

JANUARY 2023: LOOKING BACK TO 2022 + HOLY PLACES + ADVENTISTS AND MUSLIMS + 365 DAYS WITH JESUS 2.0 + THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDER

ADVENTIST REVIEW

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Pastor John Carter

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11:00 a.m.

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Charles Haugabrooks

February 25, 2023

Concert at 5:00 p.m.

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**“In 2022 the sound of God’s voice,
urging His people to prepare for
eternity, grew even louder.”**

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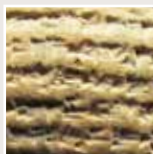
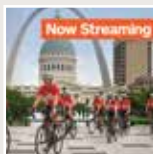
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

1



Babylonian Tablets Unearth Insights into
Judean Life in Exile by Marcos Paseggi

2



Why Do Christians Sing So
Much? by Joshua Stothers

3



Key Discovery Sheds Light on Joshua's
Conquest of Canaan, by Marcos Paseggi

4



Adventist Pastor in Jamaica Completes
Medical Degree, by Kimarley Medly

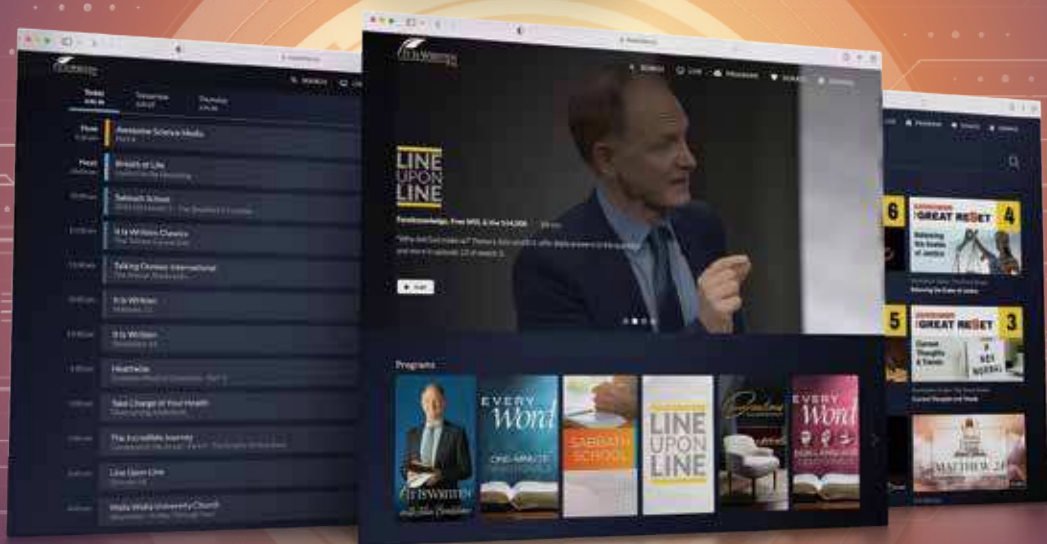
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Malaysian Adventist Bikers Share
Faith Through Caravan, by Jason
Neil Wong and Edward Rodriguez



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JUSTIN KIM



Patience Amid Long Experiments

A parody of the world-famous Nobel Prize, the Ig Nobel Prize was established in 1991 to recognize achievements that first “make people laugh, then think.”¹ In 2005, this “honor” was given jointly to John Mainstone and the late Thomas Parnell of the University of Queensland for one of the world’s longest experiments called the pitch-drop experiment.

Derived from petroleum, pitch is a viscoelastic polymer used to waterproof boats, which is interestingly found in Genesis 6:14 and Exodus 2:3, where the thick liquid was applied over Noah’s and Moses’ arks, respectively. It is black in color, resulting in the English phrase “pitch black.” Being 230 billion times more viscous than water, these two professors sought to measure how long it took for one drop of pitch to fall.

Starting in 1927, the famous experiment placed the black goo in a funnel. Apparently the first drop happened in 1938, then subsequently in 1947, 1954, and 1962. But note this: the researchers never witnessed a drop with their own eyes. By the time he joined the project, Dr. Mainstone missed the fifth drop of 1970, was away for the weekend when the sixth one dropped in 1979, and stepped out for tea when the seventh happened in 1988. Thereafter, cameras were

installed to catch the eighth drop, but the batteries ran out before it happened in 2000. Sadly, Mainstone passed away in 2013 without having seen a drop fall.

More than 500 years ago, another long-term experiment started among God’s reforming church. This experiment tested whether the Bible was really the *only* source of authority for the Christian (*sola scriptura*), was the *first* source against which all other things were tested (*prima scriptura*), and whether the *entire* Bible could really be interpreted by itself (*tota scriptura*). Nearly 174 years ago this experiment began, and it continues its maturity in God’s Advent movement.

This *Adventist Review* publication was created and circulated for this community, those who took these three ideas to their logical conclusions, resulting in the belief of the seventh-day Sabbath, the conditional immortality of the soul, Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and the imminent second return of Christ, amid many others.

The pitch-drop experiment teaches our faith community some lessons. First, how many times have we sought to witness something remarkable, only to be sidelined by peripheral distractions? Like going away for the weekend, stepping out for tea, or having low batteries. How many blessings have we missed in Adventist history because of

diversions such as conspiracy theories, politicized factions, pet theological tests, personality and temperament differences, and simple lukewarm indifference, just to name a few?

Second, that which is developed in a decade can be over in one decisecond. Christ has stated clearly that no one knows the date, but we are warned that eschatological events will be speedy. “The end will come more quickly than men expect.”² “Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.”³

Third, we are to keep vigilant watch, not for the tenth drop, but the second return of Jesus; not some viscous petroleum goo, but the victorious glory of our Lord; not something remarkable, but the most amazing event in human history. As Paul reminds us, let us fix “our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2, NASB1995).

As this new year arrives, how much closer are we to His advent? That tenth drop of pitch will come down assuredly. How much more the Lord Jesus? And this time, no one will miss it. ✦

¹ <https://improbable.com/ig/about-the-ig-nobel-prizes/>

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 631.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn. 1909, 1948), vol. 9, p. 11.

EYE IN THE SKY

Some 2,000 years ago the apostle Paul wondered about the creation of the universe and where it all came from. In Hebrews 11 we read these words: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (verse 3, NIV). It took another two millennia before Albert Einstein established his formula, $E=mc^2$, expressing his idea that the reality we can see and measure is simply another form of energy. When we think of God as all-powerful and the source of everything that made us, gave us life, and keeps us alive, this new understanding will only reinforce our faith in God.

In the early part of the twentieth century, astronomer Edwin Hubble recognized that the universe was expanding. This brought him, along with the Russian Alexander Friedmann and the Belgian priest Georges Lemaître, to the conviction that, contrary to Einstein’s thought, the known universe had a very definite beginning.

By the time Arno Allen Penzias and Robert Woodrow Wilson, in the late 1970s, discovered the cosmic microwave background radiation, which was the first proof of the earth’s early days, the idea of a definite beginning of the universe started to become accepted by more and more.

By the end of the twentieth century the world’s scientists dealing with cosmic origins found common ground and expressed it, in the form of the “standard model.” This is nothing but an overwhelming endorsement of the Creation story.

The articles in the November 2022 issue of the *Adventist Review* lay the groundwork for reassessing the church’s position on questions of the age of this planet. It will revitalize the church’s message; it will give new strength and vigor to the educational process. It will have a positive influence on the church’s mission.

Roland Fleck



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PIONEERS AND THEIR PROTEST AGAINST SYSTEMIC RACISM

I just finished reading Mr. Burton’s online essay concerning the position taken by Adventist pioneers on slavery and racism in nineteenth-century America. What an outstanding report and witness for Christ I have found it to be! This was a subject I knew nothing about, and I want to thank you for educating me and others through timely articles such as this. May our heavenly Father continue to bless all of your endeavors to teach the truth in love, and may your efforts produce a fruit that helps heal current race relations both here and abroad.

John Mattithyah

THANK YOU, JILL MORIKONE

Thank you, Jill Morikone, for putting into print my life. Case in point referencing a September *Adventist Review* in November. I am always feeling as though I might be missing a poignant moment with our children or my husband or a client. When you divide your time up with a commission-based income, it’s easy for the day to be filled with blank checkmark boxes to optimize time. And truth be told, those boxes sometimes only

May our heavenly Father continue to bless all of your endeavors to teach the truth in love, and may your efforts produce a fruit that helps heal current race relations both here and abroad.

—JOHN MATTITHYAH

mark the must-do's today or the start of a project or the nurturing of a current and new business relationship that might turn into a remunerable success. So thank you for the reminder to breathe in the moments of possible wheel spinning.

Karissa Moore

Phillipston, Massachusetts

FROM OUR FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

WHY DO CHRISTIANS SING SO MUCH?

There is salvation in praising God. We like to sing it!

Emily Garcia Cecil

MONTEMORELOS UNIVERSITY WILL LAUNCH DISC GOLF

Every campus should have a disc golf course!

Beverly Helm

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY IS PART OF GROUNDBREAKING DISCOVERY

This reminds me of the Sabbath School lesson that discussed Lachish.

Danwel Dejolde

IN IRELAND, ADVENTISTS CELEBRATE DAY OF FELLOWSHIP

To God be the praise and thanksgiving for the Irish Mission.

