

**AUGUST 2023: A THOUSAND LIKES + A GREATER REALITY + LINKED IN TO GOD'S MESSAGE + THE WAR WITHIN + THE BILLBOARD**

# ADVENTIST REVIEW



## The Matter of Influence

ADRA



YEARS OF  
JUSTICE, COMPASSION, LOVE

# CLEAN WATER SAVES LIVES



Please Visit  
[ADRA.org/CleanWater](https://ADRA.org/CleanWater)  
or Scan the QR Code to  
Learn More





## FEATURES



- 18 **AN INESCAPABLE GIFT** | SIKHULULEKILE DACO  
Introvert or extrovert, we all influence others.



- 22 **A THOUSAND LIKES** | MERLE POIRIER WITH  
JARED AND ANNETTE THURMON  
One family's experience influencing others through social  
media



- 30 **TAMING THE SOCIAL MEDIA BEAST** | SAMANTHA GONZALEZ  
It's not going away, so how do we learn to handle it?
- 34 **LINKED IN TO GOD'S MESSAGE** | LORI FUTCHER  
He stumbled on an interesting way to witness via his LinkedIn  
account.
- 38 **LESSONS FROM KING SAUL** | JARED THURMON  
Looking for good traits to emulate? This individual shouldn't  
be on your list.

**“Wanting to influence and lead others is natural for many. And now for some on social media, it has become a primary goal.”**

**39**

# ARTICLES

**44 CLINTON AND MINNIE ACHENBACH**

MILTON HOOK

He began as a missionary to Florida.

**46 FINE AND UNWORTHY**

BILL WEBER

Two men went into a church to pray.

**48 UNITY IN THE CHURCH**

ELLEN G. WHITE

There’s only one answer to division and discord.

**50 THE WAR WITHIN**

TY GIBSON

We’ve met the enemy and it is us.

**54 THE GRANITE BAY CHURCH STORY**

SHENALYN PAGE

A church plant thrives as it continues to reach the unreached.

**60 THE YOKE**

CHARMIAN LEWIS-WATKINS

A yoke implies work, but in Jesus’ invitation there is rest.

**62 THE YARD SALE AT THE END OF TIME**

SCOTT CHRISTIANSEN

Those attending yard sales today have different interests than in the past.

**65 THE BILLBOARD**

JUDITH GILLIS

Sometimes Jesus has to write His words big, bold, and direct.



**50**

## NEWS | OPINION

- » Event Connects Adventist Health Center Leaders in Portugal
- » Adventist Leaders Visit Iraq as Opportunities Open
- » Preaching the Gospel in Times of Artificial Intelligence
- » Largest Indigenous School in North America Celebrates Twentieth Anniversary
- » Businesspeople Convention Highlights Potential for Mission
- » *Adventist Review* Has Two New Associate Editors
- » Former South American Division President Dies at 92



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **JUSTIN KIM**  
SEVEN-DAY READERS

### DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 67 **HOUSE CALL**
- 71 **CLOSER LOOK**

### COLUMNS

- 29 **CLIFF’S EDGE**  
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN
- 43 **REIMAGINING FAITH**  
SHAWN BRACE
- 59 **THE FAITH-FULL LIFE**  
BECKY ST. CLAIR
- 69 **JOURNEYS WITH JESUS**  
JILL MORIKONE
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
BETH THOMAS

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

## PUBLISHING BOARD

Ted N. C. Wilson, *chair*  
Guillermo Biaggi, *vice chair*  
Justin Kim, *secretary*

Audrey Andersson, G. Alexander Bryant, Williams Costa, Paul H. Douglas,  
Mark A. Finley, James Howard, Erton Köhler, Peter Landless, Geoffrey Mbwana,  
Daisy Orion, Magdiel Perez Schultz, Artur Stele, Maurice Valentine, Ray  
Wahlen, Karnik Doukmetzian, *legal advisor*

**EDITOR** Justin Kim

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Sikhululekile Daco, John Peckham

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR** Greg Scott

**COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR/NEWS EDITOR** Enno Müller

**DIGITAL PLATFORMS DIRECTOR** Gabriel Begle

**ASSISTANT EDITOR** Beth Thomas

**FINANCE 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

**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. All rights reserved.  
Bible texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*.  
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. 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. All rights reserved worldwide. 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. Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American  
Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation.  
All rights reserved.

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 © 2023, 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@pacificpress.com](mailto:adventistreview@pacificpress.com) or call 1-800-545-2449

**ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES OFFICE:** [support@adventistreview.org](mailto:support@adventistreview.org)

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

# 1



Two Bible Conferences Challenge  
Adventist Theologians Across Europe

# 2



U.S. Supreme Court Issues Historic Ruling  
Strengthening Religious Accommodation  
Protections for Workers, by Bill Knott

# 3



Preaching the Gospel in Times of  
Artificial Intelligence, by Felipe Lemos

# 4



When Grief Is Your Companion,  
by Audrey Andersson

# 5



Times of Trouble, by Chantal Klingbeil

Coming to the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church **September 16-23**

# Jesus & Wholistic Sexuality

Ministering with Biblical Confidence in an LGBTQ World



## Pastor & Elder's Conference **Sept. 18-19**

### Conference Topics Include

- What To Expect When a Loved One Comes Out
- Family Coaching
- Overcoming Pornography
- Conversion vs. Conversion Therapy
- Stages of Victory
- The Physiology of Intimacy
- Love, Sexuality, and the Shaking

Registration and fee required. For more information visit: [villagesda.org/identity](http://villagesda.org/identity)

## Week of Spiritual Emphasis **Sept. 16-23**

Living testimonies & Spirit-filled preaching each evening at 6:30pm.

Visit [villagesda.org](http://villagesda.org) for more information.

## Coming Together Live **3 Sept. 20-24**

Exclusively for those struggling with LGBTQ issues and their families.

Registration and fee required. For more information visit: [villagesda.org/identity](http://villagesda.org/identity)

## Featured Speakers

Additional Speakers to be Announced



Michael Carducci



Jay Gallimore



Ivonne Restrepo



Neil Nedley, MD



Eric Walsh, MD, PhD





*Sit down and concentrate; prime your mind for receiving and loving truth.*

## Seven-day Readers

**O**ne keystone habit worthwhile for ministry, education, leadership, or any professional development is reading. We live in an age when we really don't read but scroll. We listen to audiobooks and watch clips galore. Though these have their place, old-fashioned analog reading has the best benefits.

Studies have shown that reading increases intelligence, vocabulary, and sentence length; reduces stress and anxiety; improves analytical thinking, writing skills, creativity, and discipline; and activates the mental processes in general. There is nothing like reading—good reading—that expands the mind and soul together. This one habit primes the brain to enable other helpful habits.

Modifying what a mentor shared, I counsel *seven* types of books:

**1. Read Scripture.** There is nothing like the Word of God to strengthen the mind, sharpen the intellect, deepen the heart, and ennoble the spirit. It is a full course of education all by itself.

**2. Read the Spirit of Prophecy.** Read especially the five books of the Conflict of the Ages series: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White. If you have read these, try some of her other books: *Education*, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Thoughts From the Mount*

*of Blessing*, and *Early Writings*. Or if you've never heard of any of these titles, start with *Steps to Christ*. The contents of these tomes range from education to biology, history to philosophy, and parenting to finances. How much more practical can you get? These wonderful gifts to the church should be read and treasured more than they are.

**3. Read 10 books in an area in which you'd like to specialize.** This is essentially what university courses do. By the tenth book, the information should be familiar. You will be very knowledgeable in that subject. You should ask yourself the question *What do I want to know well?* and read accordingly.

**4. Read difficult books.** Read books so difficult that you may not finish or understand them. The point isn't to master them, but merely to stretch the mind. You are bound to have picked up something: an idea, observation, or at least one abstruse word.

**5. Read random books.** I once read a book on Iran that immensely helped my Christian witness to a government official. I read others on poetry, the Supreme Court, the education of Asian-Americans, and the rise and fall of Roman emperors. All have been so beneficial to my thinking in general, have ameliorated (learned this word from number 4!) my conversational skills, and piqued my curiosity to explore other topics.

**6. Read something you enjoy.** Whether a magazine (the *Adventist Review!*) with special interest, or something practical, read what you enjoy. With all the aforementioned heavy lifting, one needs to cultivate the enjoyment of reading as well. Ensure this book is short so that you enjoy the experience of having finished a book.

**7. Read biographies.** Historical Christian biographies are the best (and only) way to understand the lives of dead believers of the past. There is nothing like a nonfiction story of an inspiring individual. Reading not only about the greats but also the notorious can also help us to avoid the pitfalls of life.

"There is more encouragement to us in the least blessing which we receive ourselves than in reading biographical works relating to the faith and experience of noted [men and women] of God. . . . Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage."\*

Read—don't scroll or skim or listen while driving or cooking or mowing. Sit down and concentrate; prime your mind for receiving and loving truth. 📖

\*Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1961), p. 135.

## NOT TO BE DETERRED

I appreciated the thoughtful, sensitive, yet truthful treatment of Christian nationalism in the July issue of the *Review*. I thought that Alan J. Reinach summed it up well with his comment “Yet because we share so many biblical values in common with other Christian believers, we are uniquely at risk of buying into the Christian nationalistic agenda.”

Indeed, on the issue of religious freedom we find ourselves in a very precarious position. Because of our strong position supporting the separation of church and state, we find ourselves at odds with our evangelical friends who are promoting the union of church and state. Equally distressing, perhaps, is the reality that those who share our stance on keeping government and religion separate are typically atheistic entities, such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation (see Ronald Reagan, Jr.’s ad on YouTube).

It is not difficult to envision a future in which Adventists will be falsely accused of supporting atheism, abortion, and moral decadence. Like the Christians of the first century who were also accused of being atheists by the Romans, God’s end-time people will not be deterred. We have the sure word of prophecy as our guide.

**Mark Eaton**, *Westfield, Indiana*



## CLOSENESS

I appreciate the fresh approach Justin Kim brings to the editor’s chair. While all the articles in the June issue were good, the article “A Diary Speaks,” by Ellen White, stands out for its encouraging tone. One important observation in the introduction to that three-page article are the words

“relationship with Jesus.” This phrase comes up eight times in my Ellen White CD-Rom, whereas “connection with Jesus” comes up 53 times. A connection with Jesus indicates marriage, as in Jeremiah 3:14, which says, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you” (KJV). A relationship with Jesus is

necessary and could be likened to justification, whereas connection with Jesus could be likened to sanctification.

**Howard Loewen**

*Lawrenceburg, Tennessee*

## CONTEXT MATTERS

I greatly appreciated Andy Nash’s article on forgiveness, “Two or Three” (June 2023). It’s a message we all need. He also confirmed something I have noticed many times: the well-intentioned but noncontextual use of Scripture by Adventists, specifically the “where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” of Matthew 18:20. This passage is specifically dealing with resolving conflict.

Numerous places in Scripture show us that our loving God is with us even individually, when nobody else is around. While there certainly is no damage done in this particular noncontextual use of Scripture, I think it will strengthen our stance as Bible-believing Seventh-day Adventists to always do our best to use Scripture in its proper context.

We have a unique and beautiful message to give our world, a message that is also often difficult to accept. If we are using Scripture out of context, that could make acceptance of the beautiful message God has



---

Like the Christians of the first century who were also accused of being atheists by the Romans, God’s end-time people will not be deterred.

—MARK EATON

---

given us even more difficult. Let’s make the embracing of our loving Savior and His truth as easy as possible!

**Gary Moyer**

*Charlotte, North Carolina*

### THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES

Loving this *Mission 150* series on AdventistReviewTV. The early missionaries were lucky to survive two years, so many gave their lives for the gospel.

**Pauline Downing**

*Cambridge, New Zealand*

### AN ANGRY LOVING GOD

My thanks to editor, Justin Kim, for his recent editorial, “The Cup and the Cry” (June, 2023), in which he dared to write about the wrath of God from a biblical perspective. Unfortunately, one does not hear this very often anymore in church—whether in sermons or articles—as so many think they need to protect God’s character. In fact, by neglecting this clear and biblical teaching, they are denigrating God’s character, His righteousness, what sin is, and ultimately what is necessary for our salvation: namely the atoning death of Jesus Christ. When God’s righteousness is misunderstood and minimized, then, consequently, the solution and good news of the gospel are also minimized. I am reminded of

what Emil Brunner wrote in his book, *The Mediator*:

“The God who is really angry, really loves. To reject the idea of the wrath of God also means to reject His love. . . . The idea that God is angry is no more anthropopathic than the thought that God loves. . . . God is angry because He is personal, because He really loves. The Bible speaks so naturally about the divine wrath, even in the New Testament, because it is so full of the thought of the personal love of God.”

**Jeff Taylor**

*Chattanooga, Tennessee*

### FROM THE WEB

#### TOUCHED MY HEART

Thank you, dear Audrey, for your article “When Grief Is Your Companion” (June 2023). Your inspired words touched my heart. One can lose a spouse, a child, while they can be still alive . . . The grief can be as intense.

**Ingrid**

#### SUFFERING AT THE HAND OF OTHERS

The article “Rescued From the Quarry,” by Leo J. Poirier (June 2023), describes a process that I prefer to read about than to actually experience. This often confusing business of God hurting us for our own good never gets served to us on a bed of clear and obvious benefits (temporal or eternal)!

We were not created to be rejected by other people—it is wholly unnatural. I know only one cure: to ask for the suffering of Christ to replace my own. We need Him to be our substitute, not only for the forgiveness of our sins, but also for our lived experience. I need the suffering and faith and rejoicing of Jesus operating within me as an extension of His grace. This is the only way that we can move forward. We beg not for relief only, but for the divine nature that can endure suffering with joy.

**Karl Wilcox**

### YOUR TURN

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



## YOU GIVE HOPE TO REFUGEES



SPONSORSHIP GIVES THE  
GIFT OF QUALITY  
EDUCATION AT A  
CHRISTIAN BOARDING  
SCHOOL IN RWANDA.

### ABOUT IMPACT HOPE

When you sponsor one of these young refugees, you empower them through education and vocational training to change their lives.

### \$50 A MONTH PROVIDES:

- School fees and supplies
- Bedding
- Three meals a day
- Medical care

**TO SPONSOR & DONATE!**  
**[WWW.IMPACT-HOPE.ORG](http://WWW.IMPACT-HOPE.ORG)**



735 E Clarendon Street, Ste. 107  
Gladstone, Oregon 97027  
[Info@Impact-Hope.org](mailto:Info@Impact-Hope.org)  
(503) 673-3905

**“The role of a lifestyle center is to give people, church members and nonmembers alike, an opportunity to come back to an experience of strength.”**

**Viriato Ferreira, p. 10**

# NEWS

Group photo of the participants in the European Congress on Adventist Lifestyle Centers in Coimbra, Portugal.

PHOTO: INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS



## EVENT CONNECTS ADVENTIST HEALTH CENTER LEADERS IN PORTUGAL

**“OUR AIM IS TO MAKE PEOPLE’S LIVES BETTER AND LEAD THEM TO OUR WHOLE MESSAGE.”**

**PAULO MACEDO AND WALTER FERREIRA, INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW**

**T**wo hundred twenty-six Seventh-day Adventist leaders, health center managers, and health advocates met in Coimbra, Portugal, for the European Congress on Adventist Lifestyle Centers May 30-June 3. Participants spent this international event networking and discussing the role, function, and mission opportunities of lifestyle centers driven by the Adventist health message.

During the four-day event they had the opportunity to attend presentations on the Adventist health message and the role of lifestyle centers. They also participated in panels and workshops on the more practical aspects of founding,

developing, and operating these facilities.

Lifestyle centers are an invaluable tool for the Adventist health message and practice, leaders said. “Besides providing treatments tailored to each person, they teach and promote healthy habits to all who benefit from them,” they explained.

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, emphasized the missionary role of these centers. He specifically connected that role with the third angel’s message, found in Revelation 14. “Lifestyle centers are one of God’s methods to reach the large cities of the world,” Wilson said.

“People can come for a renovation, a complete lifestyle change. It’s an important way that people can see Seventh-day Adventists in a supporting, caring setting,” he added.

Lifestyle centers are useful tools for health promotion and as a form of first contact with the people and the communities in which they are located, leaders said. For this reason, in a secular environment such as Europe, the Inter-European Division (EUD) of the Adventist Church is committed to supporting these centers and the ministries that bring them into existence, they explained.

“Our aim is to make people’s lives better and lead them to know our

whole message,” EUD president Mário Brito said. “People’s health is getting worse. They are searching for solutions. Now is the time to come and help them.”

EUD treasurer Norbert Zens agreed, as he highlighted the impressive work of the event organizers. “I am amazed at seeing how many people are here. It shows there’s interest,” he said.

Zens also highlighted the assistance of supporting ministries to the health message of the Adventist Church. “We want to help [lay] church members to increase their contributions and work together with them,” he said.

The European Congress on Adventist Lifestyle Centers took place in the St. Francis Convent, a seventeenth-century building located about 20 miles from the VitaSalus Wellness Center. VitaSalus is an Adventist lifestyle center that has served the population of Portugal for two decades. Participants visited the center and learned about the practical results in the lives of hundreds of people served.

VitaSalus director Viriato Ferreira, also an Adventist health ministries leader, explained that “the role of a lifestyle center is to give people, church members and nonmembers alike, an opportunity to come back to an experience of strength—first of all, of their relationship with God; second, of their relationship with others; and finally, of their body. It involves diet, exercise, sunlight exposure, and also the healing of relationships,” he said. ▀



The Basrah Adventist Church stands empty as it awaits renovation. PHOTO: MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION

## ADVENTIST LEADERS VISIT IRAQ AS OPPORTUNITIES OPEN

CHURCH MEMBERS EXPECTANT AS A HISTORICAL CHURCH UNDERGOES RENOVATIONS.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN AFRICA UNION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**T**he downtown traffic likely didn’t even notice the small gathering of visitors, their phones in hand, silently gazing at the bricked-up gable window above the entrance of an old church. But for many Iraqi Seventh-day Adventists the scene was riveting and deeply meaningful.

The visitors were Adventist Church leaders from the Middle East and North Africa Union (MENA), based in Beirut, Lebanon. They were led by George Yousif, legal association president of the Adventist Church in Iraq, and the special guests of Yonadam Kanna, a Christian who has served for 26 years in the Iraqi parliament and

is currently secretary-general of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. The church captivating their interest was the Basrah Adventist Church, built in 1965 but closed for decades. It is currently being partially refurbished by USAID and Durr Al Iraq Association as a cultural attraction.

The group was on a weeklong visit that provided Adventist Church leaders invaluable exposure to the rich history and current presence of Christianity in Iraq. “With this visit we were privileged to introduce our Adventist leaders to the leaders of other Christian organizations in our country,” Yousif said. “We are hon-

## Because of war, our churches have sat empty for many years. . . . Our dream is to reopen them.

ored to be one of the 14 Christian groups recognized in Iraq, and we value the opportunity to help other Christian leaders understand us better and to explain to them who we are as fellow Christians.”

