

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

APRIL 2021: WANDERING IN GOD'S WONDERLAND +  
COCOON CHRISTIANITY + GOING WHERE  
THE LORD LEADS + THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST +  
DOES GOD STILL PART THE RED SEA?

*Practical*

## The Social Gospel



# Always Fresh Always Relevant

*Join us for insightful commentary on this week's Sabbath School lesson!*

## 3ABN Sabbath School Panel

- Watch it on demand on YouTube, anytime
- In-depth Bible study
- Share a program link on social media



[3ABNSabbathSchoolPanel.com](https://3ABNSabbathSchoolPanel.com)  
Share a link. Save a life—for eternity!



PHOTO BY ZHU WEI ON UNSPLASH



## FEATURES



18

- 18 **WANDERING IN GOD'S WONDERLAND** | DIXIL RODRÍGUEZ  
Sometimes identity is found in unexpected places.



24

- 24 **SPIRITUAL BYPASS** | KRYSSELLE CRAIG  
The church is a place for refuge and healing. Or is it?



44

- 28 **COCOON CHRISTIANITY** | LAEL CAESAR  
A cocoon. A butterfly. A life lesson.
- 32 **"GRAMMING" GOD** | WILONA KARIMABADI  
Can God be found on social media?
- 40 **SHARING GOD ONE DAY AT A TIME** | HENRY STOBER  
Who knew helping mom would make such an impact?
- 44 **EMPATHY AND EMPOWERMENT** | HAROLD ALOMÍA  
Jesus understands. It's what makes His gift so amazing.

**“Nature is a keeper of identity and time,  
filling the pages of our life passport  
with stamps of awe and appreciation for  
scenery too exquisite for words.”**

23

## ARTICLES

34 **GOING WHERE THE LORD LEADS**

They had an idea. Now it’s a ministry.

36 **GOING AT IT JESUS’ WAY**

Learn more about ASAP Ministries.

38 **A LIFETIME TO BLOOM AGAIN**

CORNELIA STRUNZ  
Fighting for women, one little girl at a time.

48 **THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST**

ELLEN G. WHITE  
The biggest triumph in history—Jesus wins.

50 **I CRIED FOR A YEAR**

ANGIE HOLDSWORTH ABRAHAM  
Learning life’s lessons the hard way

52 **PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND MY CHILD**

LARRY EVANS  
Understanding is the first step toward acceptance.

54 **BEEES THAT BUZZ, FLOWERS THAT HEAR**

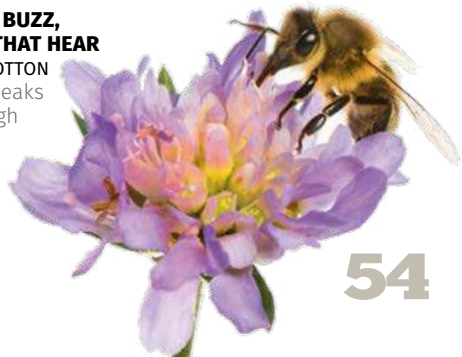
MELISSA BROTTON  
Creation speaks even through bees and butterflies.

58 **DOES GOD STILL PART THE RED SEA?**

MELANIE KWAN  
When prayer is all we have.

64 **ARS POÉTICA**

BILL KNOTT AND LAEL CAESAR  
Seeking understanding through poetry



54

## NEWS | OPINION

- » General Conference Session Is Moved to St. Louis, Missouri
- » Sacrifices Behind New Mission Center in South Korea
- » Loma Linda University Students Play Crucial Role in Vaccine Distribution
- » Adventist Church Advocates for Protections in LGBT Civil Rights
- » Adventist Karen People Gather Online to Pray for Myanmar
- » Annual Eye Camp Surgeries Restore Sight to Thousands in India
- » Southern Adventist University Announces New President



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**  
POLES APART

### DEPARTMENTS

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

### COLUMNS

- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
SANDRA BLACKMER



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

**PUBLISHING BOARD**

Ted N. C. Wilson, *chair*  
Guillermo Biaggi, *vice chair*  
Bill Knott, *secretary*  
Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Williams Costa, G. Alexander Bryant, Peter Landless, Geoffrey Mbwana, G. T. Ng, Daisy Orion, Juan Prestol-Puesán, Ella Simmons, Artur Stele, Ray Wahlen  
Karnik Doukmetzian, *legal advisor*

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR/DIRECTOR OF ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES** Bill Knott

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS/DIRECTORS, ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES**

Lael Caesar, Gerald A. Klingbeil, Greg Scott

**COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR/NEWS EDITOR** Enno Müller

**DIGITAL PLATFORMS DIRECTOR** Gabriel Begle

**ASSISTANT EDITORS** Sandra Blackmer, Wilona Karimabadi, Dixil Rodríguez

**FINANCIAL MANAGER** Kimberly Brown

**MARKETING** Jared Thurmon

**ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN** Bryan Gray/Types & Symbols

**LAYOUT TECHNICIAN** Fred Wuerstlin

**COPY EDITOR** James Cavil

**OPERATIONS MANAGER** Merle Poirier

**EDITORIAL ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR** Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste

**EDITORS-AT-LARGE** Mark A. Finley, John M. Fowler

**SENIOR ADVISOR** E. Edward Zinke

**AD SALES** Glen Gohlke

**CIRCULATION/DISTRIBUTION**

Rebecca Hilde, Sharon Tennyson

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

**E-mail:** [revieweditor@gc.adventist.org](mailto:revieweditor@gc.adventist.org).

**Web site:** [www.adventistreview.org](http://www.adventistreview.org).

Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this issue are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Bible texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Unless otherwise noted, all prominent photos are ©Getty Images 2021.

The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist® church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

Copyright © 2021, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US\$19.95, plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US\$2.00 plus shipping and handling.

To order, visit [adventistreview.org/subscriptions](http://adventistreview.org/subscriptions) or send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

**ADDRESS CHANGES**

**AND SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES:**

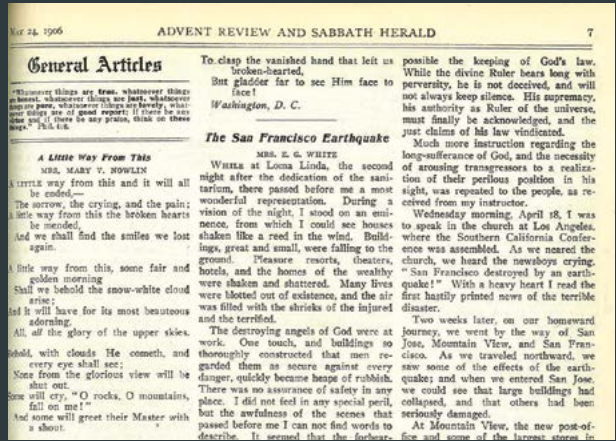
[adventistreview@pacifcpress.com](mailto:adventistreview@pacifcpress.com).  
OR call 1-800-545-2449

TRENDS

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON  
ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 Adventist Church Continues to Advocate for Religious Protections in LGBT Civil Rights Legislation
- 2 The One God has (Remotely) Prepared for Me
- 3 Adventist Family Raises Nearly US\$500,000 for Those Impacted by COVID-19
- 4 Where God Wants Us

Reported in the May 24, 1906, *Review*



Ellen White had just finished with the dedication of the new Loma Linda Sanitarium on April 15, 1906. The following night, April 16, she had a vision that she describes as leaving her “dazed by the awful scenes that had passed before me.”

During that vision she witnessed buildings falling, resorts, theaters, hotels, and wealthy homes “shaken and shattered.” She saw innumerable lives lost, and heard the screams of terrified and injured people. To her, it seemed “Judgment day had come.”

On April 18, 1906, a great earthquake shook San Francisco, California. While it lasted less than a minute, the city was devastated. More than 3,000 people were killed, nearly 500 city blocks were destroyed by fire, and half of the city residents were homeless.

While no Adventist lives were lost, many buildings were damaged, including Pacific Press. Immediately, church leadership extended an invitation to members to contribute financial support for those who suffered loss. The press was quickly repaired, and a special edition of *Signs of the Times* was printed to minister to the spiritual needs in response to the event.

# HIS Impact On Me

## Shawnewa's Story

My name is Shawnewa. I am from the Hopi and Navajo Nations. Like many students at Holbrook, my family practices traditional beliefs. My grandparents on my father's side are Christian.

My eighth-grade year of school, my grandfather tried to encourage me to enroll at Holbrook Indian School (HIS). I didn't want to be so far away from my family, so I chose not to go. Then tragically my grandfather died. In my sadness and out of respect for him, I decided I would go to Holbrook my freshman year.

When I arrived at Holbrook, I loved the atmosphere. I especially loved what I was learning about God. It gave me so much peace. One day in class, the Bible teacher asked if any students wanted to be baptized. I wanted to but was afraid of what my family would think, so I did not raise my hand. A few weeks later the teacher asked again. This time I decided I did not care what other people thought. I wanted to follow Jesus. I was baptized with five of my classmates at the end of the school year.

I am now attending my first year of college. I am thankful for all of the people who made it possible for me to learn about God's love for me and gain my education at Holbrook Indian School.

Shawnewa represents the experience of many of our students at HIS. You can help other Native American youth experience God's transforming love by making a gift to Holbrook Indian School today at [HolbrookIndianSchool.org](http://HolbrookIndianSchool.org)



**HOLBROOK  
INDIAN SCHOOL**  
SERVING NATIVE YOUTH 1946-2021

Development Department

P.O. Box 910  
Holbrook, Arizona 86025-0910  
(928) 524-6845 (Ext. 109)  
[Development@hissda.org](mailto:Development@hissda.org)

BILL KNOTT



*No longer does the center just fail to hold: for many it has ceased to be.*

## Poles Apart

This is the age of stark polarities, and not just at the poles.

Are you satisfied, or are you “woke”? Are you red, or are you blue? Immigrant or native-born? Rampaging vegan or unrelenting carnivore? Contemporary or hymn-attracted? Black Lives Matter or Blue Lives Matter?

Assumed duality—or outright blunt antagonism—invades the glorious complexity of the children of God.

The center that we used to prize—the purples, refugees, lacto-ovo vegetarians, and community builders—have small appeal when all the world will judge you by your tags. No longer does the center just fail to hold: for many it has ceased to be—a relic of an era “dissed” for compromise and “politics.”

And even in the church of Jesus, stark polarities obtrude. Is your *locus classicus* in John’s Gospel—“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10)\*—or in the Revelation given John? “Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of God’s wrath” (Rev. 14:9, 10). Is the Jesus whom you follow the Lord who silently observes the hidden gift of cold water, or is He the soon-ascending Lord best captured by the last words Matthew quotes Him saying? “Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

So foolish is the madness of the age, we soon make Jesus argue with Himself. If kindness is the sum of Christian faith, then what has preaching got to do with it? If we are judged, not by our record of untrampled Sabbaths, but by the ways we treat “the least of these,” what makes us go, disciple, baptize, and teach those who never heard the gospel?

And if the essence of discipleship is found in making more disciples, should we invest our time or treasure in those who may want our whole-grain bread but never prize the Bread of Life?

A thousand pulpits, loud with noise, assert that one truth supersedes the other—that if Jesus were alive today, He would be living with the homeless in the park; or, conversely, that His anger is reserved for those who do soft things instead of saying necessary hard things. We make of Him who called Himself the Lamb a golden calf by which we say we worship Him. He is *all* grace. He is *all* truth. The one denies the other.

Both take us back to Egypt.

May God forgive us, for we rarely get it right. Jesus was, and Jesus is, in John’s magnificent expression, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He doesn’t make us choose between the love that won our hearts to Him

and the love that causes us to win other hearts for Him. Divine consistency—filled up with grace *and* truth—draws no bright lines between the prison visit and the personal ministries visit, between putting real clothes on real people and figuratively putting on the robe of His unsullied righteousness. In the judgment it will be the wholeness of our lives He sees: the rich humility we’ve learned; the other-centeredness we’ve lived; the passion for the hungry lost that shows in us His heart of love.

What Jesus wants to overturn today are the tight categories by which we claim to follow Him. The braided cords will threaten those who make of Him an either/or—those who squeeze the Lord of life into the loyalty of brands. If we should end up with the goats, it will be for our lack of love—love for the lonely *and* the lost; mercy for the thirsty *and* the thoughtless; grace for the wrongfully accused, *and* grace for those who got it wrong.

“He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

So stay in grace *and* truth.

\*Bible texts 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.



## SABBATH AFTERNOONS

Most Sabbath afternoons I drive 53 miles to visit my 96-year-old mother. After supper she will often stay at the table to read the latest *Review* with her magnifying glass. Just a few minutes ago this evening she looked up to comment how she always appreciates Bill Knott's articles and editorials. She said she thinks he's not only a good writer but a good Christian. And then she returned to her reading. From my experience, I agree and think the same applies to most of your authors. May God continue to bless the staff and authors as they play their important role in hastening Christ's coming!

**Larry Crews**

*Silver Spring, Maryland*



"oldies but goodies" could be digitized for the tablets and phones.

**Judy Halleron**

*Marble, North Carolina*

## LIFE IN THE BALANCE

The article, "Life in the Balance," by Bruce Nicola, Jr. (January 4) has left an unforgettable image in my mind. It is seldom we read about suicide and come away with such a balanced, realistic view of this tragic subject. We know our heavenly Father is compassionate, for we know "He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Yet this author, writing from the depth of his own grief as he mourns the loss of his son to suicide, gives those words new meaning as he pictures the agony of the King of the universe kneeling and weeping beside the one who is taking his own life. That victim is not only someone's earthly son, but also God's son. God has no words of condemnation—He didn't come to condemn, but to save. May God help us be more like our loving and compassionate Father when tragedies occur.

**Eunice Fisher**

*Perryton, Texas*

## GRACENOTES

I was introduced to you [Bill Knott] by Mark Cady, and for some reason every time you write a

## THE HUMANITY OF ADVENTISTS

During COVID we have spent many hours reading our library of missionary stories. We have read books on the early missionaries to China, books on the early work in the South Pacific, plus many more stories of pioneers for God in the United States and around the world. All of these inspire and humble us. It's true that

most of these books were published in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s, and they may no longer be available. If so, that could be why many young people become disenchanted with what they see in the church, not realizing that so many before them gave years of their life to spread the love of God to those who needed to hear it the most. Perhaps some of the



I was overcome with a deep sadness thinking of all the patients and families who will no longer receive her very thoughtful, loving, comforting, unhurried care when they are in such desperate need.

**BETTY TEMPLETON ORA**, SAN CLEMENTE, CALIFORNIA

GraceNote it is like you are talking to me directly. I just want to say that it feels to me that every time your pen hits that paper it is like Jesus Himself has ahold of your hand. Thank you.

**Stafford Smith**  
*via e-mail*

#### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

“To Whom It May Concern,” by Dixil Rodríguez: her articles are always the first I turn to when the magazine arrives, and this one was the best ever! It is good to know that she is now an assistant editor. But as I read this article, I was overcome with a deep sadness thinking of all the patients and families who will no longer receive her very thoughtful, loving, comforting, unhurried care when they are in such desperate need.

**Betty Templeton Ora**  
*San Clemente, California*

#### **CORRECTION**

In the March edition we published the obituary of Adventist theologian Johann “Hans” Heinz. Unfortunately, several inaccuracies made it into the article. An updated version of the story can be found at <https://bit.ly/3cnEdNS>.  
—Editors.

#### **COMMENTS FROM ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG**

##### **THANKFUL TO BE ALIVE!**

I was moved and enlightened by such a candid and thoughtful sharing of events, reactions, reflections, and decisions. A few minutes of exposure to violence left such far-reaching consequences on the writer, and he was not even a target. I cannot even imagine what it takes for millions of humans to live in violent conditions for extended periods of time and to know that, for reasons they cannot change, they are a target indeed. Their resilience and their commitment to love, to hope, and to serve are a mystery and an undeniable sign of God’s active presence in the midst of human tragedy.

**Adrian Bocaneanu**

##### **UNTIL TOMORROW**

Oh, so sad! I have been blessed with Miss Mollie’s ministry through 3ABN. Thank you, Sister Jill, for sharing.

**Ben Naikatini**

##### **LOVE LETTERS**

What a beautiful article! Thank you for such sweet reminders.

**Martha Danforth**

##### **WHAT ELLEN WHITE DID DURING A PANDEMIC**

History is still teaching valuable spiritual lessons.

**Francine Turgott Ricketts**

##### **MEMORIALIZING AGAIN: VIEWING BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN THE WAKE OF 2020**

Leesa, thank you. True disciples embrace the tie that binds us—Jesus. They’re brave, not afraid to live out the character of Christ, to love their neighbor as they love themselves. And it applies to more than just one month out of the year.

**Ron Francis**

##### **A CENSOR’S GLOWING GOALS**

Excellent article summarizing the conditions under which we currently live and worse ones that are fast approaching. I strongly support the views expressed in this article. John Milton has some powerful statements against book censorship in *Areopagitica*. We are fast becoming a culture that is thin-skinned and hard-hearted toward those who disagree with us when Jesus has called us to be thick-skinned and soft-hearted. Thank you again for your thoughts here.

**Melissa Brotton**

**WORTHINGTON**

**PLANT POWERED™**

MEATLESS MEAT MADE SIMPLY SINCE 1939!



## DINNER ROAST

Original Flavor, Original Texture!

[eatworthington.com/roast](http://eatworthington.com/roast)



## CHICKETTS™

So versatile - Slice it!

Dice it! Pull it! Shred it!

[eatworthington.com/chicketts](http://eatworthington.com/chicketts)

**VEGAN**



MEATLESS  
**CHICKETTS**  
PLANT POWERED

13G PROTEIN VEGAN

NET WT. 4.8 (1.85g)



MEATLESS  
**CHICKETTS**  
PLANT POWERED

13G PROTEIN VEGAN

KEEP FROZEN NET WT. 4.8 (1.85g)

CHECK YOUR SDA GROCERS FOR IN-STORE PROMOTIONS ALL MARCH LONG!

EATWORTHINGTON

@EAT.WORTHINGTON  
EATWORTHINGTON

**CELEBRATE FROZEN FOOD MONTH!**

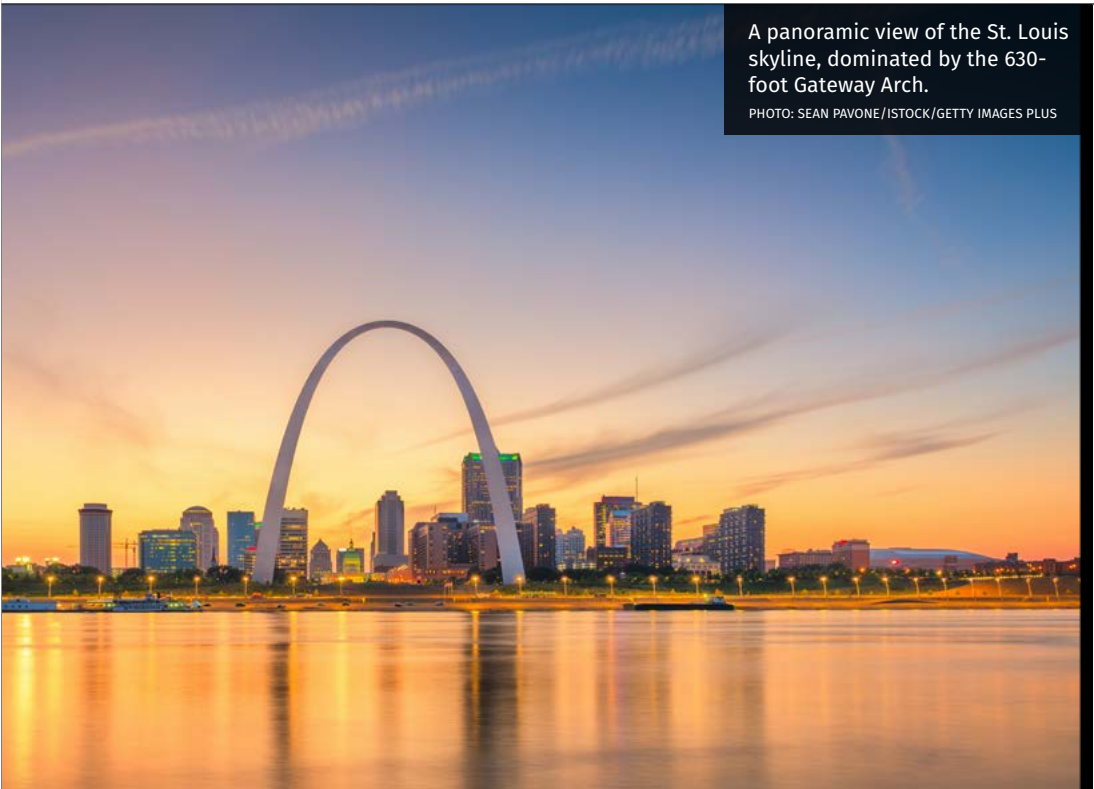
**“The response from Loma Linda University students to the call for volunteers has been tremendous. They are working to end the pandemic as quickly as possible.”**

**Michael Hogue, p. 12**

# NEWS

A panoramic view of the St. Louis skyline, dominated by the 630-foot Gateway Arch.