Monika Simmons

WHAT IS ELLEN WHITE'S ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY ADVENTISM?

Spiritual truths should not change with age or social trends. New discovered truths will still line up with the old. It does not change but sheds more light on a topic. What she wrote in leading people to a closer relationship and understanding is still viable today and till the Second Coming. We can see the health message she gave in the 1900s and science and world history's proving it true in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Science today is just coming into line with what she wrote.

Richard Ramey

SWAU SINGERS PERFORM AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Thank you for sharing! Proud of our music scholars and the opportunities that allow us to share the gospel message in unique and life-changing ways.

Jonathan Wall

CLARIFICATION

In the excerpt from Walton Brown's book cited in Leo Ranzolin, Sr.'s letter (December 2022 issue) the author is imagining our experience in heaven. What appears as a direct quotation by Ellen White is the author's paraphrase of various thoughts in her writings. In *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, for example, she refers to "unnumbered worlds that are obedient to His laws" (p. 66).

—Editors.

FEELING GOD'S EMBRACE IN A PEDIATRIC UNIT

In the past I did not work in a pediatric ICU, but in other units. It would require much compassion and spiritual strength!

Dorothy Mckinney

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.



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“I see a new perspective in our approach to carrying out church ministry because reading the Scriptures through the eyes of Adventist-Muslim Relations is so beautiful and profound.”

—Abner Dizon, p. 15



ADVENTIST REVIEW TV PREMIERES DOCUMENTARY ABOUT CYCLING TEAM

THE “I WILL GO” GROUP RODE 1,200 MILES FROM WASHINGTON, D.C., TO ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

A crew from Adventist Review TV followed eight Seventh-day Adventist leaders who set out on a cycling journey of more than 1,200 miles (2,000 kilometers) on May 22, 2022, riding from Washington, D.C., to St. Louis, Missouri, United States. Along the way the riders distributed Adventist literature, witnessed, and prayed with people.

The “I Will Go” cycling team, which included a division president and two General Conference department associate directors, arrived in St. Louis just in time for the beginning of the General Conference Session on June 5.

The Adventist Review TV crew recorded their experiences and testimonies during the more than two weeks it took the riders to complete the journey. Adventist Review TV is pleased to release the full documentary about that historic journey. 📺



SCAN TO WATCH ONLINE



PHOTO: MARK L. FROELICH/ADVENTIST REVIEW



Participants at the 2022 Conscience and Justice Council annual convention in Glendale, California.

PHOTO: CENTRAL STATES CONFERENCE

CONVENTION ADDRESSES PROPHETIC JUSTICE

CONSCIENCE AND JUSTICE COUNCIL MEETS TO TRAIN AND PROVIDE RESOURCES.

CRYSTON JOSIAH, CENTRAL STATES CONFERENCE, FOR MID-AMERICA UNION CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

The Adventist Church's Conscience and Justice Council (CJC) recently held its annual convention in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Attendees gathered September 22-25 in Glendale, California, United States, for a weekend themed around prophetic justice.

The CJC is composed of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty directors from the nine regional conferences in North America, the historically Black administrative church regions in the United States. The group includes representatives from Oakwood University, Washington Adventist University, Loma Linda University, the North Pacific Union, Pacific Union, Southern Union, and the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The event included a track on justice (the public affairs component); a track on conscience (the religious liberty component); and a pastor's track that focused on helping ministers to be better equipped to serve members and communities who deal with various social issues and ills in society.

On Friday a panel discussed "Thorny Theories and Decisions: Systemic Attacks on Truth." The panel was made up of Timothy Golden, professor of philosophy at Walla Walla University; Gregory Hoenes, director of West Region for the Southern California Conference; Jeanice Warden-Washington, chief consultant for the California Assembly Higher Education Committee; and Alan Reinach, president of the Church-State Council. This robust panel alerted the audience to many cases and laws taking place at various state and Supreme Court levels that, though legally binding, may be ethically and morally problematic—or, simply stated, wrong.

Zdravko Plantak, professor of religion and ethical studies at Loma Linda University, conducted an "Adventist Prophetic Role" workshop. He stated that God has always had a prophetic person or people in every era who were courageous enough to speak His Word and to stand for what was right, even if it was unpopular. We still have a responsibility to use our prophetic gift not just for foretell-

ing but also for forthtelling.

Over this four-day weekend participants were also blessed with powerful sermons, including one from Lola Moore Johnston, senior pastor of the Restoration Praise Center in Bowie, Maryland. Johnston, who shared the divine worship hour message, encouraged, inspired, and implored the audience to "say something and do something" when it comes to any form of injustice or oppression that takes place in our communities. We are to follow the example of the Egyptian midwives Shiphrah and Puah, who defied the mandates and genocidal laws of the pharaoh of Egypt and feared God rather than humans.

On Sabbath afternoon, participants were taken on a field trip to a few of the homeless shelters in the city of Los Angeles, a city with one of the highest rates of homelessness in the United States. By God's grace, there are individuals who are determined to make a dent in that homeless population and provide shelter and food for that demographic.

"We thank God for the leadership of the Conscience and Justice Council chairperson Edward Woods III, who also serves as the director for the Lake Region Conference, and the CJC team for orchestrating this convention," one of the organizers said. "We believe that as this annual convention moves from region to region around the country, more of our church members and leaders will be inspired to 'say something and do something.'"



Attendees at the NNSW University Ministry Summit. PHOTO: ADVENTIST RECORD

PLAN SEEKS TO INCREASE YOUNG ADULT RETENTION IN AUSTRALIA

LEADERS WORK ON UNIVERSITY OUTREACH TO SUPPORT ADVENTIST STUDENTS.

KIMBERLEY MC MURRAY AND JULIANA MUNIZ, ADVENTIST RECORD

The Australian Union Conference (AUC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has launched Disciple-focused Life Group Leadership, a project that aims to reach university students outside of the church and provide support for Adventist students within secular universities. The four-year initiative will place two young adults within chosen secular universities around Australia in an effort to set up life groups on campus.

According to statistics from the Barna Group, 72 percent of young people who attend church in Australia drop out of church life as they transition into university and young adulthood. The goal of this initiative is to help Adventist young adults stay in the church and to facilitate outreach to secular university students. Life Group leaders will have funding for the resources needed to facilitate life groups, as well as training and support from mentors at each level, from the local church to the South Pacific Division.

Jeffrey Parker, youth director for AUC, said, "It is so exciting to see all of our Australian conferences wanting to be a part of this Life Group ministry proposal as it rolls out over 2023/2024. All the conference administration teams see the need to move forward in this space and want to act fast to connect with both our own Adventist young

adults and other university students that can be reached for Christ."

The new project will provide not only an essential resource for conferences that want to get started, but also a boost to the ones already investing in it, such as in the North New South Wales Conference (NNSW).

"I have seen many of our young adults slip away from church as they face university life. It is my belief that if we give them an opportunity to connect in a regular Life Group setting, within the university itself, we will inspire them to continue their connection with Jesus Christ," Parker said.

With Adventist Students on Campus (ASOC) clubs in three universities, the NNSW young adult department plans to expand into all seven campuses in its territory.

NNSW's main ASOC club started in 2019 on the University of Newcastle campus. Providing for the needs of the students and conducting frequent initiatives to connect with them, the group grew into a church plant and officially became a church company in September 2022, so far baptizing more than 20 students.

Aiming to empower more young people to join the task force, the NNSW young adult department recently conducted its annual University Ministry Summit attended

by university students, Bible workers, and passionate laypeople from all over Australia.

Lindsay Birch, who is starting a new ASOC ministry at Griffith University in Queensland, found the event encouraging. "The summit answered many of my questions and helped me know my immediate next steps. It also gave me a framework and a greater vision to work toward," she said.

Birch said that at the summit she was inspired by the global impact of university ministry. "A key piece of information I learned was that in Australian universities there are 1.6 million students, 30 percent of which are international students, mostly coming from the 10/40 window. I saw how important university ministry can be for evangelizing, equipping, and sending back frontline missionaries to the hardest-to-reach parts of the world," she added.

NNSW young adult director Blair Lemke also believes in the great impact of this type of ministry. "Not only does university ministry have a global impact, but it is an opportunity to retain and engage Adventist youth who leave their home communities to attend university and may otherwise drift away," Lemke said.

The AUC is working on developing a new website that will be online in mid-December. The website will give parents, grandparents, friends, and university students the opportunity to inform where they're studying and help them link up to other Adventist young adults in the area. 🍃



One of the Al-Yahudu tablets. PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

BABYLONIAN TABLETS UNEARTH INSIGHTS INTO JUDEAN LIFE IN EXILE

**WE SHOULDN'T RUSH TO CONCLUSIONS ON
DETAILS THEY DO NOT REVEAL, EXPERT SAYS.**

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Beyond what the Bible says, mentions of Judean life during the Babylonian exile have generally been scarce throughout history. All of that changed in 2014, when archaeologists discovered about 200 clay tablets written in cuneiform script that reveal aspects of the life of Jews who lived in Babylon at the time of the exile.

On November 16, at the 2022 Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, Assyriologist and expert in Mesopotamian archaeology George Heath-

Whyte discussed what the ongoing translation of the tablets reveals, what the tablets don't say, and what conclusions we can and cannot derive from those findings.