Raafat Kolta, finance director of the East Mediterranean Region (EMR) of the Adventist Church, noticed the openness of fellow Christians. “I was impressed by the warm, gripping welcome the Christian leaders gave us. All of us are a very small minority. I felt their support and a longing for us to join them in growing and strengthening our congregations.”

The group also visited the Adventist church and school properties in Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Irbil. “For those of us who had only heard of these cities in news reports, our visit gave us a new picture of this beautiful country and the extraordinary impact our Adventist institutions have had in the past,” EMR director Darron Boyd said. “I’ve prayed for an opportunity to visit so many times, and it was more moving than I expected. Just imagine the stories behind each school, church building, or hospital room of what God once did here.”

Part of that story is told poignantly at the entrance of the Basrah Adventist Church, where the group stood inspecting the soft-brown bricks that blocked the entrance and filled the 12 church windows—all except the peak of each one.

MENA executive secretary Myron Iseminger was moved. “From the little bit of stained glass that we

could see of each bricked-up window, I tried to picture the beauty of the full window behind those bricks,” he said. “They say they’re coming down in the renovation; very soon light will shine through! I was struck with the thought—what God has done in this country isn’t visible right now because our churches are dark and empty. But someday soon His light will shine once again! The investment of the past has not all been lost.”

From 1946 to 1959 the Dar Al Salam hospital was a nationally famous Adventist medical facility in Baghdad. Dar Al Salam subsequently became the identity also of four large, highly respected Adventist schools that functioned into the late 1970s in Baghdad, Mosul, Basrah, and Kirkuk, all supported by a national membership of nearly 200 Iraqi members.

The Basrah church was built during some of the strongest years of the Iraqi Adventist Church, a striking sanctuary highlighted by exquisite stained-glass windows, each reflecting the beauty and thought that went into all the Adventist churches in Iraq. When the church’s 12 windows were shattered in 1990 during the Gulf War, Johnny Manassian, a pastor in Iraq and a stained-glass artist, offered to redo them. The massive undertaking began with the help of several Middle East College students who joined him for six months to cut and stain glass, pour lead, and refashion the artwork, though it took years more to complete the project.

Eileen Ghali, Manassian’s daughter, remembers the story of the

Basrah church windows: “My father understood what the windows represented. He put his whole self into restoring what he could for the future.” As more crises threatened the region, though, the church leaders in Iraq decided to brick each window to protect their unusual beauty and to hold out hope that future generations would be able to worship once again.

The travel freedom now possible represents a meaningful step toward that future as the country opens to tourists and international professionals. Boyd acknowledged the opportunities: “I saw an unbelievable amount of development and construction everywhere we went. With so much growth and opportunity in the country, I was struck most by the prospect of Adventist medical personnel, engineers, educators, businessmen, and other professionals coming and investing once again in this country, serving the Iraqi people by their professions and by the simple influence of their lives. The sanctuaries that have been silent for years can once again experience worship,” MENA president Rick McEdward said. “Because of war, our churches have sat empty for many years. This is heartbreaking for our Iraqi members around the world to see. Our dream is to reopen them. We are praying for people to take an interest in these historic communities, to come and invest in the region. We also need God’s help in providing pastors and workers for these churches so that God’s light can fill them once again.”



Adventist communicators discussed ways to make artificial intelligence an ally for mission.

PHOTO: SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

# PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN TIMES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## HOW TO MAKE AI AN ALLY FOR MISSION

FELIPE LEMOS, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**A**rtificial intelligence (AI) use and resources are becoming increasingly popular. According to Forbes Advisor, the most popular uses of AI today include responding to messages, inquiring about financial issues, planning travel itineraries, and crafting social media posts.

Other analyses point to AI as responsible for significant changes in various areas of human life, including health, education, and human and social development. This would also include religion among the areas impacted by chatbots, generative AI powered by increasingly sophisticated processes.

The Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) is an organization of Adventist communicators that has the goal of reflecting on technology and communication and applying them to the mission of the Adventist Church. In 2023 communication leaders from the three major regions of the Americas—North, Central, and South—met in Columbia, Maryland, United States, June 6 to 11 to discuss AI and its intersections with Adventist mission. Lectures, debates, and panels led participants to conclude that since Adventists can't escape from AI, they must learn how to make it an ally.

### AI AND EVANGELISM

The solid biblical foundations that inform the message of the Adventist Church can be leveraged with the use of AI, Emmanuel Arriaga, who works at Google, suggested. He understands that artificial intelligence is useful for elaborating proposals, writing documents, and doing research. He reminded GAIN participants, however, that the development of platforms and models should include ethical discussions.

Erick Sperandio Nascimento, a university professor and researcher, stressed that AI tools are opportunities to implement unprecedented content creation models to evangelize. He mentioned, for instance, the importance of using tools for theological counseling and Bible studies. "It is possible to structure systems to provide personalized studies based on people's preferences," he said.

### APPLIED INTELLIGENCE

The Adventist Church already has some practical applications for AI. An example coming from South America is the chatbot or virtual Bible assistant called Hope, built and implemented six years ago. The system provides people with real-time support, in Portuguese and Spanish, for their studies. It

has a database of nearly 6,000 official web articles produced by the Adventist Church, as well as 89 Sabbath School lesson guides and 63 books by Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White.

William Timm, coordinator of the Novo Tempo Digital Bible School, explained that between 2019 and 2023 the tool has assisted 278,422 students, with more than 40,000 of them just in 2023. "It is possible to use technology in a way that is useful for the spiritual nurturing of people," Timm said. According to coordinators, thousands have been baptized as a result.

### FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

For South American Division communication director Jorge Rampogna, "events like [GAIN] make us reflect on the need to use every possible opportunity to share the gospel and support mission." Abel Márquez, communication director in the Inter-American Division, added that "GAIN is an event that fosters interaction and creativity that keeps us up-to-date regarding ideals and tools for digital evangelism."

Christelle Agboka, head of news production for the Adventist Church in the North American Division, emphasized that such technological advances as AI can make the work even more effective. "As communicators we have a lot of power to shape the brand of the Adventist Church, reach people inside and outside of it, and help make disciples." 🦋



At the Mamawi Atosketan Native School celebration, parents watched their children doing traditional steps in colorful regalia. PHOTO: MISHELL RAEDEKE

## LARGEST INDIGENOUS SCHOOL IN NORTH AMERICA CELEBRATES TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

MAMAWI ATOSKETAN NATIVE SCHOOL IS AN ADVENTIST INSTITUTION IN ALBERTA, CANADA.

LYNN MC DOWELL, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

Satisfaction was palpable at the twentieth anniversary open house of Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) in Maskwacis, Alberta, Canada, as parents watched their children doing traditional steps in colorful regalia. On Friday, May 12, parents came out in force, filling the available seating in the high school gym to witness the showcase of student skills and achievement.

“Game On!” was the theme of the day. The open house featured a volleyball game between the Mamawi Howlers junior and senior high school teams. Notably, each team included a player who will participate in the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) this July—Jeresyn Francis, grade 9, and his brother Jerelus, grade 11. Cheers erupted from the bleachers as Jeresyn spiked a point in the game’s most memorable play, confirming that he had earned his spot as part of the NAIG volleyball stable in his age group. But in the end, the high schoolers came out on top, led by team captain Jerelus.

Rounding out the event was full-time entertainment by students, including Indigenous drumming, dancing, and a ukulele ensemble. In addition, kindergarten to grade 2 students played a mini hockey game against adults, who played on their knees. The extravaganza was appropriate for the landmark twentieth anniversary of the school opening its doors and being named by the students, who voted on a name taken from their Cree language under the leadership of then-principal Gail Wilton.

That day’s departure from the usual format of MANS’ weekend open houses was especially critical in focusing the celebration more on the Maskwacis community. The weekday timing gave parents and members of the Maskwacis community a rare chance to see their children in action during a school day—an opportunity many took advantage of. The strong turnout also enabled MANS staff to sell food and merchandise to support its student feeding program.

“It was amazing to see how

many people came out to enjoy the festivities. [The] jam-packed crowds helped bring up the energy in the school [so we could] really showcase what we have [to offer],” MANS principal Michael Willing said.

Of all the parents present, no parent was prouder than Chief Vernon Saddleback of Samson Cree Nation as he watched his son Joshua, a MANS alumnus, and Joshua’s 8-year-old daughter, Kiya, a current student, dance with confidence and finesse—a tribute to Joshua’s work as an instructor for the movement section of MANS’ cultural studies classes.

“How could I pass up the opportunity to dance with my daughter?” Joshua said in response to the question of why he agreed to help when asked by cultural studies teacher Janice Clark.

Joshua’s commitment to giving back to his alma mater is a testament to its impact on a historically marginalized and oppressed community. Presently MANS offers more than 200 First Nations youth of the four bands of Maskwacis a culturally respectful and Christ-centered K-12 learning environment.

The parent-teacher partnership has given the school a big boost, and at “Game On” the community was both entertained and excited to see the high level of traditional movement experience their children are exposed to at MANS, along with the “three R’s” (i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic) of government curriculum. ♣



Adventist businesspeople listen to the proceedings during the recent ASi Convention in Livingstone, Zambia. PHOTO: ADVENTIST ECHO

## BUSINESSPEOPLE CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS POTENTIAL FOR MISSION

**SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION LAY MEMBERS FEEL INSPIRED AND EQUIPPED.**

### SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Victoria Falls, known in Lozi as Mosi-Oa-Tunya, “the smoke that thunders,” was the location for the fourth convention of Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASi)—Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), May 10-13. Dozens of businesspeople and church leaders converged in Livingstone, the capital city of tourism in Zambia, for the event. Running under the theme “Enterprise Unusual,” business presentations sought to equip and inspire church members.

SID vice president Jongimpi Papu led the devotional moments.

ASi-SID president Advocate Dengure said he believes the event will become a game changer as members live up to the theme of the convention.

Hopeson Bonya, the SID vice president who oversees ASi affairs in the region, agreed. “As a world church division, we are pleased to see the business community working hand in glove for the mission of the church. If we as a church can continue with this spirit, we will finish the work very soon.”

ASi leaders believe that when businesspeople meet to share ideas, the end product will be an explosion in evangelism. Participants said they enjoyed presentations that sought to instill a spirit of collaboration.

One of the guest speakers was the first female mayor of the city of Livingstone. Constance Nalishebo Mukelebai thanked the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia for uplifting lives in the fields of education and health. “The government of Zambia is very happy with the work accomplished by churches, especially the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to improve the lives of ordinary people,” she said.

Vanny Munyumbwe, president of the Southern Zambia Union Conference of the Adventist Church, said that the city mayor’s visit to the event was “a sure sign that the church is doing a fantastic job.” He added, “The presence of government shows that the government is watching us, so let us keep up the good work.” One of the highlights of this convention was the

ASi members’ pledge to emulate Jesus Christ’s ministry of love and compassion by raising funds to assist the 23 former sex workers who were baptized after earlier Adventist World Radio evangelistic meetings. The group of former sex workers, now affectionately known as “The Friends of Jesus,” have been given financial support to help them start a new life and support their loved ones now that they are far from the streetlights.

Sister Esther, the spokesperson of the group, thanked the Adventist Church for its support. “We are thankful to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for this good gesture of pointing us to Jesus and taking us away from the streets,” she said. “They have given us cash to look after our families; they have paid our rent for five months and launched a garden, a grinding meal, and a chicken project so we can have meaningful income as we develop our own businesses.”

ASi businesspeople then invited the group for a big Sabbath celebration and worship and raised additional funds that will further support them as they find their way back into the community. SID-ASi projects director Stanley Kondongwe explained the rationale for their actions. “By donating to our dear sisters, we are impacting Livingstone,” he said. “We are showing we are not here just to talk but, as our motto says, share Christ in the marketplace.”

The next SID-ASi convention is scheduled for May 2024 in Luanda, Angola. ▀





Sikhululekile "Sikhu" Daco

PHOTO: ADVENTIST REVIEW



John C. Peckham

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

## ADVENTIST REVIEW HAS TWO NEW ASSOCIATE EDITORS

SIKHULULEKILE DACO AND JOHN C. PECKHAM ELECTED TO THE EDITORIAL TEAM.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**S**ikhululekile "Sikhu" Daco and John C. Peckham were elected as associate editors of *Adventist Review* and are now serving as part of the 174-year-old magazine editorial team.

Daco, who since 2017 served as senior editorial assistant at the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries (SSPM) Department, filled a position left vacant when Lael Caesar retired in 2022. Born in Zimbabwe, Daco has a bachelor's degree with a double major in French and biochemistry from Wellesley College in Massachusetts, and a Master of Arts in Religion from Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

In her role at the GC's SSPM Department, Daco worked on manuscript preparation, proofreading, and editing. Her role also included content editing and art design, as well as designing and executing social media strategy. Daco also produced content and coproduced a TV show.

"I am thrilled at the opportunity to join such a historic publication that continues to be pivotal in advancing the mission of the

church," Daco said. "To join [ARMies] at this juncture in earth's history is both terrifying and exhilarating. Terrifying when I consider the weight of the responsibility and exhilarating when I consider the possibilities."

*Adventist Review* executive editor Justin Kim said he is very excited to have Daco on board. "She will bring a fresh perspective with her unique cultural background, public speaking, evangelistic experience, keen theological awareness, and her involvement with young adult ministries," he said.

Daco also expressed that she hopes the uniqueness of her background and experiences may lead to innovative approaches to her work.

"I am still a Seventh-day Adventist because I have found it to be the most intellectually, emotionally, and socially coherent system of belief," she said. "I have a passion for articulating our faith in a relatable way. . . . I'm excited to join the team."

Peckham is an award-winning professor, theologian, and author who has built bridges in academia with other Christian and theological

organizations. He replaces Gerald A. Klingbeil, who was called to serve in his native Germany.

An ordained pastor, Peckham completed a Ph.D. in systematic theology at Andrews University in 2012 and an M.Div. with emphasis in systematic theology in 2005. He is author of several award-winning books, including *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Baker, 2018), which won the WORLD Magazine Accessible Theology Book of the Year.

Peckham is quoted often and extensively by the specialized press and academia. He is also a renowned professor who has won multiple teaching and research awards.

"It is a great privilege to be called to serve *Adventist Review*," he said. "I am excited to join the team, and I am praying that God will use me to be a blessing in this new position."

*Adventist Review* editor Justin Kim also weighed in on Peckham's election.

"The *Adventist Review* is privileged and excited to have Dr. John Peckham onboard as our associate editor," he said. "He follows our long tradition of solid biblical scholars as our editors. He will add scriptural creativity to theological articulation and spiritual depth to doctrinal fidelity. We look forward to what the Lord will do." 📖



João Wolff

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE WOLFF FAMILY

## FORMER SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION PRESIDENT DIES AT 92

**JOÃO WOLFF LED THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THAT REGION FROM 1980 TO 1995.**

JEFFERSON PARADELLO, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**J**oão Wolff, former president of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, died in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, on June 11, a day before turning 93. The cause was multiple organ failure, his family reported. Wolff, who retired in 1996, led the church in that eight-country region from April 1980 to July 1995.

Wolff was born on June 12, 1930, in Santo Antônio da Patrulha, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. His parents, Jacob and Guilhermina, wanted at least one of their nine children to prepare to serve the Adventist Church. To their joy, eight worked for the denomination.

In 1952 Wolff began taking theology courses at the then Colégio Adventista Brasileiro (CAB), today Brazil Adventist University, São Paulo campus. After graduation he began his ministry in January 1956 as pastor of Porto Alegre Central Adventist Church in Rio Grande do Sul and accounting assistant at the Rio Grande do Sul Conference of the Adventist Church.

In 1957 he married Edy Lil Louzada, a teacher who also graduated from CAB. That same year he took over the Department of Education and Volunteer Missionaries (current Youth Ministries) of the Rio Grande do Sul Conference.

During the next decades he held similar positions in other regions at conference level and then union conference level of the Adventist Church. In 1969 he became president of the North Brazil Union Mission, and in 1977, president of the South Brazil Union Conference.

### FOCUS ON MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

In April 1980, during the fifty-third General Conference Session, in Dallas, Texas, United States, Wolff became the South American Division president, a region that includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

Wolff's tenure was marked by intense work on behalf of evangelistic initiatives and the involvement of members in the mission of the Adventist Church. Under Wolff's leadership, the well-known "five-year plans" were implemented. Those plans sought to unify the work of the church across the region and get all members involved, placing the church in "a state of full-fledged and unceasing evangelization."

After retiring in 1996, he kept roles of advisor and local church pastor, for a total of more than 46 years of service.

### HIS FOOTPRINT

Daughters Marisa and Denise shared how the trunk of his car was always full of leaflets. "He was always sharing his testimony, even in the hospital. Witnessing was part of his life," they said. "Even when he was in a wheelchair, he went down from his apartment with his caregiver to the street every day. There he called to people passing by on the sidewalk and handed them the Missionary Book of the Year. He preached to the best of his abilities to the very end."

Current South American Division president Stanley Arco recalls Wolff's enthusiasm to reach more people. "He devoted all his strength to moving the church into mission. His generous leadership left its mark on several generations of pastors, workers, and members. Wolff deeply loved his family and the church. He was a great leader, a passionate pastor, a committed missionary, tireless [in] witnessing and preaching the gospel."

Wolff is survived by his wife, Edy; daughters Denise and Marisa; grandchildren Malton, Karin, Stefan, and Bruno; and great-grandchildren Miguel and Maitê. A funeral service took place June 12 at Curitiba Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. ▀



### CHURCH EMPLOYEES SPEND TWO WORKDAYS ASSISTING FLOOD VICTIMS.

A group of employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in southern Brazil left their offices and local churches and spent two days helping people affected by recent floodings. On June 20 and 21 these employees, serving at the Central Rio Grande do Sul Conference, traveled to the town of Caraá to distribute food and clothing and help clean debris. During the two days more than 40 volunteers helped several homes and countless families with food, water, and clothing.



### MONEY TRANSFER INITIATIVE COVERS BASIC FOOD NEEDS IN SOMALIA.

The Drought Emergency Response in Puntland project is targeting 800 households (or 4,800 beneficiaries) in Somalia with emergency cash transfers. The project is an initiative of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and has people from several countries involved. In Somalia more than 2 million people are displaced because they have been affected by drought during the past five years and no longer have a place to call home outside of temporary camps. Many families have lost loved ones, livestock, and agricultural products because of this catastrophe.



**TEN YEARS OF THE TENT.** For 10 days in May, students from Ruth Murdoch Elementary School in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, spearheaded a series of evangelistic meetings in a large tent on the campus of Andrews University. This year was the tenth time The Tent, as it's known, was held, and the theme was "This Is Our Faith." It was led by seventh and eighth graders, who were responsible for much of the planning and production. From May 12 to 21 they set up, preached, greeted, prayed, ran the livestream, took photos, and more.



