world's influences; nor can it seek to impose its will on society, hoping to stamp out worldly influences. This book is about engagement: recognizing that Christianity is only irrelevant to the extent that it fails to engage with society around it.

The book is divided into two sections: political theology and political ethics. Academics and scholars, especially those versed in theology and political science, will benefit the most from it. The book is heavily sourced, with the author often engaging with the works of other scholars as he advances his own conclusions.

In *Politics After Christendom*, the author reminds us that as long as we are in a covenant relationship with God, we have a message that will never cease to be relevant. ♣

respected as she herself, the Harvard Ph.D. theologian, was. She knew that "in central Kentucky in 2005, this was not a topic the church talked about" (p. 5). As she pored over her Bible, opportunities arose to teach what she was learning. She tells of her theological discoveries as well as her academic opportunities. She made promoting the biblical Christian's responsibility to the earth her running campaign. It became her career.

The ideas and convictions she lays out in *Stewards of Eden* provoke their fair share of questions. Why the inverted commas around the word week ("week"—p. 7), when she speaks of the first seven days of Genesis 1, 2? Is it because the weekly Sabbath is only something God gave to Israel at Sinai (pp. 30ff.)? Again: is her commitment to environmental stewardship a woman thing? She

speaks of her pioneering partnership with Kristen Page at Wheaton College; of the courageous leadership of Christine Pohl at Asbury Theological Seminary. Blurbs at the front of her book identify an unusual proportion of female supporters, implying a double encouragement to theology's fraternities to (1) care as much for God's earth as such women as Sandra Richter do; and (2) fix Christianity's theological enterprise so women may receive the intellectual and moral respect they deserve as sharing equally with males the image and likeness of God. Even if this is a latent function of Richter's work, it too points to God's flawless Edenic *shalom*. For both its explicit and implicit teachings, Richter's work deserves our attention. ♣

THE PATH OF HUMILITY

“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and activist who wrote these words, was merely reflecting Christ’s invitation: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Christianity embodies paradoxes: we die to live; give to receive; and humble ourselves to be exalted. The greatest Christians have embodied humility the most clearly. Their example challenges every Christian to live humbly in the twenty-first century.—Editors.

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

APOSTLE JAMES (JAMES 4:6).

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord.’”

PROPHET JEREMIAH (JER. 9:23).

“The more humble and obedient to God a man is, the more wise and at peace he will be in all he does.”

**THOMAS À KEMPIS,
FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN.**

“I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all around me seemed insufficient for that day.”

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
FORMER UNITED STATES PRESIDENT.**

“When a man truly sees himself, he knows nobody can say anything about him that is too bad.”

**D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES,
WELSH PROTESTANT MINISTER.**

“Each one of us has as much need of God’s grace and forgiveness as the next person.”

KARI PAULSEN, MISSIONARY, AUTHOR.

“As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you.”

C. S. LEWIS, CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST.

“True humility does not know that it is humble. If it did, it would be proud from the contemplation of so fine a virtue.”

**MARTIN LUTHER,
PROTESTANT REFORMER.**

“There is universal respect and even admiration for those who are humble and simple by nature, and who have absolute confidence in all human beings irrespective of their social status.”

**NELSON MANDELA,
FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA.**

“This statement [Micah 6:8] summarizes . . . the essence of true worship.”

**MARTIN PROEBSTLE,
PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT.**

**“All those who exalt
themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble
themselves will be exalted.”**

Jesus (Luke 14:11)



“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.”

PROPHET MICAH (MICAH 6:8).

“Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble.”

**ANDREW MURRAY,
SOUTH AFRICAN PASTOR AND WRITER.**

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

APOSTLE PAUL (COL. 3:12).

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.”

APOSTLE PAUL (PHIL. 2:3, 4).

“Under the Holy Spirit’s working even the weakest [at Pentecost], by exercising faith in God, learned to improve their entrusted powers and to become sanctified, refined, and ennobled. As in humility they submitted to the molding influence of the Holy Spirit, they received of the fullness of the Godhead and were fashioned in the likeness of the divine.”