PHOTO: SEAN PAVONE/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS



## GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION IS MOVED TO ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

**THE 2022 EVENT CHANGES VENUE AFTER INDIANAPOLIS SAYS SPACE IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE.**

BY ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

**T**he Executive Committee (EX-COM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted Wednesday, February 17, 2021, to move the 2022 General Conference (GC) Session, the quinquennial business meeting of the denomination, from Indianapolis, Indiana, to St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The vote comes after GC management was unex-

pectedly informed by the city of Indianapolis that the space in Indianapolis was no longer available for the June 6-11, 2022, dates. The dates voted by the General Conference Executive Committee will remain the same.

“The announcement to us that the dates in Indianapolis were not available came as a complete sur-

prise, since we had taken this information to the GC Executive Committee,” Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson said. “The officials in Indianapolis have been gracious but found they were unable to provide the verbally confirmed dates. We felt bad about not continuing the wonderful collaboration with the Lake Union Conference, Lake



Region Conference, and Indiana Conference.

“However, God had already foreseen the problem, and through helpful contacts with the St. Louis Convention Center, the exact same dates of June 6-11, 2022, were provided. God always is going before us to open the way,” he said.

The Adventist Church Executive Committee had originally voted during the 2016 Annual Council to return to St. Louis for the 2025 GC Session.

This new development comes after a January 12 vote from EXCOM members to postpone for a second time, because of continued challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the GC Session originally scheduled for late June of 2020.

Although the GC Session will now be held in St. Louis, which is within the Mid-America Union, instead of the Lake Union Conference, the two unions will join together to collaborate in evangelism and mission ahead of the meetings.

Gary Thurber, president of the Mid-America Union, expressed his desire to work together during the upcoming GC Session. “When we learned this exciting news about the General Conference Session, our thoughts turned to the Greater St. Louis area, which is divided by the Mississippi River,” he said. “In actuality, there are two unions and four

conferences covering this territory: the Mid-America Union, with the Central States and Iowa-Missouri conferences, and the Lake Union, with the Lake Region and Illinois conferences.”

Thurber continued, “Because of this, we are happy to be inviting the Lake Union to cohost the GC Session with us. The Lake Union has already prepared in a big way for the session that was to be held in Indianapolis, so they will bring much experience and help to the table. We are thankful they are willing to work with us to impact the entire Greater St. Louis community with the three angels’ messages. It is always a privilege and honor to host a General Conference Session!”

Wilson also expressed his confidence the 2022 session will be a time for Adventists to come together to share Jesus with the world. “Leading up to the General Conference Session, we look forward to a marvelous evangelistic working relationship with the Mid-America Union Conference and the Lake Union Conference, which both encompass the Greater St. Louis region,” he said. “What a privilege to proclaim the three angels’ messages and Christ’s soon coming in a united way in Total Member Involvement. As our 2022 GC Session theme says, ‘Jesus Is Coming! Get Involved.’”

## SACRIFICES BEHIND NEW MISSION CENTER IN SOUTH KOREA

US\$10 MILLION INVESTMENT IS A PRODUCT OF CHURCH WORKERS’ DEVOTION, LEADERS SAY.

BY NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION  
AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Southeast Korean Conference (SEKC) held an opening ceremony for its new mission center in late 2020 at the site of the new building in Daegu, South Korea. The SEKC Mission Center was completed 14 months after groundbreaking at the cost of US\$10 million, including land purchase and construction.

The building has two basement floors (about 24,000 square feet) and four ground floors (approximately 27,000 square feet). Office facilities, parking lots, machine rooms, and convenient facilities were constructed. A new chapel hall was built on the fourth floor. The Shiji New Heaven Church and the Gyeongsan Western Church were merged to become the Alpha City Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The construction of the mission center was a long-cherished hope of Adventist members across the SEKC. The previous Daemyung-dong office building, set up in 1991, was a continuous reminder of the need for relocation or reconstruction because of its narrow space and inconvenient traffic. The SEKC unveiled a blueprint for the construction of the mission center at the beginning of this term, and proceeded with related procedures. In September 2018 the construction committee was formed, and construction began on September 26, 2019, with the groundbreaking ceremony. The SEKC moved its offices to the new building before the end of 2020.

### PLANS AND CHALLENGES

At the opening ceremony, church leaders from the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), the Korean Union Conference (KUC), and other local conferences, along





The recently inaugurated South East Korean Conference Mission Center in Daegu, South Korea. The US\$10-million investment motivated the extraordinary sacrifices of church employees and retirees across the country and beyond.

PHOTO: NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION NEWS

with contractors, pastors, and members from nearby churches, celebrated the latest chapter of the Adventist Church in the region.

“There were a lot of challenges to get through in each step, from planning to completion, but God prepared things in advance and gave us the strength to keep up the work,” SEKC president Won Sang Kim said in his sermon at the service. He quoted Psalm 136: “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (verse 1). He also expressed his gratitude to members for their generous devotion and prayer support.

Kim also thanked those who voiced opposition. He said, “Those opinions helped me to maintain a balance. Thanks to them, we were able to set a more precise, detailed budget and raise funds more carefully.” He continued by saying, “I hope this valuable building will serve as a turning point in the history of the SEKC and will give all church members an opportunity to have confidence in God’s guidance.”

Northern Asia-Pacific Division president Si Young Kim shared a congratulatory message, referring to the celebration described in the

Bible book of Nehemiah when the walls of Jerusalem were completed. And he added, “Through this place, the three angels’ messages will be shared with the people of this region.”

Korean Union Conference president Chun Kwang Hwang also celebrated the moment. “The completion of the SEKC Mission Center is one of the historical moments when God has taken the lead in accomplishing the task. It is the result of tearful prayers, strong faith, and amazing devotion of church members across the SEKC, as well as evidence of God’s grace and power,” he said.

Adventist Church members who attended the ceremony thanked and praised God that the mission center was completed without any accidents, despite the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. “Please make this place a new history of evangelism and revival so that it can become a center of Adventist faith,” one of them said.

### **EXTRAORDINARY SACRIFICES**

Many church employees sacrificed to make this dream come true, leaders said. Every pastor and staff member affiliated with

the SEKC gave an amount equivalent to one month’s salary. Adventist institutions in the SEKC, including Busan Adventist Hospital and Sahmyook Food Factory, provided financial support. A retired pastor who lives in the SEKC region devoted one month’s retirement pension. Another pastor gave his three-year savings. A retired pastor who used to serve in the SEKC and who now lives in the United States sent a part of the savings for his funeral expenses to help his home conference.

Other people donated money in gratitude for God’s grace and mercy. Ji Man Han, a Korean medical school student who won a lawsuit against a medical school regarding Sabbath accommodations in January 2019, gave half of his compensation from winning the lawsuit. A patient recovering from cancer offered a large part of her insurance compensation, saying that she thanks God that she hasn’t lost her hair during chemotherapy and has had few aftereffects.

“The hope of all who have prayed for the completion of this building is that the great commission of Jesus will be fulfilled in the new mission center by continuous prayers of Adventists,” leaders said. ▀



A Loma Linda University School of Nursing student chats with a community member about what to expect from the COVID-19 vaccine.

PHOTO: LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

## LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE IN VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

FUTURE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ARE ASSISTING IN DELIVERY ACROSS COMMUNITIES.

BY DONAJAYNE POTTS, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS

**L**oma Linda University health professions students are playing a crucial role in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in San Bernardino County in California, United States, by administering tens of thousands of vaccines to patients from throughout the region known as the Inland Empire.

Several hundred students from the School of Allied Health Professions, School of Medicine, School of Nursing, and School of Pharmacy have volunteered to administer vaccines in a number of community vaccine clinics, including Loma Linda University Health's two vaccine sites, at the Drayson Center and Faculty Medical Clinics, where, as of early March 2021, up to 2,000 community members were being vaccinated daily.

Third-year pharmacy student Gilma Garcia said it was rewarding to be a part of an all-hands-on-deck response.

"To know that by volunteering, we were helping to take some of the pressure off frontline health-care workers, who are busy saving lives, was a blessing," Garcia said. "It was also truly special to see how happy people in the community were to get the vaccine."

Michael Hogue, dean of LLU's School of Pharmacy, has played an integral role in establishing clinics in line with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and California state guidelines and said students receive training and serve the public under licensed supervision.

"The response from Loma Linda University students to the call for volunteers has been tremendous," he said. "They are working to end the pandemic as quickly as possible by helping us reach the goal to see 80 percent of our population vaccinated."

Pharmacy students were the

driving force behind a mobile clinic that served Black and Latino populations in the city of Adelanto, vaccinating more than 1,400 individuals in one week.

In January medical students and incoming freshmen from the School of Medicine volunteered at vaccine clinics and drive-through testing sites at SAC Health System after severe staff shortages affected the operation of COVID-19 testing drive-through lines.

Students are also helping to vaccinate the underserved, who live in the poorest parts of the city of San Bernardino. Teams of students from the respiratory-care program at the School of Allied Health Professions have administered hundreds of vaccines in parking-lot clinics.

Loma Linda University reportedly has the first Bachelor of Science entry-level respiratory-care program in the United States to include COVID-19 vaccinator training in its curriculum, according to the department's program director, "and [the first] to schedule students to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to the public." 📌

**“We need to find a way to protect the rights of all Americans in a fair and balanced way.”**

**G. Alexander Bryant**

SAGITARIUS/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS



## **ADVENTIST CHURCH ADVOCATES FOR PROTECTIONS IN LGBT CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION**

**NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION RESPONDS TO RECENT LEGISLATION IN THE UNITED STATES.**

**BY MELISSA REID, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

**O**n Thursday, February 25, the United States House of Representatives once again passed the LGBT antidiscrimination bill the Equality Act (H.R. 5).

While the Seventh-day Adventist Church firmly believes that everyone is created in the image of God and should be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect, the church remains concerned that the Equality Act as drafted would further erode the religious liberty of faith communities and their members. As currently written, the legislation makes no allowance for

communities or individuals of faith who hold traditional views of marriage and gender and fails to provide essential religious liberty protections that would allow a diverse and essential group of social service, humanitarian, and educational organizations to continue to thrive.

Encouraging to the church is the diminished support for the Equality Act and the growing support of the Fairness for All Act, which was reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on Friday, February 26.

The North American Division

(NAD) and General Conference have partnered together to represent the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a diverse coalition of faith and advocacy partners who support the Fairness for All Act's balanced approach to addressing LGBT discrimination while maintaining the historically protected and cherished place held by religion in society.

Several members of Congress who previously cosponsored the Equality Act are instead attaching themselves to the Fairness for All approach, which in this term has more than doubled its number of cosponsors.

The Equality Act is expected to be introduced in the U.S. Senate but lacks sufficient support to be passed in that legislative chamber.

NAD president G. Alexander Bryant responded to the legislative developments, saying, "People of faith play a vital role in our country, and I'm encouraged to see their values being considered in this important conversation. We need to find a way to protect the rights of all Americans in a fair and balanced way."

NAD Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director Orlan Johnson affirmed the church's efforts, stating, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church will continue to advocate for the religious freedom of its members and institutions. It is both unnecessary and contradictory to weaken the civil rights of one group of society in order to strengthen the rights of another." ■



Omaha Karen Seventh-day Adventist Church in Omaha, Nebraska, United States, is one of several Karen congregations across North America.

PHOTO: OMAHA KAREN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH FACEBOOK



## ADVENTIST KAREN PEOPLE GATHER ONLINE TO PRAY FOR MYANMAR

**POLITICAL TURMOIL PROMPTS INITIATIVE ACROSS NORTH AMERICA.**

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**F**rom February 7 to 13, Jimmy Shwe, a pastor and coordinator of the Karen Seventh-day Adventist Church outreach under the Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries in the North American Division, guided the division's more than 50 Karen congregations in a bilingual week of "United Prayer." The Karen are an ethnic group from Myanmar (also known as Burma), many of whom fled because of religious and ethnic persecution by the government.

Each evening at 5:00 p.m. PST, between 80 and 130 Karen pastors, Bible workers, and church members joined a special Zoom meeting and prayed together. A few Karen families from Europe, Australia, and Myanmar also participated. The meetings were presented in the Karen language and included a special English prayer portion.

After a short devotional, preselected participants were asked to

pray. Shwe coordinated the group Zoom meetings, he said, to help assuage fears through prayer for those in distress and those who are unable to help as the turmoil in Myanmar continues to unfold. "When we cannot do anything, the best thing that we can do is pray," Shwe said. "As we trust in God, we know that He wants the best for us. Sometimes all we can do is pray to Him, trust in Him, and believe in Him. He can and will do something for us."

Reports of violence in certain regions of Myanmar have emerged in the past few weeks. After the country's general election, the military staged a coup, seizing control on February 1, and declaring a year-long state of emergency. Several news agencies have reported that Myanmar military personnel have ventured into Karen villages, ripping people from their homes. Some have been killed or injured, while others were told to flee.

Karen members in the United States have heard reports that, in one village, disruptions were so severe that the local Adventist school moved farther into the jungle, away from a military camp. Protests have swept Myanmar, a country with a complex history, with "tens of thousands in Yangon and elsewhere in the biggest show of mass anger since 2007 protests that helped lead to democratic reforms," according to a February 7 Reuters news report.

Special prayer themes were set for each Zoom service, focusing especially on prayers for peace and protection, prayers for access to safe water and food while fleeing, prayers for the children, the elderly, and the infirm who cannot run, and for the civilians wounded in war.

Over the past several years, many Karen people have come to the United States as refugees. According to online archives from the





Women wait to be seen at the eye camp. PHOTO: IT IS WRITTEN

Burmese American Community Institute, 64,759 Karen settled in the United States from 2000 through 2015.

In 2010, Shwe was at the General Conference Session when he was asked to coordinate refugee ministry in the Karen congregations in North America. Shwe, who immigrated to the U.S. and organized the first congregation in North Carolina in 2009, said that there are now at least 80,000 Karen in 41 states—and about 2,000 baptized church members across the division.

Shwe and his family are based in North Carolina, but he travels across the United States to attend to the Karen Seventh-day Adventist congregations. He is supported by a team of local church leaders in each state or region where there is a Karen congregation.

Eric B. Hare, who served as an Adventist missionary and storyteller in Burma, worked among the Karen people. During his years of service, Hare introduced thousands to the gospel message, establishing clinics, churches, and schools among the Karen in Burma and Thailand.

“This rich Adventist history has made a deep impression with generations of believers,” Shwe said. “What is happening now in Myanmar has frightened many of my Karen brothers and sisters. We know that God will do the best thing for His children. So we pray, and we come together with one heart. And the people see how much they need Jesus, and how we need more unity as a family.”

## ANNUAL EYE CAMP SURGERIES RESTORE SIGHT TO THOUSANDS IN INDIA

IT IS WRITTEN-SPONSORED INITIATIVE OFFERS A LIFELINE TO MANY DURING THE PANDEMIC.

BY CASSIE MATCHIM HERNANDEZ, IT IS WRITTEN, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**E**yes for India, a ministry sponsored by the It Is Written media ministry that seeks to restore sight to blind individuals through cataract surgeries in India, held its annual eye camp in Barabanki district, Uttar Pradesh, in February.

Ophthalmologist Jacob Prabhakar reported that once more, he was able to restore sight to thousands of people. “I thank God for a successful camp, despite the continued pandemic!”

From February 1 to 11, Prabhakar and his medical team successfully completed 2,672 cataract and 29 pterygium removal surgeries (a pterygium is a small growth in the corner of the eye). “I praise God for making such an impact possible in a Hindu temple,” Prabhakar said. “The need this year is greater than ever before. Since there were no surgery services in this area all through the pandemic year, the backlog is huge. The people are poor and desperate for help.”

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, only patients who tested negative for the virus received the operation. Each patient was provided with a mask, and the medical team wore full personal protective equipment.

Prabhakar explained that most people operated on had bilateral hypermature cataracts and that it was imperative they were operated on this year. “If we had not operated on these patients,” he said, “the cataracts may have become complicated and caused permanent, painful blindness.”

After completing their surgeries, patients received instructions on how to care for their eyes at home, together with inspirational materials translated into their languages.

Each patient was grateful to be given the gift of sight again, Prabhakar said. In a report to It Is Written he wrote, “These thousands of blind who now see are ever grateful to It Is Written for restoring their sight, which enables them to carry on with their improved quality of life, lead normal lives, and earn a livelihood. This would not have been possible without It Is Written, and we are grateful to you for this amazing ministry and your generosity. Thank you for making this life-changing impact possible!”



## “Returning to campus is like coming home for us.”

Ken Shaw



PHOTO: SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

### SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES NEW PRESIDENT

KEN SHAW WILL ASSUME OFFICE ON JUNE 1, 2021, AFTER DAVID SMITH'S RETIREMENT.

BY SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY NEWS

**S**outhern Adventist University's board of trustees is pleased to announce that Ken Shaw will become the university's twenty-seventh president. He will assume office on June 1.

Shaw graduated from Southern in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and will be the university's first alumnus to return as president. His entire family graduated from Southern: his wife, Ann (Kennedy), earned her nursing degree in 1979; their daughter, Kate Myers, earned her associate and bachelor's degrees in nursing in 2008 and 2009; and their son, Martin, earned his pastoral-care degree in 2012.

"Ann and I cherish our memories from Southern," Shaw said. "Returning to campus is like coming home for us, and we're delighted to be part of this institution. I really admire that Southern is still fundamentally centered on its mission and on the core values that the institution has been about for 129 years."

For the past seven years Shaw has served as president of Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. Previously he worked at Florida State University for 25 years in various capacities, from assistant professor of mathematics education to campus dean of Florida State University Panama City and academic dean of the College of Applied Studies. His track record as a

leader in higher education includes increasing enrollment, establishing new academic programs, and improving institutional financial stability.

Southern's presidential search committee identified five key characteristics and skills necessary in a new president: spirituality and the ability to instill a strong spiritual character in the culture of the university; innovation; being the face of the university to the broader Chattanooga community; providing leadership to fundraising activities; and business acumen. Southern's board is confident Shaw possesses these qualities and more.

"I am pleased that Dr. Ken Shaw has accepted our invitation to be the next president of Southern Adventist University," said Ron Smith, chair of Southern's board of trustees and president of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. "The unanimous decision of the board is strong evidence that the will of God has been executed. We thank the Lord for His providential leading and anticipate His blessing in the Southern community as a result of Dr. Shaw's acceptance."

As President David Smith retires at the end of May, we look forward to showing our appreciation for his service as we welcome Ken Shaw and his family with warm Southern hospitality. 🍷



### **ADVENTIST FAMILY RAISES NEARLY US\$500,000 FOR NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESSES.**

When the coronavirus significantly destabilized certain businesses in Shelby County, Tennessee, Seventh-day Adventist businessman Reginald Coopwood, his wife, and their two daughters set up “Pay It Forward Mid-South.” The campaign raised funds in support of hospitality agencies and service industry workers who lost employment or took pay cuts because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A social media challenge helped inspire area businesses and the community to contribute almost US\$500,000 by January 31.



### **ADVENTIST BUSINESSMAN INAUGURATED AS PRESIDENT OF PALAU.**

On January 21, Surangel Whipps, Jr., a Seventh-day Adventist, was sworn in as president of the Pacific island nation of Palau. Whipps acknowledges his father’s tenets for happiness—God, family, hard work, and education. Among participants in the swearing-in ceremony were Chamberlain Kinsiano, an Adventist pastor, members of Whipps’ family, and the Koror church youth choir. Whipps is a deacon in that church, and a member of the Guam-Micronesia Mission executive committee.