### TWO BIBLE CONFERENCES CHALLENGE ADVENTIST THEOLOGIAN'S ACROSS EUROPE.

The Inter-European Division (EUD) recently celebrated a Bible conference event that brought together pastors from across the division under the theme "Anticipating His Coming." From June 6 to 11, 160 pastors from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, and Switzerland-France gathered at the Adventist University of France in Collonges-sous-Salève, France. From June 12 to 16, 260 pastors from Germany, Switzerland-Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia met at Friedensau Adventist University, Germany. The objective of these conferences was to encourage pastors, giving them tools to support, enable, and help them in their ministries.



### BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS SET THEIR FOCUS ON "MISSION POSSIBLE."

Business professionals employed by the Adventist Church in the South Pacific Division recently convened for a series of insightful presentations, seminars, and workshops to learn from each other and forge new connections. The convention was held June 5-8 at Port Stephens in northern New South Wales, Australia. The event brought together 200 delegates from across the division and representatives from church organizations and institutions, such as the ADRA, Adventist Media, Adventist schools, and retirement villages.



### ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

To receive our weekly newsletter highlighting current news, inspiring stories, thought-provoking commentaries, engaging features, and other media, sign up today.

[www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup](http://www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup)

## SIKHULEKILE DACO

**I**nfluence—the intangible force, exerted to varying extents by every human being, that sways the thoughts and actions of those within its sphere. There is not a person who does not possess its power. Whether an individual is ostentatious or unassuming, their presence exerts an influence. Your sheer existence changes the landscape.

### INESCAPABLE

This can be particularly distressing for those who would like to disappear into the drapes when they enter a room. For some, being present is desirable, but being noticed, in a large group, is a disaster. Telling someone who feels this way that they are exerting an influence even in their silence can sound mortifying.

Too often it is represented that someone must be loud or extroverted to share the gospel. Or that a preference for engaging the large crowds of people has the greatest impact in sharing one's faith. In this age of social media connectivity, an individual's potential to impact the world is often judged by how many followers they have amassed.

When Jesus saves us, however, He saves us individually. A personal preference for smaller, more intimate gatherings, having a handful of followers on social media, or no social media account at all is not wholly incompatible with sharing your faith. In fact, as this article explores, personal contact is a necessary ingredient in harnessing our influence for the gospel. Ellen White states, "Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men

# AN INESCAPABLE GIFT

---

*On the nature  
of influence*

are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit”<sup>1</sup>

With that said, to offer that a bashful soul can escape the reality that their presence makes a difference would be untrue. Every individual’s presence, even a quiet and unassuming presence, makes a difference. It is the nature of reality. In that, the timid soul has no choice—none of us do. Where the choice lies is in what type of influence we will exert, be it in our reserved stance or in our boisterous conviviality.

#### **THE RESPONSE**

An attractive influence draws others to emulate you in some way, and a repulsive one does just that—repels them away from your example. Most often we think of influence in its attractive capacity, as it results in behavior that aligns with that which is modeled. Influence, however, is the mere ability to affect those around you. Its effect may be attractive or repulsive.

Think, for instance, about Jesus raising Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for four days. “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. . . . Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death” (John 11:45-53). It is noteworthy that the same behavior elicited both attraction and repulsion.

While we may have some control over factors impacting how our influence is exerted, we cannot

guarantee how it will be received. As Paul states: “God . . . causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life” (2 Cor. 2:14-16, KJV). A life lived in faithfulness to God may attract some and repel others.

In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-15) there are four types of soil, where each soil type represents the state of the heart of the hearer of God’s Word. While everyone is responsible for the state of their own heart, there are things that the sower can do to encourage good soil, just as any farmer knows to cultivate the ground before planting. If there is anything that we can do to ensure that the seed is well received by the ground, we must spare no pains to do it. Ultimately,



## The impact of the Word inculcated and infused in their lives resulted in a more powerful proclamation.

though, people's hearts are not inanimate soil, and each person will choose how they receive the gospel when they hear or see it.

### OUR CHOICE

Although we cannot necessarily control the way people respond to our influence, we do have a choice in the nature of the influence we exert, be it for good or for ill. It is apparent that one's example may be virtuous or deplorable, whether or not it is attractive to others. More important than how many follow the example set through our influence, though, is what type of an example we are setting.

Jesus lived His entire life as an example for us (cf. John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21). As we follow His example, our lives become an example for others, pointing them to the Great Exemplar. So Paul exhorts, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). The apostle's goal was not to amass followers in order to puff up his pride, but to use his influence to draw attention to the One who changed his life.

Describing the cycle of influence, Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe" (1 Thess. 1:5-7). Not only did the apostles preach the gospel in theory, but they demonstrated through their lives what it looks like lived out. The impact of the Word inculcated and infused in their lives resulted in a more powerful proclamation. Those who received the Word in turn became an example for others. And so the cycle continues.

Paul's invitation in his letters to follow his example does not come in a vacuum. As evidenced in his first letter to the Thessalonians, he spent time with them, investing in a relationship with them, being open and transparent with them (verse 5).

In his first letter to the Corinthians he addresses them as his children (1 Cor. 4:14). It is in the context of this loving relationship that he urges the church at Corinth to imitate him (verse 16). Paul's influence bears greater force because he has personally invested in those he hopes to influence for Christ. Through his personal investment he has been careful to maximize the impact of his influence.

Here is a caveat. Since we have no choice but to exert an influence, if we are not being careful to exert an influence for Christ, then what is the nature of our influence? Consider that we are sinful human beings and but for the saving grace of Christ, our tendency is to evil. Without a decided effort to orient our influence for the salvation of others, do we not run the certain risk of misguiding them? Without a daily reliance on God's guidance, we may inadvertently exert a noxious influence.

"There are many whose names are on the church books, but who are not under Christ's rule. They are not heeding His instruction or doing His work. Therefore they are under the control of the enemy. They are doing no positive good; therefore they are doing incalculable harm. Because their influence is not a savor of life unto life, it is a savor of death unto death."<sup>2</sup> Not everyone will fit the definition of social media influencer, but everyone has influence. If we do not choose to use our influence for Christ, then it will inevitably work against Him.

Let us summarize the three points in this article one more time for clarity. We cannot decide whether or not we will exert an influence in the world. By virtue of our existence we have an influence. We cannot necessarily control how others will respond to the influence we exert. That's their choice. Our choice is in what type of influence we exert. For the Christian, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). So whether in life or in death, our influence must decidedly be on the side of Christ—from the charismatic personality, whose influence is immediately apparent, to the reserved individual who may still need some convincing that they have an influence. ▀

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 304.

**Sikhululekile Daco** serves as an associate editor of *Adventist Review*.

# Jim and Donna

are in good health,

happily retired, and love their community. They want to pass on their legacy of giving to their grandchildren and want them to have a say in how they begin to make donations with their funds each year. They've called a family meeting to explore interests and gauge how to move forward with exciting contributions that all can see the fruit of.



To learn more about Jim and Donna's journey—  
scan the QR code or visit [willplan.org/JimandDonna](https://willplan.org/JimandDonna)



Planned Giving  
& Trust Services

Experience  
the Joy of Giving

[willplan.org](https://willplan.org)

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black dress and a wide-brimmed straw hat, is seen from behind, carrying a young child in a white baby carrier. They are standing in a lush green field with several alpacas. One alpaca is on the left, another on the right, and a third in the background. The scene is set under a large, leafy tree. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

# A Thousand Likes

*A social media influencer describes her life of authenticity.*



## MERLE POIRIER WITH JARED AND ANNETTE THURMON

*Jared Thurmon has advised and helped the Adventist Review in various capacities for the past eight years. During that time he transitioned from living the city life to life in the country. His wife, Annette, made an even larger transition that involved becoming an active social media influencer. As we at the Review explored the topic of influence, it seemed a natural step to discuss how their decisions have affected their lives.*

*Merle Poirier, operations manager for the Review, and the Thurmons spent time talking about country living, social media, faith, and family. —Editors.*

**Merle :** Jared, Annette, we've been colleagues and friends for some time now. I follow Annette on Instagram and have watched her grow in influence and followers. I remember many highlights: the pre-farm days, your move to the farm, announcing your pregnancy, and the steady accumulation of "animal friends." Let's start with some history. What led to your move to the country? I think it's fair to say that this was an intentional choice to transition to this lifestyle.

**Jared:** Yes, we clearly chose this life. We recently returned from attending a homestead festival south of Nashville. We were invited to be on a panel with others, and the interviewer said, "Now, Jared and Annette, you're unique in that you don't eat animals or eggs from your chickens..." From the gasp of the audience, you would have thought it was just announced that we killed cats for sport (note to cat lovers, Annette is a huge fan). It's pretty rare to raise so many animals and not eat them.

**Annette:** Our motivation for moving to the country came around 2008 when we heard some sermons and read some books that reminded us of the reasons God made humans to live in a garden. We read a statement from Ellen White that two things most favorable for character development are caring for plants and animals. We knew we needed to change the path of life we were on. We only wish we had done it sooner.

**Country living is not a new idea for Adventists. Many Adventists today don't take it seriously. Yet country living or homesteading is trending in secular society.**

**J:** It's amazing how many forward-thinking, innovative ideas Adventism has had in the past that the world has now taken the lead. There's plant-based

eating, hydrotherapy, wellness centers, and this idea of living outside the city. Annette and I have been fascinated when many people share they would love nothing more than to live on a few acres outside a major city, yet don't do it. We feel very fortunate to have acted on this counsel to experience all the personal benefits that extend beyond the prophetic warnings of Ellen White.

**A:** I would agree. It is trending. Brands see this trend and are jumping onboard. Even though it seems outdated in some Adventist circles, we see many church members making similar decisions.

**So you moved to the country; got a few animals; planted a few things. And somewhere in there, you became a social media influencer.**

**A:** I started sharing my life on Instagram as a way





to document my journey in homesteading and sustainable living—it was a hobby. But it gradually grew into a full-time job. I've been able to connect with people all over the world who share my passion for living off the land and caring for plants and animals.



**Being an influencer takes social media to a whole new level. It's not just a photo here or there. It's sharing your life. What are the pros and cons of documenting your life for all the world to see?**

**A:** The biggest pro is definitely the connection I have with my followers. By sharing my experiences, I'm able to inspire others to make positive changes in their own lives. It's been an amazing platform to connect with like-minded people and build a community. The biggest con is definitely the lack of privacy. When someone shares so much of their life, it's easy for people to make assumptions and pass judgment on everything you do. It can be hard to deal with negative comments and criticism, especially when it's about something personal.

**Was it initially awkward to put your life out there?**

**A:** Yes, I think at first I took some pictures here and there that I found beautiful and wanted to share—the same way many use Instagram or other platforms. Then I had a friend who said that I should take it more seriously and go “all in.” I think that once I made that decision, I saw the need or felt the pressure to share more and more. I realized early on, though, that if this wasn't my actual life

and I just did things for the camera or for the “likes,” I would burn out quickly. So I made a commitment to share only what I want and not be caught up with the latest trend. I'll be honest. There were times I would see other accounts doing those things and growing [in followers]. But I reminded myself why I do this—because I enjoy it and would take the same pictures and videos if it was only for my own memories.

**J:** I think that's one reason people find Annette so genuine. She really doesn't do more for the camera than what she would do if no one was watching or following. Now, don't get me wrong. She puts a ton of work into recipes and photo-shoots that are clearly a little extra to make something more beautiful. But she seems to enjoy it, so I say go for it.

**How many hours do you give to social media? If someone reading this were to consider pursuing social media as an influencer, what should they expect?**

**A:** I would say a few hours each day. But I also spend a few hours writing, editing, planning photo shoots, all while bringing Ava, my daughter, along. I have learned that if I schedule out blocks of time, it becomes something manageable. If I don't, I will admit I can get overwhelmed. It's especially true when I partner with brands on projects and there are deadlines. If it's raining and we can't do the shoot or my parents need to go to the doctor or something else, it can throw things off. To anyone wanting to do this full-time, you have to ask how much you love it and how long you're willing to do it with nothing in return. If you're committed and dedicated, the results will follow. I have seen that reality again and again with new friends who have a few hundred followers and a year later have tens of thousands.

**It sounds like you really put all of yourself into this, in time, energy, and transparency. How do you balance sharing life with followers but also keeping some things private?**

**A:** It's all about setting boundaries and being intentional about what I share. I try to be honest and authentic with my followers, but there are

It's amazing how many forward-thinking, innovative ideas Adventism has had in the past that the world has now taken the lead.

definitely some things that are too personal. I also make sure to take breaks from social media and spend time away from my phone to prioritize my mental health and personal relationships.

**Let's get specific. You're not just any influencer. You're a Seventh-day Adventist. Do you incorporate Adventism into your social media? Or is faith something kept separate?**

**A:** I share that our church day is on Saturday and that Sabbath is crucial to our lives. We talk about how we eat a plant-based diet, which, as Jared



For me there are so many things I used to care about, stress about, and think about that no longer matter.



mentioned, is strange in the homesteading world where most see animals as the source of protein on the farm for their own survival. I promote kindness, compassion, and loving people who may not be like you. Yes, I personally feel I share the core elements of my faith with others.

**J:** I'm always more tempted to be more direct about things, so I'm learning life is a journey. If we are prayerful and kind, the conversations will come. I've been fascinated to see how many people reach out to Annette about subtle things she mentions here or there and the amazing conversations that result. I'm sure there are more creative ways to share unique points of faith, and we always ask each other how to do that. We try to do that in our weekly podcast and have gotten some great feedback because we have time to explain things better than in a 30-second reel on Instagram.

**Social media seems like a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week kind of job. Some influencers believe they must be "on" all the time or risk losing followers. How do you incorporate Sabbath into influencing?**

**A:** I made it a point not to go on Instagram or post anything on Sabbath. That's been nice, because the rest of the week I'm go, go, go. Sabbath is the best day of our week. Just ask Ava. She asks us every day, "When is Sabbath?" or "Is it Sabbath yet?" We think it's because we make it like a holiday every week. She sees her friends at church. We have all the family and some friends over to the house for lunch. We eat outside like kings and queens. It is our best day of the week. Being able to rest and know that while we rest, God does things for us that wouldn't be done if we did it ourselves is so satisfying.

**I believe part of being an influencer is to attract brands and products. You then promote them through your social media platform. Does that ever interfere or cause you to pause about endorsing a brand?**

**A:** Yes, it's a delicate balance. I was able to replace the income I was making while nursing with what I do now on social media. People think it's crazy when I tell them that, and honestly, I don't even know how to explain it. The last thing I want to call

myself is an “influencer.” But to do it at the scale that I do, I had to flip the switch and treat it like a business with a calendar, to-do lists, and deadlines. I plan things out, I think about how not to cross that line where things get weird, and, to be honest, I don’t like following people who talk about only the latest gizmo or product they are promoting. For me, that gets old. I think the fine line is finding brands that align with my principles. If you just want to make money, you can find brands who will throw money at you, but these products don’t align with who I am. I like to find brands that I actually use. That’s the best scenario. If I don’t already buy their stuff, then I ask them to let me try it and see if I would actually use it. I have so far promoted only things that I actually use. But with my decision to make it a business, it’s tough to know how much is too much. I had a friend recently ask me why I didn’t promote anything. To me that was a win because I have been, but I have been able to do it in a very tasteful way that’s not in your face. The brands have been happy with how I do it, so I plan to continue to do so.

**While I understand it’s a business, it does lead me to another question. As Christians we’re taught not to focus so much on ourselves, but on others. Social media seems like a very self-oriented medium.**

**A:** That’s something that’s hard to balance for many people. I’ve taken the position that I’m doing this for myself, as well as to encourage others. I’ve never cared about the number of followers, and I’ve chosen not to do things simply for more “likes.” I think that decision has been easier for me because my parents raised me to know I was loved by them, but even more so by God for who I am, not what I do. So many people scroll through social media thinking there is greener grass out there, when the reality is, and I can say this personally, we post only the prettiest moments for people to see on social media. It’s not real life. We don’t show people, in the case of our farm, the heartache, the dead animals, the weeds, storm damage, etc. So knowing our value in God’s eyes and recognizing that social media isn’t real life are key to making it about something more than just drawing attention to ourselves.

**You’ve chosen to involve your daughter in your business. How did you come to the decision to include her?**

**A:** I’m not afraid to show myself or my family. Some people are afraid of what others might do to their home or family, so they don’t post, but I’m careful in how I show her. I feel that ultimately showing our whole family and how our choices benefit all of us is more positive than any potential negatives. We aren’t motivated by fear, but a love for what we are doing and a desire to share that with others.

**Does Ava know why you are taking so many photos and videos, or does she think this is just normal?**

**J:** That’s a fine line. On one hand, Annette loves documenting everything and capturing beautiful moments. Ava has learned this is just part of the adventure. At the same time, we are pretty hard-core on not letting her look at screens. We show her a video or picture here or there, but for the most part, we are doing all we can not to lead her down a path that says, “Screens are fun; look at them often.” We think we’re doing fairly well in that she really doesn’t care about them when they are around or when we are looking at our phones. But she loves to be silly and I’m a huge fan of laughter, so she’s always thinking of ways to do something funny, especially when we are recording something.

**Ava is engaging and speaks easily to adults. Perhaps your choice to do social media has helped her feel socially comfortable and confident.**

**A:** Someone told us before she was born that one of the best things we could do was never to talk to her like a child, but instead as an adult. There was never any baby talk. Jared’s already had the conversation about the birds and bees, for crying out loud, so we treat her as one of us. We love that she seems to be a social butterfly, going up to people, asking their name or their age. Perhaps it’s from our intentionality to demonstrate this to her when we are around people. We are always striking up conversations, seeking to make people feel heard and loved.

**Let’s put the social media influencer component aside for a moment. Comparing life before with life now, what’s the biggest benefit/difference for you?**

**A:** I think for me it’s that so many things I used to care about, stress about, think about, no longer

matter. Whether that was the latest fashion or look or—this may sound silly, but I used to be all about manicures all the time. Now I have dirt under my fingernails, and I really don't care. I no longer care about the latest cool shoes, but instead I want to purchase a chicken that lays blue eggs. I would say the biggest difference and benefit is caring about things that matter and aren't artificial.

**J:** I would say there is a clear divergence from keeping up with the “Joneses” and recognizing the benefit of a simple life instead of chasing the latest thing. It isn't worth it. That's not imaginary, but close to home. I remember convincing Annette she needed a nice car, and we could afford it. Today we laugh to think about getting into a car like that when half the time we're walking around with chicken poop on our shoes.

**What counsel would you give to Adventist families who might want to move to the country, but feel like there are too many obstacles?**

**J:** Our only regret is that someone didn't sit us down the very day we got married and say the greatest thing we could ever do for our joy and marriage in

this life is to move to someplace in the country outside of a major city and get some animals and live life. Ellen White talks about how families that do this will live like “kings and queens.” I believe it. The main excuse (and we used it too) is that we'd miss out on life. But honestly, it's indescribable how much fun we have. When we moved here, our friends thought we were crazy. But when they come visit, they say, “OK. I get it now.”