THE TABLETS

The tablets, known as the Al-Yahudu texts, were acquired from a seller, so the specific place and background of the discovery have been lost. They have been dated between 572 and 477 B.C. This means that the oldest seem to have been written about 15 years after Babylon's invasion of Israel.

The translation of the cuneiform script on the tablets shows that they are legal documents written in the Babylonian language. Some of them are promissory notes—one party is required to transfer goods to another party on a specific date. There are also receipts, marriage agreements, and other personal documents. Most come from the time of Darius's reign, Heath-Whyte explained, and reveal the existence of a Jewish community living in the countryside, in a town south-east of Babylon.

"There is much we can learn about how life was for that particular community living in Babylon," Heath-Whyte said. "They give us a glimpse into the Judean working the land . . . in the land-for-service scheme. [They show that] some Jews were quite entrepreneurial. Some secured jobs in the Babylonian administration."

Heath-Whyte said that what the tablets show fits nicely with God's message to the exiles in Jeremiah 29:5-7, which reads, "Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace."

A MISMATCH WITH THE BIBLE?

Some scholars have been using the findings in the tablets to point out what they call a mismatch with the Bible record. They say, for instance, that even though the Bible talks about the exile as a horrible period, the tablets show the overall situation of the Jews in exile was pretty good.

Heath-Whyte doesn't think this is an either-or situation, however. "The evidence of the Babylonian sources is being misused. It is a false dichotomy," he said. "Were Jews living in Babylon able to advance? Yes. Were Jews living in Babylon free people? No. They had to work in a land they didn't own and render service to a foreign king. They were not entirely free."

At the same time, Heath-Whyte explained, the Bible is clear that even though most of the Jews living in exile longed to return to their homeland, some of them, when they in fact had the opportunity, decided to stay. Also, we know that Mordecai, Nehemiah, and others achieved relatively high positions in the kingdom.

Critics also point out that no tablet mentions that the Jews knew about the Pentateuch and the Sabbath. But those are not things you would expect to find in a Babylonian legal document, Heath-Whyte explained. "The sources do not allow us to determine whether the Sabbath was observed," he said, "even though one name that appears in one tablet is Shabbataiah."

Some scholars have been using the findings in the tablets to point out what they call a mismatch with the Bible record.

Others have pointed out that no tablet mentions the Jews returning to their homeland. Again, Heath-Whyte said, that is not something Babylonians would necessarily include in a legal document. "We have tablets that talk about sale of property, of paying of debts, but we can't tell if they are connected to the Jews selling their properties before returning," he said.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SOURCES

At the same time, Heath-Whyte acknowledged, there are many details these sources can't tell us. The first has to do with the nature of the sources.

"People imagine they are letters, or fragments of the Psalms. But this is not the case," he said. "These documents were written by Babylonian scribes in Babylonian legal jargon. There are large areas of the exiles' lives that these documents do not mention."

Also, the sources available are insufficient. "We don't have many of them. Or not enough to paint a whole picture," Heath-Whyte said.

Regarding the context of the sources, Heath-Whyte reminded

his audience that the tablets were found and then sold. "We don't know where they were found, or in what circumstances," he said.

THEIR GIVEN NAMES

What the tablets do reveal is the names of many of the Jews living in exile. According to Heath-Whyte, who studied the topic extensively, most of the names are not Babylonian, but seem to be related to the biblical text and the God of Israel.

"The contents of a person's name do not tell us what they believe, but it can show the connection with the belief in one God. You can see a sense of identity with God through their names," he said. And, he added, "just as the Bible said, some Jews prospered in Babylon, and for at least some of them, the God of the Bible seemed to be their only and true God."

In conclusion, Heath-Whyte emphasized, when we come across claims about these texts, we need to test them. "We must be careful not to assert what the texts don't say, but we can be modestly optimistic," he said. "Most of what these sources tell us fit with what the Bible says." 🍀



Mission school students display their certificates of completion of the preparatory training for service. PHOTO: NAASSOM AZEVEDO, SOUTH

AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

BRAZIL REGION WILL SEND 120 VOLUNTEERS TO OTHER COUNTRIES

YOUNG MISSIONARIES WILL SERVE ACROSS ASIA, AFRICA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

JEFFERSON PARADELLO, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Attorney Déborah Cardoso is living a dream come true. In 2023 she is set to go and serve as a missionary in Lebanon and then in Egypt. There she's planning to spend several months of her life working in an educational project aimed at the community. "I must serve to be useful; if I don't serve, I won't be useful at all," she says. "Participating in mission has always made sense to me."

Cardoso is one in a group of 120 missionaries from the Brazilian states of Bahia and Sergipe who will be sent to serve in various regions of the world in 2023. The Pitcairn Project, as it has been called, is a response of the Adventist Church in that region to what others did when they left their countries so that the Adventist message could be spread throughout South America.

"As church leaders and members, we are partnering together to send young missionaries to various places around the world," East Brazil Union Mission president André Dantas said. "For instance, Ad-

ventist businesspeople who cannot take a year off their business are contributing [funds] so that others can go. People who have few resources are also helping in some way. Everyone is involved."

According to Dantas, this initiative reinforces the feeling that no one is alone in sharing the biblical message in each of their localities. It also awakens what could be called missionary awareness, because it is necessary not only to speak about Jesus where one lives but also to help elsewhere.

The group of young missionaries, who recently attended the sixth "I Will Go" convention at Bahia Adventist College, will serve under the auspices of Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS), which will connect them with their place of service. The regional church will help them cover the cost of passports, visas, and air travel, Dantas said.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD MISSION

Sending young missionaries to places in need means that the fo-

cus of the Adventist Church is on the right place, Elbert Kuhn, AVS director for the General Conference of the Adventist Church, said. "Our church exists to fulfill the biblical mandate, which calls us to share Christ's love. It also shows concern for young people, who at the most challenging moment of their lives are involved with something that will give them depth in their communion with God, and abilities and skills in the emotional and professional area and in their relationship with new cultures and languages."

Kuhn pointed out that such an initiative also stresses the global nature of the Adventist Church. "It shows our appreciation for the new generations and that we have the same ideal around the world," he said.

After participating twice in the One Year in Mission project, which offers initiatives in the areas of health, social development, and Bible teaching, Jefferson Silva thought of taking a step further: he decided to take the entrance exam required to study theology. At the same time, Silva received an invitation from his local pastor in Ilhéus, Bahia, to be a missionary in another country. "I am passionate about it: bringing the Word of God to people. I eventually found out that the entrance exam would take place on the same day as the 'I Will Go' convention, and that I had to make a choice. My heart already knew where I wanted to go," he said. ▀



Instructors and leaders who participated in the “Understanding Islam” colloquium in Thailand October 28-30. PHOTO: GERARD BERNARD, ASIA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR ADVENTIST-MUSLIM RELATIONS WILL OPEN IN THAILAND

CHAPTER WILL BECOME PART OF THE CHURCH'S GLOBAL NETWORK.

JOY KUTTAPPAN, SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Although only 0.2 percent of Thailand's population are Muslims, Asia-Pacific International University (AIU), a school run by the Adventist Church in Muak Lek, Saraburi, Thailand, enrolls a large number of students from around Southeast Asia. In that broader region 25 percent of the population belongs to the Muslim faith. Taking this into account, the school is planning to open a chapter of the church's Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations (AMR) to better understand Islamic ideas, culture, and customs.

The decision to start an AMR chapter was made after an “Understanding Islam” colloquium held October 28-30 by the university's Faculty of Religious Studies (FRS). The colloquium's guest speakers included Abner Dizon, director for Muslim and Secular-Postmodern Ministries for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD), and Petras Bahadur, director of the Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

A number of initiatives in Adventist Mission have included the AMR. However, many Adventists might not understand the idea of Adventism's mission to Muslims and its accompanying techniques. The FRS colloquium communicative stated that understanding the

concepts relating to the Adventist mission to Muslims and its techniques is necessary so that members might take personal initiatives to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.

“There was much material on Islam, and the significance of the mission to Muslims presented at the AMR colloquium. Both speakers were authorities in their respective fields, and as followers of Jesus Christ, they encouraged us to be enthusiastic about carrying out God's job,” Alfredo G. Agustin, Jr., dean of the FRS, said. “They also pushed us to put what we had learned into practice by starting the AMR chapter and AIU Missionary Movement.”

The two-day conference attracted a number of university staff members and students. Some of the topics discussed in the colloquium included “Adventist Identity,” “Understanding Islam,” “Biblical Truths and Islamic Sources,” and “God's Plan Before the End of Time.”

“I see a new perspective in our approach to carrying out church ministry because reading the Scriptures through the eyes of Adventist-Muslim Relations is so beautiful and profound,” Dizon said. “Why should someone hear the gospel twice when others have not even heard it once?”

Dizon added that the AMR col-

loquium challenges the church to actively pursue its mission to reach the unreached because it is enlightening. Mahaingam Varah, the senior pastor of the AIU church, concurred. “We have hundreds of ‘Samaritan ladies’ right here on our campus, and it is time to present who Jesus is to them.”

“WHY SHOULD SOMEONE HEAR THE GOSPEL TWICE WHEN OTHERS HAVE NOT EVEN HEARD IT ONCE?”