### **ANDREWS UNIVERSITY RAISES NEARLY US\$1 MILLION TO ASSIST STUDENTS.**

Since April 2020, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, has received nearly US\$1 million in donations to two key funds that significantly support student finances. The President’s Student Scholarship Fund, established since 1972, is awarded once per semester in the form of a specific sum from US\$500 to US\$2,000 to help students complete financial registration, while the COVID-19 Emergency Fund helps students cover costs of rent and groceries.



### **HOPE RADIO PUTS KIRIBATI PRESIDENT ON THE PATH TO GOOD HEALTH.**

Taneti Maamau, president of the South Pacific island nation of Kiribati, and his wife, Teiraeng, are improving their health by participating in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP). They tune in regularly to Hope Radio, an Adventist station and the nation’s leading radio broadcaster.



### **ADVENTISTS IN NORWAY SCORE INGATHERING RECORD DESPITE COVID-19.**

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Norway, in cooperation with Hope Channel Norway and the church’s Norwegian Union Conference, raised a record amount equivalent to US\$570,000 for projects in developing countries, through their annual fundraising program called Ingathering. Participants responded to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on movement by social media events, including a car trunk sale, birthday fundraisers on Facebook, a pushup challenge, and a livestreamed auction on Facebook that raised about US\$25,000.



### **IN MEXICO, STATE FUNDS GO TO REMODELING OF ADVENTIST CHURCHES.**

In the Mexican state of Sonora, the Council of Public Works Management has helped in the physical improvement of 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches since 2018. According to Guillermo Méndez, president of the Sonora Mexican Conference, the government appreciates Adventist impact on society through such programs as the “I Want to Live Healthy” community health initiative, the “I Want to Grow Healthy” school health initiative, and the Pathfinder programs across the region.



### **ADVENTIST SCHOOL IN MONGOLIA SHINES THROUGH PANDEMIC TIMES.**

Tusgal Seventh-day Adventist School in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, has shone brightly through COVID-19 pandemic darkness. In the academic year 2020-2021, 61 students received scholarships and financial aid worth 30 million tugriks (about US\$10,500). Several teachers have received national awards, including “Certificate of Honor,” “Top Teacher,” and the title of “Excellence.” A collaboration with Brazil Adventist University [UNASP], campus 3, will soon be implemented. Otgontuya Tserenpil is school principal.



DIXIL RODRÍGUEZ

The backpack is two pounds heavier than expected. “Take something out, and we will weigh it again,” says the tour guide, placing the backpack in front of me and calling out to the next person in line. I am about to begin a climb I did not request but volunteered to join as a “favor” to a friend. The request was benign: “I am taking my creative writing students to the canyon for a writing-intensive escape. I need another faculty member and thought you would love the canyon! You haven’t been there yet!”

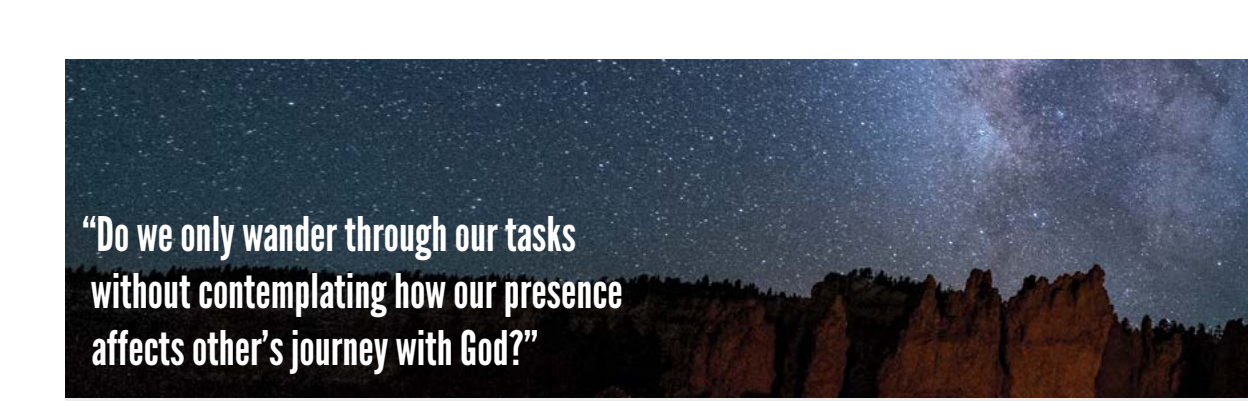
That was three weeks and two pounds ago. Standing at the entry of our trail, preparing to “gear up,” I am questioning just how incredible this canyon truly is. A travel guide lifts my backpack, pressing on the top of it, shifting the weight in a casual manner. He identifies the problem: too many water bottles. In a quick motion he unzips the backpack, removes several bottles, and reweighs the artifact. *Perfect!*

WANDERING ~~WITH~~ <sup>in</sup>  
GOD’S WONDERLAND:

WHO ARE ~~YOU?~~ <sup>we</sup>







## “Do we only wander through our tasks without contemplating how our presence affects other’s journey with God?”

The water bottles are placed in the “this will not travel with us” bin. The guide explains that two pounds will feel like 10 pounds in a few hours. “The trail has areas of fresh water to refill canteens. Don’t worry. You don’t hike much, huh?” I shake my head and catch a glimpse of the sunrise that suddenly outlines the sketch of dangerous (but curious) trails ahead. “You probably don’t remember me,” says the guide. “I took an exam at the university a while back?”

We walk together past an entrance with a list of warnings. “Welcome to wonderland,” he states with a smile, walking ahead, pointing to the variety of trails I may choose to traverse. *I remember you!*

Just like that, I enter multiple spaces and narratives.

### *draft of us* ~~THE FORMULA COMPOSITION~~

The room is quiet, too quiet. I stand in a corner in the atrium and observe as students walk toward the auditorium door, scan their student identification cards, and wait. They wait for the red light above the door to turn green, confirming that the “system” recognizes the student, granting entry into the computer lab. Somewhere on campus a computer has determined that this student is in the right place, at the right time, and has submitted all proper documentation to take a graduate school entrance exam that will determine successful entry into graduate studies.

Today, along with three other colleagues, I will observe students’ progress on a screen in a separate room. The screen allows access to view every question a student answers in the next six hours: mathematics, vocabulary, science, and a writing sample. I represent the writing portion of the exam in case there are any questions by students or evaluators. As I take my seat next to a mathematics professor and friend, I glance at the “Proctor Red Book,” which outlines the questions for students by category. I point at the initial terminology on the pages of math questions: *extreme value theorem, Newton’s method,*

*Riemann sum . . .* I shake my head and admit the math section would be a guessing game for me. My colleague laughs and turns to the last page of the book where one of the writing prompts is located.

“Do these students know who they are?” he points at the essay question. “This essay option is an autobiographical essay. Experiential material. That’s a tough one. How do you grade that? How do you give points based on someone’s life story?”

Suddenly the math questions appear simpler than I imagined. For in them there is a level of calculation, formula, margin of error, and correction not available in autobiographical writing “on the spot”

“We don’t grade it,” I whisper. “We cannot evaluate someone’s personal story. We evaluate the process, organization, grammar . . .” I hear my voice trail off as I notice a student in the back row, head down. *Is he praying?* Suddenly the screens light up. The exam has begun.

I look at the clock. *There is not enough time to write that essay, not as a student or a professional.*

### *lifetime . . .* ~~ONCE UPON A CRAFTED~~

. . . there was a girl who wandered off and found herself in an unknown space, in a curious place, where all she could do to remember who she was required repeating memorized poetry. Her oratory, the language and organization of the poem, gave her the comfort of knowing who she was. Memory and delivery validated her identity. Until . . . she forgot. The poems became confusing and the delivery became difficult. The girl walked through a garden alive with funny creatures, unique characters, all the while learning and observing so many new things that the original content, the language, the poetry, was no longer intact (or accurate) in her memory. When the moment came to identify herself, Alice did not know who she was:

“‘Who are you?’ said the Caterpillar.

“This was not an encouraging opening for a





conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'<sup>1</sup>

I cannot engage in any analysis or image of Alice other than the one I find in the original text by Lewis Carroll. A critical analysis of the book engages the complex, dangerous exploration of the nature of language, communication, and yes, philosophy. It is at the core of this book that my own curious mind—as a professor, a friend, a writer, a daughter, a chaplain, a sister, an editor, a Christian—takes a walk, a quick life review: *who are you?*

Alice is not simply confused about her identity and presence in a new space; she admits to something very powerful: change. "I cannot go back to yesterday, for I was a different person then."<sup>2</sup> I can relate to the reshaping of self in light of unexpected life situations. I do find Alice to be a bit braver in her understanding of the impossibility of going "backwards" when she is now a different person. Has anyone else noticed this difference?

In moving forward, often the things we have etched in our heart, memorized, carried with caution, may expand or shrink. The lessons we learn affect others. How does our change affect the relationships we care about: friendships, family, church? With so many changes in our personal wonderlands it seems wise to nurture the roots of faith, to remain grounded by them. Yet Alice's words linger in my mind: "... I was a different person then." How fragile or accurate is change in our daily lives? Do others recognize a different character in us? One that is exemplary? Or do we only wander through our tasks without contemplating how our presence affects others' journey with God?

### *The original question* **SEARCHING THE OBVIOUS:**

The first question encountered by humanity was not one of identity but of location. It was not

a complex linguistic feat; it was a simple question with devastating realizations woven through each syllable: "Where are you?"

Of all the questions asked, this is one that is often posed out of curiosity and fear. Have you witnessed a mother call out to her child who is no longer standing next to her? When a response is not immediate, the mother's tone and action change, quickly and passionately. There is a desperate, devastating transition of a human voice running through rungs of emotions: curiosity, anger, fear, desperation! "Where are you?"

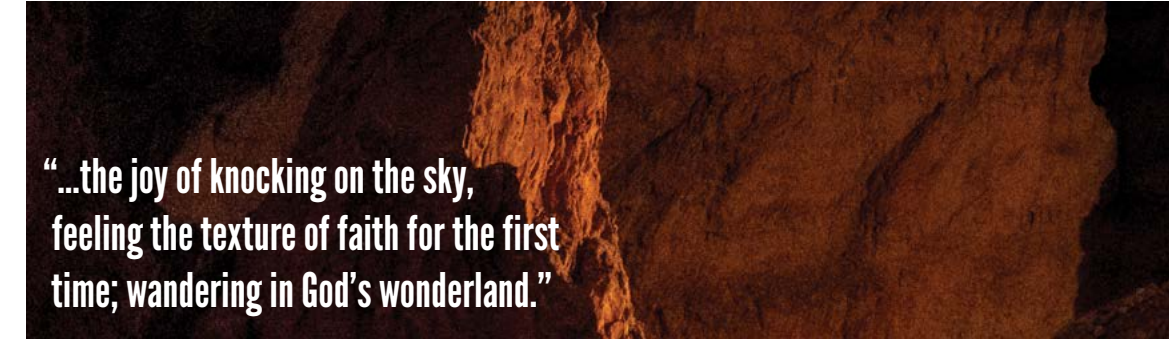
These are our own human emotions we recognize. Our limited, human emotions. Consider how it must have sounded for the Creator, aware of the events that occurred, to walk into the garden and ask: "Where are you?"

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and [they] hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself,'" (Gen. 3:8-10).

Compassion. Unfiltered, genuine compassion. A heart-wrenching extended compassion in which the omniscient Creator invites those created in His image to explain what has happened; the words narrating a terrible judgment of character, an error that will cost everyone present everything! Compassion toward a being that is now naked, vulnerable, fatally wounded; more than a ripple in the water, the weight of stone in this failure to obey has caused a cosmic ripple. Yet there is compassion: "Where are you?"

To this day I struggle with the same question of where I am and who I am, because the struggles are many. Because my memory is short-lived, and I forget the miracles passed, the promises written





“...the joy of knocking on the sky,  
feeling the texture of faith for the first  
time; wandering in God’s wonderland.”

out for me. I negotiate the trails, passing gardens, deserts, and canyons, seeking, often not ready to admit that I already have what I am searching for! I just need to embrace it and demonstrate it: more compassion toward others.

What would it be like if we could avoid the lingering questions of identity by acts of compassion? What would it take to shake away apathy? How has it occurred that we often engage living the example of Jesus’ life and ministry and forget that compassion toward others is a vital part of that ministry? Do we simply assume loving one another demonstrates compassion? Or does compassion drive us to love one another? When my emotional and spiritual wanderings take me to the edge of the page, where I am asked to write out, speak out, acknowledge who I am by method of narrative and action, it is a bit frightening to acknowledge that today I am different than yesterday, but my faith walk continues to move forward, walking in grace, in one direction.

*Living imitation compassion*  
**MEMORIZING OUR INVENTION: CARE BY FAITH**

After eight hours in a small room, observing students work through examinations and signing documents to push the data forward, I am happy to walk out of the building. The weather is relatively pleasant, and the sun is just bright enough to invite a moment of respite at the university courtyard, an invitation to sit down and take in nature, if just for a moment.

In the courtyard there is a fountain. It is an old fountain that is subtle and poignant, perfectly placed between the science buildings and the teaching hospital grounds. I often wonder if this fountain “hears” less from those around it than it should, for it seems that nobody ever sits around the fountain or on the benches under the beautiful trees that line the courtyard. I have never seen a gathering of friends at this fountain or a conver-

sation occurring around the monumental sculpture raised above the water.

The good Samaritan. That is the image in the middle of the fountain. The good Samaritan. In a place where science and health care are taught, this fountain offers wisdom in the form of art. It is not *just* a structure; it is a strong statement. A reminder of what you cannot teach but hope to see students learn: kindness.

As I walk around the fountain, I make an abrupt stop: a young man sits quietly, staring at the pavement, hunched down, elbows resting on his knees and a backpack next to his feet. *I know you. You were part of the student group that took the exam this morning. You were the one praying.* He looks up in surprise.

“How are you?” I ask. “You had a busy day.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he says, standing up. I shake my head and tell him I do not wish to interrupt his thoughts; he is the first student I have seen sitting there in the eight months I have worked at the university and lived in this new state. He tells me that he never has time to visit this side of campus but has a fondness for the fountain: “It’s inspiring,” he says, pointing at the images. “He knows where he’s going. He didn’t see a broken man in need; he just helped a stranger. Showed a little compassion, no questions asked.” We speak for a few minutes. He has a full-time job and goes to school full-time. As I wish him a good day and walk away, he calls out: “Professor! How long until I know what my score is?”

I explain that the exams are graded by a professional team across the nation who receives the exam electronically. The team never meets the student. It will be weeks before that team is done with the exam. He looks worried, so I change the topic for a moment and ask about his job. He works as a tour guide at a national park close by. He tells me how his job was an answered prayer.



"After high school I was not in a good place," he says. "I had to spend some time in rehabilitation for substance abuse; my family and I were at odds. A friend of the family hired me for this job, no questions asked, at the national park, cleaning up some areas, and I started getting there early in the morning just to be alone and think. I started praying again. Got back into school, getting good grades, thank God. Things changed." He looks away as if the last portion of his story is embarrassing. Noticing a pattern in his storytelling, I tell him that early-morning prayers are important and encourage him to keep the faith and remember how important it is to show kindness, "no questions asked." He smiles.

"At my job there are some evenings when the stars are so bright, you have no doubt God is watching. I would love to reach out for one of them; I think it would be like touching faith. It's like wonderland out there, compassion, no guilt. You just reminded me of that word, 'compassion' he says. "Maybe one day I can grab a star, keep it safe, and have faith with me all the time, all the time."

A shining star of faith. No guilt. That sounds like a fine idea.

As I walk to my office I think about the fountain. Maybe it is not just a display of kindness that is demonstrated by the good Samaritan, but also compassion. I do not even *think* about the word much on any given day. There are topics I think and speak about quite often: sacrifice, timing, prayer, wisdom, forgiveness. Why has compassion been long omitted?

**We are  
I AM**

Nature is a keeper of identity and time, filling the pages of our life passport with stamps of awe and appreciation for scenery too exquisite for words. As I watch the sunset at Bryce Canyon

National Park, Utah, unencumbered with longitude or latitude awareness, I stand at the edge of a small corner of the canyon, amazed at what I see. I am surrounded by awkward jutting structures that speak of careful architecture, precise stone cuts. I listen to the loud silence of nature. I have followed jagged edges for climbing in no straight line or form toward a higher space simply to witness "*this*." As my gaze slowly takes in the horizon's details, there is simply no denying that "*this*" is inexplicable. Truly a divine wonder.

I see the deep-blue evening sky and stars slowly drip over the sunset canvas as the wind carries parting words of birds and places them at my feet, in small swirls of dust that linger and leave faint echoes of songs reverberating through towers of stone. "*What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?*" (Ps. 8:4). How appropriate that in this moment, just God and I, there is no question of who I am, where I am going, where I have been. At this moment all is well. My soul is at rest, my mind is not consumed by deadlines, language, appointments, or questions. I am simply grateful for the compassionate kindness of a Savior who cares. For all the blessings, the daily awakenings, the divergent paths, the limitless painted skies remind me of grace, compassion.

From the corner of my eye I see one of our travel guides gazing at the same sky. He reaches his hand out toward the skies, extends his fingers as if conducting an invisible orchestra of stars that play his song of laughter; the joy of knocking on the sky, feeling the texture of faith for the first time; wandering in God's wonderland.

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: Macmillan, 1920).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

**Dixil Rodríguez** is an assistant editor for Adventist Review Ministries.

**A**rk of safety. Haven. Hospital. We usually think of the church as a place of refuge and healing. We are encouraged to support one another in good times and through challenges, to “bear one another’s burdens,” to endeavor to build the kingdom through serving one another in unity. Why then does it seem that many are looking to other sources in the hope of being fulfilled? It may be time to examine our practice of *being* the church with a more discerning lens.

#### JARGON FOR CARE

Many churches use standardized language in their interactions:

“Good morning! Happy Sabbath!”

“God is good!” “All the time!”

“How have you been?” “I’m just blessed and highly favored!”

“Bless your heart.”

“God works in mysterious ways . . .”

“I’m praying for you.”

“All things work together . . .”

“Let go and let God.”

At first glance these statements are benign, even comforting, common staples found on the lips of believers worldwide. While these holy exchanges feel warm immediately, they cool on the hearts of hurting people almost as instantly as they are applied. The real goal of uttering standard “churchspeak” is to appear interested for as short a time as possible and move on, bypassing the hurts, fears, issues, and

# SPIRITUAL BYPASS



emotions that run deep below the surface of another individual. Why do we treat others this way? Is it not totally unlike God to leave people in the midst of their pain as we walk away with preoccupied smiles? What does this do to the soul of a seeker? It could possibly be said that “for this reason many are weak and sick among you” (1 Cor. 11:30).

The church is responsible for authentically representing the values of the gospel. Knowing we have not been worthy ambassadors, how do we change?

### **A SCENARIO**

Imagine for a moment being outdoors in Antarctica on the coldest day of the year with no coat. You run toward black smoke in the near distance, hoping desperately to find people, fire, warmth! With the last ounce of strength you finally arrive, grateful, at the door to the shelter, and knock. The people who live there open the door, inquire as to the whereabouts of your coat, and swiftly wish you “Godspeed” on your journey to finding what you need, before returning to their fireplace. How cruel. You were desperate, cold, hurt, and now, disillusioned.

If God was willing to share His only Son with us even with the knowledge that we would abuse

Him, God’s followers certainly ought to consider more hospitable approaches to each other and the “stranger who is within your gates.”

How does the church attempt intentional reconciliation with those who have been bypassed? The following subheadings’ succinctly sum up the blueprint for establishing more authentic relationships as followers of the gospel, resonating as a modern translation of Jesus’ Great Commission.

### **SAY IT**

Spiritual bypass, or “churchspeak,” fosters a sense of identity and community by providing common language to identify who belongs to a certain group. A perhaps unintended consequence of this is the tendency for exclusion once a person fails to offer the traditional response to a specific gambit. Rewrite sentence: The person seeking a human affirmation of God’s affection may feel rejected if all they hear is that “God cares.” We are all human and responsible for submitting what we say to God before offering it on His behalf.

David understood the importance of inviting God’s transformational power to guide his tongue when he penned Psalm 19:14: “Let the words of my



## God was willing to share His only Son with us even with the knowledge that we would abuse Him.

mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord" (KJV). Grace invites us to practice being mindful of what we say, as our words are often the bridges to enduring, effective relationships with others.