**A:** I would say we didn't know what we were missing until we experienced it. To any family with children, it will be the best decision you ever make. I know Jared can get preachy, and many have done that, but our desire is to make what we have chosen beautiful and attractive and something people would want to do rather than something they *had* to do. I would say many people point to Ellen White on this subject, and rightfully so—she does talk a lot about where we should live. But if you go through the Bible, there is a strange pattern of where most of the heroes—both men and women—grew up.

**Thanks so much for sharing your time and experience with our readers. For more about Annette's business, Azure Farm, visit [azurefarmlife.com](http://azurefarmlife.com).** ♣



# A GREATER REALITY

The earth rotates on its axis at a speed of about 1,000 miles per hour, and it orbits the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph. A single line tracing your ride for the past year would be a 584-million-mile ellipse with 365 elongated loops. Funny—despite the long schlep, your senses missed the ellipse and every loop.

Nor do they alert you to the 10,000 muons that pass through you every minute (or the 100 trillion neutrinos that pass through you every second). And even though millions of the world's cell phone calls are in the air around you, as real as the light that enables you to read these words—without cell phones to do what your eyes, ears, mouth, nose, and skin can't, you'd never know about them, including the texts and calls meant for you.

And though matter is solid to the touch, we all learned young about the atomic model, with electrons orbiting the nucleus, which means matter is mostly empty space. However, according to quantum theory, particles exist only as waves, which are smeared over space but, following the Schrödinger wave equation, collapse into particles, yet only when measured. And even then, according to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, we can determine either their location or momentum, not both.

We know the outside world only through our brains, which remain encased in absolute darkness, and whatever gets in does so only as electrical signals. Genesis 1:1-27 exposes the reality of an external world apart from our consciousness, but I wonder about the gap between that external world and how it's filtered by our senses. That is, what's

the difference between the tree outside my window and the neural wiring in my brain that imprints the image of that tree into my head? What's lost in translation from the tree to my consciousness of it?

Centuries ago Immanuel Kant separated the *noumenon*, the world as it really is, in and of itself (*das ding an sich*), from the *phenomenon*, the world as it appears to us after being sifted and categorized by our brains. Taking Kant to extremes (they would say to his logical conclusion), some later argued that because all we can know of the external world are our own ideas about it—why not ditch the notion of an external world to begin with?

The real lesson, I think, in this gap between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, between reality itself and our limited views of it, is just how much greater the creation is from how it appears to us. Scripture points to a reality richer and deeper than the dogmatic materialism that now dominates the noosphere. Angels (fallen and unfallen), the great controversy, the dead raised, God's speaking the world into existence, the promise of salvation, Christ feeding the 5,000, the Second Coming—the reality that Scripture unveils, by default, exposes the poverty of a worldview that limits existence to what we can in principle detect with our senses (even aided by things like the large Hadron Collider), or to what can be scientifically quantified and theorized.

Left to ourselves, we know so little, and how much of the little we know is wrong anyway? One day, though, we will learn what we really knew (1 Cor. 13:12), and what we really didn't (1 Cor. 4:5). ♣

---

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

CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



SCRIPTURE POINTS  
TO A REALITY  
RICHER AND DEEPER  
THAN THE DOGMATIC  
MATERIALISM THAT  
NOW DOMINATES  
THE NOOSPHERE.



## TAMING THE SOCIAL MEDIA BEAST

---

### *Tips for achieving balance*

In a crowded room, all is silent. Heads are bent, eyes fixed on a mobile device as fingers scroll endlessly through videos and images. Every now and then a chuckle or mutter can be heard while a child watches a cartoon loudly on their tablet. There is minimal conversation apart from a person showing a companion the latest viral video or post. Another person pulls on their screen over and over, refreshing their social media feed for more content to engage with. Does this scene sound familiar?

During the past two decades, social media has become an integral part of the lives of most Americans. Statista estimates

that as of 2023, 308.2 million Americans regularly use a form of social media. The United States has the third-largest social media audience, following China and India. The number of social media users in the U.S. is projected to peak at 331 million by the year 2028.<sup>1</sup>

Humans by nature are social, and it is undeniable that social media platforms have impacted the way we navigate and interact with the world. Following the inception of Facebook in 2004, social media platforms have expanded our ability to connect with people across the globe.

It has allowed individuals to challenge cultural barriers, interact with other belief systems, and challenge ideas of identity. Society is seemingly more connected than ever before; fellowshipping with others is only the click of a button away. Platforms have even implemented computer algorithms that tailor a person's social media feed to their unique interests. People have



more freedom of expression, producing and even marketing their creations.

With all these benefits, you may wonder, What's the harm in consuming media without limitations? Of course, in theory there's no harm in watching some funny videos or commenting on a friend's post. Social media use becomes a concern when it impacts one's ability to attend to their responsibilities or affects their mental health. Like many things in life, social media can be a double-edged sword.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND CHILDREN**

America's youth have never known an age without the Internet and smartphones. Media is now consumable in a variety of ways, such as video games, social networking sites, and television. Unlike their parents, today's youth can access information by inputting a few keystrokes.

A study conducted by Pew Research Center in 2022 estimated that 95 percent of American teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 engage with social media platforms, with 35 percent of teens reporting using social media "almost constantly."<sup>2</sup> They discovered that teenagers' daily use of devices averaged five and a half hours, owing in part to the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. While social media has increased learning and creativity among today's children, it has had several detrimental impacts on their mental and physical well-being.

A study conducted by the *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*<sup>3</sup> showed that the popularity of Internet usage has led to the rise of sedentary behavior. Children and adolescents who previously would be seen at local parks playing sports with their peers now choose to stay home connecting with their friends through video games or social networking.

As children have become less physically active, childhood obesity has risen in the United States, with an estimated 17 percent of children and adolescents classified as obese by their physicians. The lack of exercise also increases the risk of physical health conditions as well as being correlated with increased psychological distress.

Because of minimal vetting of age, children and adolescents can easily join social media platforms. Children today can easily find dangerous, harmful, or inappropriate content. Whether through computer algorithms or unwanted messages, children

can be exposed to images of substance use, violence, or derogatory behavior. Exposure to harmful media has been linked with increased anxiety, depression, and potential substance use disorders.

### **CONNECTED YET DISCONNECTED**

Despite the connectivity of social media, Americans have moved away from face-to-face interactions and toward superficial relationships. Many Americans today prefer texting to phone conversations, which increases the physical and emotional disconnect from others. Physical interaction has been replaced with liking an individual's social media post or sending them an instant message. Online activity creates a false sense of connection—individuals can engage with many "friends" on social media and in reality be socially isolated. Social networking has removed the emotional labor of developing relationships and has led to the breakdown of interpersonal skills.

The anonymity of social platforms has also led to the rise of the hateful behavior dubbed "cyberbullying." It is a digital form of aggression in which individuals harass and threaten victims through social media, cell phones, email, or other electronic technologies. Individuals can mask their physical identity and contact their victims at all hours as a result of the Internet's 24/7 availability.

Cyberbullying has risen among young people, with 45 percent of adolescents having experienced at least one form of online harassment. Adults experience cyberbullying as well, with up to 24 percent having been a target of harassment as determined by the *Journal of Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Pew Research Center,<sup>5</sup> cyberbullying can be defined as offensive name calling, spreading false rumors, receiving explicit images, sharing of explicit images without consent, physical threats, and persistent questions about their activities or whereabouts. Cyberbullying has been linked with psychological distress, suicidal ideation, and suicide because of persistent online harassment.

### **WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

Unlimited access to the Internet via computers and smartphones has exposed our brains to a constant stream of visual stimuli. This is in part because social media is designed to be addictive. As we receive a like or comment on social media,

## Like many things in life, social media can be a double-edged sword.

our brain secretes dopamine, the chemical associated with reward or reinforcement of behaviors.

More interaction with social media creates a feedback loop or self-perpetuating cycle. For example, some people will close an app on their phone only to open it moments later and continuously refresh their feed, looking for the next exciting post. How can one break free?

### FOR ADULTS

- **Be mindful of your time.** Do you know how much time you are currently spending on social media? Certain apps and phones have ways to monitor social media usage. By increasing our awareness of the total time spent on apps, we have a starting point for reducing our use.
- **Create opportunities for technology-free moments.** Put your phone down during social gatherings, reconnect with old hobbies, start new hobbies, or go for a walk. Silence your app notifications to minimize distractions.
- **Set time limits.** Set a timer as a boundary for using social media apps. Set aside a certain time of day to put the phone down. Following dinner, for example.
- **Reduce or even delete social media apps.** Yes, it's possible to live without them!

### FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- **Foster communication and expectations for social media usage.** Together, families can come up with boundaries and rules and adhere to them. For example, limiting the use of technology one hour before bedtime.
- **Model healthy social media engagement.** Children learn how to navigate the world through the way their caregiver operates. Parents can provide an example by limiting their own social media use, being mindful of the content they interact with, and the way they behave on social media.
- **Increase your awareness of what your child is consuming.** Caregivers can limit the harm a

child experiences by constantly communicating about the sites a child is engaging with and the types of posts or videos in their feeds.

- **Teach kids about the risks and benefits of social media.** Empower children to be responsible with technology by educating them on the ways they can protect themselves, such as implementing privacy settings. This can look like setting a child's media profile to "private," which limits outside messages from individuals they do not know. Educate children on such dangers as cyberbullying, harassment, and inappropriate adult behavior.

### FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

- **Be mindful of what you share with others.** The Internet is forever; our public information can be accessed and stored easily. Limit the amount of information you share publicly with those you don't know. If you are unsure a post is appropriate, ask a parent or trusted adult. Block messages and friend requests from people you do not know.
- **Balance.** Limit the use of devices to one hour before bedtime, because screen time is linked to disrupted sleep quality. Foster meaningful personal relationships by putting your phone down. Instead, make in-person interactions a priority to create relationships that last.
- **Ask for help.** Reach out to a safe adult or close friend if you experience cyberbullying, harassment, or inappropriate social media interactions. Abuse lives in silence; reach out for support or contact the 988 Mental Health Crisis Lifeline.

Reducing one's social media use does not mean never using the Internet again. It is about becoming more intentional about the content you engage with and the priority it has in your life. Life is about balance. We can still find new content to interact with and have time for the important things. 🍀

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278409/number-of-social-network-users-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851?needAccess=true&role=button>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shame-nation/201911/adult-cyberbullying-is-more-common-you-think>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/12/15/teens-and-cyberbullying-2022/>

---

**Samantha Gonzalez**, AMFT, AMCC, is a clinical therapist at Loma Linda University Behavioral Health.

# FLETCHER ACADEMY

fletcheracademy.org • North Carolina

- Find your purpose and transform the world as a **disciple of Christ**
- **Smartphone-free** focused learning, strong **academics**
- Explore our 600-acre campus & hands-on **agriculture program**
- Every student **works**, Every student **serves**
- The majority of students are involved in performing **music groups**



- Live with purpose at Fletcher Park Inn, an active independent **retirement community**
- Make new **friends** and enjoy Christian fellowship
- **Grow your legacy** by engaging in Fletcher Academy's mission
- Walk from your home to the LPC Fitness & **Aquatics Center**, and AdventHealth **Hospital**, Fletcher Seventh-day Adventist **Church**, and Fletcher **Academy Farm**

## FLETCHER PARK INN

fletcherparkinn.org • 828-209-6930

# LINKED IN TO GOD'S MESSAGE

---

*A finance expert influences the world by sharing his faith.*

**LORI FUTCHER**



One Sabbath afternoon during the height of the pandemic, Lott Chidawaya was at home in Maryland when he started thinking about risk management. This was not an unusual subject for Chidawaya to contemplate. As a senior financial expert at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), risk management is part of Chidawaya's professional language.

But Chidawaya was not thinking about business. He was contemplating risk management in connection with mortality and his Christian faith.

Realizing that even his secular acquaintances were also thinking about death more than usual because of the masses of people dying from the COVID-19 virus, Chidawaya composed a LinkedIn article on the subject.

Beginning with language his colleagues would recognize



and relate to, Chidawaya made his point clear. “God says He has the solution to our mortal predicament—the potential of missing out on this, if God exists, could turn out to be the mother of losses.”

Across the ocean in Berlin, Germany, one of Chidawaya’s colleagues signed into her LinkedIn account. Yuliya Kudrashova first met Chidawaya at a workshop he had spoken at four years earlier. He advised her professionally, and she appreciated his guidance. So when she saw his post, she was curious about what he had to say.

Chidawaya’s words got her thinking about life. “The effect of this post on me cannot be overstated,” says Kudrashova. “He talked in my

professional language about my faith—and I heard him.”

Wanting to discuss these ideas more, Kudrashova got in contact with Chidawaya. Soon he was leading her through weekly topical Bible studies over video chat. They talked about what it means to believe in God, what it means to be saved, and other fundamental aspects of Christianity. Kudrashova became the firstfruits of Chidawaya’s LinkedIn ministry when she accepted the Adventist faith.

#### **GETTING NOTICED**

A couple weeks after Chidawaya’s first LinkedIn article, news of George Floyd’s murder dominated the headlines. Protests erupted across the country.

As the national guard was being mobilized in Minnesota, Chidawaya worked on his response to the news, a LinkedIn article titled “Reflections on Racism, Classism, and other Forms of Segregation.”

In analyzing the problem of what Chidawaya describes as grandiose delusions that one person can be superior to another, he covered the subjects of Creation, the Sabbath, and Satan’s fall.

“Thus true religion of God presents the human family as equals whose worthiness comes only from character developed through supreme love of God and impartial love for humanity,” he concluded.

The article, described by one investment officer as “mind-boggling,” had more than 1,000 views. At this point LinkedIn employees noticed the traffic Chidawaya’s articles were bringing to the platform, and asked him to write more.

Meanwhile some of his Adventist connections began to express concerns. “This is a professional platform,” they would say, unaware that those operating LinkedIn were encouraging Chidawaya to continue. Of all the responses he got, the only negative ones he received were from Adventists who didn’t believe his posts were being shared at the right time or in the right place.

“There’s never a *perfect* time to share the gospel,” Chidawaya says. “If they’re waiting for a perfect time, that time won’t come.”

That’s not to say that Chidawaya doesn’t look for opportunities, conversations happening in society that lead into a religious discussion. “I pray for the Lord to impress upon my mind the perfect timing and way to present the gospel message,” he says.

In fact, it is the connection he makes between current events and his Christian worldview that attracts readers. People who would never read a purely spiritual piece are interested in what he has to say as a finance expert.

## GROWING FAITHFUL

Recognizing that it’s unusual for an accomplished professional in his field to also be a godly person, Chidawaya is grateful for the doors God has opened for him to speak intelligently to this section of society. Had Chidawaya’s educational journey gone as he had planned, he wouldn’t have had these opportunities.

Growing up in a poor household in Zimbabwe,

Chidawaya was the son of a man who had trained to be a Catholic priest. “[My father] was a religious man from a young age,” says Chidawaya, “and he grounded me in the Bible.”

When Chidawaya went away to a government boarding school as a teenager, he met some Adventist students, read *The Great Controversy*, and became the first Adventist in his family. The Adventists at the school had permission to hold Sabbath services on campus, and in his senior year Chidawaya was put in charge of that group of worshippers.

After graduation he had plans of becoming a doctor, but medical school presented several challenges. First, he was not able to take one of the required tests, because it was held on the Sabbath. After the scheduled exam, one of Chidawaya’s professors berated him in front of an auditorium packed with more than 100 students. The professor could not understand why Chidawaya wouldn’t just go ahead and take the test, then ask for forgiveness from his pastor.

It wasn’t only Sabbath issues that interrupted Chidawaya’s plans, but also a student protest, a protest so severe that it indefinitely closed down the University of Zimbabwe, where he was studying.

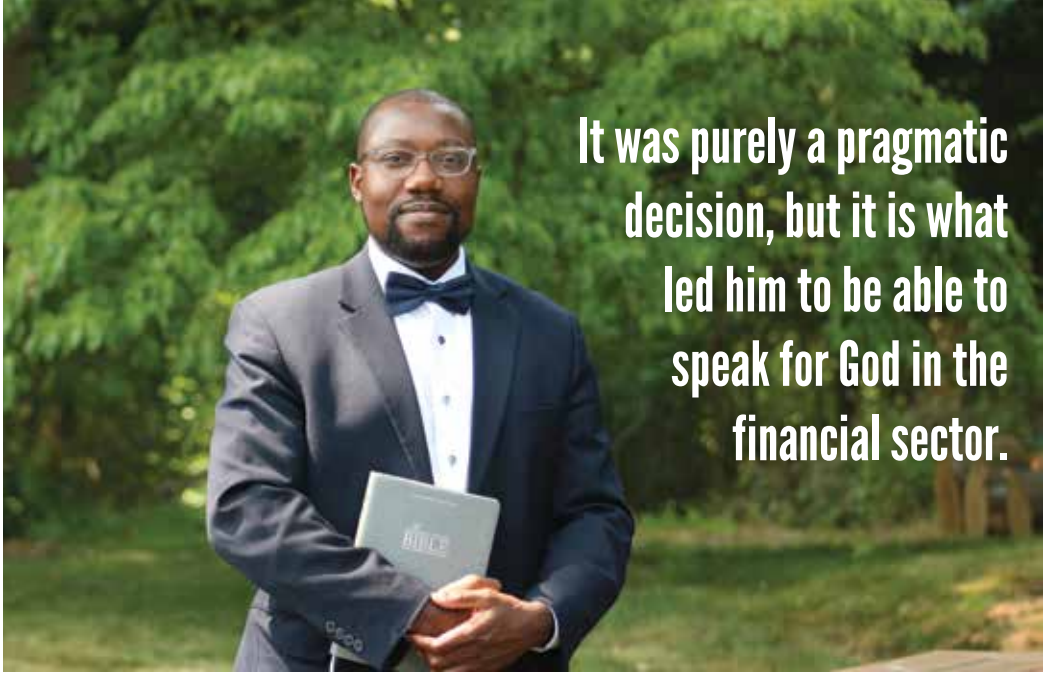
Because this was the only university in Zimbabwe offering medical studies at the time, Chidawaya relocated to South Africa, but he was unable to receive credit for the classes he had already taken. If he were to continue pursuing a medical degree, he would have to restart the seven-year process toward becoming a doctor.

## ENTERING THE WORLD OF FINANCE

At his brother’s suggestion, Chidawaya switched to finance. It was purely a pragmatic decision, but it is what led him to be able to speak for God in the financial sector.

Now he is able to follow the biblical model of helping the poor and marginalized through his work at IMF, an organization that is the economic first responder to countries facing hardships. “It’s almost like a lifeline for most countries,” says Chidawaya. “There’s nowhere else they could borrow from.”