The presentations were educational and novel, several of the participants said. “A lot of innovative information and methodology were offered,” Franklin Hutabarat, an instructor at the FRS, said. “The speakers' firsthand accounts of reaching out to Muslims were eye-opening. The fact that the Muslim people can be traced back to Abraham's ancestry is one significant feature,” he said.

At the conclusion of the colloquium, presenters assisted AIU's pastoral team and theology faculty in identifying several outreach needs and strategies, including the decision to establish a section on Buddhism and Islam in the university library, and to launch a separate Sabbath School, church service, and Week of Prayer specifically for non-Christian students. 🖋️



Crew of Maranatha volunteers work on the new Bethsaida Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia. PHOTO: MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

IN ZAMBIA, VOLUNTEERS BEGIN RECONSTRUCTION OF DESTROYED CHURCH

IN JANUARY 2022 A STORM MADE THE BUILDING COLLAPSE, KILLING FIVE MEMBERS.

MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

After a tragic start in 2022, the Bethsaida Seventh-day Adventist community in Zambia closed out the year with new hope and possibilities as Maranatha volunteers are building a new church to replace one that was lost.

In January a fierce storm passed through the city of Kasama, in northeastern Zambia. The Bethsaida Seventh-day Adventist Church had just wrapped its worship and lunch as dark clouds brewed overhead. People scattered, eager to get home before the deluge, but some were forced to take refuge inside the church building. Unfortunately, the downpour weakened the already-failing structure, and the entire church collapsed, crushing the members inside. Five people died, and many more were injured.

Adventist Church leadership in Zambia reached out to Maranatha, asking for help in rebuilding the church, “as [the nearly 500] members have nowhere to worship, and it is the rainy season,” Samuel Siyangwe, president of the Adventist Church in the Northern Zambia Union, said. In June Maranatha launched a US\$600,000 fundraising effort to build a large church com-

plex that will include seating for 500, six Sabbath School classrooms, bathrooms, and a well. More than 900 people gave to the effort, allowing Maranatha to reach the goal.

In November, 19 volunteers headed to Zambia to start construction at Bethsaida. After a grueling 15-hour bus ride that lasted two days, the team arrived on site and jumped into action. Halfway through the project, they had already completed the block walls of two classrooms and started work on another set of rooms and the church itself.

On Sabbath volunteers worshipped with the Bethsaida congregation at a nearby school. After the service they met with members who had been injured by the church collapse.

“It was an absolutely amazing, meaningful, heart-tugging and rewarding experience for everyone,” Susan Woods, Maranatha’s medical services coordinator and the project coordinator, said. “In some homes we were invited inside to sit on their best tiny benches or chairs. At others we sat on cloth or maize meal sacks spread on the ground beside the house.

“We had the opportunity to visit with each one, hear from them,

meet their families, share comfortable Bible promises, sing . . . and pray for them. We ended visits with hugs, handshakes, and big smiles—and all of our hearts warmer for having experienced a small taste of heaven.”

When complete, the structures will not only serve the congregation but also have a primary school. There is an Adventist school in the area, but it has 1,200 students meeting in three shifts each day.

ABOUT MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

Maranatha Volunteers International is a responsive organization that for 54 years has fulfilled requests for construction assistance for the Adventist Church. Each project is carefully considered for need, overall impact on the community, and resources for long-term maintenance and support.

Maranatha’s construction projects are funded by donations from private supporters. Donors can choose to give to a general fund that goes where it’s needed most, or they can give to a country effort. There are also specific programs that make it easy for people to give.

Currently Maranatha is working in roughly a dozen countries around the world. Efforts are focused on church and school construction and water wells. A portion of the projects are completed by volunteers participating in short-term mission trips organized by Maranatha. ♣



MALAYSIAN ADVENTIST BIKERS SHARE FAITH THROUGH CARAVAN.

The Adventist Church in Malaysia organized a three-day motorcycle convoy in Sabah, Malaysia, October 28-30. The biker convoy traveled 310 miles across the Tambunan, Keningau, Tenom, Sipitang, and Papar districts. With the theme “Reach the Unreachable” and “Every Ride Is a Mission,” Adventist riders joined the convoy to conduct various services, including distributing the missionary book of the year, community service, food distribution, and health screening.



MINI-CHEF COOKING COURSE EDUCATES CHILDREN ABOUT FOOD.

A mini-chef course provided 2- to 12-year-olds in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, with several weeks of training in cooking. The initiative, launched in September, resulted from a partnership between a child development project of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the UniTFC nutrition program. The goal of the initiative was to awaken the pleasure of cooking in children exploring a wholesome use of food according to the Brazilian Food Guide.



ADVENTIST CHURCH PROMOTES READING AMONG ITS TEEN MEMBERS.

Hundreds of adolescents participated in a region-wide reading competition in northern Colombia. The initiative, which sought to motivate the reading of books for spiritual growth, was organized by the children's and adolescent ministries of the North Colombian Union. Nearly 300 people gathered in Medellín on September 24 to watch the grand finale competition and cheer on the eight finalists who were representing the local fields in the region.



THOUSANDS WELCOME FREE MEDICAL CARE IN VENEZUELA.

For more than three months starting in July, the Adventist Church in Venezuela provided free medical services to thousands of people in Mérida, a city in the Andes Mountains in northwestern Venezuela. More than 70 medical doctors, 15 leaders, and dozens of church members volunteered their time and expertise to assist more than 2,700 people. It is the first time free medical services have been extended for more than a few days throughout the West Venezuela Union territory.



ADVENTISTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY HOLD A COMMUNITY FUN RUN.

The annual initiative promoted and inspired participants to a healthy lifestyle by being more physically active, mentally aware, and socially connected through regular course-oriented marathons. More than 150 runners participated in the race, which began before dawn at the Gia Dinh Stadium in the Binh Thanh District. The Vietnam Mission's Health Ministries Department has been hosting the fun run for six years.



ADRA PROVIDES MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS IN MEXICO.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), in coordination with Adventist health professionals and volunteers, recently joined efforts in Baja California, Mexico, to provide medical services to dozens of migrants in two shelters in Tijuana. The ADRA initiative, which has been running since March 2022, seeks to assist migrants with much-needed medical services.



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LOOKING BACK TO 2022

Can you see God at work in this world?

JOHN BRADSHAW

During the past 20 years the level of Lake Powell, a human-made reservoir straddling the Utah-Arizona border, has been steadily, and ominously, shrinking. Overuse of the water supply and a dramatic lack of rainfall mean that an area of land seven times bigger than Manhattan that was once underwater is now dry ground. Consequently, remarkable geographical features that have been hidden from view have in recent times reappeared. When the Glen Canyon Dam opened in 1966, arches and canyons were inundated. But now they are back in view, as a serious drought enables us to see what is hidden beneath the surface.

The same could be said for 2022. It might be that the past 12 months have enabled us to see some of what had been hidden beneath the surface. If we allow it to be so, this might be the greatest gift granted us by the year we now bid farewell.





DEATHS AND TRAGEDY

In many ways 2022 was a year like most others. Planet Earth said goodbye to numerous notables, such as Queen Elizabeth II and former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev. The sports world lost basketballer Bill Russell and commentator Vin Scully, while entertainers Jerry Lee Lewis, Loretta Lynn, Olivia Newton-John, Meat Loaf, and Sidney Poitier went to their rest.

We learned in 2022 that in economic terms, there really is a “down” as well as an “up.” We discovered, after years of a robust economy, that the economy is, in reality, a fragile creature. Mimicking the call and response of a preacher and a congregation, the economy called, bad news responded.

As inflation soared, shoppers experienced pressure in their pocketbooks, and investors watched investments shrink. The net worth of Elon Musk (of Tesla and Twitter fame) is said to have dropped by a staggering \$100 billion. Belt-tightening was a familiar theme of the past 12 months.

The year 2022 was, like most years, a year of tragedy. In late September more than 100 people lost their lives in Florida during the devastation caused by the deadliest hurricane to impact the Sunshine State in more than 85 years. Hurricane Ian claimed even more lives further up the Atlantic coast. In August 43 died in cataclysmic flooding in eastern Kentucky. Three months earlier 21 lives were brought to a senseless, premature end in a mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas, just 10 days after 10 were shot dead at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.

And, of course, the question will be asked, “How close are we to the return of Jesus?” It isn’t an insignificant question. Jesus Himself, speaking of His return, told us that “when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!” (Mark 13:29).

The answer to the question is obvious. We’re close. Closer than we have ever been. But rather than attempt to know the unknowable—the same Jesus assured us that no one knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36)—it would be wise to focus on the known.

HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

If you were traveling on Interstate 75 from Chattanooga, Tennessee, to Atlanta, Georgia, you would notice a sign just outside Chattanooga that says something like “Atlanta, 75 miles.” Sometime later another sign will say, “Atlanta, 52 miles,” and so on. At each point you know precisely how far you are from Atlanta. But on the road to Atlanta there’s another sign, which says, “I-75 South.” This sign doesn’t tell you how far you are to your destination. Instead, it tells you what

road you're on. You're on I-75. Specifically, I-75 South. As long as you know you're on I-75 South, you know you're on the road to Atlanta, and with every mile that passes, you're a mile closer to your destination. The sign that says "I-75 South" informs you you're heading in the right direction.