### DO IT

Often it is easy to make a promise and more challenging to keep it. In addition to thinking more about what we say, connecting our words with necessary action lets people know we are concerned about them. The next time you are tempted to tell someone "I'll pray for you" in response to hearing about a troubling matter of the heart, try honoring your word in real time by taking the time to pray with them at the moment. This free demonstration of your commitment will acknowledge the concern of your prayer partner and immediately place it in the hands of our Provider. Future conversations will encourage reflection on the action and a sense of solidarity in seeking God's will. Remember, we are promised that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20, KJV).

### SHOW IT

How do we show our friends and family that we want to include them in our lives? We invite them to be with us in our spaces. We check on them and take an interest in the details of their experiences. As the church, we are also invited to actively cultivate relationships with others by going the extra mile to learn about the realities of the people around us, and inviting them to be part of our world. True connections and devoted, genuine friendships are formed, not when we are satisfied with surface interactions, but when we show an interest in participating in the lived experiences of others: "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). When we take the initiative to care about the inner world of someone else, we are mirroring the image of God.

### PROVE IT

The church can practice providing emotional and spiritual safety by engaging with people wherever they are. No longer is the knowledge of God subject to the availability of specific members, convenience, or tradition. Effective methods for the present-day church will utilize innovation, technology, and investments in parallel ministerial and community partnerships.

Spiritual bypass has a direct effect on individual relationships. Its impact is felt cumulatively with regard to how the "body" moves as it prevents us from growing through the vehicle of vulnerability. Integrating the wisdom of generations past with the opportunities of the present will pave the way for spirituality to become targeted, tangible, and accessible.

Matthew 5-7 gives us an example of Jesus rearranging His method for ministry based on the circumstances of the moment. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain" (Matt. 5:1, KJV). This break with the use of conventional facilities for religious education enabled Him to reach all who would come, and impacted their spiritual development to the degree that "the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28, 29, KJV). Jesus used practical insight to offer the people access to Himself. Chapter 8 describes how the people, compelled by His practical gospel, felt compelled to follow Him. The aim of the church should be to provide access for people to love, grow, and serve.

The message of the gospel is too valuable to bypass spiritually. At this very moment the church is hearing God's call to something more profound, to honestly offer each other and the world deeply caring empathy, "and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Accepting this call to care as individuals is fundamental to furthering God's cause of restoration and healing of the whole body of Christ. The opportunity to be the healing change we want to see in the world is in our hands. And it will flourish when we allow Christ to first heal our own wounded hearts. ■

\* Borrowed from a 1994 hit, "If You Love Me," by female trio Brownstone.

---

**Kryselle Craig**, a doctoral student in marriage and family therapy, is passionate about the intersection of faith and relationships in modern practice.

English | Spanish | Portuguese | French | Tagalog | Afrikaans | Ukrainian | Russian | Bahasa | Mongolian | Tamil  
Telugu | Hindi | Marathi | Malayalam | Bengali | Mizo | Bhojpuri | Santali | Cebuano | Nepali | And Many More!

ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO PRESENTS:

# UNLOCKING BIBLE PROPHECIES

INTERNATIONAL

MASTER CLASS with CAMI OETMAN

Adventist World Radio's *Unlocking Bible Prophecies* series has returned, and is now available in dozens of languages!

Share this life-changing series with family and friends around the world and encourage them to sign up for AWR's free Bible studies.

Join Cami Oetman for this thrilling master class in Bible prophecy!

Watch  
Online  
Now!

[awr.org/bible](http://awr.org/bible)



Adventist World Radio 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904



Let's Connect! [f awr360](https://www.facebook.com/awr360) | [i awr360](https://www.instagram.com/awr360) | [@ awr.360](https://www.youtube.com/awr360) | [awr.org/videos](https://www.youtube.com/awr360) | [awr.org](http://awr.org)



All these things Jesus spoke to the  
multitude in parables; and without a parable  
He did not speak to them (Matt 13:34).



## COCOON CHRISTIANITY

## How far is “going all the way for God”?

### LAEL CAESAR

**C**ocoon Christianity doesn’t have to believe in butterflies. Doesn’t have to, because getting to be a cocoon already proves your willingness to go all the way. With Jesus. Remember that this is about Christianity, not about metamorphosis.

### NOT COCOONS ANYWAY

Cocoons have already come a long way: they’ve been eggs; they’ve been larvae; they’ve done enough. Moreover, potential butterflies object to being called cocoons. They aren’t—except for two, the *satyr* and the *parnassian* butterfly. Apart from that, they’re chrysalides. They’d like you to know that while moths do cocoon, they do not. Butterflies do chrysalis. You may not appreciate the important difference, but butterflies do. And it isn’t conceit: it’s being careful about terminology. Because moths are not butterflies, they are moths. Calling butterfly pupae cocoons does not befit their stature—or whatever more meek and Christian language you’d prefer. They can’t say anything about class, because Mr. Linnaeus already lumped them all together into one huge class called the six-leggers (*hexapoda*), later, *insecta*, largest class in the largest phylum (subdivision) in the animal kingdom.

More to the point, you Christians are so committed to judging people on superficial things like words. Meanwhile, what matters to butterflies at this point is a real distinction, the one between themselves and moths, even when they stall at their pupal stage and refuse to move on to something else. They don’t need to become something else. Something else like what? Like moths?

### CHRYSLID CONCERN

Chrysalides hold in their pupae a strong concern about all the flapping and flailing and flying of full-blown butterflies. All that flying doesn’t make them any more birds; cucaracha, (cockroaches), maybe, but not real fliers like birds. Besides, bird, cucaracha, whatever, the effort of it too clearly suggests a creature’s works instead of

the Creator’s awesome power and the Redeemer’s gracious salvation. Moreover, there’s a conspicuousness to the flailing and fluttering that departs from the spirit of humility so fundamental to pupae . . . to cocoons. I mean, to chrysalides.

### GROWING-UP STEPS

Cocoons used to be eggs once. Eggs are a beginning phenomenon. Lots of people today object to being told “and it was so” as in the Genesis creation story. They find it more interesting to keep asking the question, Which came first—chicken or egg? The answer is, of course, the chicken: “God said, ‘. . . let birds fly’” (Gen. 1:20). And butterflies and moths and their skipper friends, even the despised cucaracha, it seems, were part of that fifth day’s first order of business. What could God have been thinking? What could He have been intending? What was the first couple to think? And what could their current existence, numbers, and behavior possibly teach us today—about cocoon theology?

We should first concede that we cannot say definitively what these creatures looked, sounded, moved, interacted like, in the beginning. The best of our questions may well remain unanswered until . . . Until we converse on the matter directly with our infinite Creator God. Still, living with yesterday’s secrets, while looking to learn from creation today does serve divine purposes, it appears, as words from Job, cautiously applied, may suggest: “Ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you” (Job 12:7).

As for our cocooning and noncocooning creatures, the Hebrew calls them *sherets ha’oph* (swarming fliers), where *sherets* connects them to the ground, more particularly, to small creatures like mice and geckos; and *’oph*, from *’ûph*, connects them to the sky, specifically to birds, because it means “to fly” Consider, then, that these ridiculous seeming paradoxes represent the most successful response of all the animal kingdom to the divine instruction to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:22). These creeping and scuttling nuisances, flailing

## Being born is neither the end nor the climax of life.

too, about, in so-called flight, these absurdities of the divine creation—at least as they now appear to us—constitute more in species, sheer numbers, and distribution across the earth's ecological zones than all of brilliant humanity, elegant beasts or soaring avians combined, with 1 or 2 or 5 million species in all, counting both living and extinct.

Among them are our cocoons and chrysalides.

### THE GREAT PUPAE CONTROVERSY

Which leads me to wonder about the attitude of chrysalides in our parable. It may be somewhat uncharitable to make this kind of connection, but their fussy anxiety to be distinctive evokes for me such a stern warning from Jesus Himself, one about the theologians, better known in New Testament times as scribes: “Beware of the scribes,” He says. And why? Well, their drive to stand out impels them to fairly farcical behavior: their thing is “to go around in long robes” (Mark 12:38). Stagnated chrysalides object strongly to such behavior. Given what we've heard from them, we can see that their commitment is to avoid the ostentation of going around in long robes, fluttering by in scintillating colors. For them true religion is very denominational and totally nondemonstrative. They've already told us how suspicious they are of fluttering and flailing, sighing and flying. For them passionate involvement in activities that the teeming millions (of *sherets ha'oph* and beyond) readily recognize and even identify with, is strictly a nonstarter: all that fascination with social issues that takes them into the streets, publicly protesting against callous and cruel conduct coming from those who are expected to be peace officers is clearly political and thus clearly irreligious. In fact, honest confession would be that it's socialist, and true chrysalides want nothing to do with socialism.

So they stay where they are, hanging from the tree—like Jesus, they may say: forever and ever acknowledging His dying, agreeing with Paul about dying all the time (1 Cor. 15:31); ever remembering, ever pronouncing the “thou shalt not”s; paying tithe

“of mint and anise and cumin”; [traveling] land and sea to win one proselyte,” then making him [yes, “him”] “twice as much a son of hell as [themselves]” (Matt. 23:15); oblivious to the aborted contradiction of life, growth, charity, practical godliness and eternal joy in living and service that they are; insensitive to the simple virtue of going about doing good, as Jesus of Nazareth did (Acts 10:38); uninformed about the greater blessedness of giving (Acts 20:35), or the reality of the lifelong ministry of the very One they claim as leader: “having a form . . . but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5).

Meanwhile, on the other side of the great butterfly versus moth, chrysalid versus cocoon controversy the droves have gathered: rallying droves of conscientious moth pupae, resisting, rejecting, repudiating all that the chrysalides claim to stand for. If chrysalides are against social justice, then they are for it; if chrysalides cannot speak the word “socialist” without spitting—if, to speak the word, they must spit it out, then the moth pupae, the true cocoons, will speak it with sympathy. They do so not because they themselves subscribe to any Marxist dialectic, but because socialism is itself an inherently wonderful idea already demonstrated, they insist, in the life of the early church.

The true cocoons know that life makes sense only when one discovers the reason they are here. And the most excellent reason for being here is to help fellow humanity, instead of living with the notion of a fantastic tomorrow where pain and suffering will be no more. True cocoons are determined not to be so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good. So, rather than obsess about some supernatural transformation that will fit them for life on a cloud, in the sky, way up high, in some sweet by and by, they live for the present, in the moment, liberated from arbitrary constraints about what people can do and can't, about details of their life and lifestyle that are their own business; but unstinting in their service to those they refer to, using antiquated language and fossilized phrases: e.g., “the least of these,” “a cup of cold water,” sheep versus goats (Matt. 25:40, 45, 32; 10:42). The occasional seventeenth-century turn of phrase proves them to be part of the spiritual community they look down upon; it shows that while they freely associate with elements of society motivated by socialist agendas their ethical identity is not lost. They know who they are and what they are doing. They are realistic about human need and



make a difference “where the rubber meets the road”—not an ancient saying, but another of the cocoons’ favorites. They show their faith by their works (James 2:18): they support Prison Fellowship’s annual Angel Tree project, protest with the Black Lives Matter movement, pay dues to the American Civil Liberties Union, contribute financially to the Southern Poverty Law Center, and build houses for poor, single mothers with Habitat for Humanity.

### **BORN TO LOSE?**

The standoff or hang-on between the chrysalides and cocoon pupae holds no promise of victory—not for either of them in their present estate and mental state. Whether they know it or not, they are both doomed. Immaturity dressed in grown-up’s clothes is either a cutie’s floor show or a tragedy. The 4-year-old girl trying to walk in mom’s heels amuses us all so long as she doesn’t fall. The young adult, middle-aged woman, or old man, throwing tantrums, is a cringeworthy embarrassment to everyone cursed to contemplate the pathetic spectacle. Chrysalides are not the real enemy of moth pupae: their mutual stagnation is. And the answer that will deliver both the parable’s chrysalides and cocoons from their arrested development is growth. For now, they live in a time warp where each evaluates its inadequacies in relation to the other, concluding that it is superior because it has none of the other’s failings.

For the cocoon to win, the chemical ecdysone needs to get to work enabling the moth to cast off its outer coating. Then enzymes called caspases proceed to tear up cells in its muscles, digestive system, and other organs. And the Holy Spirit’s work in transforming the born-again sinner into a revealer of the divine likeness is its own never-ending work of tearing down and building up.


To change the metaphor while highlighting the challenge of it: “The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. . . . Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose.”\* And as surely as a cocoon or chrysalis will never fly without this shredding and constructing, just so surely the milk-imbibing Christian will never attain to the measure of the stature of Christ’s fullness without daily submission to the will of heaven working within to will and to

do of God’s good pleasure (see Heb. 5:12, 13; Phil. 2:13). Being born is neither the end nor the climax of life. Children born of God will not be contented with being cocoons. Hence Peter’s encouragement to milk-drinking Christians: “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

The metaphor is consistently applied between Paul and Peter: for the latter, milk is to help you grow; for the former, that growth takes you to the place where you have matured beyond baby behavior: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man [i.e., mature], I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11).

### **THE CLIMAX. THE SUMMARY**

Like politicians in the news, Christians today are presented the option of alignment in contrasting camps over against each other, subtly engaging the language of Scripture, obsessing with terminology, not merely to validate our own perspective and agenda, but to denounce the other. Our times affirm the possibility of living as enemy Christians, refocused away from Jesus and the promise of progressive perfection in Him. Or we may choose Christ’s own option of all serving in the common vocation to which we all are called (Eph. 4:1), while recognizing the privilege of distinctive stewardships (1 Cor. 4:1, 2; 12:4; Eph. 4:7). Keen Christians will let God do the calling, and affirm each other in the ministries to which He calls each one.

In evil times evil men drove their slaves by the lash. But the powers of duress and tyranny, however brutal, cannot hold a candle to the blazing light of the love of God—in Eden, in Gethsemane, at Calvary. It is a love that leaves us no choice. So born-again children of God, born to incorruptibility (1 Peter 1:23), growing together, developing, maturing, working—together—constrained by the incomparable force of heaven’s love, shall soon attain, God grant, unto whatever His purpose may be for us this side of glory. And subsequently, beyond our glorification, He shall continue in us His wondrous transformation as we work together with Him, doing the will of God our Father, with all our heart, and forever (Eph. 6:6).

\*Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 453.

**Lael Caesar** is an associate editor of *Adventist Review*.



## “GRAMMING” GOD

---

*What do the #God, #blessed, #faith posts really accomplish?*

**D**on't tell your God how big your storm is; tell your storm how big your God is." "Remember who you are. Don't compromise for anyone, for any reason. You are a child of the Almighty God. Live that truth."

#Bible Verse 1

#Bible Verse 2

#verseoftheday

What do these types of posts and hashtags accomplish? Whom are they for? Is this the most authentic way to live out faith on Instagram, as a Facebook post, a tweet, or on TikTok?

### BRANDING

Your social media platforms project your brand, regardless of whether you believe you have one. Like it or not, the content you post on your various accounts represents you—accurately or not. Photos are usually carefully curated to show sub-

jects in their best possible light and angles. Captions for photos, tweets, and copy, how ideas/thoughts/jokes are captured in a 60-second video, are rarely conceived on the fly. It's mostly carefully thought out and easily deleted if the post lands wrong.

Likes, comments, shares, retweets, and direct messages affirm us or ruin our days. We build followings that can lead to monetization, or our pages stay safely in the realm of content for family and close friends. The key to all of it lies in what you put out.

If you're a follower of Christ, your social media content can certainly reflect that, or not. Keep in mind, on the Web everything has a long shelf life. If your life's brand is truly focused on your walk with Christ, your content will often be perceived that way. Be certain that your social media posts tell that story. Life and "art" truly should imitate each other. If there is a cognitive dissonance between the two (because many people cannot keep the various "sides" of a person compartmentalized), you aren't doing God any favors in your imagined representation of Him.

### ARE YOUR "GOD POSTS" DRIVING PEOPLE TO HIM OR AWAY?

While I'm not aware of any substantial studies on this topic, I conducted some informal research. Where did I go? Social media. Debbie\* is a former Seventh-day Adventist. Her posts, outlining her deep disappointment in the judgment and behavior of many of the Christians she's known and grown up with, would likely resonate with a lot of people. What does she get out of Chris-

tian-themed memes? “Nothing,” she says. “I scroll on by and often feel the person posting is lacking something in their life.” An interesting perspective considering that people who post religious content are often doing so because that’s exactly what is filling their lives; certainly not something they are desperately seeking. People share this information because it fills them and brings them meaning they want to share.

Jim, a friend from graduate school, doesn’t identify as a religious person. “I am not a big fan of serious memes in general,” he says. “But as a nonreligious person, if most of what I’m seeing from someone are religious memes, that sort of doubles up on things that are outside of my chosen experience. So I “unfollow.” To each their own, but I’d rather be seeing posts that aren’t memes and/or provide insight that I can appreciate.”

Most of us raised within Christianity are familiar with the concept of “planting seeds.” It’s when you leave someone a morsel of your faith in hopes that it will germinate and become a mighty oak tree of belief in Jesus. Blessedly, this sometimes happens. But how effective is that notion on social media? Clearly Debbie and Jim, who are not believers, say “seed posts” aren’t appreciated. It could be argued that they would naturally feel that way because they aren’t interested in the content. It makes sense they would scroll on by or unfollow altogether. Did the Holy Spirit not have enough time to reach them before they scrolled away?

Believing Christians don’t always get a lot out of spiritual posts either. “I think they tell me more about the person posting than making me feel like I learned something. Every once in a while I read something meaningful to me, but not that often,” says Colin. Phil concurs. “I feel nothing,” he says. “Sometimes when I feel guilty I read them and try to make sense of them. Maybe there’s a message for that moment. But I forget about it after a few seconds.”

## INTENTION MATTERS

Social media is deeply influential. Just look at what has happened during election seasons worldwide. Social media delivers news and opinion, and can certainly be powerful enough to affect values and thinking. In that light, if social media posts carry that kind of power, surely that power can be harnessed for good. Enter in the rays of sunlight and positivity in the form of a God-hon-

**“I scroll on by and often feel the person posting is lacking something in their life.”**

oring post. Guess what? There are a lot of people who need and appreciate that type of content.

“It’s a good way to remind myself of God’s love when it’s been too busy,” says Vinciya. “I also use those memes to lift up friends in need.” Harold finds them enjoyable and inspiring, and he engages further by reposting or commenting to the original post author. Posts that provoke deeper thought on various topics are often appreciated for personal growth.

“For Bible verses, I generally scroll on by. Usually, the verses chosen are ones that I know so well they start to feel overused,” Sari says. “I’m usually engaged by progressive Christianity posts that help me think deeper on a topic, or to think about a topic in a new way.”

Intention is often a benchmark of whether a “God post” is well received or not. What is the person posting really like? If you know them, do these posts match up with their behavior? Do you know if there are things going on in their lives where making a spiritual post might be more about encouraging themselves than in spreading a good word? All such things matter to increasingly sophisticated social media consumers.

“I try to look at the intention behind a post and find the good,” says Jamie. “But sometimes I feel these posts are not inclusive of other worldviews and can feel like they are excluding people of other backgrounds and cultures.”

Does posting about God on social media need to be a marker for the Christian creator? Maybe. Perhaps the greater question to answer is whether the time taken in posting spiritual content is truly worth the time it takes to create the post. Could it be that Christ is better exemplified in real human connection rather than words in a square?

It’s something to think about before you hit that share button. 📌

\*All names used in this article are pseudonyms.

**Wilona Karimabadi** is an assistant editor for Adventist Review Ministries.





Dedication day at Havilah orphanage, founder directors Frazier and Virginia Mathis at center of picture.

## GOING WHERE THE LORD LEADS

*From small beginnings, one ministry impacts the world.*

Adventist Review associate editor Lael Caesar recently spoke with Frazier and Virginia Mathis about their ministry for orphans in Africa.

### Tell me about your ministry: What is Global Vessels?

**VM:** Global Vessels is a nonprofit organization. Its aim is simple—to bless and be blessed. With this in mind, we do outreach, mostly in Africa. We are happy to go wherever God sends us. We have discovered that we think we’re going to bless somebody, but instead we receive the blessing.