Marrying his Christian calling to his work, Chidawaya helps the marginalized while witnessing to the privileged. He talks openly about his



It was purely a pragmatic decision, but it is what led him to be able to speak for God in the financial sector.

faith and has shared *The Great Controversy* with those in his professional circle. “My Christianity is central to who I am,” he says.

Also central to who he has become is the environment he grew up in. After his conversion to the Adventist faith, his parents also joined the church. He credits their commitment to following God as the reason his life turned out differently than the lives of his childhood peers.

“Most of my friends didn’t have the privilege of godly parents,” he says. “They were drinking and smoking at a young age.”

In December 2021 Chidawaya visited his childhood home. The church where his family was worshiping didn’t have a place to meet. During the pandemic the school where the church had been meeting closed its doors, leaving the congregation without a place to worship.

Chidawaya spoke with his aging father, who agreed to donate some land for the church. A few months later Chidawaya’s father died, but the church is being built on the land he gave, with Chidawaya funding the project.

#### SHARING HOPE

Chidawaya knows that his father is sleeping, waiting for Christ to return. When LinkedIn asked him to continue writing articles, he wanted to share the peace he has found in this message.

“People tend to worship God out of fear,” he says, commenting on how he has seen the tendency of those who believe in an eternal soul to

eventually leave the Christian faith because they couldn’t understand a God who burns people in hell for eternity.

Chidawaya prayed for an opportunity to present the truth about death to his LinkedIn community. “You can’t just start talking about the state of the dead,” he says.

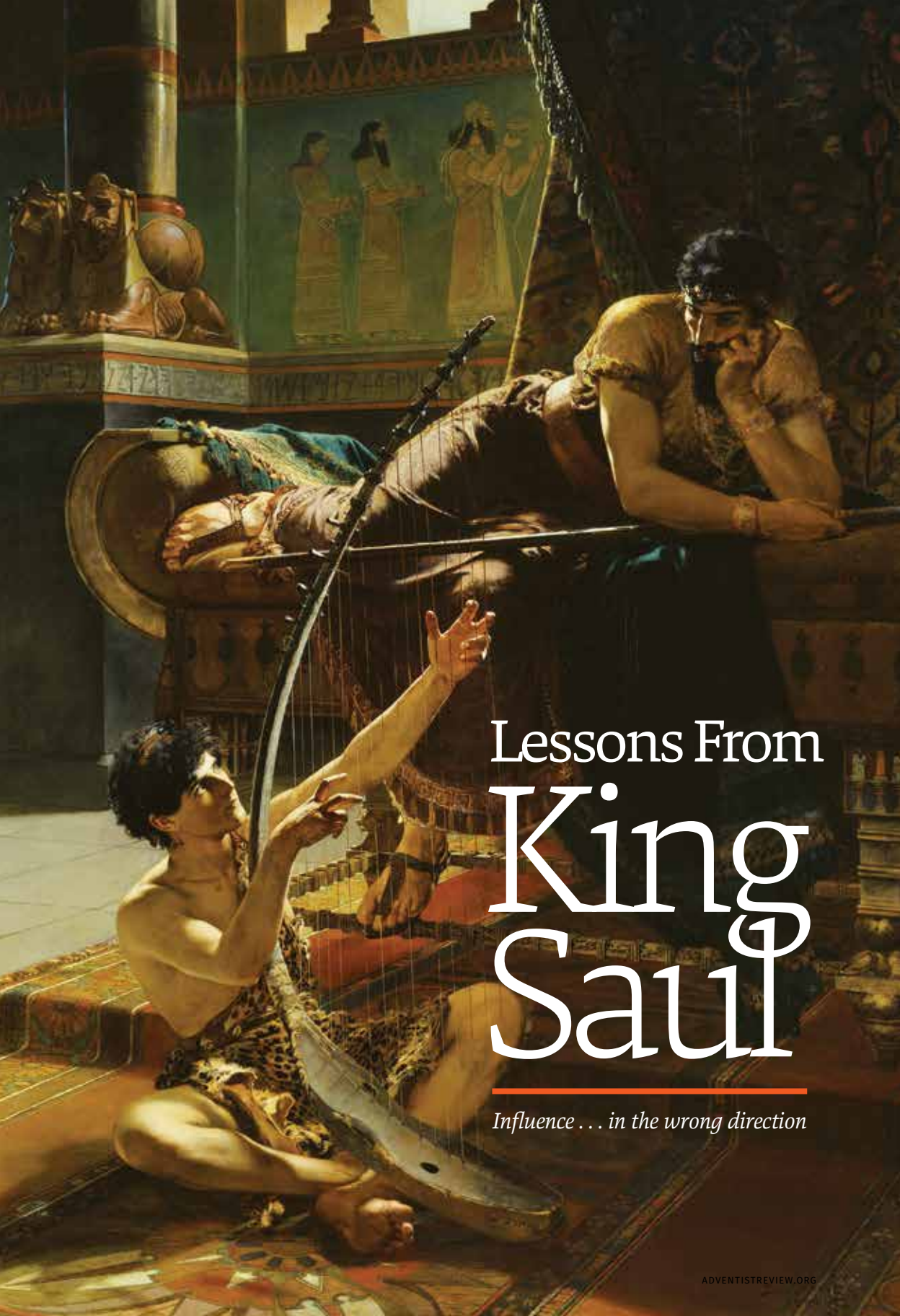
The opportunity arose only a few weeks after his second post. As Chidawaya watched President Trump’s May Employment Report, he noticed that the president hoped that George Floyd was “looking down” from heaven. This was the hook he needed. He posted his third LinkedIn article, focusing on the state of the dead. In the discussion from that post, there were questions and comments about hell, which Chidawaya then addressed in his next post.

To date, Chidawaya has posted five meaty, religious articles on his LinkedIn page. He continues to study the Bible with those who respond to his articles, and he continues to look for openings to share God’s message with a world longing for a better alternative.

“People are going through stress and looking for answers,” he says. He knows that the Adventist Church has these answers; all we need to do is share them with those who are seeking. “Peace comes from knowing that the Lord is in charge, regardless of the rumors around us. We are sitting on a treasure trove.”

---

**Lori Futcher** is a full-time freelance writer, editor, and speaker living in Nampa, Idaho.



Lessons From  
**King  
Saul**

---

*Influence . . . in the wrong direction*



In 2021 a survey of 1,000 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 was done, in response to what they would consider to be their dream job. They discovered that 60 percent of respondents were more interested in starting their own business than engaging in what might be considered more traditional employment. Another survey of 3,000 children, ages 8 to 12, revealed that 29 percent listed “YouTuber” as their first choice. Yet another survey of 1,000 children, ages 6 to 17, found that 52 percent were looking forward to a YouTube career. But what was interesting about all three surveys was that it was clear that they had been influenced. Of the 1,000 teenagers in the first survey, 37 percent cited social media influencers being responsible for the choice of their future career.<sup>1</sup>

We are living in what some call the “age of influence.” It’s a reference to the phenomenon of social media influencers who inspire people on any variety of topics or brands. Need baby products? Someone is there to tell you exactly what you should buy. Traveling to a vacation location? Someone will tell you the best place to take a selfie. Not sure what to wear to an event? How to dress for success for any moment is available at your fingertips on your nearest cell phone.

Wanting to influence others isn’t that unusual. We can probably all tell at least one story in which someone copied what we were doing or wearing, and we realized either with pride or annoyance that someone had done so. Perhaps we dreamed of being the leader—whether of the line in first grade or the team in middle school or the main role of the high school drama. Wanting to influence and lead others is natural for many. And now for some on social media, it has become a primary goal.

But let’s go back even further. A quick perusal of the Bible will find that influence is as old as, well, the beginning of time. We can pause on any number of Bible stories to discover influence as a primary factor. But let’s focus on one individual—Saul. He was literally head and shoulders taller than everyone else. This seemed to suggest his influence and leadership potential. Interestingly, where Saul begins looks like anything but. We don’t find him center stage. He’s hiding in the baggage. Let’s take a closer look at how one attempting to blend in with luggage could ever end up as one of the key influencers on Israel’s

history. It’s ultimately a story of how influence can be misused, misguided, and wasted.

### THE CHARISMATIC MASK

At first Saul possessed qualities that garnered him favor and acclaim. He was chosen by God and accepted by the people; his physical appearance was impressive; and he had a certain amount of charisma and charm. Charisma and good looks, however, while they may help with influence, don’t guarantee effective leadership. Saul proved to be superficial, masking a deeper flaw in his character—he thrived on the need for approval.

“One great defect in the character of Saul was his love of approbation. This trait had had a controlling influence over his actions and thoughts; everything was marked by his desire for praise and self-exaltation. His standard of right and wrong was the low standard of popular applause. No man is safe who lives that he may please men, and does not seek first for the approbation of God. It was the ambition of Saul to be first in the estimation of men.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we find our first lesson in influence. If the desire for wanting to influence others stems from a deeper need for others’ approval, we may be on dangerous ground. To live for “likes” or “followers” may cause us to compromise our values or lose sight of our spiritual compass.

### THE POISON OF JEALOUSY

A primary catalyst that led Saul down the path toward poor leadership was jealousy. When David, a young, handsome, courageous warrior, emerged victorious against the Philistines, the people praised David more than Saul. Instead of embracing David’s success and using it to benefit the kingdom, Saul allowed jealousy to consume him. This toxic reaction fueled his actions and distorted his judgment.

We also must recognize the insidious nature of jealousy. It breeds resentment, sows discord among others, and corrodes trust. When we allow jealousy to fester, we lose sight of our ability to influence, nurture, and support those around us in a positive way. Unfortunately, where influence can be for the greater good, it can also impact those around us, whether family, friends, or those in our wider sphere, causing negativity, envy, and conflict.

The desire to influence often causes us to focus on followers. It naturally can lead to competition,

because if someone else has more followers, then there is the race to surpass them. This can be fueled by jealousy no different than Saul's need to have the people praise him more than David. We must be careful that our influence comes from looking to Jesus and imitating His traits rather than those around us.

### THE POWER OF FEAR

Fear can be another potent force that can cloud our judgment and lead us astray. With Saul, his jealousy of David's growing popularity grew to fear as he perceived a threat to his own influence. His fear drove him to make rash decisions, further eroding his leadership.

We find in this a reminder to confront and address our fears head-on. We should cultivate an environment in which open communication is encouraged, and concerns can be voiced without fear of retribution. My favorite example of this comes from Ed Catmull, cofounder of Pixar.<sup>3</sup> He described the secret of his corporate success as well as the success of Pixar and Disney Animation as candor and having kind, honest people in a brain trust that can be straightforward without fear of penalty. This extends to life in general. By acknowledging and managing

our fears, we can make more rational and better-informed decisions, thereby avoiding the downward spiral of poor leadership and misused influence.

### THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF INSECURITY

Where there is jealousy and fear, insecurity is not far off. As Saul compared himself to David's achievements, he became increasingly aware of his own inadequacies. Instead of addressing his insecurities constructively, Saul instead sought to undermine and eliminate the perceived threat to his authority.

Again, we today are not immune. We must prioritize personal growth and self-awareness. It is vital to acknowledge and address our own insecurities and shortcomings. One of the best ways to accomplish this is by allowing people who not only respect and appreciate us to be our close associates, but ultimately want us to be the best influencers or leaders possible. This may result in their giving an honest assessment that addresses weaknesses and traits that may need adjusting. When we create a culture that values vulnerability, fosters personal development, and encourages collaboration rather than resorting to destructive tactics, we increase our influence.

## Leadership Tips From the Life of King Saul

### JARED THURMON

Saul was not only an influencer, but he led Israel for 40 years. Leadership, and the influence that comes with it, hold immense power to shape individuals, organizations, and society. The impact of leadership, both positive and negative, reverberates far beyond the immediate sphere of influence. Saul's story was a tragic one. What started as strong leadership potential soon failed in multiple areas. Let's review some leadership lessons that, had Saul followed, might have led to a much different result.

- **Leaders today must prioritize building and maintaining trust within their teams.** Trust is the bedrock on which effective leadership is built. It requires transparency, fairness, and consistency in both words and actions. By cultivating trust, leaders can foster an environment in which collaboration, innovation, and shared goals flourish.
- **Leaders know they need to hire people better than themselves.** If we truly want to create thriving organizations, we must be humble enough to find individuals who are better than we are. Leaders understand that tomorrow is not guaranteed, and the success of the organization is greater than their own accolades and achievements.
- **Leaders must engage in regular self-reflection and cultivate self-awareness.** Leaders can proactively address potential pitfalls and make more informed decisions by understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and triggers. Self-awareness allows leaders to recognize their own biases, manage their emotions, and respond to challenges with clarity and composure.
- **Leaders should surround themselves with a diverse and complementary team that challenges their assumptions, provides different perspectives, and brings a range of skills and expertise to the table.** Embracing diversity fosters innovation, encourages healthy debate, and prevents

## LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

Saul's poor leadership had far-reaching and devastating consequences for Israel. His misguided actions not only impacted him personally, but reverberated throughout his 40-year reign on Israel's throne, leaving an indelible mark on the history of Israel. His obsession with maintaining his own position hindered the growth and potential of his kingdom.

His desperate hold of power led him down a treacherous path of unethical behavior that went against the very principles of his kingdom. Saul's moral compass became increasingly distorted. In his pursuit of self-preservation, he sacrificed integrity.

His erratic behavior and unjust treatment eroded the trust and loyalty of those around him. Instead of fostering a united front, Saul sowed seeds of discord and mistrust, creating an environment rife with tension and animosity. When trust is shattered, the ability to influence is compromised.

Influence as a result of leadership or influence that extends simply from living a consecrated life can be affected if we take our eyes off Jesus and look increasingly to ourselves or others. There can be long-reach-

ing consequences when we exhibit negative influence that is experienced in our life or those around us.

## IN CONCLUSION

The story of King Saul serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of how influence for evil can result in terrible consequences. His is a cautionary tale that must be heeded to avoid falling into the same trap. While we do not sit on a kingly throne making decisions for a nation, we do, in our everyday life, make decisions that influence others. By learning from Saul's mistakes, we can chart a different course. Let's avoid the dangers of misusing the influence God has given each of us. Let us recommit ourselves to leave a lasting impact through what we do and say, whether it be through our actions or our social media postings. We have a world to influence for His kingdom. 📌

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.connectionsacademy.com/support/resources/article/career-goals-among-children/>

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 650.

<sup>3</sup> Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace, *Creativity Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration* (TransWorld Publishers Limited, 2014).

**Jared Thurmon** resides in Adairsville, Georgia. He has advised and helped Adventist Review Ministries in various capacities for the past eight years.

leaders from succumbing to groupthink or becoming isolated in their decision-making.

### ■ Leaders must embrace a growth mindset and encourage a culture of continuous learning.

They should recognize and nurture talent within their organizations, even if it means relinquishing some control or sharing the spotlight. By doing so, leaders can unlock untapped potential and drive long-term success.

### ■ Leaders must prioritize ethical conduct and lead by example.

Influence is something that must be stewarded, because it has the power to change the world, for good or evil. Leaders must establish clear ethical guidelines and ensure they are upheld throughout the

organization. As we see later in the story of King David, once his moral mishaps with Bathsheba and her husband take place, the kingdom's ethics decline at a rapid pace. By fostering a culture of integrity, leaders inspire their teams, organizations, and families to act ethically, enhancing the organization's reputation and ensuring sustainable success.

■ **Leaders need to embrace humility and adopt a servant leadership mindset.** One of the greatest examples of leadership comes from Saul's son Jonathan, the rightful heir to the throne who laid down his claim in order to follow God's leading and serve David, God's anointed, all while being a good son and honoring his father.

- **Humility allows leaders to acknowledge their limitations, seek input from others, and recognize the contributions of their team members.** By serving others and prioritizing the collective good, leaders can inspire trust, build strong relationships, and foster a culture of collaboration.
- **Leaders must strive to cultivate such qualities as trust and integrity.** By doing so, they can break the cycle of poor leadership, foster a culture of growth and innovation, and create a lasting positive impact on their organizations and those they lead. Strong Christian leaders should heed the lessons of the past to become "kingmakers" in the future.

# Called to Serve: Loren & Diana Fish

My husband, Loren, and I had our dream jobs and were happy living the beach life in Florida. We were both active in the church but something was missing. We began praying for God to lead us into full-time ministry together.

I made a last-minute decision to attend a conference organized by the North American Division's Women's Ministries. It was a time of powerful prayer and surrendering of self to God. I happened to walk by the Holbrook Seventh-day Adventist Indian School booth in the conference's exhibition hall.

A woman at the booth asked about my work. When I told her that I worked in development, she excitedly pointed at the other woman in the booth. "She is our development director, and she is retiring," she said. She told me that Holbrook was located in Arizona, and I thought to myself, "There is no chance we are moving there."

Six months passed, and Loren and I continued praying about where God might lead us.

Loren made a last-minute decision to attend the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas. While there, he found himself at the booth run by Holbrook Indian School.

A woman at the booth noticed his badge with the letters "LCSW" under his name. "Does that stand for 'licensed clinical' something?" she asked. Loren nodded his head. Licensed clinical social worker. "We need one of those!" the woman exclaimed excitedly.

Loren nervously smiled, looking to make his escape, but the woman asked about his wife's job. He responded that she was a development officer at Advent Health.

"We need one of those, too!" the woman said, waving at her husband, who happened to be Holbrook's principal.

A few weeks later, we decided to pay a quick visit to Holbrook at the end of a previously planned vacation in Colorado. Loren and I spent more than nine hours

talking with Holbrook staff about the school's mission to Native American children and youth. I struggled to sleep that night in a Holbrook guestroom. I was scared of moving away from friends, leaving a job that I loved, and living farther away from our children and grandchildren.

But before I opened my eyes in the morning, thoughts began racing through my mind about how wonderful it would be to work at Holbrook. Jumping out of bed, I noticed a familiar-looking book on a bookshelf. I reached into my backpack and pulled out the same book, which Loren had received at the General Conference Session. I had packed it at the last minute. The book was titled, "Follow: Anytime, Anywhere, at Any Cost" by Don MacLafferty. At that moment, I knew God was calling me to Holbrook Indian School.

I told God that He would have to put the same impression on Loren's heart. I prayed and waited.

Several days later, as we entered our home in Florida, Loren announced that he felt convicted that God wanted us to move to Holbrook. That evening we submitted our resumes and began packing. Two weeks later we were hired.

We are amazed at how God has used the challenges and experiences of our lives to prepare us for the work that He has called us to do at Holbrook. We are so glad that we followed Him.



To read the full story, visit [HolbrookIndianSchool.org/staff-stories](https://HolbrookIndianSchool.org/staff-stories)



Development Department

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

# DO YOU “MINGLE”?

Ellen White, in perhaps her most famous quote about how to reach people for Jesus, explained that it is “Christ’s method alone” that will bring “true success” in reaching people. Noting how Christ followed a four-step process before inviting people to follow Him, she explained how He crucially began with “mingling.”<sup>1</sup>

Do you “mingle” with people who don’t know Jesus?