In March an Academy Award-winning actor physically assaulted an awards show host on live television, while yelling obscenities heard around the world. In 2021 the executive director for the National Institute for Civil Discourse stated the United States was at a turning point for public discourse.¹ A year later, based on what is witnessed in society, we have to conclude that society has rounded a bend. We can't know what that means in terms of the precise timing of Jesus' return, but it does suggest we're on I-75 South, as it were. A monkeypox outbreak sickened people in 75 countries. Crowd crushes killed approximately 150 people in South Korea and 125 in Indonesia. I-75 South. A heat wave in Europe, deadly flooding in Pakistan, Australia, and South Africa, and hurricanes in the Caribbean. There were a total of 29 billion-dollar weather disasters in the first nine months of the year alone.² Do they tell us how near we are to the return of Jesus? No, they don't. But what they do tell us is that we're on the right road. The second coming of Jesus is just up ahead.

But from a personal perspective, it's probably more important to consider what 2022 has told us about what lurks beneath the surface.

In September of this year President Joe Biden announced that the COVID pandemic was "over." After more than two years the great majority of COVID-related restrictions were rolled back in the United States and around the world. Planet Earth reopened for business, people were able to freely visit family members after being long unable to do so, and again tourists traveled the world. As the fog of COVID began to lift, the death toll slowed dramatically, and many businesses began the arduous journey back from the economic doldrums. While debate will long linger regarding Doctor Fauci and politicians and community health boards, the church can now assess how *the church* handled COVID.



SALVADORCELIS / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

While some congregations were models of Christian cooperation, others, in the words of many pastors I have spoken to, "will never recover." COVID allowed us to see beneath the surface of our Christian experience. As Ellen White wrote in *Christ's Object Lessons*: "It is in a crisis that character is revealed."³ If anger, debate, and disagreement characterized attitudes and behavior during COVID and the COVID thaw, we saw stark evidence of our great spiritual need. History has taught us there will always be issues. How one reacts to an issue is where the rubber meets the road for the believer in Jesus. Christians whose experience was exposed as wanting during the COVID emergency were given the opportunity to consider their words and actions, and to inquire how they might stand during earth's last great crisis. As Jeremiah wrote: "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?" (Jer. 12:5).



AND THE CHURCH?

LGBTQ+ issues were prominent in 2022. While people learn how to deal with issues that have not long—or not ever—been central to the church's experience, it is to be remembered that LGBTQ+ poses no risk to the church. The church has weathered talking movies, television, rock 'n' roll, prohibition, free love, hip-hop, and TikTok, and will certainly survive evolving moral and lifestyle sensibilities. What will affect the church is how the church *relates* to changing perspectives. Irrespective of the reasons an individual may identify as "they" or "them" or "bisexual" or "transgender" or "nonbinary," what 2022 has reinforced is that Christians are going to have to learn how to carry themselves in the spirit of Christ. The church is being forced to learn how to demonstrate to people—especially young people—that they are loved, even when their beliefs and actions do not meet with universal approval. One ministry leader told me abortion is increasingly common among college students who fear pregnancy would bring ostracism and condemnation. Even those who don't follow God's Plan A—perhaps, especially those who don't follow God's Plan A—must feel love and acceptance from those who claim to closely follow Jesus.

Speaking to people who "thought that the kingdom of God should

The church has weathered talking movies, television, rock 'n' roll, prohibition, free love, hip hop, and TikTok, and will certainly survive evolving moral and lifestyle sensibilities.

Three times He appealed to them, and three times they slumbered. There was no watching and no praying.

immediately appear,” Jesus told them they should “occupy till I come” (Luke 19:11, 13, KJV). In the parable, Jesus’ emphasis is not on the timing of His return, but on what His people are doing as His return draws near. As the sixty-first General Conference Session convened in St. Louis, Missouri, this year—two years late, courtesy of COVID—church membership had grown to around 22 million, double what it was as recently as the turn of the millennium. Five months later the population of the world surpassed 8 billion.⁴ As natural disasters proliferate and tragedies unfold and political controversies swirl like campfire smoke and the love of many waxes cold (Matt. 24:12), Jesus’ voice is still heard saying, “Occupy till I come.”

WATCH—AND PRAY

In September 1894, residents of Hinckley, Minnesota—about halfway between the Twin Cities and Duluth—were aware that forest fires were heading in their direction. The summer had been especially hot, and tens of millions of board feet of tinder-dry lumber was stacked at the local lumber mill (located in suitably named Pine County). Responsible citizens that they were, the people of Hinckley prepared for the possibility of fire by filling barrels with water. The lumber mill secured the use of a garden hose and filled barrels with approximately 1,200 gallons of H₂O—the equivalent of 25 bathtubs—as their defense against what turned out to be a ferocious firestorm. The people of Hinckley were, understandably, completely overwhelmed. Officially, 418 people died in the awful tragedy, although many claim the number was much closer to 500. Today a monument on Fire Monument Road in Hinckley testifies to the grim reality that while the people of Hinckley prepared, they were woefully underprepared.


The events of 2022 tell us that we are heading steadily toward the glorious day when Jesus returns. Our parents’ generation, and our parents’ parents’

generation, believed the same thing, and yet here we are. But we remember that “the final movements will be rapid ones.”⁵ Recent history has proved to us that things can happen quickly.

Throughout His ministry Jesus urged us to be adequately prepared for His return. The parable of the 10 virgins demonstrates that while five of the young women were wise and five were foolish, all 10 were asleep. The night before His crucifixion—in His most trying hour—Jesus implored His three closest friends to “watch with Me” (Matt. 26:38). “Watch and pray,” He urged, “lest you enter into temptation” (verse 41). Three times He appealed to them, and three times they slumbered. There was no watching and no praying.

The church of the end-times must not find itself unprepared, while, Bible in hand, it knows the name of Jesus and agrees with the 28 fundamental beliefs. In the book of Revelation, God’s people declare, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17, KJV), while entirely ignorant of their true spiritual condition, and completely unprepared to meet Jesus at His return.

That we might be truly prepared for the great events lying just before us, Jesus offers His people gold tried in the fire, white clothing, and eyesalve, the graces of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. He speaks to Laodicea and says, “Be zealous therefore, and repent” (verse 19, KJV). In other words, *Be surrendered, and truly converted.*

In 2022 the sound of God’s voice, urging His people to prepare for eternity, grew even louder. We know not what 2023 will bring. But we do know Jesus is soon to return. How soon? Soon enough. Eternity beckons. God graciously invites us to allow Jesus the primary place in our lives. 

¹ Tony Perkins, “Political Strife, Pandemic Causing Public Discourse to Plunge Even Lower,” *National Institute for Civil Discourse*, <https://nicd.arizona.edu/blog/2021/02/04/political-strife-pandemic/>.

² Jeff Masters, “World Rocked by 29 Billion-Dollar Weather Disasters in 2022,” *Yale Climate Connections*, <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2022/10/world-rocked-by-29-billion-dollar-weather-disasters-in-2022/>

³ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 412.

⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/world-population-8-billion-acc94296d8aeb06e64daff9e597e0214>

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 11.

John Bradshaw is president of It Is Written, an international media ministry, and lives with his wife, Melissa, in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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GET READY FOR 2023— AND BEYOND

How to really prepare for the end

TY GIBSON

Recently I met a man who articulated his preparations for end-time events. We were talking about how hard the past couple of years have been with the COVID crisis, the lockdown, the economic downturn, and the rise of political divisiveness. Once we had painted a sufficiently abysmal picture of the past two years, I said, “I wonder what 2023 has in store for us?” He responded, “Well, if we are entering the end-times, everything is about to get much worse.” Then, after a solemn pause, he said, “But I’ve got a 50-pound bag of lentils and a shotgun, so I’m ready.” An awkward laugh escaped my lips, but he didn’t even crack a smile. He wasn’t joking.

Maybe we have overlooked the primary factor Jesus said will define the final events of human history.

The disciples asked Jesus, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). Most of us are familiar with the first half of the answer Jesus gave: “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pesti-

lences, and earthquakes in various places” (verses 6, 7).

In passing, notice that Jesus, after listing these signs of the end, offers an important clarification: “All these are the beginning of birth pains” (verse 8, NIV). All of human history has been characterized by famines, pestilences, natural disasters, and wars. So why does Jesus say these things will constitute signs of the end? Well, He explains that these kinds of events will not be unique of themselves, but their manner of occurrence will be. They will become like “birth pains,” like a woman experiencing contractions leading up to giving birth—more frequent and more intense as the end approaches.

Now back to the main point toward which we are inching. After explaining that His second coming will be preceded by an increase in the frequency and intensity of disastrous events, Jesus says these events will precipitate an escalation of hatred and a plummeting of love:

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. . . . And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (verses 9-12).

The end-time followers of Jesus will offer to the world a minority report, a counterwitness regarding the character of God.

CAN YOU SEE IT?

Jesus tells us that the final events of human history will take on the form of hate versus love. And then, at some point along the way, as disasters overtake the world, hate will aggregate and animate into a persecution machine. With this vital insight, Jesus has brought to our attention the psychodynamics of end-time events, which is crucial for us to understand, because this is precisely where the real “preparation for the end” needs to occur.