### What led you to start Global Vessels?

**FM:** We started by going on several Maranatha mission trips. We returned after one trip, and I said, “You know what? I’d like to go to Africa.” An inquiry into Maranatha found they were focused on a different part of the world. Since I’m in construction, I asked if they would share blueprints for a church. With those plans in hand, I stood before the Emmanuel Brinklow church, in Ashton, Maryland. “I have a set of drawings to go and build a church in Africa,” I said. “Who wants to go with me?” Thirty-eight volunteers decided to go build a church in Bekwai (in Ghana).

### Which is easier: Getting the ministry started or keeping it running?

**VM:** That’s a difficult question, but I’m going to say, keeping it

running. Especially since we have moved into new territory— orphanages. We built three churches, a dormitory, and a library in Ghana. Buildings you can build and leave. But with orphanages, we have to take care of children.

### So let’s talk about the orphanages: Why? And why Tanzania?

**FM:** Each year we went to Ghana. When we returned, we would give a report at our church. We’d talk about what we had done in Ghana.

**VM:** It wasn’t just building! We did evangelistic series. Often we would present a Week of Prayer while there. We worked day and night, and by God’s grace saw many young people join the church. But we felt as though God was impressing us to go elsewhere.

### So you started an orphanage.

**FM:** Yes, we were telling everybody what we were doing when someone asked, “When are you going to go to my country [Tanzania]?” So we went and met with the church leadership. They wanted an extension on an existing clinic. They also wanted something for pregnant women, as well as for AIDS patients.

**VM:** We took a group and started building. While there, we lived at the union compound.

**FM:** Each day we’d pass this sign that said “Orphanage.” Each day we said we were going to stop. One day we did. It was a one-room house with a man in charge of at least 20 orphaned children he had rescued off the streets. They were in dismal circumstances.

We decided to pass the hat in the group. We got money from

everyone there. We bought flip-flops and clothing for the children. We sent the women to the store. They bought some basins, and then got a 55-gallon drum, and filled it with water. We began to bathe the children and dress them.

**VM:** After we finished our building project, on the plane returning to the U.S. one woman asked, "What are you going to do? You saw those children. You can do better. You can build an orphanage."

### **How long did it take you to return?**

**FM:** The following summer we returned to Tanzania to buy land. The university owns at least 250 acres, and they offered us three locations to choose from. The original plan was to have 10 homes with 10 children per home. After some planning we returned to build the first house in honor of our board chair's mother.

### **How did you decide on the name of your ministry and the name of the orphanage?**

**VM:** We came up with Global Vessels because while our determination was that we were going to Africa, we'll go wherever God sends us.

**FM:** The name of, "Havilah," means "where there is gold" (Gen. 2:11). Our children are gold, thus the name Havilah. After the first house, we did house two. The daughter of Louise Washington Warnick decided to give funds for that house. Then house three was built in memory of Valerie Silver, who died in the World Trade Center, and house four in memory of William Woods.

### **How many children do you now serve? And how many houses?**

**FM:** Twenty-nine children.

**VM:** We have four houses. The directors live in one. The other three are occupied by children.

### **What's the one thing that keeps you from doing more or reaching your ideal?**

**VM:** I'm going to say money. We could tell you stories. We're not challenged by money, because God has it all, and we know that. We do trust Him, but we do need people to help us.

**FM:** Money is a big thing, but it's really not *the* thing. One year we were planning house four. We hadn't raised any money. Then we got a call. I drove over to see the individual. He gave me a check for \$10,000. Brother Caesar, when I got that

check, the Holy Spirit whispered to me: "Money isn't your issue. I can get all the money you need. The only thing I need you to do is be faithful." With that in my mind, what is it that you cannot do? We decided to build a learning center.

**VM:** God has blessed us. God has a lot of pastors who hold us close to their hearts. They encourage their members to come with us, because that's another way that we raise funds.

### **What's your next big thing?**

**FM:** The next thing is to get this learning center functioning. We need teachers to teach computer coding. We need individuals who know how to saw. We need individuals who know how to bake. We need individuals who can repair cell phones and computers. We have the building and equipment, but we need instructors. The children (orphans) have grown. We took them in when they were 3 and 5 years old; our oldest is now almost 20. She's in the first stages of law school. When the children turn 18, the government no longer allows them to be in an orphanage. We have other children coming behind and [we have] those who are leaving. They need to be able to take care of themselves.

### **What about your Adventist faith? Is that a dimension of your work?**

**FM:** The children have worship every day and evening. We take them to church every Sabbath.

**VM:** We are not allowed to force anyone to be in a religion, because we're working with social service in the government, but we take them to church. The director is a pastor. He and his wife have beautiful voices. He has made a wonderful children's choir with our children. They go around Tanzania and sing. Churches invite them to preach. We have tried to teach them the love of God, who God is, and to pray to God. We want them to remember this when they leave us. Many of the children choose to be baptized. One of the other things we do is ask people to help us send them to Adventist schools.

### **How should interested readers and listeners reach you if they want to know more about your ministry or want to lend support to your ministry?**

**VM:** There are several ways. We have an e-mail address: [globalvessels@aol.com](mailto:globalvessels@aol.com). We have a postal box: Global Vessels, P.O. Box 702, Fulton, MD 20759. Or you may call (202) 438-7325. 📞



## GOING AT IT JESUS' WAY

*Sharing the gospel is a  
wholistic enterprise.*

*Adventist Review associate editor  
Gerald Klingbeil recently spoke  
with Julie and Scott Griswold  
about the relationship between  
preaching the gospel and serving  
the needs of people.*

### **Scott and Julie, tell us about ASAP ministries.**

**SG:** ASAP Ministries stands for Advocates for Southeast Asians and the Persecuted. It's an organization that has been going strong for more than 25 years and started out of the refugee crisis in Southeast Asia.

**JG:** Judy Aitken, the founder of ASAP Ministries, served in the refugee camps, helping with all kinds of needs. Hundreds were baptized. Judy returned to America and became an advocate for the refugees moving to North America, helping them survive and find a home church. She continued going back and forth to Southeast Asia, helping the unreached peoples in those areas where the church was still very small. She raised funds in North America to help with planting churches, with medical missions, and with schools.

**SG:** The work has grown under the new director, Julia O'Carey, Judy's daughter, so that now ASAP Ministries supports 80 different schools with about 5,000 at-risk children. There are more

than 600 funded workers, including Bible workers, medical workers, and teachers.

### **What is your involvement with the ministry?**

**JG:** I'm working with ASAP Ministries as outreach coordinator for Reach the World Next Door in Houston, Texas.

**SG:** We took the opportunity to come here because the Texas Conference had a real heart for unreached people groups. They were willing to partner with us and with ASAP Ministries to do outreach, specifically for refugees, immigrants, and international students. We had previously worked with ASAP Ministries in Michigan, and before that in Thailand and Cambodia for 16 years as missionaries.

### **You mentioned schools and children and reaching people wholistically. What is the relationship between sharing the gospel and serving people in their daily needs?**

**SG:** We usually slide to one extreme: we're all about preaching the gospel and doing evangelistic meetings, or we're all about social action. Jesus combined the two perfectly. For sure, the good news centers on Jesus' death and resurrection, but it's also about God's love, and that's often best seen by helping someone in need. Some people say that's like using a hook, but it doesn't have to be that way. We should truly care about someone's need, someone's pain, and help them, even if they don't want the spiritual side. Jesus helped a lot of people like that, but He was always working trying to reach their hearts as well.

**JG:** As an ASAP worker,



whether you're a teacher, a medical missionary, or a church planter, each one is equipped to care for the whole person. The church planter knows how to do a charcoal poultice, and the teacher knows how to make a gospel presentation.

**Based on your own experience in Southeast Asia, what do you consider the most effective way of preaching the gospel in a non-Christian context that is vastly different from North America?**

**JG:** I relied on the Holy Spirit to know where to begin. Our hearts started going out toward the widows, the children. All around us were beggars. There was a squatter village by the railroad tracks. We would give them microloans to start a small business, like with a cart to sell noodles or fruit, or to connect them with different organizations that would sell things they made.

**SG:** We taught simple sanitation so that their babies wouldn't die of diarrhea. In the beginning I started with the gospel, and it seemed to just go over their heads. There were too many desperate needs. As we helped them, it was beautiful how they started asking questions and we started praying with them. "God, please bless their children. Help them go to school, and to get well and to make a living." Pretty soon a small group of the people we were helping became Christians. We called it the Water Lily church.

**Scott, tell us about Reach the World Next Door.**

**SG:** Right before moving back from overseas, we visited Houston, Texas, for a youth convention. The city was full of people from around the world. As the young adults were going door to door, we heard such statements as "I met a Muslim lady and I didn't know what to say" and "I had nothing to give the lady who only spoke Vietnamese." I said to Julie, "We have to find a way to train people here for cross-cultural missions right in America." That became: Reach the World Next Door.

**How many people originally from Southeast Asia are living in the United States as either immigrants or refugees?**

**SG:** About one third of the world is part of what we call an "unreached people group," those who have basically never had a chance to know Jesus. There are between 4,000 and 7,000 unreached groups, depending how you count them. In North

America we have people from more than 300 of those groups, right where we can help them and share Jesus with them.

**Tell me a story that illustrates well the interconnectedness between preaching the gospel and serving people?**

**SG:** We were here a few months when Hurricane Harvey hit the coast really hard. We were two hours away from a Cambodian community. A friend called and said, "We have three feet of water in every house. These people are devastated. Can you come down and bring some volunteers?" We spent the next weeks helping tear out moldy drywall and starting to rebuild. The people were so grateful. We would go house to house and say, "How are you doing? Are you getting help? Is anybody sick?" The Buddhist temple let us teach health classes on its grounds. They even let us do a program to share the meaning behind Christmas. Soon people were saying, "We never really thought much about Christianity until we saw it was mostly Christians who kept coming to help. That touched us. We want to know more." One man named Phaly, from the country of Laos, wanted to study the Bible. We took church members there and just shared the main Bible stories. He knew nothing about the Bible.

**JG:** In one of the local churches we met a newly baptized young man named Dylan who was also Laotian. We asked him if he would come with us to meet Phaly. They were talking back and forth and asking, "What province do you come from?" "Oh, really? That's the same province that my dad came from." "What village did you live in?" He named the same village that his father was from. Can you believe that? They were best friends growing up, drinking buddies, and now Phaly has thrown away his alcohol, just got baptized, and may be the very one God uses to help Dylan's father, whom he has been praying for constantly to stop drinking. That's the beauty of how Jesus works. ✨

You can find out more about ASAP Ministries and Reach the World Next Door at [asapministries.org](http://asapministries.org) and [reachtheworldnextdoor.com](http://reachtheworldnextdoor.com). If you want to connect with different people and language groups in your region but wonder about language resources, visit [mylanguagemylife.com](http://mylanguagemylife.com) to find resources for more than 150 languages.



meet the needs of those affected.

Our goal is to offer wholistic medical care to women suffering from the consequences of genital mutilation. This includes not only surgical interventions and reconstructive operations but also psychological and physiotherapeutic help. We also offer a self-help group that meets once a month at Waldfriede Hospital.

### A LIFELINE FOR AFFECTED WOMEN

Since the opening in September 2013, more than 600 women have sought our medical help. Surgery was necessary for half of them.

A stable solution has also been found in the meantime for the financial settlement of problematic cases. An operation costs around 2,000 to 4,000 euros. For people with statutory health insurance, the costs are covered by health insurance. However, since we also want to treat people who are not insured, we have founded the Förderverein Waldfriede e.V. (Waldfriede Association). The association, financed by donations, supports or assumes the costs in these cases.

Since January 2015 we have been conducting support group meetings once a month. Both women whom we have already treated and those still looking for help come to the meetings. In a protected setting, the women can exchange experiences and learn that they are not alone with their fears and worries. Sometimes affected women talk about their fate, or women who have already undergone reoperation talk about their experiences.

### A WHOLISTIC APPROACH

The most important measure in the fight against FGM is wide-

## A LIFELINE TO BLOOM AGAIN

*Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for nonmedical reasons, and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls. The practice also violates their rights to health, security, and physical integrity. It also goes against their right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and their right to life when the procedure results in death. Based on biblical principles, the Seventh-day Adventist Church opposes FGM and adopted a document against this practice in April 2000. Since its opening in 2013, Desert Flower Center at Seventh-day Adventist Waldfriede Hospital in Berlin, Germany, has assisted more than 600 women affected by FGM. —Editors*

---

*Desert Flower Center fights female genital mutilation, one woman at a time.\**

**CORNELIA STRUNZ**

The project Desert Flower Center Waldfriede (DFC) came into being out of clinical necessity, as many women in Germany also suffer from the health and psychological consequences of FGM. The project was realized in cooperation with the Desert Flower Foundation under the patronage of former model Waris Dirie and her manager, Walter Lutschinger, in December 2011, as it became clear that purely preventive work did not

spread education and schooling of children, locally, in their home countries. In general, the public should be sensitized to the issue. Information on FGM should be bundled and further developed on an interdisciplinary basis, and professional competencies should be strengthened. To this end, in 2020, we founded the Berlin FGM Coordination Office. The coordination office aims to link existing services in Berlin and expand them according to need, train professionals in dealing with the issue, and strengthen awareness-raising activities in communities.

In the sense of wholistic support, the coordination office offers psychological support and psychosocial group services for those affected, in addition to medical counseling and treatment.

To this end, the coordination center focuses on raising awareness among professionals, and qualifies them for dealing with those affected. A hotline also offers the first point of contact and counseling for affected persons and professionals and enables simple and low-threshold mediation.

As we receive many inquiries about shadowing at the Desert Flower Center, we have been offering an FGM-intensive seminar for colleagues, midwives, and nursing professionals, twice a year since 2018.

### **AN HONORABLE ENTERPRISE**

As medical coordinator and senior physician of the Desert Flower Center Waldfriede, I am the first person the women get in touch with by phone or e-mail. The fact alone that these often very emotional preliminary talks, and the medical examination, take place in a trusting environment from woman to woman, makes it easier for them to open up to me.

In the counseling session, problems presented are dealt with individually. It is not always about an operation. Some want to talk to our psychotherapist or join our self-help group. Others need a medical certificate for their ongoing asylum procedure. It is important to take time for a detailed anamnesis and examination and respond to the patients' needs, thus alleviating their fears and addressing their concerns.

As a specialist in our department, I am grateful to be able to be engaged in such a noble endeavor at the Desert Flower Center Waldfriede. The many positive responses encourage me to continue in this highly important work.

**They can often talk about their worries and experiences for the first time in their lives.**

### **RESOURCES**

In October 2020 we published the first German-language reference book on FGM. We aim to share our experiences with this complex issue and provide assistance for all professions in coping with the multifaceted problems of circumcised women. That month the center also published the first issue of the new *Desert Flower* magazine. In it we provided a detailed overview of the task, and our projects, and successes, in the worldwide fight against FGM. The magazine is available in German, English, and French.

### **GIVING LIVES BACK**

A major problem at the beginning was intercultural perception and communication. We are delighted to now have two employed counselors/interpreters, in addition to volunteer counselors, who help us and the women we serve to overcome these nonverbal hurdles. With Evelyn Brenda (born in Kenya) and Farhia Mohamed (born in Somalia), we have two therapists on the team who can work psychotherapeutically both in German and in their respective mother tongues.

All the women tell us how valuable this sense of community within the self-help group is for them. There they can often talk about their worries and experiences for the first time in their lives—in a protected setting among like-minded people. At these meetings we are always aware that our work with the women is much more than just a job.


When they come together, there is always a very warm atmosphere. We all call each other by our first names, and especially the women who have already been treated are bursting with self-confidence. In these moments we realize how much this task fulfills us and what the team at the Desert Flower Center Waldfriede achieves. Here women are literally given their lives back. ♣

\* Based on an interview by Inter-European Division women's ministries director Dagmar Dorn and communications director Corrado Cozzi.

**Cornelia Strunz** is medical director of the Desert Flower Center in Berlin, Germany.







You have only begun to show your servant  
mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven  
who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?  
Deuteronomy 2:24



My times are  
in your hand;  
deliver me from  
the hand of  
my enemies,  
and from them  
that persecute me.  
Psalm 31:15



Because I seek  
not my own will but the  
will of him who sent me.  
John 5:30



For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge  
of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.  
Habakkuk 2:14



Grace and peace be multiplied unto you  
through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.  
2 Peter 1:2



And you  
shall be  
able to  
stand  
firm  
against  
the  
wiles  
of the  
devil.  
Ephesians  
6:10-12



And what you have heard from me  
in the presence of many witnesses  
entrust to faithful men, who will  
be able to teach others also.  
2 Timothy 2:2



It is good for me  
to draw near to God:  
I will trust in the Lord, and  
my declare all thy works.  
Psalm 73:28



And you shall be  
able to stand firm  
against the wiles  
of the devil.  
Ephesians  
6:10-12



wh  
it, and sp  
Isaiah 42:5



*The words of a man's mouth  
are deep waters; the fountain  
of wisdom is a bubbling brook.*  
Proverbs 18:4



*Turn to me  
and be gracious to me,  
for I am lonely and afflicted.*  
Psalms 25:1

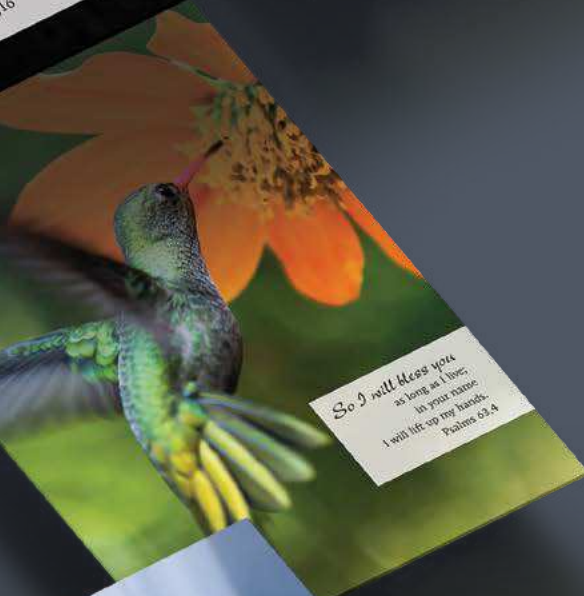
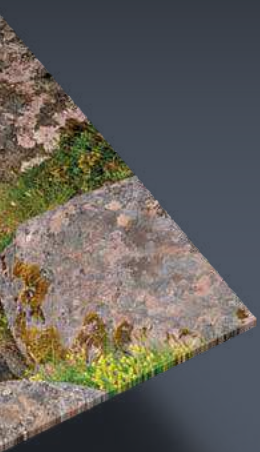
our  
ometh.  
5,13



*And God made the beasts of the  
earth according to their kinds, and  
the livestock according to their kinds, and  
everything that creeps on the ground  
according to its kind.*  
And God saw that it was good.  
Genesis 1:25







Honor everyone.  
Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.  
1 Peter 2:17



Your bars shall be iron and bronze,  
and as your days, so shall your strength be.  
Deuteronomy 33:25

So I will bless you  
as long as I live,  
in your name  
I will lift up my hands.  
Psalms 63:4

## How It Is Done

1. Ask God to lead you to the scripture most appropriate for each day. Using a Bible app, search the Bible daily for texts suitable for future mailings.
2. You can prepare texts several days in advance if a chapter or story appeals to you.
3. Psalms and Proverbs are fantastic sources. Sometimes even though a text has been used before, it can take on new meaning with a different image.
4. It is easiest to store your photo collection on your cell phone. There you can find an appropriate image for the selected text.
5. Working on a phone application instead of a computer works best. It allows for a consistency in the size of the text and the photograph. The cell phone display is ideal for seeing how it will look.
6. Then export it as a screenshot to your send folder and then on to your recipients.



EMPATHY AND

EMPOWERMENT

*Pinpointing  
the moment  
Jesus won  
the victory*

## HAROLD ALOMÍA

**E**mpathy” is defined as the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.<sup>1</sup> The popular saying of “walking in someone else’s shoes” comes to mind; and in order to express this reality, we tend to use such expressions as “I feel your pain” or “I understand what you mean.”

But it’s worth noting that sometimes those phrases feel somewhat empty, especially when the disparity of the situation is glaringly obvious. After all, can you really “feel the pain” of a widow dressed in black if you are a bride dressed in white?

Understanding someone is powerful. It’s one of the most significant attributes of humanity; something that, in spite of the results of the Fall, still shows the glimmers of the image of the Creator.