I’ve found, over my years of ministry, that very few Seventh-day Adventists spend significant time doing this. We may pass out literature, go door to door, or put on evangelistic meetings. These things are all well and good—but they’re not, at least according to Ellen White, “mingling.”

Earlier in the same book, *The Ministry of Healing*, she explains what this practice looked like for Jesus. He accepted the invitations of the “wealthy and cultured” classes, attending their feasts and familiarizing Himself with their “interests and occupations.” Perhaps even more amazingly, of the Samaritans, whose religious customs and practices diverged from His own, she says Christ “slept with them under their roofs” and “ate with them at their tables,” even eating “the food prepared and served by their hands.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Jesus immersed Himself in the culture, habits, interests, and pastimes of those He was trying to reach. He ate with them, stayed with them, celebrated with them, lived among them.

He didn’t keep Himself removed from people, interacting with them only long enough to drop bits of religious truth. He was truly “God *with us*” (Matt. 1:23), unafraid to be sullied by the sin that characterized people’s lives.

As I said, I’ve discovered that very few of us do this—for various reasons. We’re

often too busy, too afraid, or too committed to evangelistic approaches that keep people at arm’s length and unable to influence us negatively.

This was my experience for a long time, unsure of how to even relate to people who didn’t think like me, act like me, or believe like me.

What did we have in common, after all? And would my fellowship with them implicitly communicate I affirmed their behaviors and beliefs that differed from mine?

Jesus didn’t seem too concerned about such things. He regularly welcomed and ate with the outcasts, misfits, and religiously alienated—the “tax collectors and the sinners”—which caused the religious leaders to grumble and complain (see Luke 15:1-3). But He came to “seek and save” the lost—which is why He started with mingling (see Luke 19:1-10).

It doesn’t have to be too complicated for us: just begin by inviting your neighbors over for dinner—not with an agenda to immediately convert them, but just to share life with and relate to them as fellow human beings who bear God’s image.

We first must “win their confidence,” according to Ellen White’s four-step process, before we can even think about springing religious ideas on them anyway—which, in my experience, takes a long time in this religiously suspicious world.

So let’s just follow Christ’s example by mingling with people—actually entering into their lives and loving them as people whom Christ died for and who deserve our love for love’s sake. ▀

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

**Shawn Brace** is a pastor and author in Bangor, Maine, whose most recent book, *The Table I Long For* (Signs Publishing), details his and his church’s recent journey into a mission-centered life. He is also a D.Phil. student at the University of Oxford, researching nineteenth-century American Christianity.



**DO YOU “MINGLE”  
WITH PEOPLE WHO  
DON’T KNOW JESUS?**



DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

who had a similar background and was also a nurse trainee in the Sanitarium. They married on February 6, 1903.

### **MEDICAL, CANVASSING, AND MINISTERIAL WORK IN THE SOUTH**

A call to medical evangelism in the Florida Conference started a united career for the Achenbachs that developed in the homeland and overseas mission fields. In 1904 the couple, joined by Clinton's younger sister, Maggie, pioneered an enterprise that combined hydrotherapy treatment rooms with a vegetarian café. This endeavor gave rise to the establishment of the Florida Sanitarium in 1908, later known as Florida Hospital, and most recently AdventHealth Orlando.

In 1907 Clinton began two years as missionary field agent in the Florida Conference, a role that placed him in charge of a team of canvassers. He urged American church members to escape the cold Northern winters and spend the season selling books in Florida. He was given a ministerial license in 1909 and ordained to the gospel ministry by General Conference president Arthur G. Daniells in October 1910. Two years later Achenbach was elected president of the South Carolina Conference, a position he held for two years. To better equip himself for ministry, he studied at Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park, Maryland, during the 1914-1915 academic year.

### **MEDICAL MISSION IN PERU**

Clinton and Minnie received an appointment to join Ferdinand and Ana Stahl at the Lake Titicaca Indian Mission in the

## **CLINTON AND MINNIE ACHENBACH**

---

*Medical missionary  
pioneers*

**C**linton Achenbach was an American missionary who served during the early phases of Adventist work in the Spanish-speaking lands of Peru, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

Clinton, the eldest child of William and Valeria Achenbach, was born in Mount Aetna, Pennsylvania, on April 11, 1875. He attended a local public school before enrolling in South Lancaster Academy in Massachusetts in 1894. After he graduated, he moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, where he was employed at the Battle Creek Sanitarium before taking the nurses training course there. It was there that Clinton met Minnie Branson,

highlands of Peru in 1915. There was a certain romantic aura about this mission station, for it was the home of the ancient Inca culture, remote and picturesque. The lake itself was the highest navigable body of water in the world. The extreme altitude of 12,500 feet (3,800 meters) made it a challenging environment in which to work.

The Achenbachs departed from New Orleans on July 10, 1915, negotiating the relatively new Panama Canal and sailing down the coast to Cal-lao and Mollendo. The landing was so steep that a chair had to be lowered, and each passenger was hoisted by a derrick onto terra firma. They journeyed partway into the mountains to acclimatize at Arequipa, and remained there for several months to learn some Spanish before ascending farther to Puno on Lake Titicaca.

The mission station was located near Puno on the northwestern shore amid hundreds of grass-thatched homes. It had been established a decade earlier and enjoyed a good reputation. Soon after arrival, Clinton reported that Sabbath School attendance was approximately 700. The clinic, conducted in a special building on site, treated up to 20 patients each day. Clientele included Spanish nationals, priests, and Inca Indians, who were known to travel long distances for medical treatment.

Ferdinand was also a trained nurse. He and Clinton united their efforts, at times performing such surgical procedures as removing eye tumors or operating on a gangrenous foot. A small fee was asked for each treatment. On some occasions Clinton would travel several kilometers away from his headquarters to treat extreme cases.

The good influence of the medical work generated requests from the nationals for mission outposts to be established. The first was in 1918 when a school for 85 students was opened at Titilaka on the lakeshore south of Puno. That same year, Raquel, Clinton and Minnie's only child, was born.

### INTER-AMERICAN MISSIONS

Poor health made it necessary for the Achenbachs to return to the United States in early 1920. While recuperating in the homeland, Clinton ministered in the Southeastern Union Conference for six months and was then appointed director of the Porto (Puerto) Rican Mission. During his three-year term (1920-1923) the number of churches grew from 10 to 15 and the baptized

## The influence of medical work generated requests for mission outposts to be established.

membership increased from 486 to 629 individuals. He nurtured five church schools and established Colegio Adventista, a training school located in the mountainous region of Aibonito. Two other church schools were constructed in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, then a fledgling territory within the Porto Rican Mission.

From Puerto Rico Clinton transferred to be superintendent of the Venezuela Mission, a smaller entity of two churches and a membership of 84 believers. He continued in leadership roles in Spanish-speaking countries, next as superintendent of the Cuban Mission, then as superintendent of the Santo Domingo Mission. The latter region was particularly difficult for Seventh-day Adventists to make any progress. The earliest converts were imprisoned for their faith, but the Achenbachs' church schools reduced prejudice. The government began to realize that the mission was beneficial and deserved a place in their society.

### FINAL YEARS

Clinton and Minnie furloughed in the United States for a brief time in 1928, then returned to Puerto Rico. After six more years of evangelistic and pastoral labor, poor health again compelled them home in 1934. Clinton suffered a stroke while attending the 1934 Autumn Council held in Battle Creek, Michigan, followed by a second stroke that ended his life on March 19, 1935, at age 59. He was laid to rest in the Washington National Cemetery in Maryland. Minnie remained in the area and enjoyed many more years, passing away in 1961. She rests in the same cemetery. 🍀

---

**Milton Hook**, Ed.D., is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College. He has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a teacher, missionary and pastor. Editor's Note: A longer version of this article was originally published on the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists website, [encyclopedia.adventist.org](https://encyclopedia.adventist.org), November 28, 2021. We have adapted it for space.





# DON'T MISS THIS SEASON'S FIRST EPISODES



TV'S #1 AWARD-WINNING LIFE COACHING SHOW

Did you know? FAITH FOR TODAY, the Adventist Church's first television ministry, continues to serve as your ambassador to help connect the people of the world to your local, loving communities of faith with a message that your church **does** care and that we **can** help them live their best life possible!

Share these upcoming episodes with your neighbors!



CHECK YOUR LOCAL TV LISTINGS AT:

[www.Lifestyle.org](http://www.Lifestyle.org)





3DMASTER / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

# UNITY IN THE CHURCH

---

*Stronger together*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

**T**he cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ.

Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The

nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING UNITED**

Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action.

In the wonderful prayer that Christ offered for His disciples just before His crucifixion, He

said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” [John 17:15-19].

“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth” [verse 17]. “Sanctify their understanding. Make them holy through obedience to Thy Word. Strengthen their faith. Fill their hearts with an earnest purpose to do Thy will. Mold and fashion them in harmony with Thy will. Make them complete in Thee.”

The truth of God, with its refining, purifying influence, must do its work on the hearts of human beings before they can be accepted by God. Christ cannot present us to God as complete in Him until we have been conformed to His will.

#### **LOVE IS THE BONDING AGENT**

Let us strive to answer the Saviour’s prayer, that we may be one, as Christ and the Father are one. Those who are thus joined to the Lord are stamped with the same superscription, influenced by the same power, knit together in the bonds of Christian love.

“Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” [verses 20, 21].

I do not pray for those only who are now My disciples—the eleven and the seventy—but for all who shall afterward believe on My name. All are embraced in the prayer for oneness. All are given opportunity to show the world that God loved His earthly children as He loves His only begotten Son.

The members of Christ’s body are to unite in harmonious action, part acting in harmony with part. The glory of God is reflected from those who labor in love and unity, working in Christian fellowship.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be

## **The members of Christ’s body are to unite in harmonious action, part acting in harmony with part.**

made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” [verses 22, 23].

These words seem almost too much for us to grasp. But they are true. God does indeed love human beings as He loves His Son.

#### **CHRIST THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE**

Workers for God are to set a Christlike example in spirit, in word, in deed, showing that they are sanctified through the truth. Thus they bear testimony to the world that God sent His Son to save sinners, to purify and ennoble sinful human beings.

May the eyes of God’s people be opened, that they may see the importance that the Lord places on the oneness of His people. May their hearts be so filled with the desire to answer Christ’s prayer that they will allow nothing to keep them from fulfilling God’s requirements.

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” [2 Peter 3:10-14].

---

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 Ellen G. White, Letter 49, 1904.



TY GIBSON

# THE WAR WITHIN

---

*The fight is a good sign.*

No doubt you've heard someone say, "I am my own worst enemy." Maybe you've said it yourself.

We intuitively understand that there is some sense in which the *I* stands against the *me*. Part of me wants to be something other than what I am, to do otherwise than I do, to relate differently than I relate.

Truth is, I'm engaged in a *psychic civil war*.

And so are you.

## DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED WILLS

Paul pinpointed this internal conflict when he wrote, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7:23). In other words, *I discern a deeply embedded principle at work in my bodily appetites and impulses that wages war against my higher reasoning faculties*.

Your mind is a war zone, your body a battlefield, and your soul the territory at stake.

Ellen White nailed it when she wrote, "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought."<sup>1</sup> In this statement the individual person is described as if he or she were two persons: *I am at war with my self*.

Spiritually—by which we simply mean mentally, emotionally, and volitionally—we are at odds with ourselves. Two diametrically opposed wills are fighting against each other inside of us. Polar opposite motives rip and tear at our humanity. There's blood on one of our hands and a feather held gently in the other. We are bent inward toward ourselves, upon ourselves, against ourselves, in vicious and covert attacks in which we are both the victim and the victimizer.

Ellen White described the fall of humanity with the simple and insightful words "selfishness took the place of love."<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther described sin as *homo incurvatus in se*, Latin for "man curved inward toward self."

## ONE OF TWO DIRECTIONS

This is precisely our predicament. And each of us is going to go one of two directions in the battle: either we're going to follow the natural trajectory of our inward bent toward self to its inevitable end, or we're going to rise up within, and against, ourselves as spiritually mobilized warriors.

Allowed to run its course, the inward bent (what the Bible calls "sin that dwells in me" [Rom. 7:17]) will incrementally form a nightmarish inner world of complex and convoluted thoughts and feelings that will close in around one's inner landscape until all others are blocked from emotional view. Others will be seen, but not felt with empathy. The soul will increasingly find itself alone in the darkness of an acute self-interest—an aloneness composed of the inability to genuinely feel the feelings of anyone other than one's self. Paul

# Your mind is a war zone, your body a battlefield, and your soul the territory at stake.

insightfully describes this state of being with the terrifying words “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19)—in other words, beyond the emotional capacity for conviction, beyond sensitivity to the Spirit.

But there is another direction we can travel.

The salvation that is present in Christ—fully present as an achieved reality in His humanity, which is our humanity—invites the fallen human being into a beautiful liberation from one’s self, and, simultaneously, a restoration of one’s self on the only premise that the self has viability at all, namely, to exist for others rather than for self. Said another way, in Christ we are called upon to war against our carnal mode of existence and to be reborn into a whole new way of being human, which is, in actuality, the old way of being human as God originally designed humanity to function.

According to the gospel, someone must die, and it’s *you*. Also, someone must live, and it is *you*. The you that must die is the you God never intended you to be, while the you that may come alive through Christ is the real you God always meant for you to be.

## KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE

Paul describes the introspection of those engaged in the battle:

“We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Rom. 7:14-19).

This may seem complex upon first reading, but Paul says “we know.” That is, the reality he explains is self-evident to anyone who cares to pay attention. We are experientially aware of the funda-

mental conflict that exists between God’s good law and the carnal self. So if you identify with what he’s talking about here, you are alive in Christ even as you wage war against your carnal self. The fact that you are consciously engaged in the inner battle between good and evil means you are on the right side of the conflict, although, paradoxically, the target of *your* onslaught is *you*. You are at war with *you*.

On the other hand, to not “know,” that is, to not understand what Paul is talking about here, is an indication that you are still living, without resistance, in the delusional matrix of unchallenged self-centeredness. If you are not awake to the conflicted nature of your case, you are residing under the oppressive control of the carnal self. Unawareness of the inner war is the most immediate evidence that you are in a defeated position, obeying, without a fight, the urges of tyrannical King Self.

## THE GOSPEL IS THE VICTORY

But while awareness is the most immediate precursor to victory, *mere* awareness is not sufficient.

Paul would have us understand that we must engage in a specific and deliberate spiritual maneuver in order to win the battle that rages inside of us. But it is not the kind of maneuver you would suppose necessary. It is, in fact, a maneuver that might be characterized as a *non*-maneuver because it shifts the focus outward away from my own inner resources and rivets my trust elsewhere. Paul does not call for a valiant act of will. He does not attempt to whip into action a tenacious or skilled or seminar-trained exertion of internal grit. He does not adopt the Nike slogan *Just Do It!*

Not even close!

It is not more of *you* that *you* need.

*You* are *your* problem (remember?).

You need something else.

*Somebody* else, more precisely.

You need an exodus from self into the promised

land of complete dependence upon the ultimate Other, the One who is alone of sufficient power to break the power of *yourself* over *yourself*. Having described the inner conflict that the spiritually alive person wages against self, Paul now comes to the brilliant bottom line of his theology (aka the gospel):

“O wretched man that I am!” the apostle cries out in full recognition of his imprisonment and impotent state. “Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:24, 25).

Paul does not merely describe a wretched man, but rather a man who knows his wretchedness and flees to Christ for deliverance.

If this is you, with one part of your mind you feel the impulse to feed the craving for self-preservation, self-exaltation, and self-gratification in all of its insatiable forms. But with another part of your mind you genuinely desire to live for God and for others above and before yourself, in humility, gentleness, and self-forgetful love. The internal civil war between the carnal mind and the spiritual mind, the old man and the new man, rages on inside of you, but in the midst of it all, you cry out for Jesus, rather than merely crying out for more self as if you were, in yourself, sufficient for the battle. You know that “the law is . . . holy and just and good” (verse 12), but you also know that all your best efforts to keep the law in your own strength are futile, powerless, and even enslaving. You know that “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24, KJV), and it is to Christ you have come. The law is intended to bring us to the end of ourselves and turn our “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9) selves to a power outside of and above ourselves.

Ellen White succinctly encapsulates the idea:

“Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

This is an extremely important concept.

Power to overcome my sin and guilt does not lie innately within me. I am, in Paul’s words, “without strength” (Rom. 5:6). The apostle does not mean, of course, that I am without physical strength, but rather that I am without moral strength. He’s confronting me with the uncomfortable reality that I am bankrupt of moral ability to cancel out the shame that haunts the deepest recesses of my conscience or to refrain from the self-defeating behaviors that I know I ought not to engage in. Plain and simple, in myself I am in bondage to my natural inclination toward self-serving motives.

If I am awake to the true reality of my situation, I realize that I am utterly powerless to fight and win my internal battles if left to my own power of will. I need foreign energy to be infused into me, a new principle of operation, a different motive to actuate me, a power that cannot be conjured up from within, but must be uploaded into my moral hard drive from an outside source. My cognitive processing, my emotional firing, and my bodily impulses need complete reconfiguration in the light of God’s love poured out upon me in Christ.

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (verses 6-8).

When I turn my attention and my trust away from myself to Him, new things begin to happen: liberation from guilt and victory over sin.

I am my own worst enemy.

But Jesus is my truest friend.

I give myself to Him, broken, fragile, self-serving—just as I am—and He turns right around and gives myself back to me, mended, empowered, indwelt by His Spirit, and actuated by His selfless love. ♣

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 29.

---

**Ty Gibson** is speaker and codirector of Light Bearers and pastor of the Storyline Seventh-day Adventist Church.

# THE GRANITE BAY CHURCH



---

## *Answering God's call*

**T**hey were an unusual sight. Tattoos covered Rick's bulging forearms. His long hair and biker's vest contrasted sharply with John Freed's suit and tie. Yet tears flowed freely as the surgeon and biker hugged. Rick's shoulders relaxed when he finally stepped back, and a smile tugged at the corners of his lips. "She was OK," he said. "You prayed with her. Thank you!"

A year before, one of Rick's daughters, the only Christian in the family, had died in a car crash near the church. Rick was already doubtful about God, and her death had pushed him into a bitter, resentful space. Then John Quedzuweit, a pastor at the Granite Bay Hilltop Seventh-day Adventist Church, showed up at his door because Rick's other daughter had requested Bible studies.

"Go away!" Rick yelled. "I don't want anything to do with you Christians!" Yet Pastor Quedzuweit remained patient and then gently reassured Rick, and as the mourning father relaxed, he opened up about his daughter's death. Eventually Rick agreed to study the Bible, yet his daughter dying alone with no one to pray with her continued to haunt him.