Jesus indicates that the pressure-inducing events of the end-times will generate a focused hatred on His followers, not because they are obnoxious and annoying (so let’s stop all that), but for His “name’s sake.” His character operating within them, in resistance to the principles of the world system, will arouse the world’s aggression against them. It’s not difficult to understand the relationship between these two factors. When people are threatened by disastrous events, the impulse to preserve self kicks in by creating a sense of need for a scapegoat to cast blame upon. Populous forces will channel their fear-stimulated rage against those who are out of sync with the self-preserving impulse, which politicians stoke in the masses with no small amount of help from religious leaders who hold in their hearts theological views that will interpret the scapegoating venture as righteous necessity.

Then comes the vital stroke of end-time insight offered by Jesus. After stating that “the love of many will grow cold,” Jesus says, “But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (verses 13, 14).

The qualifying “but” is preceded by the love of many growing cold and followed by God’s people enduring to the end. So, then, Jesus is saying something quite astounding: as love grows cold in the world, it is precisely the sustained practice of love, even in the face of hate, that will enable His people to “endure to the end.” The grammat-

ical flow also indicates that “this gospel of the kingdom” refers back to love enduring in the face of hate. That love is the practical manifestation of the gospel in God’s people as their final witness to the world. The end-time followers of Jesus will offer to the world a minority report, a counterwitness regarding the character of God. As the world becomes increasingly embroiled in the politics of hate, the followers of Jesus will stand out as advocates of nonviolent love. They will refuse to participate in the prevailing rage of the times and will resist the scapegoat impulse that seeks to resolve collective guilt by finding an enemy to blame.

MICROCOSMIC AND MACROCOSMIC PERSPECTIVES

The betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Christ is the microcosmic historical event that includes all the elements that will define the macrocosmic final crisis of human history. The dominating religious orders of the day—Pharisees and Sadducees—found it expedient to their self-preservation to unite in a diabolical scapegoating maneuver against Christ. “It is expedient for us,” they reasoned, “that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish” (John 11:50). Having joined forces, these politically motivated conservatives and liberals leveraged their collective influence with the state to engage in a litigation process that made it appear as if Jesus were a criminal threat to the stability of the mutually beneficial arrangement between church and state. The fact is that both systems—religious and political—were imploding under the weight of their own moral corruption. But rather than address the real cause of their imminent fall from power, they found in Jesus a convenient focal point of blame, against whom they could stir up the hatred of the masses and thus get the heat off themselves. At Calvary, religious and political forces coalesced into a singularly of murderous evil in defiance of the love of God.

Jesus taught that His crucifixion would be repeated, in principle, on an eschatological scale



and thus constitute the final, climactic event of human history:

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. . . . If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. . . . They will treat you this way because of My name, for they do not know the one who sent Me” (John 15:18-21, NIV).

“They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me” (John 16:2, 3, NIV).

Jesus here explains that the world’s hatred against Him will inevitably be leveled against His followers. This will not take place, according to Jesus, in the form of the secular population gang-ing up on the Christian population. Far from it. Rather, Jesus indicates that the persecution machine of the end-times will be driven by religious people coopting the political system, all the while imagining they are serving God by hating

and killing others. He further explains that they will *do this in God’s name*—please get this point—*because they don’t actually know God as God really is*. The final persecution will be the logical out-working of bad theology. Professed Christians, having enshrined in their souls an appeasement picture of God, will find it justifiable to hate and kill in the name of God.

TWO OPPOSING PARADIGMS

Here is a simple way to describe the principles that will play out at the end of the world: the sal-vation-by-works picture of God inevitably leads a person to act in the interest of self over others when placed under pressure. By contrast, the sal-vation-by-grace-through-faith picture of God ori-ents a person to prefer others over one’s self. Legalism, whether in its conservative form or its liberal form, shapes within us the habitual impulse to judge and negate others for the sake of personal security. The gospel, on the other hand, forms within us a deep reservoir of security in God’s

The great controversy is not a war between conservatism and liberalism. It's a war between good and evil, with love and liberty on one side and hate and force on the other.



ANNIE SPRATT / UNSPLASH

unearned, unalterable, unconditional love, so that we will lay down our lives, if necessary, to keep on loving people, even in the face of their hate.

It is evident, then, from the teachings of Jesus that the gospel and eschatology are a seamless continuum of enacted principles of character. In the final crisis of human history, each of us will act out our picture of God under the pressures that will be brought to bear upon us.

God's end-time people do not get "the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name" (Rev. 15:2) by means of willpower or tenacity, nor by means of food and firearms.

Nope!

None of that kind of "getting ready" is ever mentioned in Revelation. Rather, God's end-time people gain the victory by radically different and counterintuitive means:

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Rev. 12:11).

We are called upon to overcome the world system of hatred and violence by living out the implications of God's self-sacrificing, nonviolent love as demonstrated in Christ when He voluntarily died on the cross.

In the final eschatological shakedown the world will not be divided into conservatives and liberals, but rather into lovers and haters, persecutors and persecuted, those who will find justification for religious legislation in their belief system and those who will find in their Calvary-formed hearts no room for employing coercive political power in matters of conscience. The great controversy is not a war between conservatism and liberalism. It's a war between good and evil, with love and

liberty on one side and hate and force on the other. Followers of Jesus simply cannot safely align themselves with partisan politics on either end of the spectrum. Go ahead and vote your conscience, but whatever you do, do not buy into the zero-sum game of us-versus-them that politicians and their parrot preachers are pushing on the public. You do not have to participate in the hatred that defines the ideology wars. You can, by God's grace, love your neighbors as yourself, including all your neighbors everywhere along the political spectrum. Keep in mind the fact that Jesus launched His own kingdom rather than joining up with any political system the world had to offer. The gospel of His kingdom is the one and only truly revolutionary alternative to the money-hungry, hate-stoking, warmongering messaging peddled by the politicians and preachers of the dominate world order.

The most effective way to *not* prepare for the final crisis of human history is to form the habit of participating in the prevailing spirit of our times, which is characterized by demeaning speech, retaliatory posturing, political rancor, and us-versus-them-ism.

The most effective way—in fact, the only way—to really prepare for the end is to believe and practice the gospel of God's noncoercive love as manifested in Christ. While having some extra lentils on hand isn't a bad idea, storing up food and firearms will not prepare us for the final events of human history. Storing up the love of Jesus in our hearts will.

So let's get ready! 🍷

Ty Gibson is speaker and codirector of Light Bearers and pastor of the Storyline Church, with Sabbath worship online every Sabbath at 11:00 a.m. (PT).

THE HOUSE OF SAXE-COBURG AND GOTHA

Whether from the soap opera scandals of Charles, Diana, Camilla, et al.; to the disgrace of Prince Andrew; to the antics, in exile, of Harry and Meghan; and, finally, to the death of Queen Elizabeth—most people know something about the British royal family. (In contrast, who knows much about the royals of Liechtenstein or Belgium?)

One fact, however, that most people probably don't know about the monarchy is that even if its lineage reaches to the ninth century, its name, the House of Windsor, is a recent invention. The year 1917, to be precise. Before then it was the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. If that sounds more like wiener schnitzel and Goethe than fish and chips and Mary Poppins, it's because it's German, not English.

For centuries European royal dynasties intermarried, often to create new relationships or to cement old ones. British King Edward VII (1841-1910) and his son King George V (1865-1936) were directly descended (via Albert, prince consort and Queen Victoria's husband) from the German House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. With England and Germany in the midst of World War I, hatred of the "Huns" was running high. Not helping matters was the Germans' use of a heavy bomber called (awkwardly enough) the Gotha. Believing a name change expedient for the monarchy, whose popularity has always waxed and waned over the years, King George V, on July 17, 1917, decreed that the British House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was, from that day forward, the House of Windsor.

What an astonishing fulfillment of Daniel 2, where Daniel described four

world empires: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, followed by the breakup of Rome—depicted as feet “partly of iron and partly of clay” (Dan. 2:33)—into what are now the nations of modern Europe. And among his descriptions of these European nations was that they would “mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (verse 43).

Mingle with the “seed of men”? Such as in German royalty marrying British royalty? And they shall not “adhere” to each other? Such as in World War I, with German and British subjects of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha shooting, gassing, bayoneting, and bombing each other?

Precisely.

It's hard to imagine a better example of what Scripture millennia ago predicted. When first presented, in 1979, with this prophecy, I was blown away by the rational and logical evidence it gave, not only for God's existence but for His foreknowledge and sovereignty. And I still am today. In fact, I defy anyone, anywhere, to explain how Daniel could have made this prediction, which is based on something as firm and as immutable as world history itself—without its having been first revealed to him by a sovereign and omniscient God.

And, too, if Daniel were right on all worldly kingdoms coming and going, including some details about them, we certainly can trust him for the final kingdom, God's, which “shall stand forever” (verse 44).[✦]

Clifford Goldstein, editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*, is leading an Israel tour June 18-27, 2023. For information, email tabghatours@gmail.com.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
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CUTTING TO THE CHASE

*What God
considers
deadly sins*



ANNE FARGUSSON

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was an Italian poet, prose writer, literary theorist, moral philosopher, and political thinker. One of his most famous works regards the seven deadly sins. They include the following: pride, envy, wrath, gluttony, sloth, lust, and greed. What is common among the seven sins is that they rise so naturally and frequently among human beings. They facilitate the commission of the worst human deeds. Most people today would attest to the fact that all these sins are grievous—even those who don't subscribe to any religious practice. The seven deadly sins lack unambiguous biblical foundation and yet they have merit. Even Galatians 5 refers to these types of sins as “acts of the flesh.”