As significant as empathy is, it becomes somewhat limiting if it’s left at that. Having empathy for someone, but not helping them improve their plight, is the equivalent of “thoughts and prayers.” What actually makes a successful combination occurs when we can pair empathy and empowerment. When our understanding of someone’s plight offers us the ability to give the person in the situation the tools, means, or circumstances that raise them beyond their problems into a different plane of existence. That manifest altruism is also a glimmer of God’s image, a remainder of our original design. This question of understanding doesn’t limit itself to our own interrelated realities; it’s a question that flows all the way to God and asks, Does God understand the human predicament? Does He really understand me?

### THE BASIS OF EMPATHY

Since we are asking the question, the answer must come from the pages of Scripture. The central reference point for the answer to this

question comes to us from the Gospel of John. John tells us that the Word (the eternal Logos), who is God and was with God from the beginning, decides to occupy human temporal space as a human person. The story finds its descriptive beauty in the figure of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling (literally, “pitching His tent”)<sup>2</sup> among us. God in human flesh (John 1:1-14). The apostle Paul adds to this description by stipulating that “in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9, NRSV).<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament writers paint an exceptional picture for us. Jesus is a unique incarnation of the eternal Logos. Paul adds in Philippians 2:6-9 that this transformation was willing and purposeful. This very simple description of the Incarnation lies at the foundation of divine purposeful and empowering empathy.

### EMPATHY IN TEMPTATION

The story of the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11 offers us key lessons that help us understand God’s empathy toward us. Let’s look at three of them.

#### *Temptation One: Hunger*

Note that the devil comes to Jesus at the end of His fast, at the moment when He is the hungriest. The devil comes disguised and uses the real feeling of hunger to drive a temptation that is aimed to have Jesus doubt who He is. Forty days before, the Father had spoken clearly and had stated who Jesus was—His Son. The temptation is not just questioning Jesus’ identity, but ultimately the word that God had spoken over Jesus’ life, bestowing upon Him the identity in question. The similarities with the first temptation in Genesis 3 cannot be missed.

The reality of this being a repeated strategy used against God’s children in all generations is also hard to miss. Hunger is not just referring to the physical pangs of an empty stomach; hunger for love, care, attention, protection, and empowerment are also real. And when we find ourselves





sensing this hunger, it's easy to believe the lie that we are less than what God has declared us to be, and therefore we need to satisfy these hunger pangs in ways that do not really satisfy. All we end up having as *evidence* of this identity is the morsel we bit from; the result is always more hunger. It's the hunger of the addicted, always coming back for more, but never finding satisfaction. We note that Jesus responded with the truth that humans don't live by bread alone "but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, NRSV). The response rings true today. What God calls us to must be what determines and shapes our lives; not our emotions or feelings, as true as they may be and feel. When we live our lives on the basis of what God calls us to be, we too can begin to perceive the lies that throw into question the reality of God's Word over our own lives. We are His children (John 1:12, 13); we are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Many other texts declare the Word by which we are to live. Jesus' example shows us that He truly understands the temptation.

### ***Temptation Two: Pride***

This time the identity of the Son is put into question from a different perspective. Since Satan couldn't create doubt in Jesus' own identity, perhaps he could instill doubt in God's provisions, and what it really means to "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). Jesus' response, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt. 4:7, NRSV), discloses an important piece of the puzzle. Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, which is a recapitulation of the Exodus story.

This particular remembering is tied to the incidents of Exodus 17:1-7. The children of Israel bemoan a lack of water in the desert and wonder,

"Is God with us?" Mind you, this real question ("Is the Lord with us?"), brought on by difficult circumstances, comes at the tail end of manna from heaven, deliverance from the Egyptian army, the crossing of the Red Sea on dry land, the 10 plagues, and freedom from slavery.

If temptation one is about us doubting the identity that God speaks over us, temptation two is about doubting God's providence and care for our lives. Wondering if the Lord, our God, is in fact with us (though He's proved Himself to be with us already) opens us wide to Satan's whisperings. That's why when we recognize, receive, and believe the truth of who we are in Him, we can live under the shadow of the Almighty; not in presumption but in secure confidence of who cares for our lives. Nothing can alter that—not losing life; not losing love; not losing a job. The way Jesus responds shows us that He actually knows and understands.

### ***Temptation Three: Shortcut***

This third temptation offers the allure of achieving something by ease, though always at a price. Jesus faces a similar temptation at a later moment, this time not in the desert but in a garden. Jesus' answer at the top of the mountain was a resounding "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him'" (Matt. 4:10, NRSV). This understanding of the "easy way" is deepened when we look at the night when Jesus withstands this temptation, arguably His greatest trial. The Gospels paint a picture of dread and struggle when they describe the scene in Gethsemane—full of real anxiety and fear of what the future held. Jesus clings to the ground, His heart is heavy with the consequences of sins that were ours to bear, but that He bears willingly. He endures

# What God calls us to must be what determines and shapes our lives; **not our emotions or feelings, as true as they can be and feel.**

the separation that sin produces. The weight is heavy, so heavy that we picture His hands and fingers clinging to the earth as beads of sweat and blood pour from His face. Jesus wants out. The temptation to leave and choose the “easy” way is ever present in that garden.

And He could have. Yet He remained. He could have given up, but He didn’t. Faced with the real consequence of eternity without us, Jesus plunges through hell for us. “Let it pass, but not my will but yours be done.” He does this alone, as suggested by this text from Isaiah: “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me” (Isa. 63:3, NRSV). His will submits: He voluntarily takes on Himself the death that was ours to bear, and emerges on the other side of this night settled and focused on the cross awaiting Him. He settles in His heart at this moment what the outcome will be on the cross. Whereas in the first garden the first Adam failed, in the second garden the Second Adam succeeded.

## THE POWER OF THE CROSS

The cross demonstrates to the universe that sin has no other intent and result than evil. And since the grave could not hold Jesus, He emerges from the grave with a new starting point for the human race. Through death He is able to destroy death, and by that set us free from the fear and bondage of sin. Not only that, but because of His life, death, resurrection, and the faith He lived by, we are able to look at this “starting point” and understand that we no longer live under the power of sin. Paul clarifies this when he states that through Christ (and by faith) we are dead to sin (Rom. 6:11).

Our Christian walk is not just a wishful gazing

at Jesus as some sort of celebrity whom we admire from the safety of our social media platform. No! “He [did] not give aid to angels, but . . . to the seed of Abraham” and “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:16, 18). This reminds us that Jesus, the founder, initiator, finisher, and hero of our faith, not only understands the human plight of suffering and sorrow; He also empowers us to live our lives for a greater good than obtaining a certificate of salvation that allow us to enter heaven. We are enabled to live within, through, and by the person of Christ.

That’s why I am not running toward salvation, I run in salvation; I don’t run toward righteousness, I run in righteousness; I don’t run toward sanctification, I run in sanctification, always growing in Christ. That’s the *euangelion*, the “good news.” The celebration of the absolute good news proves that God both understands us and empowers us to live above the pressing circumstances of this life by the power of the gospel speaking and moving in us. After all: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). That’s you and me. Through Christ by faith, we live in the new reality that He has created for us, loved by the Father, empathized by the Son, and empowered by the Spirit. ♣

<sup>1</sup> “Empathy,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy>, accessed Feb. 17, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The tenting metaphor is a clear link to the reality of the sanctuary “tent” in the desert that functioned as God’s earthly habitation (cf. Ex. 25:8).

<sup>3</sup> Bible texts credited to NRSV 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.

---

**Harold Alomía** serves as lead pastor of the College View church in Lincoln, Nebraska.



© RHPA VIA GOODSALT.COM

## THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

---

*The dramatic resurrection and its implications for us all*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

**T**he disciples rested on the Sabbath, sorrowing for the death of their Lord, while Jesus, the King of glory, lay in the tomb. As night drew on, soldiers were stationed to guard the Saviour's resting place, while angels, unseen, hovered above the sacred spot. The night wore slowly away, and while it was yet dark, the watching angels knew that the time for the release of God's dear Son, their loved Commander, had nearly come. As they were waiting with the deepest emotion the hour of His triumph, a mighty angel came flying swiftly from heaven. His face was like the lightning, and his garments white as snow. His

light dispersed the darkness from his track and caused the evil angels, who had triumphantly claimed the body of Jesus, to flee in terror from his brightness and glory. One of the angelic host who had witnessed the scene of Christ's humiliation, and was watching His resting place, joined the angel from heaven, and together they came down to the sepulcher. The earth trembled and shook as they approached, and there was a great earthquake.

### **HE AROSE . . . VICTORIOUS**

Terror seized the Roman guard. Where was now their power to keep the body of Jesus?



They did not think of their duty or of the disciples' stealing Him away. As the light of the angels shone around, brighter than the sun, that Roman guard fell as dead men to the ground. One of the angels laid hold of the great stone and rolled it away from the door of the sepulcher and seated himself upon it. The other entered the tomb and unbound the napkin from the head of Jesus. Then the angel from heaven, with a voice that caused the earth to quake, cried out, "Thou Son of God, Thy Father calls Thee! Come forth." Death could hold dominion over Him no longer. Jesus arose from the dead, a triumphant conqueror. In solemn awe the angelic host gazed upon the scene. And as Jesus came forth from the sepulcher, those shining angels prostrated themselves to the earth in worship, and hailed Him with songs of victory and triumph.

### TRIUMPH OVER SATAN

Satan's angels had been compelled to flee before the bright, penetrating light of the heavenly angels, and they bitterly complained to their king that their prey had been violently taken from them, and that He whom they so much hated had risen from the dead. Satan and his hosts had exulted that their power over fallen man had caused the Lord of life to be laid in the grave, but short was their hellish triumph. For as Jesus walked forth from His prison house a majestic conqueror, Satan knew that after a season he must die, and his kingdom pass unto Him whose right it was. He lamented and raged that notwithstanding all his efforts, Jesus had not been overcome, but had opened a way of salvation for man, and whosoever would might walk in it and be saved.

The evil angels and their commander met in council to consider how they could still work against the government of God. Satan bade his servants go to the chief priests and elders. Said he, "We succeeded in deceiving them, blinding their eyes and hardening their hearts against Jesus. We made them believe that He was an impostor. That Roman guard will carry the hateful news that Christ has risen. We led the priests and elders on to hate Jesus and to murder Him. Now hold it before them that if it becomes known that Jesus is risen, they will be stoned by the people for putting to death an innocent man."

### THE AFTERMATH

As the host of heavenly angels departed from the sepulcher and the light and glory passed away, the Roman guard ventured to raise their heads and look about them. They were filled with amazement as they saw that the great stone had been rolled from the door of the sepulcher and that the body of Jesus was gone. They hastened to the city to make known to the priests and elders what they had seen. As those murderers listened to the marvelous report, paleness sat upon every face. Horror seized them at the thought of what they had done. If the report was correct, they were lost. For a time they sat in silence, looking upon one another's faces, not knowing what to do or what to say. To accept the report would be to condemn themselves. They went aside to consult as to what should be done. They reasoned that if the report brought by the guard should be circulated among the people, those who put Christ to death would be slain as His murderers. It was decided to hire the soldiers to keep the matter secret. The priests and elders offered them a large sum of money, saying, "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept." And when the guard inquired what would be done with them for sleeping at their post, the Jewish officers promised to persuade the governor and secure their safety. For the sake of money, the Roman guard sold their honor, and agreed to follow the counsel of the priests and elders.

When Jesus, as He hung upon the cross, cried out, "*It is finished,*" the rocks rent, the earth shook, and some of the graves were opened. When He arose a victor over death and the grave, while the earth was reeling and the glory of heaven shone around the sacred spot, many of the righteous dead, obedient to His call, came forth as witnesses that He had risen. Those favored, risen saints came forth glorified. They were chosen and holy ones of every age, from creation down even to the days of Christ. Thus while the Jewish leaders were seeking to conceal the fact of Christ's resurrection, God chose to bring up a company from their graves to testify that Jesus had risen, and to declare His glory. ▀

---

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from the book *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), pp. 181-184.



JORDAN WHITT ON UNSPLASH

## I CRIED FOR A YEAR

---

*A mother's journey with her son's autism*

**ANGIE HOLDSWORTH  
ABRAHAM**

I cried for a year after we learned of Sam's diagnosis. It wasn't fatal or debilitating, yet his having Asperger's syndrome sent me into mourning for my vision of motherhood and for what I thought a typical Adventist family would be. I mourned for whom I thought my son would be. He was just in first grade.

Our large church was full of active children and youth performing on stage, going camping, playing basketball, participating in talent shows, even preaching sermons. I cried at almost every church service and program, heartbroken for my boy, who was overwhelmed

and unhappy. I felt overwhelmed and unhappy myself. I was embarrassed by his differences, and feeling guilty for the embarrassment. I felt angry at the church members who looked at us with pity or told us he'd grow out of it.

My own childhood spent in summer camps, Vacation Bible School, camp meeting, Pathfinders, and Adventist schools from kindergarten to graduate school charted out my motherhood road map. Now, I was in completely new territory, with no emotional GPS to guide me and very little help.

### **CHARTING OUR OWN PATH**

Sam went to school at a local large Adventist elementary school. Though he didn't misbehave in school, he struggled to stay on task and was often observed daydreaming, for which the teacher publicly scolded him. He held in the pain of embarrassment and feeling overwhelmed until the end of the school day, when he came home bursting with anger and frustration. He hated everyone and everything about school, and we didn't know why.

When we shared the diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome with school staff, the principal told us that the school could not meet his needs, and recommended that we send him to public school. Even after we offered to pay for an aide to work in the classroom with him, the principal refused. This local expression of Adventist education, one of my core values, failed us. I cried.

Sam entered public school in second grade. Their services

helped for a while, but by the middle of fourth grade Sam was struggling again. His anger and frustration had returned. We could have legally fought for the school system to pay for private special education, but the legal fees were prohibitive, and would be reimbursed by the school district only if we won the court battle.

We chose to self-pay for private special education, which Sam attended from mid-fourth through seventh grade. The skills learned in these schools prepared him for reentering mainstream school in eighth grade, and he did very well through his senior year of high school. He had a good group of friends, made good grades, and garnered the respect of his teachers. He's now attending his first year at a public university, majoring in nuclear engineering. Whew! He made it!

#### **WHAT IT IS REALLY LIKE**

My celebration of his success is dampened by the residual effects of raising a son with Asperger's syndrome. Though I'm an active church member with a great support system of friends and family, my faith has been tested and tattered many times. I'm in an ongoing struggle with depression fed by the aforementioned feelings of embarrassment and guilt, as well as loneliness, guilt, money stress, work stress, guilt, and low self-esteem.

Though shy, Sam was well-behaved in public. Church members and friends didn't see his behavior at home. It was very difficult for me to ask for help or respite when his negative behavior wasn't obvious to them. I didn't want to be perceived as complaining or acting too much like a victim, so I didn't ask for help. That led us to travel a lonely road.

Only my mother, who often helped us with child care and transportation, understood the challenges I faced. While Sam did well learning and applying his new skills at school, it took a lot out of him. When he returned home, he let it all go. He was oppositional, bullied his little brother, had tremendous meltdowns, and said whatever came into his head. He had no qualms pointing out my failure. My mother was in her 70s, and I continually fought my guilt in taking advantage of her in her retirement years. At 85, she is still my solace.

Money was another stressor. Sam's tuition ranged from \$18,000 to \$29,000 a year. Spe-

## **Though I'm an active church member with a great support system, my faith has been tested and tattered many times.**

cial-needs day camps averaged \$600 per week, and we had day care and summer day camp expenses for our second son. In addition, medical insurance didn't cover a lot of our mental health expenses. Providers often didn't participate in insurance plans, and we had to self-pay.

I went back to work, returning to a high-level communications position, reporting directly to the president. Stress at work compounded the stress at home, and I burned out and resigned after 18 months. I then took a job as an administrative assistant. It wasn't in my professional track, but it paid the bills and lightened my stress load. Though my work stress was lessened, I'm still struggling with my professional identity.

#### **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

When you come across flustered moms with badly behaving children, remember that you don't know their story. So offer help, not judgment. When children in your church don't participate, don't be too hard on them. Get to know the parents. Invite them to help in Sabbath School class. Or let Sabbath School be a respite. Please, give them all the love and grace you can possibly muster.

If you are one of those moms or a mom like me, please try to open up and share your story with at least one other person. Don't be ashamed or guilty for what you're going through. You are a child of God: you are loved. And there's always someone out there who will help. 🍀

---

**Angie Holdsworth Abraham** is a freelance writer living on Bainbridge Island in the Pacific Northwest. For virtual support for families with autism, Angie recommends the Facebook group [AdventistsWithAutism](https://www.facebook.com/groups/AdventistsWithAutism) at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AdventistsWithAutism>.





KATARZYNA/BLASIEWICZ / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

## PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND MY CHILD

LARRY EVANS

There is a plea offered by a growing number of parents for others to be more understanding and show greater acceptance of their child who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD is a developmental condition that affects a person's ability to socialize and communicate with others. Often these individuals have a restricted interest and/or have repetitive patterns of behavior. The term "spectrum" refers to the degree in which the symptoms, behaviors, and severity vary within and between individuals. Some people are mildly impaired by their symptoms, while others are severely disabled.

A mother wrote to us out of exasperation when the school her teenage daughter was attending insisted that the child withdraw from school or else she would be expelled. It seems the girl needed more support than they were able to provide. The mother and the teenager want her "to be her best for God." They had hoped she would be able to attend a Christian school.

It wasn't rebelliousness that caused the problem. It was a developmental challenge that made social interaction with other students and staff awkward and difficult. Mother and daughter contacted Adventist Possibility Ministries to see if we could help them find a Christian school where the student would be understood and accepted. This is becoming a growing concern among a growing number of parents.

Data gathered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from 2016, published in 2020, indicate that in the United States 1 in every 54 (1.9 percent) 8-year-old children were identified as having ASD.<sup>1</sup> Our own church organizations are beginning to recognize the need for understanding and acceptance of children with ASD.

While there is a debate as to whether autism is a true epidemic,<sup>2</sup> there is a growing need for greater awareness as to how it is expressed in the behavior of children in the classroom and on the playground. This conversation calls for an understanding not only of the child but also of the challenges faced by caregivers and the support they themselves need.

There are ways of helping these children. A number of Adventist churches and conferences are beginning to address the challenge with online and, when possible, in-person seminars and panel discussions.<sup>3</sup> The appreciation shown suggests that the needs have existed for some time. Unintentionally, students and parents are often left with feelings of aloneness, even of being shunned by others. Several helpful resources may be found at the Adventist Possibility Ministries website, <https://www.possibilityministries.org/autism-related-links>.

To paraphrase a well-known proverb, let's "seek first to understand, then create a sense of belonging for the ASD child rather than expressing annoyance or disapproval." ■

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/autism-spectrum-disorder-asd.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/is-there-really-an-autism-epidemic/>

<sup>3</sup> Examples include Gulf States, Allegheny East, and Greater New York conferences.

**Larry R. Evans** directs Adventist Possibility Ministries of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, in the United States.



**BREAK  
THROUGH  
TO A NEW YOU**

# **INDESTRUCTIBLE**

**BUILD AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE IN A WORLD THAT'S FALLING APART**

## **INDESTRUCTIBLE YOU**

A Free Online Seminar Series

**Begins April 9, 2021**

Register now at: [www.IndestructibleYou.com](http://www.IndestructibleYou.com)

Join Author and TV Host, Roy Ice, as he interviews celebrities and experts on 5 key principles necessary for developing a life that can thrive even in the toughest circumstances.

Faith  
for Today

April, 9 - 13, 2021  
[IndestructibleYou.com](http://IndestructibleYou.com)

Presented by Faith For Today  
in partnership with SermonView





MELISSA BROTTON

# BEEES THAT BUZZ, FLOWERS THAT HEAR

*Mutuality in God's kingdom*

One morning, as I approached a butterfly bush behind my house, I startled a black swallowtail, which fluttered upward and disappeared over the fence. It was the first time I had ever seen one. It was stunning. Midnight wings, gossamer in the sunlight, and gracefully tapered into the classic tail lobes. A flash of heaven in my own backyard.