# STORY



One day Pastor Quedzuweit mentioned Rick's story to Dr. John Freed, head elder of the Granite Bay church. "Where was it?" Dr. Freed asked. "I think I was there. I stopped at an accident that day and prayed with the girl in the car."

The next Sabbath Pastor Quedzuweit helped Rick and Dr. Freed connect the dots around Rick's daughter's death. Dr. Freed had been the first to arrive on the scene when Rick's daughter crashed. He stayed with her and prayed with her until the ambulance crews arrived. "She wasn't in pain," he assured the big biker. Rick's relief was palpable as he flung his arms around Dr. Freed and let the tears flow.

## **A GROWING CHURCH**

"That divine encounter between Rick and John highlighted what God is doing through the Granite

Bay church," says Pastor Quedzuweit. "He is using this church to care for people and help them understand His love and last-day truths."

Senior pastor Doug Batchelor agrees. "Our goal is to lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus. We seek to disciple them in the truth, then teach them how to live out His teachings and share the good news with others."

This focus on discipleship in biblical truth has helped the Granite Bay church grow rapidly since it was first planted in 2007 by the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. Today a church family of more than 1,000 members comes together each Sabbath for preaching, fellowship, and service. Yearly evangelistic series and weekend seminars draw in the community. The church has planted at least two other churches. In 2022 it baptized 58 individuals. It also works closely with Amazing Facts International in producing and broadcasting truth-filled media.

"God has blessed Granite Bay in amazing ways," says Darrin Dee, an elder at the church. "We cannot take any credit for what God has done here. We pray often and remind ourselves that this is God's blessing."

## **PLANTED TO GROW**

The Granite Bay church began as the vision of Pastor Batchelor, who also serves as president of Amazing Facts International. "We wanted to plant a church in an unreached community that would be a place for local and media evangelism," explains Batchelor. "We had maxed out the Sacramento Central church and wanted to multiply our service to bless other churches."

A group of about 20 people volunteered to start the church plant with the guidance of Pastors Jëan Ross and Quedzuweit. "That core group was absolutely committed to preaching the truth, implementing the cycle of evangelism regularly, getting members involved, and supporting missions," says Quedzuweit. "We met for several months to pray and plan before we launched. We've never seen such a dedicated group of people. Everyone wore five hats and helped with everything."

The group was purposeful about everything they did. "We thought about why we would want

Some people  
downplay  
evangelism, but  
we have found that  
people are starving  
for biblical truth.

to go to church, and realized it was to understand the Bible better,” explains Ross. “We designed a service that prioritized the teaching of the Word and minimized distractions. We were very intentional in focusing on the distinctive characteristics of our Seventh-day Adventist message.”

“We went into this with the idea that we’ve always heard about the evangelism cycle, but now it was time to see how it worked in practice,” he adds. “We wanted to teach people who didn’t know about the Word, implement the evangelism cycle, and call people to decide for Christ. Following the right method worked.”

After about a year the church plant outgrew the school space they had been renting, and moved to a rented church facility. “We really started to grow then,” says Ross. “We had a lot of young families coming and were very active. We grew from 15 people to 400 in under three years.”

#### **A BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP**

About this time Batchelor began to preach more often at the Granite Bay church. Though the plant



had been his idea initially, he was not heavily involved in the initial stages of growth. Amazing Facts offices were near the Granite Bay church, but the church had grown primarily on its own.

Amazing Facts had bought a property in the growing city of Granite Bay, California, for a new office complex and a church building equipped for media production and broadcast. Unfortunately, the local permitting and building process took far longer than anyone expected, and a temporary move to an industrial building became necessary.

By 2020 the newly completed Amazing Facts office building and church were ready for occupancy. "I believe the timing was divine," remembers Dee. "COVID hit the moment they moved into the new offices. Amazing Facts was in the perfect position to minister to the world during the pandemic. The church never shut down, either. We met in the parking lot until the new church building was ready in the fall."

"It took 20 years to build the church," says Batchelor. "I kept asking, 'Lord, is this what You want? If it is, I'd love to dedicate the church without ever using our line of credit.' That's exactly what happened. The Granite Bay Hilltop church and the Amazing Facts office buildings were dedicated with no debt or ever touching the approved loans."

The Granite Bay church and Amazing Facts cooperate closely in producing truth-filled media. Church services, Sabbath School classes, evangelistic series, and weekend summits are all filmed and broadcast on the Amazing Facts networks.

The Granite Bay church has been shaped and blessed by its affiliation with Amazing Facts. Yet its growth cannot be attributed solely to Amazing Facts. Many other factors, ones that other churches can duplicate, have helped the church grow and prosper.

### **BIBLICAL PREACHING**

The Granite Bay church plant began with a vision of becoming a church that would share the three angels' messages with an unreached community and be a place for local and media evangelism. That vision has fueled the church's growth for more than 15 years.

Pastor Ross spent the entire first year preaching through the book of Revelation. Then he took the

congregation through Hebrews, Romans, and Daniel. "We wanted to get people into the Word of God," he explains. "My goal was to present truth in a way that made sense and allowed the Bible to speak for itself"

Dr. Freed and his family began attending Granite Bay during those early years. "The verse-by-verse preaching drew us in," says Freed. "We were hungry for biblical knowledge. We were looking for a church that focused on our unique Seventh-day Adventist message and stood up for the truth."

"We try to be consistently biblical in our messages," says Batchelor. "We do expository preaching. Either we choose one topic and use many scriptures to explain it, or we choose one passage and use it to teach many truths. Our goal is to preach the gospel and the three angels' messages and contextualize them for the times in which we live."

### **IMPLEMENTING THE CYCLE OF EVANGELISM**

The Granite Bay church invests heavily in the yearly cycle of evangelism. In addition to the church board, an outreach leadership team is responsible for all aspects of evangelism. These leaders plan for prework, advertising, yearly evangelistic meetings, discipleship, small groups, and ongoing revival.

"Evangelism is the heartbeat of our church and has brought in many new members," says Ross. "Any church that implements the cycle of evangelism will grow."

"Evangelism has been part of my chemistry ever since I became an Adventist," says Batchelor. "I am passionate about helping people learn the cohesive message of truth that Adventism teaches. Some people downplay evangelism, but we have found that people are starving for biblical truth. When we stick to the fundamentals and are creative in presenting the truth, people and churches grow."

"Working together creates camaraderie," says Dee. "It keeps us praying together and seeking God's blessings."

### **CAREFULLY CHOSEN, CONSISTENT LEADERSHIP**

Church leaders are carefully chosen at Granite Bay. "We've kept our leadership team small," says Ross. Five to eight elders work with the pastoral team. "We look for people who understand the



church's mission and are committed to being involved."

"We've realized we cannot push a person into leadership," adds Quedzuweit. "They must have an interest and a desire. We've never tried to start a ministry by appointing a person. We've prayed and let God grow things in His time and way."

Yet everyone's gifts are welcomed. "We try to use the spiritual gifts of everyone who comes," explains Batchelor. "We want everyone to know that their contributions are important."

Consistent, long-term pastoral leadership provides stability for the church. Ross has led the church since its inception in 2007. He now serves as an associate pastor alongside Batchelor and four other pastors specializing in outreach, youth, young adults, family life, and member care. "We've been blessed with fantastic pastors," says Dee.

"This church would not be what it is today without them."

### THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER

"Prayer is one of the biggest keys to our growth," says Quedzuweit. "We have faithful prayer warriors who have met at 9:00 A.M. every Sabbath since we first started the church." Prayer meeting holds a weekly place in the church's schedule. The elders also pray together weekly.

"We need to be praying incessantly for God's will at this time in earth's history," says Dee. "Things are going to get worse. We need to prepare by being prayerful, studying the Bible, and doing evangelism. We must find God's will for our churches and work with Him."

### END-TIME MISSION

"I've often thought about what our mission should be," says Batchelor. "Jesus said to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that He commanded us. You really can't get a better mission statement than that."

Not every church has the advantage of an internationally known media ministry in its backyard, yet all churches can step out in faith to answer God's call to make disciples. "Every church can get involved in their community and love people for Christ," says Quedzuweit. "We need to preach the truth and welcome people without judgment. Then we must be willing to get involved in their lives. That's harder than giving a Bible study, but that's where the real results come."

"Even small churches can commit to doing something for Christ," adds his wife, Cathy. "Things may not change overnight, but if you are praying and doing something, God will work."

The Granite Bay Hilltop church is modern-day evidence that the cycle of evangelism, biblical preaching, prayer, vision, and fellowship are still divine keys to church growth. They are God's backdrop for the sacred moments when a broken-hearted biker meets the surgeon who prayed for his dying daughter—moments when lives are transformed and a church is grown. ▀

---

**Shenaly Page** is a homeschool mom and freelance writer specializing in telling God's stories for Adventist organizations. She lives with her husband, Tyson, and their three children in Auburn, California.

# FIVE LIFE LESSONS FROM MUSIC

If you've been reading this column for any length of time, you probably know music plays an integral part of my life. The lesser-realized truth is, though, that life plays an integral part in music. Here are five life lessons I've learned from music.

**Listening is imperative.** From multiple parts to dissonant harmonies to complex rhythms and intervals, choir can be hard. But any good choir can overcome these challenges by doing one single thing: listening. Listening to the parts others have in the bigger picture of life means we can more effectively fit our own within that picture. This makes the difference between complete chaos and recognizable cohesion.

**Mistakes happen. Make them confidently and learn from them.** Percussion is probably the most terrifying section to be part of in any ensemble, because everything you do stands out. Percussion also keeps the group together and leads them in rhythm and tempo, however. So even if it is wrong, percussionists *have* to play clearly and confidently, because that's how the director knows when gentle correction is needed to make everything come together. We don't help anyone by timidly hiding our role in the corner, too scared to even try.

**Clarinets can't play violin parts.** Any time a wind ensemble plays pieces originally written for orchestra, the clarinet section ends up with the transcribed violin part. While this makes sense musically, it does not make sense technique-wise, because of one major factor: Violinists do not need to fit breathing in between notes. Violin parts were written for violins, not clarinets. We cannot expect the same results from different people using the same approach.

**Practice makes permanent.** The old saying "practice makes perfect" is untrue.

If I practice a section of music repeatedly, but practice doing it *wrong*, it will never be perfect, because I have now solidified it in my head incorrectly. Practice, in fact, makes permanent. If I practice something *correctly* over and over, however, the correct way of doing it becomes permanently etched in my brain.

**Everyone brings their own strengths to the table.** Percussionists have favorite instruments, and inevitably the same people end up on the same instruments time and time again. Though it is beneficial to do something outside our comfort zone from time to time, the pieces come together best when each of us is in our element, literally playing to our strengths. When everyone is given the opportunity to fill in the gaps in the skills of others by utilizing their own strengths, everything flows more smoothly and makes more sense.

In Exodus 35 Moses points out to the people of Israel that God had given His people skills to do "all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers . . . , and weavers" (verse 35, NIV). These were very specific skills of *creative expression* that God felt were important. So important that He chose two men and "filled [them] with the Spirit of God" (verse 31, NIV), then gave them "the ability to teach others" (verse 34, NIV).

It is not a coincidence that one can find life lessons in the arts. Music is a gift, and, beyond enjoyment, it was given for us to learn from. And learning is always more fun (and effective) when you're doing something you love. ♣

---

**Becky St. Clair** is a freelance writer living in California with her husband and three children. She has a decade of experience in public relations for the church, and currently writes and copyedits for various church entities around the world.

THE FAITH-FULL LIFE  
BECKY ST. CLAIR



WE DON'T HELP ANYONE BY TIMIDLY HIDING OUR ROLE IN THE CORNER, TOO SCARED TO EVEN TRY.



JAMES NEGI / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

## THE YOKE

---

### *A lighter load*

**CHARMIAN LEWIS-WATKINS**

Jesus the rabbi, teacher, scholar extraordinaire, used metaphors and analogies to teach important truths. His goal was to effect change, and so He used that to which His listeners could relate. Some owned vineyards, others were fishermen, and yet others livestock and subsistence farmers, just to name a few. Whatever the occupation, He tied truth to that which they understood best in order to create learning opportunities and facilitate optimal learning experiences that were memorable.

This is the context in which Matthew 11:28-30 emerges.

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

### **YOKE FOR YOKE**

The offer of a yoke is not received with the same enthusiasm as the idea of a luxurious and expensive gift. Instead, the word “yoke” conjures up thoughts of bondage, servitude, and burden-bearing. Who wants that? Yet all of us are carrying baggage: pain, hurt, resentment—all residual effects of the mental and physical trauma we have experienced, things that haunt us every day, things that steal our happiness. We have been taught not to take our stress out to the streets, not to look like what we are going through or have been through, so we wear masks. We smile on the outside, post pictures and emojis that make people feel we’re OK, while we’re dying on the inside. Oh, the burdens we bear, some too great to verbalize.

In the midst of it all, Jesus offers an invitation that’s all-inclusive but doesn’t cost a dime. The offer includes an exchange, an opportunity to learn, and the gift of rest. While there are cities that boast of their insomnia (such as New York, the city that never sleeps), my Lord offers rest.

Yoke for yoke; why not His? The yoke we wear is of our own design. At best it is ill-fitting, simply because it is a device

meant for two. Without another beside you, there is no balance, hence, the attempt to carry it is exhausting. The yoke by definition balances the burden, making it easy to carry. Confirmation, is it not? Doesn't Jesus say His yoke is easy? Yes, He does. Let's take a closer look at the yoke and the spiritual lessons it teaches by way of an analogy.

### **YOKED WITH JESUS**

A yoke of oxen refers to two oxen that are joined together by a wooden beam across their necks. They are then used to till the field and prepare the soil for planting. In Christ's day there was no Black and Decker, no John Deere, no Craftsman, but a yoke, that bar that was placed over the neck of two animals. Together they got the job done while yoked; walking shoulder to shoulder in unison and at the same pace. Imagine being yoked to Jesus: that does make things easy, and if you know who Jesus is, you know He'll carry more than He'll let on.

Animals of like species working together hints at like-mindedness, being of one accord, united in purpose—all qualities that facilitate a process. When we are linked together by His yoke, a yoke that's easy, a yoke crafted by the Master Craftsman, the burden becomes light. As the yoke keeps the animals close together, being in close proximity to Jesus allows an opportunity for transformation, for by beholding we become changed. He is the Majesty of heaven, yet He is not aloof. Instead, He is willing to come in close, shoulder to shoulder, not only to help us carry, but to teach. He says, "Learn of Me."

As the oxen walk together, the job is getting done, the soil is being tilled, it's being softened, it's becoming aerated. Roots will be able to access nutrients with ease, and plants can flourish, blossom, and yield fruit. Likewise, the soil of my heart is tilled, aerated, softened, making me receptive to His teaching. His Word takes root and anchors my soul. When I am yoked to Jesus, the possibilities are endless.

### **WALK AWAY LIGHT**

In this state of being receptive, a packet of seeds labeled "Fruit of the Spirit" sprinkled on my softened heart, a heart that is ready, quickly germinates, and my transformation is evidenced

**In the midst of it all Jesus offers an invitation that's all inclusive but doesn't cost a dime.**

by my character. I exude joy; I am kind and patient with people and situations that try me. I possess a peace that passes all understanding. I have goodness, His goodness, and the goodness I extend to others. His love constrains me, and now I have self-control. No longer am I the equivalent of a loose cannon. I am faithful; I am believing God for good outcomes; I am faithful with my vows, understanding that faith is essential for my salvation.

This beautiful experience all begins with obedience to the invitation to me—"all you who are weary," and not just weary, but also "burdened" (Matt. 11:28, NIV). Those words are intentional. They speak to the magnitude of our situations. Be ever aware that the omnipotent, omnipresent, all-seeing omniscient God wants to partner with us. His promise in Deuteronomy 31:8 says that "He will not leave you nor forsake you."

He is Immanuel, God with us. I am His temple. I am where He resides if I let Him. He has not left us. He is the burden sharer, the burden lifter. Sometimes the burden persists because He allows the situation to continue so that we might learn a valuable lesson, and sometimes the burden persists because of us. We do not want to relinquish control—our arrogance and pride hold us hostage.

Today the prayer is simple: Lord, I accept Your invitation to come. I must admit that I have been carrying this burden for what seems like an eternity, and it has been exhausting. Lord, today I surrender not just the burden but my ill-fitting yoke. I choose You, and I choose to walk away light. I surrender my heart and my will to You, O mighty Jesus. Give me a heart to know You, a heart that is willing to learn. Lord, today I exchange my yoke for Yours; may I walk away light. 🦋

---

**Charmian Lewis-Watkins** is a registered nurse living in Brooklyn, New York.

THE  
YARD  
SALE



at the  
END OF TIME



---

## *Will our churches be ready for it?*

### **SCOTT CHRISTIANSEN**

**M**y wife is the director of the Woodstock Whitetails Pathfinder Club at our church in western Maine. Her Pathfinder work keeps her quite busy, for she knows that it is the attention to detail and behind-the-scenes work that underpin a well-functioning club. And of course, my wife being kept busy means that *I* am kept busy with her overflow and the occasional special project. One project I always seem to end up being responsible for is the fundraising for the once-every-five-years International Pathfinder Camporee (next to be held in August 2024 in Gillette, Wyoming). The undertaking is considerable; most Pathfinder clubs raise money for almost five years to get their group to an International Camporee.

### **THE ROUTINE**

One of the most reliable fundraisers for the club has been to ask church members to clean out their attics, garages, and closets, and then hold a large yard sale beside the busiest road in our town. I've been in charge of this annual endeavor for eight years now, and each year has had its adventures, such as discovering Tiffany jewelry among the donations, opening a box of antique tools, or receiving a collection of guns to resell.

But adventures aside, the yard sales themselves have taken on a familiar pattern: Church members make donations in fits and starts, with most of the items coming right before the sale. We collect and sort the donations, and while there's plenty of diversity in what we receive, we'll reliably get clothing, dishes, and health-related items (walkers, crutches, juicers, healthy-living books, etc.). We'll also get a significant number of Adventist books—witnessing books, Bible study books, Spirit of Prophecy books. On Friday we'll put out our "Yard Sale" signs, put up our canopy, stack the tables high with boxes of goods or piles of clothing, and then cover everything with a tarp.\*

By 7:00 a.m. Sunday morning a small group of yard sale devotees will be waiting impatiently for us to show up, take the tarps off the tables, and declare the yard sale "open" so they can set about pawing through boxes and piles. Throughout the day a couple hundred people will stop and buy something or other, or maybe just make a small donation to the club. They'll be looking for tools, appliances, furniture, or decorative knickknacks, and will almost completely pass over the clothing, dishes, health items, and books on offer. By the end of the day, about 50 percent of the items will have sold, and the rest will be given away or taken to a landfill.