But God has a different perspective. He gets to the heart of the matter. His perspective addresses how sin began and, highlighting a side of God of which we need a better understanding, how He feels about

sin. Since our thoughts are not God's thoughts (Isa. 55:8), let's examine God's description of seven deadly sins as found in Proverbs 6:16-19, followed by brief commentary and further reflections.*

- 1 “Haughty eyes”—looking down one's nose at others.
- 2 “A lying tongue”—stating something that is outright false or fudging the truth.
- 3 “Hands that shed innocent blood”—condemning anyone who is blameless.
- 4 “A heart that devises wicked schemes”—intending to harm someone and having malevolent intent.
- 5 “Feet that are quick to rush into evil”—highlighting those who bring about the end of peace.
- 6 “A false witness who pours out lies”—giving deliberately and repeatedly false testimony.
- 7 “A person who stirs up conflict in the community”—stirring up a particular mood or situation that results in disapproval.

This list looks somewhat different from Dante's list. It's a real case of juxtaposition. As already noted in 1 Samuel 16:7, people may look good on the outside, but God looks at the heart and recognizes our true condition.

GOD'S PAIN

Taking a closer look, I believe God included this list because He wants us to know that these attitudes and actions hurt Him when He sees humans displaying them. Every time God encounters these sins, He is reminded of how much pain and destruction is caused by Satan—in heaven and on earth.

We all have known people who "take the church hostage," demanding their way whether by word or by wallet. Here is an example from a church that had some serious challenges with children ministries. Sometimes the junior leader just wouldn't even show up on Sabbath morning. A plan of action was offered to the board to fix the problem, and it was approved. The head elder was on board, and after a few short weeks the church rejoiced over the highest attendance in the children's Sabbath School division that anyone could remember. One Sabbath someone got upset about something that appeared to be minuscule, but the leader was willing to discuss the complaint. Instead, the individual contacted the head elder, and, bowing to the pressure that was applied, the elder made his way to the leader's home. The first thing he asked was if the leader had prayed, because this wouldn't have happened if there had been sufficient prayer. The children's ministry in that church came almost to a complete halt. It's an example of stirring up conflict to the demise of the church and would fit the list of sins described in Proverbs 6:16-19.

LETTING GO OR SPEAKING UP?

The next question is How should we respond to difficult coworkers, church members, and family when they exhibit these traits? How did God deal with Satan? Similar to what He is doing for us, God let Satan prove his point of view for a time. He gave him a choice also, and Satan was quite the influencer. "Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung to the earth," notes Revelation 12:4. Satan was hurled to the earth, with many angels following him (verse 9). The devil has been a big problem for us ever since.

We need to be aware of difficult people's

Every time God encounters these sins, He is reminded of how much pain and destruction is caused by Satan—in heaven and on earth.

schemes—not to judge them, but to be astute. We are asked to be long-suffering and patient, and yet we need to pray and ask God to show us when it's time to let these people go. Yes, let them go!

Why do we address people who are arrogant and overbearing with indifference, as "Oh, that's just John or Jane"? We should never allow anyone to destroy our churches and God's people. In another church there was a nice gentleman who was pleasant but had a big problem with sexual harassment. He would talk to women, hug them, touch them inappropriately, and make unsuitable comments, such as "I love all women; they are beautiful to look at." It made several women, including me, uncomfortable, but when the issue was brought to the church staff, their response was "He is harmless; that's just John." No one wanted to rock the boat until a visitor was addressed in this manner and never came back.

WRAP-UP

While Satan would have us focus on outward behavior and keep us occupied with list making like Dante's, God focuses on what is most important—the heart of the matter. We are called to model God's patient love—as demonstrated even in Satan's case—but there will come a moment we have to let go in order to protect the vulnerable. Above all, we would do well to remember Paul's counsel to the Galatians: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:10).[✍]

* All Scripture quotations have been taken from the New International Version.

Anne Fargusson is a retired nurse and pastoral spouse living in Sacramento, California.



THE NEW YEAR

Significant pointers on how to end the old and begin the new year

Another year has almost passed into eternity. . . . Let us review the record of the year that so soon will be past. What advancement have we made in Christian experience? Our work—have we so done it that it will bear the inspection of the Master, who has given to every man work according to his several ability? Will it be consumed as hay, wood, and stubble, unworthy of preservation? or will it stand the trial by fire?

WORKING GOD'S WAY

The need of fidelity is overlooked by many. There is a great deal to be done in this world—not in our way, but in God's way—for the benefit of those for whom Christ has died; but if this is done negligently or imperfectly, "Wanting" will be written against our names in

the book of heavenly records. God is not pleased with any work unless it is done in the very best way possible. Every provision has been made that we may attain a height of stature in Christ Jesus that will meet the divine standard. God is not pleased with His representatives if they are content to be dwarfs when they might grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ. He wants you to have height and breadth in Christian experience. He wants you to have great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. Every passing year should increase the soul's yearning for purity and perfection of Christian character. . . .

If all who profess to be servants of Christ are faithful in that which is least, they will be faithful in much. If there are debts yet unpaid, make special efforts to pay them. If you have run up accounts at the provision store or with the dry goods merchant, settle them if you possibly can. If you cannot, go to those to whom you are indebted, and frankly tell them the impossibility of meeting these demands; renew your note, and assure them you will cancel the debt as soon as you can. Then deny yourselves of everything you can do without, and be very economical in your expenditures, until your promises are fulfilled. Do not indulge yourselves in the use of other men's money for the sake of gratifying appetite or a love of display. You may thus remove a stumbling-block whereby many were hindered from believing the

truth; and your good will not be evil spoken of. Will not our brethren make diligent efforts to correct this slack, haphazard way of doing business? The old year is fast passing; it is nearly gone. Make the most of the few days remaining.

CUSTOMS TO IMITATE

The Chinese New Year commences in February, and lasts one week. They have a custom of settling all quarrels between themselves and all outstanding debts; and if there are any who are unable to pay their debts, they are forgiven them. Thus the new year is commenced with all difficulties and accounts settled. This is a heathen custom that the Christian world would do well to imitate. God's law requires all this of us, and more—we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. That is, we are to deal with our neighbors in everything just as we would wish them to deal with us. If we wish them to act fairly and justly toward us, then we should act fairly and justly toward them. We are simply to do as we would be done by. . . .

If we have but little time, let us improve that little earnestly. The Bible assures us that we are in the great day of atonement. The typical day of atonement was a day when all Israel afflicted their souls before God, confessed their sins, and came before the Lord with contrition of soul, remorse for their sins, genuine repentance, and living faith in the atoning sacrifice. . . .

Let the remnant of this year be improved in destroying every fiber of the root of bitterness, burying them in the grave with the old year. Begin the new year with more tender regard, with deeper love, for every member of the Lord's family. Press together. "United, we stand; divided, we fall." Take a higher, nobler stand than you ever have before. . . .

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

The old year is in its death struggle; let all wrath, malice, and bitterness die with it. Through hearty confession, let your sins go beforehand to judgment. Devote the remaining moments of the swift passing year to humiliation of self rather than trying to humiliate your brethren. With the new year, commence the work of lifting them up—commence it even in the waning moments of the old year. Go to work anew, brethren and sisters—go to work earnestly, unselfishly, lovingly, striving to lift

The old year is in its death struggle; let all wrath, malice, and bitterness die with it.

up the hands that hang down, to strengthen the feeble knees, remove the heavy burdens from every soul. Let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. Bring to your homes the poor that are cast out. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and the Lord shall say, Here I am." . . .

This work of confession must be done sooner or later. Shall it not be done in the dying hours of the old year? Shall we not put away our sins by confession, and let them go beforehand to judgment? Shall we not strive now as we never have before, that we may commence the new year with a clean record? Shall we not individually take hold of this long neglected work, humbling our souls before God, that "pardon"—blessed pardon—may be written opposite our names? Shall we not be truly Christians—Christlike?

Try it in every church. Have special meetings when you can—meetings of humiliation, of afflicting the soul, meetings where the rubbish shall be cleared away from the door of the heart, that the blessed Saviour may enter. What a wonderful time the dying of the old year and the birth of the new might be! If we individually try to do what we can on our part, God is faithful that hath promised, and He will fulfill on His part abundantly more than you can ask or even think. Let no more moments be wasted. Let us now arise, and make earnest efforts to cherish the subduing love of Jesus. We need to be melted over, that the dross may be removed. We need to learn in Christ's school meekness and lowliness of heart, drawing closer and closer to Jesus. ♣

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt is taken from the *Review and Herald*, December 16, 1884.



365 Days With Jesus 2.0

In January 2022 we featured a unique Bible reading plan in our sister publication, *Adventist World!* It had a great reception from our readers, enough for us to bring it back in 2023. This 2.0 edition has been updated and modified so that there are now 365 daily readings of the four Gospels in chronological order, along with corresponding selections from Ellen White's powerful volumes, *The Desire of Ages* and *Christ's Object Lessons*.² Use the circles to mark your progress through the year. It is our prayer that your life will be changed day by day as you spend more time with Jesus in 2023.