When the butterfly was gone, I wondered if the purple plumes of the host plant had responded to its arrival by preparing a tastier meal. No, I had not fallen into the rabbit hole of "Wonderland." Rather, I was recalling a recent study by Marine Veits and her ecology team at Tel Aviv University. The study outlined how flowers produce sweeter nectar when bees approach them.<sup>1</sup> Veits and her colleagues exposed evening primroses to the recorded sounds of a flying bee as well as to various simulated sound frequencies in the range of bee wingbeats and also in a silent range. Nectar was extracted from





the flowers before and after each treatment. Researchers found that flowers exposed to natural and synthetic bee-sound frequencies vibrated to those frequencies and produced significantly sweeter nectar than those exposed to other frequencies and silent conditions. Furthermore, it took only about three minutes for the flowers to respond to these “guest” sounds.

Veits and her team explain this sudden reward given by flowers to bees as an example of mutualism, a principle of operation in nature whereby two different species benefit from each other through their relationship.

In this case, the plant, by producing a tastier treat for the bee, enhances its cross-pollination, and the bee, of course, gets a sweet deal.

### **MUTUALISTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

According to Carol C. Landry, at least 170,000 plant species and 200,000 animal species are participants in mutualistic relationships; thus, these reciprocal exchanges are a vital part of ecology systems.<sup>2</sup> While pollination is a prime example of mutualism, numerous other examples of

mutualism are operating in nature. The most notorious of these is the oxpecker, a colorful African bird that skims parasites off large mammals such as zebras and rhinoceroses. Remora, otherwise known as suckerfish, attach themselves to whales, sharks, and turtles, and take a danger-free ride while they keep the host’s skin clean of flaky skin and harmful parasites. Pilot fish actually swim into sharks’ mouths to floss their teeth.

One of the most engaging illustrations of mutualism is called allogrooming, during which animals, especially primates, groom each other. Cats also engage in allogrooming (birds in allopreening), and we see it in mammal sibling interactions too.

Our own human skin and hair contain a mutual microsystem that is vital to our health. Some skin bacteria protect us against invading pathogens by alerting our immune guardians to fend them off, while others secrete chemicals that prevent harmful bacteria from attaching to us. Still others benefit us while also benefiting the bacteria that help us. What forethought the great Designer had, knowing the need of these kinds of mutual relationships. How careful was His plan to equip our skin with microbiota to fight against and prevent harmful invaders at such little cost to us, the largely unconscious hosts, even while they “educate” our immune system.



## THE CREATOR'S THUMBPRINT

We can see mutualism in nature as another thumbprint of a Creator whose own selflessness is reflected in all of His works. Ideally, mutualism, with its bidirectional benefit, is a lesson for us and something that naturally occurs among humans as well.

For centuries humans have been bartering goods to improve both quality and variety of living. In my own community, neighbors trade lemons for oranges and persimmons for pomegranates. Services can also be traded: for example, trimming a tree for fixing a broken fence.

Mutuality in these forms can go a long way toward maintaining a sense of harmony and peace, a sense of everyone looking out for the needs of one another.

An intensive form of human mutualism was miraculously visible in the early church through the Holy Spirit's power. Shortly after Pentecost, believers began to gather together and share their possessions with one another: "And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44, 45, ESV).<sup>3</sup> The generosity the early believers displayed spilled over into many communities. As they continued to help one another and praise God, the Lord gave them favor with others and "added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (verse 47, ESV).

In God's perfect design for life on earth, which He implemented in Eden, every living thing worked for the good of everything else. Humans, animals, and plants sustained each other through mutual giving and receiving. There was no fear that self or others would lack anything. Everything was in harmony. Universal peace was a given.

When sin entered the world through human transgression, the principle of self-centeredness began to contaminate that which was once declared "very good." Inhabitants of earth began to contend with each other within and outside of their species. Stronger animals preyed upon weaker ones. Predation became a normal way of life for much of the animal kingdom, and many

species of animals now survive by scurrying around to avoid being taken by a predator.

## THE RESTORATION PLAN

God longs to restore us to our original state of mutual giving. One of His main reasons for sending His Son into this broken world was to show us how to serve others through Jesus' selflessness. Now He offers each of us a place in that plan so that the occupants of this world can experience healing and growth through Him.

Jesus' plan for human giving is so potent that even other members of the creation benefit from it. "For the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19, NET).<sup>4</sup> Here on earth we can practice what we will be doing for eternity, giving mutually to others—to divine, human, and nonhuman creatures.

In her book *Patriarchs and Prophets* Ellen White wrote about the law of mutual dependence: "We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others will reflect in blessing upon ourselves."<sup>5</sup> God's wise design for all His creation was based on the principle of mutuality in giving. Humans, animals, even bacteria, were to give to each other, something that makes the world a sustainable place. When sin entered the world, mutuality was compromised, but it did not disappear entirely. We can still see it today even in our gardens. And the thought that God would provide "dental insurance" to sharks as they protect their much smaller "dentists" shows me how much we can trust Him to meet our every need. ■

<sup>1</sup> Marine Veits, Itzhak Khaït, Uri Obolski, Eyal Zinger, Arjan Boonman, Aya Goldstein, Kfir Saban, Rya Seltzer, Udi Ben-Dor, Paz Estlein, Areej Kabat, Dor Peretz, Ittai Raztersdorfer, Slava Krylov, Daniel Chamovitz, Yuval Sapir, Yossi Yovel, Lilach Hardoni, "Flowers Respond to Pollinator Sound Within Minutes by Increasing Nectar Sugar Concentration," *Ecology Letters*, July 8, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ele.13331>, accessed Feb. 16, 2021.

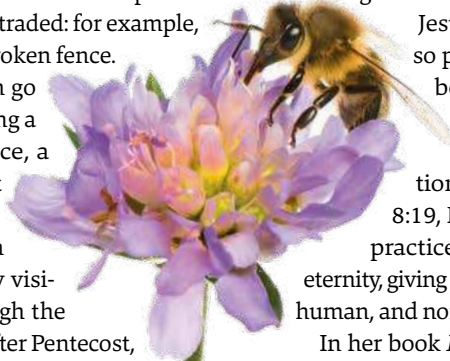
<sup>2</sup> Carol Landry, "Mighty Mutualisms: The Nature of Plant-Pollinator Interactions," *Nature Education Knowledge* 3, no. 10 (2010): 37.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Scripture quotations credited to NET are from the *New English Translation Bible*, copyright © 1996-2021 by Biblical Studies Press, LLC. All rights reserved.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), pp. 534, 535.

**Melissa Brotton, Ph.D.**, chair of the English Department at La Sierra University in California, is an avid student of ecotheology.







*Ruth's*  
VEGETARIAN  
GOURMET

**REAL. SIMPLE. GOOD.**

**INSPIRED BY ADVENTIST FAMILY RECIPES**

*Delicious*

**PLANT-BASED FOOD FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE!**

**FOR RECIPES, WHERE TO FIND OUR FOOD  
AND FOR OUR COOKING SHOW  
RUTH'S SIMPLY VEGETARIAN**

**RUTHSGOURMET.COM**





OLIVIA SNOW ON UNSPLASH

## DOES GOD STILL PART THE RED SEA?

---

*God is with you even in the midst of deep water.*

I prayed and found my life changed. The same God who parted the Red Sea and delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh's army still works miracles today.

My life in Singapore was good, and I had a comfortable routine with my work, church, and family. I wasn't looking for change. Twelve years before, I had moved back from the United States to be with family. Over time my career had progressed well, with regular promotions and opportunities for professional development. An opportunity soon opened up for doctoral studies, along with a doctoral teaching assistantship.

### **GUIDE ME, O THOU GREAT JEHOVAH**

While I was excitedly tracking official documents, my professor e-mailed the class schedule. My heart sank. As a Sabbathkeeping Seventh-day Adventist, I saw a class would be held on Saturday. Further clarification indicated it would not simply be a one-time

occurrence, even if I were tempted to let my convictions slide one time. After e-mailing I would be unable to proceed, I cried for a week. Strangely, through the tears, I felt at peace. It was important to honor my Creator above my ambition.

Several months later another professor told me that the university was expanding its campus in Japan. She offered to accommodate my spiritual convictions, and did not schedule for Saturday any of the classes I needed. I was amazed at and grateful for God's provision.

After finishing those courses, I prayed. Now at a crossroads, I asked God for a clear sign to continue studying or move on to life's next chapter. A year later, I accepted a job offer that involved relocating to the United States. The plane ticket was booked within three weeks, the visa application was approved in two weeks, the appointment at the embassy occurred within a week, and the visa was returned within two business days! On the second day of the new year, I found myself again halfway across the world.

My aging parents were not thrilled about the distance of the move. During this time, we all learned about increasing our faith. Yahweh Shammah (the Lord is there) settled our doubts and fears one step at a time. The final confirmation came with the offer of a full scholarship from another university.

### **FORSAKING HUMAN WISDOM AND SEEKING GOD'S INSIGHT**

At first glance, no one would ever turn down a scholarship, especially one that also included living expenses. Even though this univer-

sity was also overseas, it was closer to home than the other program in the United States. Acceptance seemed a natural choice, yet I did not have peace.

God's wisdom, in the words of Charles Spurgeon, "is our direction, His knowledge our instruction, His power our protection, His justice our surety, His love our comfort, His mercy our solace, and His immutability our trust. . . . Oh! How sweet thus to behold Jesus, and to call upon Him with the certain confidence that in seeking the interposition of His love or power, we are but asking for that which He has already faithfully promised."<sup>1</sup>

Down on my knees, I realized that my conversations, questions, and pleas to El Olam (the everlasting God) would inevitably decrease as I lived the comfortable life of a full scholarship. While it was everything I could possibly dream of, spiritually, for me, it would not be positive. Throughout the past year I had seen God provide work right down to the location—it was ideal access to the university. He even provided young charges to mentor, something that I had wished for, and He had enabled sooner rather than later. This path would continue an ongoing dialogue with Him about what needed to happen each day. It seemed the scholarship was a huge distraction.

### **"BE BOLD!"**

One day in a sermon, my pastor, Bayu Kaumpungan, rallied church members out of their comfort zone with his message to "Be bold!" His message convicted me that choosing the scholarship option was not the wisest road to take.

During the final month, God also provided unexpected prayer partners. Old friends, new friends, all comfortably joined in the upward-turned conversation, because this path was filled with unknown questions.

God provided one key piece at a time, so there was a lot of waiting before the tapestry was pieced together. Yet, without a doubt, there was and is a quiet settledness; I am assured that whatever storms and challenges that may yet arise, I can rest in my Father's arms.

Do you have a Red Sea dilemma? Do you feel hemmed in, against all odds (Ex. 14)? Whether it is a career impasse, an abusive relationship, or weighing a call to mission, take it to the Lord in prayer (Isa. 1:18; Ps. 34:8). Ask for courage to dive deep into the faith experience, to take action, set up the fleece test, and for wisdom to discern the next step.

## **Stand back, take a deep breath, and be amazed.**

God is our Sustenance, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Protector. God has our good at heart—our safety, our well-being, healing, restoring relationships, all in His good time (Matt. 6). While there are no one-size-fits-all actions prescribed, there are sound principles laid out in His blueprint (Ex. 20). Walking by and in faith shows us God is trustworthy and faithful—He keeps His word (Prov. 3:5, 6).

Then, stand back, take a deep breath, and be amazed. Prayer opens up surprising and unexpected ways to understand God's love and character, ways that are uniquely personal and breathtaking. Our response to answered prayer is overwhelming gratefulness at His mercy and omnipotence, and delight and humility that He would concern Himself over the little details that mean the world to us. *God is real. God is good. God is love. God loves me!*

Through lived prayer experiences, you too may have a deep and profound encounter with our heavenly Father. He is interested in the little details that we care about, our hopes, dreams, desires, and wishes, and He has the big picture. In the words of an inspired author, Ellen G. White, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."<sup>2</sup>

The invitation is ever standing, and we are all invited to take His hand, to let Him guide us one step by one step. God wants to bring us rest, and His assurance of perfect peace is the balm for uncertain times. At every pause and juncture we are invited to set aside all our worrying and anxiety, to wait upon Him, and to see Him come through in a way that only He alone can (Isa. 40:31). To God be the glory, the honor, and the praise always (1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25)!

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Reading*, May 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 196.

**Melanie Kwan** writes from Takoma Park, Maryland.

# Share Bible Studies Online!

Study the Bible with people in your community using your cell phone, tablet or computer!



It's **FREE** and **EASY**

- 1** Customize your own webpage
  - Choose your study webpage name
  - Create your own welcome message or video message
  - Choose the Voice of Prophecy Bible guides you want to offer
- 2** Advertise your own unique URL—on social media, in print, where ever—and all requests for Bible studies will come directly to you!
- 3** You interact online with those studying the Bible and discuss their questions.

**Start your own ONLINE DISCOVER BIBLE SCHOOL today!**

Go to [bibleschools.com/apply](https://bibleschools.com/apply) and our team will get you on your way.

For more information contact the Voice of Prophecy Discover Bible School

Phone: (970) 622-2990 | Toll Free: (877) 955-2525 | [discoverschool@vop.com](mailto:discoverschool@vop.com)

 **DISCOVER**  
BIBLE SCHOOL





PETER N. LANDLESS

ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## WEIGHING RISKS AND BENEFITS

*How to make good health decisions*

**Q:** How do I make sound health choices?

**A:** Especially in today’s misinformation-disinformation environment, the Holy Spirit is sorely needed for discernment and wisdom.

Absolute certainty is illusive. Suspicion, doubt, and fear strangle confidence, trust, and faith. We respond to the “how” of making decisions regarding our health, but we dare not dictate “what” you should choose; that is your God-given prerogative. Beware, though, that not deciding is a decision.

Important decisions require thoughtful decision-making. One such process is a risk-benefit assessment. In this process the facts about risk (uncertain danger) and benefit (aid or advantage) need to be accurately known; they must be from truthful, reliable sources; and then they should be weighed in the balance. Careful, prayerful, and researched choosing of whom to believe is essential for obtaining the best information available. Eve herself believed a creature who apparently was new to her above believing God—whom she knew (Gen. 3:1-6). So consider the source!

We all have biases; some are conscious, and others are unconscious. These act as lenses through which we see and evaluate what is around us. Often our biases are exposed only when confronted. Strong opinions and emotions may lead to poor decisions. Respectful conversation in a safe setting with well-informed, spiritually mature people who may differ in viewpoint can expose you to facts and interpretations previously inaccessible because of bias. Remember, Solomon advises that whoever takes a side before truly listening is foolish and shameful (Prov. 12:15; 18:13); to learn, one must be willing to be taught, and to dislike refutation is not wise (Prov. 12:1; 18:15).

Some risks or benefits can be universally applicable, while others are circumstantial. For exam-

ple, peanuts can be deadly to anyone with a severe peanut allergy and present a choking risk (asphyxiation) to all toddlers; but eating peanuts is pleasurable to the nonallergic, adult peanut lover. To complicate matters, perceived risk and benefit may not be the same as “real” risk. A tarantula may pose a fearful, deadly risk to the uninformed but only a minor risk to knowledgeable pet tarantula owners (they rarely harm humans). So risks and benefits need to be individualized. (The tension between personal health benefit and community health benefit is an additional matter.)

Every risk and benefit carries weight. The sum of these may involve emotional weight as well. Fear may often hold overwhelming weight and tip the balance. Be careful: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

God is needed at every step in evaluating information and its sources as we employ unbiased assessments, collegial counsel, the relative weight of each risk and benefit, and the personal weighing of it all. Yet we conclude as did Paul: “Be fully convinced in [your] own mind!” (Rom. 14:5). 📌

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

### Key Points:

- Pray for discernment and wisdom.
- Use the best information (consider the source).
- Confront biases through safe dialogue.
- “Perceived truth” may still be false.
- Indecision is decisive in time-sensitive matters.
- Be objective (minimize emotion-driven factors).
- Christ is our pattern—nobody else.

1888 MESSAGE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

JULY 7-10  
2021



**DARKNESS  
BEFORE DAWN**

**DOES ANYONE HEAR MY VOICE?**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

CALL: (269) 473-1888

EMAIL: [INFO@1888MSC.ORG](mailto:INFO@1888MSC.ORG)

VISIT: [WWW.1888MSC.ORG](http://WWW.1888MSC.ORG)

JOIN US IN PERSON OR VIA LIVESTREAM — LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED

# Into All the World

55 Years of **AMAZING FACTS**



In 1965, a pair of passionate clergymen founded a regional radio program called *Amazing Facts*. They had no idea that over the next 55 years, their small ministry, located in a basement in Maryland, would soon grow to become an international evangelism center.

Today, Amazing Facts International is headquartered at the all-new W.O.R.D. Center campus outside Sacramento—and while it has changed in size and scope, its Christ-centered mission remains the same: to proclaim a distinct last-day message of hope and salvation to every corner of the globe.

Every facet of ministry is designed to introduce people to Jesus in a way that speaks directly to their lives and needs . . .



**Television and Radio:** 24/7, worldwide programming on AFTV.com, as well as through TV and radio broadcasts like *Amazing Facts with Doug Batchelor* and *Bible Answers Live*.



**Center of Evangelism:** Online (afcoe.org) and in-person outreach training for church members who want to become bold and effective soul-winners.



**Internet:** From amazingfacts.org to helltruth.com, Amazing Facts offers thousands of online articles, books, and video and audio resources to help surfing seekers discover Bible truth.



**Bible School:** More than 100,000 students have enrolled in our Internet and mail-based Bible course (amazingbiblestudies.com).



**Publishing:** From sharing magazines and books to DVDs and digital downloads, Amazing Facts publishes hundreds of resources and distributes them worldwide (afbookstore.com).

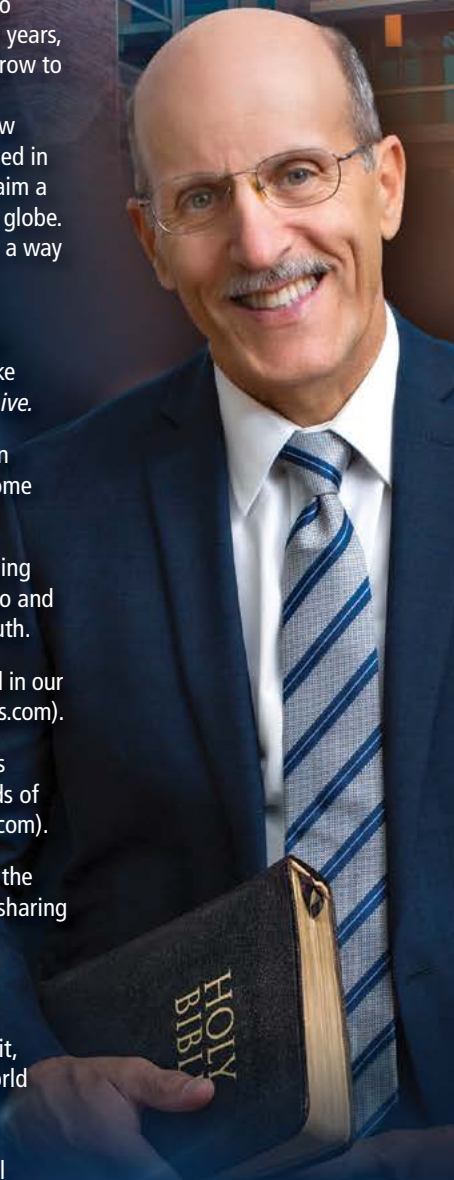


**Global Evangelism:** From India and China to all across the United States, our team of evangelists travels the globe sharing Christ through live local and televised events.

## God's Message Is Our Mission

Every day, through the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and our faithful donors, Amazing Facts is giving people around the world the biblical answers they need to make an intelligent and heartfelt decision for Christ—and to equip them to help others do the same.

In honor of 55 years of ministry, the Amazing Facts International leadership and staff want to thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your continued support and prayers!





# To a Lover of Lilies

How hard it is to die in spring,  
Savoring the deep earth-freshness of the garden  
As you pour your soul out unto death.  
All things begin. All things draw to the end.  
These are the strangest then of couplings—  
Olive shoots with salty tears,  
Warm, honeyed breezes bearing agonizing cries.  
The elements protest against  
This jarring fate to which you bow.  
Why now refuse the sweet-slow rising of the sap?  
Why blast the seedlings, newly sprung from cloddy cells?  
Why silence every thrushsong,  
Stifle the glad cry now rising in the common folk  
Whose hearts warm with the muddy soil?  
The tempting spring deplores your ill-timed sacrifice.  
Each sense, each nerve, exhilarated, begs you  
Lay aside unseasonable, unreasonable imaginings.  
And yet,  
You choose the barren, grieving path,  
Mind-tortured,  
Utterly alone.