### **THINGS CHANGE**

That was the pattern, or at least it was up until 2022, when the trend changed significantly. Something about the COVID era caused people to approach the yard sale differently. Maybe it seemed like

## At the very time people became increasingly open to our message, some of our churches became increasingly unfit to proclaim it.

a more abrupt change, because the club didn't have a yard sale in 2021 because of COVID concerns. Or perhaps the change did actually come in a rush. Whatever the case, in 2022 the people who showed up at the yard sale were suddenly far less interested in shiny knickknacks.

They wanted health items, and they especially wanted any books or supplies related to healthy living or healthy cooking. Most shocking of all, they wanted Christian books. I cannot recall an instance of a single Christian book selling in previous yard sales, but this time a significant number of shoppers—random community members—carefully leafed through the Christian books on offer and actually bought a number of them.

Something about the COVID era changed people's priorities, and that changed people's receptivity to spiritual information. People who came to the Woodstock Whitetails yard sale in 2022 had stopped looking for cheap shiny things and were suddenly responsive to the health and spiritual messages that the Adventist Church has been faithfully proclaiming for more than 150 years.

### SOME BAD NEWS, SOME GOOD NEWS

Normally, if there was even a slight shift in the public's receptivity to evangelism, Adventist churches would be celebrating and eagerly planning outreach efforts. But the COVID era that changed people, opening them to evangelism, also changed Adventist churches, and in many cases it was an unfortunate change. In Maine and in many areas across the nation there were discussions—arguments, actually—over masking and immunizations. Lines were drawn among brothers and sisters more in response to political partisanship and media polarization than to Bible instruction and inspired counsel. Churches looked inward, and some discouraged people left altogether and have yet to return. At the very time people became increasingly open to our message, some of our churches became increasingly unfit to proclaim it.

I have some bad news and some good news.

The bad news is that in these last days, wave after wave of crises and emergencies will soon enough wash over us, and society will be shaken to its foundations. The good news is that each wave will result in more and more people becoming open to the message of salvation through Christ. The question is Will we have become unified and loving churches, faithfully proclaiming salvation through Christ, or will we let Satan use those waves to divide and destroy us? Maybe, in churches where it is feasible to do so, it would be wise to debrief by looking back, honestly assessing, and asking what needs to be done differently the next time a divisive crisis hits.

Based on the incremental changes I have seen, I can predict what a yard sale at the end of time will look like: No one will be examining the leather designer handbags. No one will be lingering over shiny knickknacks or electronic games or movies on DVDs. A few people will be looking for ammunition, sturdy clothing, candles, hand tools, and vegetable seeds. The rest will be intently, even desperately, looking for the soul-saving information they had previously ignored.

We are very, very close to the end of time, and people are finally beginning to buy the message that generations of faithful Adventists have tried to promote. Are we at this critical hour sufficiently close to Christ that we will lead people to Him by modeling His character? Are we so dedicated to Christ that we will let go of our precious politics and bias-reinforcing media and cultural preferences? Will we embrace our fellow church members and show the world what a loving, Christ-centered church looks like? COVID has shown us that there is an abundance of opportunity, and also an abundance of work to be done to capitalize on it. As the storm clouds gather on the horizon, we should be praying as never before for the Holy Spirit and for Christ to dwell in us. 🦋

\* No, nothing has ever been stolen. Praise God!

---

Prior to retiring, **Scott Christiansen** was the communication director and evangelism coordinator for the Northern New England Conference.



# THE BILLBOARD

“He turned to me and heard my cry” (Ps. 40:1, NLT).\*

## JUDITH GILLIS

**W**inter dusk was closing in as I drove out for a few quick errands. My day had been one of solitude, tears, and prayers about the difficult circumstances in my life at the moment. Challenges that seemed unremitting despite my prayers for God to intervene and bring resolution.

As I drove, I felt so weary. It seemed as if God were a thousand miles away. “Lord, please send some comfort to me tonight,” I whispered. “Make Your message so big and real that I can’t miss it. Put it on a billboard for me!” I admit my prayer seemed silly and shallow, but in my dispirited frame of mind, it was the best I could do.

Jesus says ask. Unadorned, simple, straightforward. Ask. I asked. He answered. Driving back home a short while later, I rounded the corner to my street and slowed to pull into the driveway. Lo and behold, the illuminated sign on the church across the road read, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28, KJV). Big bold black letters on their billboard! I couldn’t miss it! Nobody could!

Thankfully, no cars were behind me, because I

slowed to a crawl and read it again. There were the very words of comfort I so desperately needed. On a billboard and lit up like a Christmas tree!

It took only a moment for my gloomy mood to vanish and for praise to fill my heart. You need a bigger-than-life billboard answer from God? Ask! Just ask! He’s more than able to answer! I know!

\*\*\*

**Postscript:** The very next day workers took the billboard down and replaced it with a sign that read “Faith Center Church.” I discovered the new sign was meant to be in place a month earlier, but had arrived damaged and had to be returned for a replacement. In the meantime the old sign emblazoned with Jesus’ words was left in place. Their fancy, new sign came the day after my prayer.

“Ask, and ye shall receive” (John 16:24, KJV).✍

\*Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

**Judith Gillis** is retired and writes from Kernersville, North Carolina, where she is an enthusiastic newly baptized member of the Kernersville Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Supporting refugees  
and migrants all  
over the world for  
the past 40 years

“I always feel  
better after  
seeing them  
[ADRA Staff]!”

—Rachel  
Kyaka II Refugee Settlement  
UGANDA

Scan here  
to watch  
Rachel's story!





PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## TICK, TICK, TICK

*Avoiding tick-borne diseases*

**Q:** I have two neighbors who developed Lyme disease last year and another who has suffered chronically for more than five years after a tick bite. Are there natural ways to prevent tick bites while still enjoying the great outdoors?

**A:** You probably live where there's a high concentration of ticks that are infected with bacteria, viruses, or parasites that cause such pesky problems as Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis, and Powassan virus. Infected ticks pass on the offending microbe(s) to humans as they feed. The longer they are attached, the greater the risk of passing on the offensive microbe. For example, infected ticks need to feed for about 36 hours to pass on *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the cause of Lyme disease, the most common of the 18 tick-borne illnesses in the US.\*

Avoiding contact with ticks is difficult if you spend a lot of time outdoors in infested areas. Nonetheless, here are some proven and effective natural precautions that minimize your risk of tick-borne diseases.

- Wear protective clothing when going into tick-prone areas. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants and tuck your pants into your socks or boots to create a physical barrier.
- Wash clothing in hot water and dry on hot setting after each potential tick exposure.
- Keep the grass around your house short and free of leaf litter. Create a tick-safe zone between wooded areas and your lawn, using gravel or wood chips.
- Apply tick repellents to exposed skin and clothing when going into tick-prone areas. Effective natural repellents include essential oils of oregano, cedarwood, clove (bud), red thyme, geranium, lavender, and lemon eucalyptus. Neem oil is a natural insect repellent that can be applied to the skin or mixed with water and sprayed on clothing.



GABORITZ / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

**Lyme disease is the most common of the 18 tick-borne illnesses in the US.**

- Perform thorough body checks after spending time outdoors, with special attention to the scalp, behind the ears, under the arms, the waistline, and in the webs of fingers and toes. Promptly remove any attached ticks using tweezers, grasping the tick as close to the skin as possible and pulling straight out (no twisting), leaving no tick parts behind.
- Apply pet-approved repellents and thoroughly check pets after potential exposures.
- Encourage natural tick predators (birds, chickens, guinea fowl) to help control the tick population in your immediate environment.

Always dilute essential oils with a neutral oil such as coconut or almond and do a patch test before widespread application. We recommended the wholistic, multipronged approach that combines the above measures rather than relying on any one of them alone. Please be sure to talk to your local doctor who knows your personal health history and the situation in your community that puts you and your family at risk for tick bites. We are blessed with the great outdoors, but will have risks until we have a new earth. Maranatha! 🙌

\* [https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/tbdwg-2020-report\\_to-congress-final.pdf](https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/tbdwg-2020-report_to-congress-final.pdf)

**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.

**BRAND  
NEW!**

# COSMIC CONFLICT

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL



**ONLY  
\$3.49**

Product Code:  
**BK-CCOE**

The conflict between good and evil is a mystery to many, but the Bible pinpoints its true origin, its ultimate outcome, and its tremendous impact on your life! This powerful new sharing magazine also explains God's true character and why He permitted sin to continue at such a great cost—and reveals His amazing, self-sacrificing plan to redeem humanity.

**Perfect for sharing with friends,  
family, co-workers, neighbors,  
and more—so stock up today!**

<b>BULK PRICING</b>	
10+ ...	\$2.95 ea.
25+ ...	\$2.45 ea.
50+ ...	\$2.10 ea.
100+ ...	\$1.95 ea.
500+ ...	\$1.50 ea.
1,000+ ...	\$1.20 ea.
5,000+ ...	\$1.15 ea.

**AMAZING FACTS**  
  
**INTERNATIONAL**

**EASY WAYS TO ORDER**  
ONLINE: [afbookstore.com](http://afbookstore.com)  
PHONE: 800-538-7275  
MAIL: P.O. Box 1058, Roseville, CA 95678-8058

# PRESENT OVER PERFECT

Stillness has never been my strong suit. Moses spent 40 days on the mountaintop with God. Elijah sought the voice of God in the thunder and fire, finally discovering the Divine in stillness. Mary chose to “be” rather than “do,” simply being present at His feet.

I’ve tried to be still. My lack of stillness is not open defiance or pushing back against God. I simply struggle to still my mind and focus on God. I love Him. I want to spend time in His Word. I desire to be filled with His peace and presence. Yet the harder I focus, the more restless I become.

Being “present” seems to be elusive. Have you ever talked with someone while your mind answered an email? ever sat with a friend while you mentally solved a problem? ever watched a sunset while you added to your to-do list? *God, why can’t I just be still?*

I could call it an overactive mind, and perhaps that’s true. It could be too much to do, and that is certainly accurate. But there has to be something deeper, more profound. Recently, as I prayed and sought to experience more peace, more stillness, in my life, someone spoke three words into my world. They’re simple but transformational.

*You are enough.*

As I’ve explored what that means in life, in marriage, and most definitely in ministry, I’ve uncovered truth that is setting me free. This is not necessarily psychobabble, nor is it self-help. It’s biblical.

I discovered that the drive to complete a project, the shame if I fail or don’t measure up to my own expectations, the motivation to overachieve, is all based in a twisted sense of self.

If God loves me, why do I seek to earn His love?

If God adopts me, why do I need to prove myself?

If God forgave me, why am I still sensing condemnation?

If God chose me, why do I feel left out?

If God accepts me, why do I keep working for acceptance?

It’s a performance-based mentality, instead of accepting and receiving who I am in Jesus. *In Christ I am enough.* I can be present without seeking to be perfect. I can grow and learn and become all He intended me to be.

If you’re still reading, and you worry that Jill has left the law to embrace grace, let me assure you of this: Yes, I am embracing grace! A grace that seeks me where I am. A grace that convicts of sin, yet offers the blood of Jesus to cleanse me. A grace that invites Jesus to transform me from the inside out. A grace that empowers me to live in freedom from sin. This grace is in the process of setting me free.

What about you? Are you perfect or present? Are you enough? ♣

---

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

JOURNEYS  
WITH JESUS  
JILL  
MORIKONE



I SIMPLY  
STRUGGLE TO  
STILL MY MIND  
AND FOCUS  
ON GOD.



# Andrews Bible Commentary

*The Adventist standard for the next generation*



## *Enthusiastic readers say ...*

*"These commentaries are such a great resource for going deeper into God's word. Reading through portions of the Old Testament has helped me see more clearly the heart of God."*

*"The commentary is an easy read. I'm enjoying reading it cover to cover."*

The *Andrews Bible Commentary* is the perfect companion to the *Andrews Study Bible*.

**ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!**

Adventist Book Center: 800-765-6955

Andrews University Press:  
800-467-6369 or  
[universitypress.andrews.edu](http://universitypress.andrews.edu)

The accessible  
commentary by the  
scholars of the church for  
the people of the church



Andrews  
University Press



# CLOSER LOOK

## The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life

Dacher Keltner, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2023), ISBN 978-1-9848-7968-4 (hardcover), 336 pages, US\$25.20. Reviewed by Justin Kim, editor, *Adventist Review*.

**T**hough the pandemic has waned, the use of video conferencing, apps, social media, and other technologies have not. Presenting the latest neuroscience research about their biological and psychological dangers, psychology professor Dacher Keltner argues that this general inwardness of humanity has led to the deprivation of relationships, wonder, and awe. Released at the beginning of this year, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* first defines and then calls attention to eight sources of awe.

Physiologically, awe causes goose bumps, chills, or shudders. Psychologically, it is losing ourselves in the larger picture. Awe is the unique emotion of being in the presence of something vast that transcends you. Awe is shown to lower inflammation, rates of depression, anxiety, heart disease, autoimmune problems, and mental despair. It fights against narcissism, egotism, superiority complexes, feelings of entitlement, and arrogance.

With one chapter dedicated to each, Keltner highlights the eight sources of awe. The first category is labeled moral beauty, where stories of inspiration, optimism, and hope cause listeners to be in awe of such virtues as bravery, loyalty, and kindness. Collective effervescence is another source and is experienced when groups move in unison. Whether you're marching in political protest, celebrating favorite sports teams, or engaging in a cultural dance, there is something ritually profound when you lose yourself in the masses.

Awe can also occur when one experiences the vastness and mystery of nature. Keltner shares the medical benefits of the sound of water, which

may lower stress and heart rates. Even the scents of plants (phytoncides) can strengthen immunity. Nature raises dopamine levels, which increase concentration, stress resilience, and cognitive performance.

The chills also result from music. The author traces its neural route from the ears to the auditory cortex, then anterior insular cortex, then the heart, lungs, vagus nerve, sexual organs, and gut, and finally to the hippocampus, where learning and memory is processed. Visual design is another source of awe, when looking at architecture and art. These visual patterns lead to ideas, then direct experiences, and finally point to meaning.

Interestingly, he points to religious and spiritual experiences, recommending worship regardless of belief system. Disappointingly, rather than lending his support to religion or spirituality, he points to psychedelic drugs that impact the spiritual centers of the brain. Their effect reduces depression and anxiety, and raises an awareness of common humanity and the certainty of morality.

Life events and death experiences, such as witnessing a birth or a funeral service, are obvious sources of awe. And big ideas and epiphanies are his last category. Whether it be ethical systems, large organizations, or other interlocking abstract structures, awe sees how small the individual is compared to the large environment.

In this era of continuous stimulation, the sense of wonder is the antidote to boredom and disenchantment. Keltner keenly observes that there is no mention of money, technology, consumerism, status, or acquisition as sources of awe in his research. The book presents much of the latest research for us to glean, especially as the Advent movement is concerned with worship and the role of awe and wonder in the human spiritual experience. May we survive the modern predicament through integration, formation of communities, and the sharing of our corporate identities, all inspired and sparked by these eight sources of awe. 🍀



## CONFESSIONS OF A RECOVERING ADDICT

I'm a recovering addict. There, I admitted it.

When I was little, my parents gave me every opportunity to make good choices and build a solid spiritual foundation. What I did with those opportunities was my own responsibility.

As a staff kid on an academy campus, I often heard students talking about TV shows or movies they'd seen. Naturally, my curiosity was piqued. They'd ask me if I'd seen the shows, and I'd self-consciously answer no. They'd laugh and shake their heads, suggesting I was really missing out. More than anything, I wanted to fit in. I was sure that if only I knew what they knew, I'd be accepted. That idea backfired, unfortunately.

**JESUS OFFERS  
FREEDOM, POWER,  
AND STRENGTH TO  
OVERCOME.**

My parents had chosen not to have a TV in our home, but I began spending a week at my grandparents' house every summer. I packed in as much TV as possible. There were no limitations, and if I didn't like what everyone was watching in the living room, I could go into another room and watch something else—all day long. Addiction roots began to anchor in my heart, unfurling deep into my college years.

Television and movie characters became my friends, and I lived vicariously through them. When I wasn't working or attending classes, I was seated comfortably in front of the TV, ingesting whatever came on the screen. My physical health suffered, and my spirituality dramatically declined. I resented family worship and my parents' fixation on practical Christianity. I didn't know that the enemy had pinpointed a weak spot in my character

and, almost imperceptibly, introduced a preoccupation to draw my attention away from Christ.

One night I begrudgingly went to prayer meeting. As the speaker shared, a quiet voice whispered through the foggy shadows in my mind: *You're not ready for Jesus to come.* I was strongly convicted that something needed to change.

I knelt and prayed in the pew, asking God to give me the strength to turn my heart completely over to Him. "I am powerless without You," I cried. I gave Him permission to change my heart. As I left the meeting, I felt a renewed sense of freedom. I completely trusted that God would give me victory, and He did. As I gave Him every part of me, He helped me grow in spiritual strength.

The beautiful book *Steps to Christ* underscores this idea. "You are to *give* all—your heart, your will, your service—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must *take* all—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper—to give you power to obey"<sup>1</sup>

Like me, you might struggle with addiction of some sort. Jesus is stronger than the temptation. In His amazing love He offers freedom, power, and strength to overcome—but it does require one hard thing: allowing Him control. "If you will leave yourself in His hands," however, "He will bring you off more than conqueror."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

**Beth Thomas** is an assistant editor for Adventist Review Ministries.

# Miracles Still Happen!

WATCH. BE INSPIRED. SHARE WITH YOUR CHURCH.



## From "Witch" to Witness

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

Ranja was held captive by the evil spirits that possessed her . . . until the day she turned on her radio.



## Trading Guns for God

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

Rebel assassins have laid down their guns in exchange for a new life in Jesus . . . and they're already leading others to Him!



## Taking a Bold Stand

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

Wisam's own family tried to stone and stab him for his belief in God, but today he is an Adventist pastor in the Middle East!



Download the new AWR360° app  
to watch these and many more  
miracle stories at:  
[awr.org/app](http://awr.org/app)



- 📞 1-800-337-4297
- 🌐 [awr.org](http://awr.org)
- 📘 [/awr360](https://www.facebook.com/awr360)
- 📷 [@awr360](https://www.instagram.com/awr360)
- 🐦 [@awr360](https://twitter.com/awr360)
- 📺 [awr.org/videos](http://awr.org/videos)

12501 OLD COLUMBIA PIKE  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20904 USA



NO WALLS. NO BORDERS. NO LIMITS.

AMAZING FACTS  
INTERNATIONAL  
PRESENTS

# THE PINNACLE OF PROPHECY



UNLOCKING REVELATION'S MYSTERIES



A 10-Part Epic Bible Adventure with Pastor Doug Batchelor

*Are you ready for the coming crisis? Get clear, trustworthy, logical answers to your most pressing questions about Bible prophecy, the last days, and what it all means for you and your family!*

LIVE from the Granite Bay Hilltop Church | October 27 – November 11, 2023 • 7:00 – 8:30 pm PT

Extraordinary insights. Extraordinary assurance.  
[pinnacleofprophecy.com](http://pinnacleofprophecy.com)

scan to learn more