**ELLEN G. WHITE
(THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, PP. 49, 50).**

“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

APOSTLE PETER (1 PETER 5:5, 6).

“Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.”

PROVERBS 22:4.

“There are two things that men should never weary of, goodness and humility; we get none too much of them in this rough world among cold, proud people.”

**ROBERT LEWIS STEVENSON,
SCOTTISH NOVELIST AND POET.**

“True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”

RICK WARREN, CHRISTIAN AUTHOR.

“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

APOSTLE PAUL (ROM. 12:3).

“In the life of the disciple John true sanctification is exemplified. During the years of close association with Christ, he was often warned and cautioned by the Saviour; and these reproofs he accepted. As the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, John saw his own deficiencies, and was humbled by the revelation. Day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience.”

**ELLEN G. WHITE
(THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, P. 557).**

WHAT'S NEXT?

As I write, summer's season is still new. Not that its predecessor ever surrendered. No, Season Previous has run raging on right into summer, even where there's nothing called summer.

Labeling this unrepentant, unrelenting season has inspired vigorous dispute. Suggestions scientific, subjective, offensive, witty, insensitive, or other all claim their adherents: GPS—global personal shutdown? COVID-19? SARS-CoV-2? Awkwardly: Kung flu? Zoom season, given the redefinition of all things—loved fellow humans included—as square frames inside the reality of screens!

Still, campaigners and protestants the world over now rage at yet another imposition on our screens of reality and our labels for seasons: Is there such a thing as legal murder season? Who knows what's next?

Turns out we can, you and I. For all our faith in squares and science, our focus on screens, our concerns for cops and their victims or campaigners and their law-and-order causes, there is reliability more grounded than protestants and their placards, and truth more transcendent than science, predating and outlasting the creation of matter and energy, and inspiring me to offer two lines for the next zoomed PowerPoint:

Line 1: The only constant in the universe is God: not your job or my president, not Judah's King David or 2020's King COVID; not anything else social, emotional, political, physical. God, whom none of us can either see or comprehend; God, who alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16), revealing Himself through His Son Jesus

Christ, the same yesterday, today, forever (Heb. 13:8), and teaching us everything we need to know through His omniscient Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10; John 14:26; 16:13), God is reality.

Line 2: The future we need to know is secure and guaranteed. Omniscience created us with the knowledge that omniscience isn't ideal for us. But what we do need to know about ourself or the world's future is accessible: "The Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). You have questions: Zoom season, King COVID season, legal or illegal murder season? Go to adventistreview.org to see some we've addressed.

Keep listening to and learning from the prophets' messages. The Spirit inspires the prophets (see John 14:26; Rev. 19:10), so we can know what needs to be known. Ask the prophets (the Word) the crucial, personal questions: about job, family, health, retirement, salvation—ask! This is not a platitude. God's Word is no palliative. It is as secure as the One who utters it: we're much more than lilies (Matt. 6:25-34); He'll carry all our cares—emotional, spiritual; about our neighbors, our country, national/international health, loved ones on the front lines, loved ones on ventilators, loved ones struggling to breathe; and justice. He cares (1 Peter 5:7).

The Word/Jesus can tell us what Satan wants to do next; God knows what Satan means to do next (2 Peter 1:19). But Jesus has Satan's neck. Jesus has our hearts. Come clean with Him, and He'll clarify what He knows needs to be clear: if we want to know, we ask. 🦋

Lael Caesar is an associate editor at Adventist Review Ministries.

THE FUTURE WE
NEED TO KNOW IS
SECURE AND
GUARANTEED.