We are amazed.  
We do not understand.

—Bill Knott



# ELOI!

“My God, My God!”  
This is the awful hand  
That rents asunder all  
The veil of gloom  
That clothes the world  
And veils the holiest  
Where God and angels laugh and cry  
As God hangs dying:  
The battering ram that slams  
To smithereens the separating wall of tyranny  
An enemy constructed:  
The ordnance unleashed upon his own,  
claimed ground,  
That blasts him to eternity:

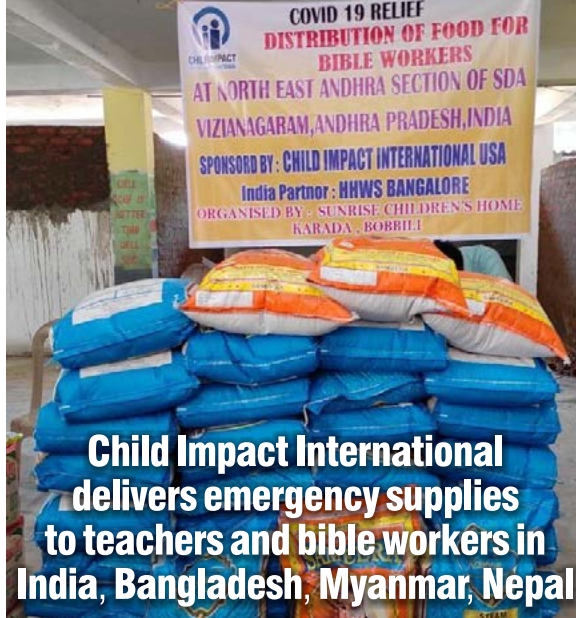
This cry of “Eloi!”  
Is the great answer  
To the high challenge of the tyrant:  
The word that flings gauntlets of holy vengeance  
In his face, marking his last obliteration.

This cry of “Eloi,”  
Is heaven’s full-throated counter  
To myriad meek apologies,  
“Help Thou mine unbelief,”  
Esteemed and celebrated by Thomas’ twins  
In their great, feeble faith.  
“Eloi” in all its tortured anguish  
Rings out the confidence of true possession:  
“My God,” addressed with force of full authority.  
The gamut run to its last end,  
You prove My God.  
The agony I bear for You, My God.  
The pact that coeternal beings sealed  
’Ere the foundations of this earth were laid  
Must be full realized. This is My part.  
I am still God. The whole creation groans  
About this cross upon this mount  
Between these thieves. And We, its Maker,  
Made it, not to groan, but to exult in joy!  
“Eloi!”  
I Am still God. You, Father, are still mine.  
But this sad earth, sold and betrayed so long,  
Clutched by cold death and enemies  
Of light, and love  
Must be restored to life and peace.  
“Eloi! My God!”  
Creation leaps up from his failing, flailing, fading grasp.  
He vanishes,  
Forever banished from all scenes of action.  
“Eloi! My God!” This is the victors’ song:  
“Eloi! My God!”

—Lael Caesar



**Child Impact International**, a fully supportive ministry of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, has been active in assisting schools, church workers and teachers who have not been receiving pay during the Covid crisis in countries including India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal. Child Impact International's key focus is the sponsorship of over 3,000 children in Adventist mission schools. It also funds schools for the blind and deaf in India, and includes three Adventist orphanages in India. It is currently involved in a major rebuild project of an Adventist boarding school in Bangladesh and other mission school projects in India. The Operation Child Rescue project is actively rescuing children from human trafficking in India. Child Impact International is currently helping Riverside Farm in Zambia fund the building of a new high school and sponsoring needy students. Since the pandemic struck these Adventist mission schools have lost their income from the absence of paying students and sponsored children. As a result, most of them have not been able to meet the expenses or wages of teachers and staff.



## Child Impact International delivers emergency supplies to teachers and bible workers in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal

They continue to face a crisis once schools reopen because parents will not be able to afford the school fees, while pastors and bible workers, who are supported by local churches, have been receiving less than half of their normal wages or none at all. As soon as Covid struck Child Impact International established the "Rice and Health" appeal.

Thankfully, it was generously supported by donors, and we have received many thanks from senior church leadership in all of the countries.

### Some of the positive impacts we have made include:

- Over 15,000 bags of rice have been distributed.
- Personal Protective Equipment distribution to schools in India.



## The Rice and Health Appeal expands its program to include Education Now the Rice, Health & Education Appeal

Covid has brought many challenges to our mission schools and not only are the children affected, but the teaching staff as well. Unfortunately, the teachers have only been able to collect 50% of their wages and in most cases no wages at all. This cash crisis has made it impossible to purchase food for children who board as well as other school requirements. Child Impact believes that it is critical to ensure that these mission schools remain open and are expanding their appeal to the "**Rice, Health & Education**" fund. The key priority is to ensure that Adventist mission boarding schools will have a three month minimum supply of rice and other foods to ensure they stay open. It will also ensure that our teachers and bible workers, struggling to meet their own family needs, also

receive support. The Adventist mission school system is critical to the outreach of the church. Supplies are purchased directly by Child Impact staff in these countries. Child Impact is one of the few supporting organizations giving direct support to many of these larger Adventist mission schools. Jim Rennie, CEO of Child Impact says "Child Impact International is very appreciative of the huge support thus far, but the need is great and must continue in order to sustain the mission schools and their staff. Sadly, there is also a constant demand for emergency supplies from various community groups where the children reside."



Donate now to the "**Rice, Health & Education**" Appeal [childimpact.org](http://childimpact.org) or call 423-910-0667





**CHILDIMPACT**  
INTERNATIONAL

**HOPE** for those who **Covid-19** has left with **NO HOPE**  
**RICE, HEALTH & EDUCATION**  
**EMERGENCY APPEAL**



### RICE

Rice for our children,  
school staff and mission  
schools with urgent need



### HEALTH

Covid-19 protection and  
resources for everyone in  
Adventist mission schools



### EDUCATION

Urgent assistance and  
essential supplies for  
Adventist mission schools

Child Impact is struggling to meet the needs of those it serves in the six countries it operates. Those already in great need have suffered more due to no work and no income. This crisis will continue if not get worse for some time to come. Adventist mission schools serve the poor and haven't been able to receive income thus struggling to stay open.

**Sadly there is no sign of relief and they need our help.**

Child Impact is extending its Appeal to these three areas of need and, in this emergency, seek your help again.



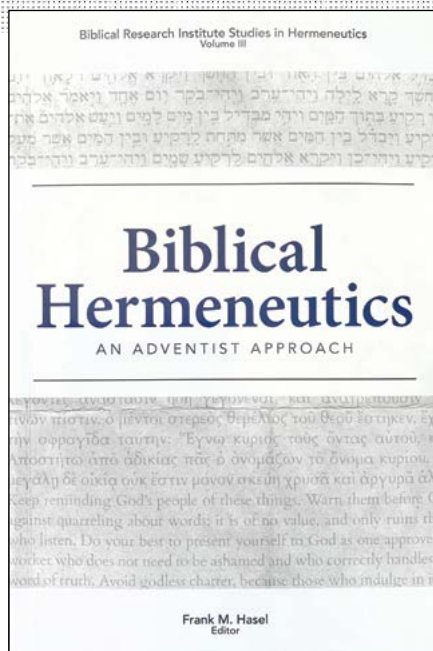
Child Impact International is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

**Sponsor or Donate Online**  
**childimpact.org**

**by Mail:** Child Impact, PO Box 763,  
Ooltewah, TN 37363

**or Phone:** (423) 910-0667

# CLOSER LOOK



## Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach

Frank M. Hasel, ed., *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*, BRI Studies in Hermeneutics 3 (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald Academic, 2020), 488 pages, \$15.00 (paper), reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, associate editor, *Adventist Review*.

For most of our history, Seventh-day Adventists have been known to be “people of the Book”—a faith community with the utmost regard for the Bible. Current research suggests that 48 percent of surveyed members read the Bible daily or more than once a week. Yet, *reading* the Bible is not always equivalent to *understanding* the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Understanding the Bible requires grasping the basic principles of biblical interpretation that grow out of Scripture’s own claim to be “God’s Word.” This is where *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach* comes in, which

updates and in some instances refines an earlier volume, entitled *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, published in 2006 by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI).

The volume contains 14 chapters, excluding an introduction by the editor and an appendix containing a statement regarding methods of biblical interpretation, voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference during an Annual council held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on October 12, 1986. As is customary in academic publications, the volume includes a useful index of biblical and nonbiblical books (pp. 475-488).

The list of contributors includes current and former members of the Biblical Research Institute [BRI], as well as other Adventist scholars from educational institutions. Kwabena Donkor tackles the important issue of presuppositions in hermeneutics, reminding the reader that every reader will bring to the Bible a set of presuppositions that are part and parcel of a worldview. “Since interpretation without presuppositions is an impossibility, it becomes extremely important not only to reflect on the nature of an interpreter’s presuppositions but also to understand the manner in which they affect interpretation” (p. 29). The second chapter, contributed by the editor of the volume, Frank Hasel, focuses on elements of biblical hermeneutics that are in harmony with Scripture’s self-claims. Together with Donkor’s chapter, this chapter focuses on methodology and Scriptures’ own claims of inspiration. Hasel suggests to the reader that “Scripture is self-authenticated” (p. 60), which means that its claims are based, not on logic or argument (even though logic and argument are present in the biblical text), but rather on God’s self-revelation that is received in faith.

The following two chapters offer discus-

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

sions of textual variants and versions (authored by Clinton Wahlen) and the historicity of the Bible as it relates to questions of biblical interpretation (contributed by Michael Hasel). Both of them are important reading, while at times technical, and both reflect the particular research interests and specialties of the two authors.

The next chapter deals with the question of the relationship between culture and our biblical interpretation and offers a unique collaboration between a missiologist (Wagner Kuhn) and a biblical scholar (Clinton Wahlen). The authors discuss a number of cultural elements, including the Sabbath and marriage, circumcision, ritual washings and baptism, slavery, and many more. They query in each case if the meaning of the element was universal, unbiblical, limited, or symbiotic. This chapter promises plenty of food for thought for potluck tables (if and when that will be possible again).

Chapter 6, authored by now retired Loma Linda University biology and paleontology professor Leonard Brand, introduces the reader to the hermeneutical questions associated with the triangle of faith, science, and Scripture. Brand's nuanced discussion is helpful and highlights the importance of a biblical worldview versus a naturalistic worldview.

Chapters 7 to 10 focus on specific principles of biblical interpretation (Ekkehardt Mueller), the way biblical authors used and quoted earlier biblical authors (Richard Davidson), the specifics of interpreting biblical apocalyptic texts (Gerhard Pfandl), and the way Bible readers should interpret conditional prophecies about Israel (Elias Brasil de Souza). Earlier Adventist volumes on hermeneutics had more chapters on specific groups of biblical books (such as Gospels, epistles, historical literature, psalms and wisdom literature, etc.). *Biblical Hermeneutics* seems to be more focused on the underlying worldview and the system of interpretation.

The final four chapters offer additional perspectives on an Adventist hermeneutics that are relevant. The Genesis creation record is taken up by Michael Hasel as a test case for the application of the principles of interpretation established in the earlier chapters. Then follows a survey of the

historical development of Adventist hermeneutical presuppositions, perceptions, and methods between 1845 and 1910 (Denis Kaiser).

John Peckham offers a helpful look at the prophetic gift (including the ministry of Ellen White) and the *sola scriptura* principle. He notes that Adventists have affirmed that Scripture is to be the only rule of faith and practice, that it is sufficient and should be interpreted comparing scripture with scripture, that the biblical canon is to be distinguished from noncanonical prophetic messages, and that, as insisted by Ellen White herself, her writings are not the source of doctrine and should not be employed as a final and normative interpreter of Scripture (p. 403).

The final chapter, "Recent Trends in Methods of Biblical Interpretation," authored by Frank Hasel, offers an overview of more recent methods that current scholars employ as they engage the biblical text. Beyond the presuppositions of the historical-critical method, the reader is introduced to modifications of the method, canonical criticism, literary approaches, varied postmodern reader-response approaches, and others. Seminary students and professors will value the thorough analysis of this chapter and the rich footnotes that offer starting points for understanding these methods.

*Biblical Hermeneutics* offers a solid introduction to a Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutics and will become prescribed reading for a new generation of pastors and interested members who are not afraid of footnotes and, at times, complex and foreign terminology. Readers should be reminded that these chapters are not solely the result of individual scholarship (even though that is on display as well). Every chapter has been read and critiqued twice by members of the Biblical Research Institute Committee, listed in the early pages of the volume. *Biblical Hermeneutics* is thus an effort of doing theology in community—an excellent place to begin all talking about God and His Word. 📖

\* Numbers based on 2017-2018 Global Church Member Survey: *Meta-Analysis Final Report* (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Andrews University, October 2018), pp. 34-39, online at [https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/Global%20Church%20Membership%20Survey%20Meta-Analysis%20Report/GCMSMetaAnalysis%20Report\\_2019-08-19.pdf](https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/Global%20Church%20Membership%20Survey%20Meta-Analysis%20Report/GCMSMetaAnalysis%20Report_2019-08-19.pdf).



## Practical GOD & THE ~~SOCIAL~~ GOSPEL How much does works count?

**Question:** How does God feel about the welfare of the stranger, the indigent, those on society's economic margins?

**Question:** Has God spoken to such questions?

**Question:** Is it appropriate for a Christian to take sides with regard to issues of social justice?

**Answer:** God has not left these questions to chance: we may know quite clearly where He stands:

**Ex. 23:9:** "Do not oppress a foreigner; . . . because you were foreigners in Egypt."\*

**Lev. 23:22:** "When you reap . . . , do not reap to the very edges of your field. . . . Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you."

**Lev. 25:23:** "The land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners."

**Ex. 20:10:** re the Sabbath of the Lord: On it no one works—neither you, nor your family, servants, animals, "nor any foreigner residing in your towns."

**Ex. 23:12:** ". . . so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed."

**Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*, p. 126:** "Freedom from work and from the yoke of exploitation are explicit characteristics of the Sabbath."

**p. 127:** "The Old Testament concern for social justice does not stop at the Sabbath, but the seventh day must be seen as the generating principle giving rise to other markers that are similarly bent on providing rest . . . and relief"

**Deut. 10:17, 18:** "[The Lord your God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing."

**Jean Calvin:** "God distinguishes Himself from men, who are carried away by outward appearance, to hold the rich in honor, and the poor in contempt; to favor the beautiful or the eloquent, and to despise the unseemly"

"As regards strangers, God proves that He cares for them, because He is gracious in preserving them and clothing them; and then a special reason is again adduced, that the Israelites, when they were formerly sojourners in Egypt, had need of the compassion of others."

**Deut. 14:28, 29:** "Every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites [otherwise destitute] . . . and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you."

**Isa. 56:1:** "The Lord says: 'Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.'"

**Jean Calvin:** "Under the names 'judgment' and 'righteousness,' He includes all the duties which men owe to each other, and which consist not only in abstaining from doing wrong, but also in rendering assistance to our neighbors"

"This is the sum of the second table of the Law, in keeping which we give proof of our piety, if we have any."



**Deut. 16:10-12:** “Celebrate the Festival of Weeks . . . by giving a freewill offering. . . And rejoice before the Lord your God [with your kids, servants, otherwise destitute Levites, orphans, single women] . . . and the foreigners . . . living among you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt.”

**Isa. 58:6, 7:** “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them.”

**Amos 5:24:**

“Let justice roll on  
like a river,  
righteousness like a  
never-failing stream!”

**Jean Calvin:** “Hypocrites, we know, always raise a clamor . . . ; ‘What! Have we then lost all our labor, while endeavoring to worship God? Is all this to go for nothing? . . .’ The Prophet here shortly answers—that if only they brought forth true righteousness, their course would be free.”

“[The Prophet] expresses this in the form of a promise, ‘Run down shall your righteousness as impetuous waters, provided it be true, and not an empty name.’”

**Acts 10:38:** “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and . . . he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil.”

**Albert Barnes’s Notes on the New Testament:** “This is the simple but sublime record of his life. It gives us a distinct portrait of his character, as he is distinguished from conquerors and kings, from false prophets and from the mass of people.”

**Acts 20:35:** “I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

**Albert Barnes:** “*It is more blessed to give.* It is a higher privilege; it tends more to the happiness of the individual and of the world. The giver is more blessed or happy than the receiver. This appears (1) because it is a condition for which we should be thankful when we are in a situation to promote the happiness of others; (2) because it tends to promote the happiness of the benefactor himself. . . (3) [because] it is blessed in the reward that shall result from it. Those who give from a pure motive, God will bless.” (Italics supplied.)

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

**Jean Calvin:** “[James] reminds us that religion without the things he mentions is nothing.”

**Matt. 25:40 [45]:** The King’s reply—“Truly I tell you, whatever you did [not do] for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did [not] do for me.”

\*Bible texts are from the New International Version.

## ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

**A**ttitude” is a prominent topic of discussion during this time of COVID-19. Remaining positive and optimistic while attempting to navigate our challenging journey helps us build resilience and remain healthy. In the face of overwhelming tragedy, sadness, and loss, websites are brimming with recommendations on emotional and physical survival techniques. These include ways we treat others who hold viewpoints distinct from our own. Basically—do we pass the “nice” test? Are we able to rise above the issues themselves—mask or no mask; social distancing or crowded gatherings—and behave toward one another with kindness, com-

**BEING “RIGHT”  
ABOUT AN ISSUE  
ISN’T ALWAYS THE  
MOST IMPORTANT  
THING.**

passion, and respect, no matter the divergence in perspective? The way we interact with others can raise a person’s stress level and feelings of isolation; or, it can generate feelings of calmness, acceptance, and hope.

Attitude makes a difference.

The impact attitude can make on our lives recently hit home when I read an article in a local Big Rapids, Michigan, newspaper entitled “Around the World in 91 Years, Big Rapids Woman Not Slowing Down.”<sup>1</sup> The subject of the profile, Ramona Seath-Lubke, a lifetime Seventh-day Adventist, credited “having a great attitude throughout life” as a secret to longevity.

“I like to encourage [people] to dig deep within their lives to see their potential,” Seath-Lubke is quoted as saying. “Everyone has potential, and once they find it, they can help inspire others and live a more purposeful life.”

Born in Evart, Michigan, in 1929, Seath-Lubke—a professional gospel singer, a small-plane pilot, and holding degrees in nursing and psychology—has

called numerous places home. She has also traveled extensively to such locations as Germany, England, Alaska, and Hawaii—making many friends along the way. Even now, Seath-Lubke doesn’t sit around watching life pass her by. She begins her day with Bible study and asking the Lord, “If somebody needs me today, for whatever it is, please let me know.” She says she loves people and believes that’s why she’s here: to help others. “I want to have a purpose in life,” she says, then fills her days with walking at a nearby sports track, cycling, bowling, ice skating, and tennis.

“I like to stay busy and interact with people,” Seath-Lubke told me in an e-mail. “My mother taught me to be kind and to love people, and I’ve tried to be like that as well.” Even a warm smile and a hello to strangers can make a person’s day, she says.

Ellen White agrees: “The very expression of the countenance has an influence for good or evil. His spirit, his words, his actions, his *attitude* toward others, are unmistakable. . . . If he is filled with the love of Christ, he will manifest courtesy, kindness, tender regard for the feelings of others and will communicate to his associates, by his acts of love, a tender, grateful, happy feeling. It will be made manifest that he is living for Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, being “right” about an issue isn’t always the most important thing or the most effective way to witness; sometimes it’s our attitude that makes the difference. ♣

<sup>1</sup> Bradley Massman, in *Big Rapids Pioneer*, Oct. 30, 2020, [www.bigrapidsnews.com](http://www.bigrapidsnews.com).

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 34. (Emphasis supplied.)

**Sandra Blackmer** is an assistant editor for *Adventist Review*.





HopeChannel

# CLIFF



Tune in as author, speaker, and former atheist Cliff Goldstein melds basic truths, literature, and popular culture to answer some of life's most abstract questions.

**Sundays at 11:30AM EST on [HopeTV.org](http://HopeTV.org)**

**[HopeTV.org](http://HopeTV.org)**

Mission

**elevates**

them over I

Planned Giving  
& Trust Services

Experience the joy of giving • [willplan.org](http://willplan.org)