**EVERY CHILD.
EVERYWHERE.
IN SCHOOL.**

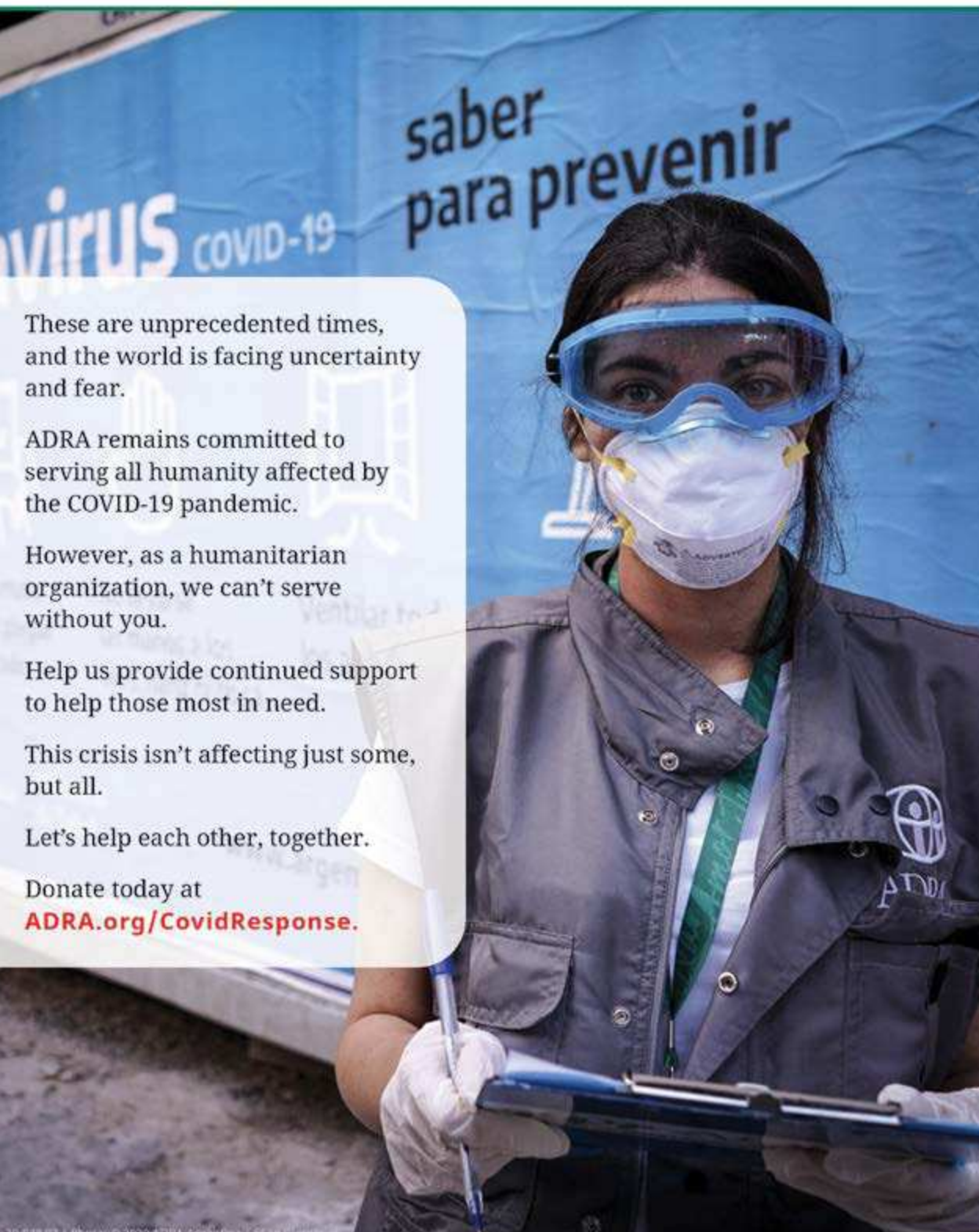
#EveryChildInSchool

**TODAY, 262
MILLION
CHILDREN
DIDN'T GO TO
SCHOOL.**

Join the Adventist-led, global movement to ensure education for children everywhere by signing the petition at **ADRA.org/InSchool.**



COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE



These are unprecedented times, and the world is facing uncertainty and fear.

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Help us provide continued support to help those most in need.

This crisis isn't affecting just some, but all.

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ADRA.org/CovidResponse.