May your life be
changed as you spend
more time with Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

○ 1/1					DA 19-22
○ 1/2					DA 23-26
○ 1/3					DA 27-30
○ 1/4		Mark 1:1	Luke 1:1-4		DA 31-34
○ 1/5				John 1:1-18	DA 35-38
○ 1/6	Matt. 1:1-17		Luke 3:23-38		

BIRTH NARRATIVE

○ 1/7			Luke 1:5-25		DA 97-100
○ 1/8			Luke 1:57-80		
○ 1/9			Luke 1:26-56		
○ 1/10	Matt. 1:18-25				
○ 1/11			Luke 2:1-20		DA 43-49
○ 1/12			Luke 2:21-38		
○ 1/13					DA 50-58
○ 1/14	Matt. 2:1-23				
○ 1/15					DA 59-62
○ 1/16					DA 63-67

CHILDHOOD

○ 1/17			Luke 2:39-40		DA 68-74
○ 1/18			Luke 2:41-45		DA 75-79
○ 1/19			Luke 2:46-51		DA 80-83
○ 1/20			Luke 2:52		DA 84-92

THE FIRST YEAR AND A HALF OF MINISTRY

○ 1/21	Matt. 3:1-12	Mark 1:2-8	Luke 3:1-18		
○ 1/22					DA 101-108
○ 1/23	Matt. 3:13-17	Mark 1:9-11	Luke 3:21-22		
○ 1/24					DA 109-113
○ 1/25	Matt. 4:1-11	Mark 1:12-13	Luke 4:1-13		DA 114-116
○ 1/26					DA 117-123
○ 1/27					DA 124-131
○ 1/28				John 1:19-51	
○ 1/29					DA 132-137
○ 1/30					DA 138-143
○ 1/31				John 2:1-12	DA 144-146
○ 2/1					DA 147-153
○ 2/2				John 2:13-25	DA 154-158
○ 2/3					DA 159-166
○ 2/4				John 3:1-21	

○ 2/5					DA 167-171
○ 2/6					DA 172-177
○ 2/7			Luke 3:19-20	John 3:22-36	DA 178-182
○ 2/8				John 4:1-42	DA 183-187
○ 2/9					DA 188-195
○ 2/10	Matt. 4:12		Luke 4:14-15	John 4:43-54	
○ 2/11					DA 196-200
○ 2/12	Matt. 4:13-17	Mark 1:14-15			DA 231-235
○ 2/13			Luke 4:16-30		DA 236-239
○ 2/14					DA 240-243
○ 2/15	Matt. 4:18-22	Mark 1:16-20	Luke 5:1-11		DA 244-251
○ 2/16	Matt. 8:14-17	Mark 1:21-39	Luke 4:31-44		
○ 2/17	Matt. 4:23-25				DA 252-256
○ 2/18					DA 257-261
○ 2/19	Matt. 8:1-4	Mark 1:40-45	Luke 5:12-16		DA 262-266
○ 2/20	Matt. 9:1-8	Mark 2:1-12	Luke 5:17-26		
○ 2/21					DA 267-271
○ 2/22	Matt. 9:9-13	Mark 2:13-17	Luke 5:27-32		DA 272-275
○ 2/23	Matt. 9:14-17	Mark 2:18-22	Luke 5:33-39		DA 276-280

THE SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

○ 2/24				John 5:1-47	
○ 2/25					DA 201-207
○ 2/26					DA 208-213
○ 2/27	Matt. 12:1-8	Mark 2:23-28	Luke 6:1-5		DA 281-285
○ 2/28	Matt. 12:9-14	Mark 3:1-6	Luke 6:6-11		DA 286-289
○ 3/1	Matt. 12:15-21	Mark 3:7-12			
○ 3/2		Mark 3:13-19	Luke 6:12-16		DA 290-293
○ 3/3					DA 294-297
○ 3/4	Matt. 5:1-12		Luke 6:17-26		
○ 3/5					DA 298-305
○ 3/6	Matt. 5:13-16				DA 306-307
○ 3/7	Matt. 5:17-37				DA 308-310
○ 3/8	Matt. 5:38-48		Luke 6:27-36		DA 311-312
○ 3/9	Matt. 6:1-21				DA 313-314
○ 3/10	Matt. 6:22-34		Luke 11:33-36		
○ 3/11	Matt. 7:1-29		Luke 6:37-49		
○ 3/12	Matt. 8:5-13		Luke 7:1-17		
○ 3/13					DA 315-320
○ 3/14	Matt. 11:2-19		Luke 7:18-35		
○ 3/15					DA 214-220
○ 3/16	Matt. 12:22-45	Mark 3:20-30			

“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83).

○ 3/17			Luke 11:14-32		DA 321-324
○ 3/18	Matt. 12:46-50	Mark 3:31-35	Luke 8:19-21		DA 325-327
○ 3/19			Luke 11:37-54		
○ 3/20	Matt. 13:34-35				COL 17-21
○ 3/21		Mark 4:33-34			COL 22-27
○ 3/22	Matt. 13:1-23	Mark 4:1-20	Luke 8:1-15		
○ 3/23					COL 33-38
○ 3/24					COL 39-44
○ 3/25					COL 45-50
○ 3/26					COL 51-56
○ 3/27					COL 57-61
○ 3/28	Matt. 13:24-30				COL 70-75
○ 3/29		Mark 4:21-25	Luke 8:16-18		
○ 3/30		Mark 4:26-29			COL 62-65
○ 3/31					COL 66-69
○ 4/1	Matt. 13:31-32	Mark 4:30-32	Luke 13:18-19		COL 76-79
○ 4/2	Matt. 13:33		Luke 13:20-21		COL 95-98
○ 4/3					COL 99-102
○ 4/4	Matt. 13:36-43				COL 80-84
○ 4/5					COL 85-89
○ 4/6	Matt. 13:44				COL 103-107
○ 4/7					COL 108-114
○ 4/8	Matt. 13:45-46				COL 115-121
○ 4/9	Matt. 13:47-50				COL 122-123
○ 4/10	Matt. 13:51-52				COL 124-128
○ 4/11					COL 129-134
○ 4/12	Matt. 8:18-22		Luke 9:57-62		
○ 4/13	Matt. 8:23-27	Mark 4:35-41	Luke 8:22-25		DA 333-336
○ 4/14		Mark 5:1-20	Luke 8:26-39		
○ 4/15	Matt. 8:28-34				DA 337-341
○ 4/16	Matt. 9:18-22	Mark 5:21-34	Luke 8:40-48		DA 344-347
○ 4/17	Matt. 9:23-26	Mark 5:35-43	Luke 8:49-56		DA 342-343
○ 4/18	Matt. 9:27-38				
○ 4/19	Matt. 13:53-58	Mark 6:1-6			
○ 4/20	Matt. 10:1-15	Mark 6:7-13	Luke 9:1-6		
○ 4/21	Matt. 10:16-11:1				DA 349-352
○ 4/22					DA 353-358
○ 4/23	Matt. 14:1-12	Mark 6:14-29	Luke 9:7-9		
○ 4/24					DA 221-225

THE THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY					
○ 4/25	Matt. 14:13-14	Mark 6:30-34	Luke 9:10-11	John 6:1-4	
○ 4/26					DA 359-363
○ 4/27	Matt. 14:15-21	Mark 6:35-44	Luke 9:12-17	John 6:5-13	
○ 4/28					DA 364-367
○ 4/29					DA 368-371
○ 4/30	Matt. 14:22-33	Mark 6:45-52		John 6:14-21	
○ 5/1					DA 377-382
○ 5/2	Matt. 14:34-36	Mark 6:53-56			DA 383-384
○ 5/3				John 6:22-71	
○ 5/4					DA 385-389
○ 5/5					DA 390-394
○ 5/6	Matt. 15:1-20	Mark 7:1-23		John 7:1	
○ 5/7					DA 395-398
○ 5/8	Matt. 15:21-28	Mark 7:24-30			
○ 5/9					DA 399-403
○ 5/10	Matt. 15:29-31	Mark 7:31-37			DA 404
○ 5/11	Matt. 15:32-39	Mark 8:1-10			DA 405
○ 5/12	Matt. 16:1-12	Mark 8:11-26			
○ 5/13					DA 406-409
○ 5/14	Matt. 16:13-28				
○ 5/15		Mark 8:27-38	Luke 9:18-27		
○ 5/16					DA 410-413
○ 5/17					DA 414-418
○ 5/18	Matt. 17:1-13	Mark 9:1-13	Luke 9:28-36		
○ 5/19					DA 419-425
○ 5/20	Matt. 17:14-23	Mark 9:14-32	Luke 9:37-45		
○ 5/21					DA 426-431
○ 5/22	Matt. 17:24-27				DA 432-434
○ 5/23	Matt. 18:1-20		Luke 9:46-50		
○ 5/24		Mark 9:33-50			
○ 5/25					DA 435-442
○ 5/26	Matt. 18:21-35				
○ 5/27					COL 243-246
○ 5/28					COL 247-251
○ 5/29				John 7:2-15	
○ 5/30					DA 447-450
○ 5/31					DA 451-454
○ 6/1				John 7:16-53	
○ 6/2					DA 455-460
○ 6/3				John 8:1-11	DA 461-462
○ 6/4				John 8:12-59	

○ 6/5					DA 463-470
○ 6/6				John 9:1-41	
○ 6/7					DA 471-475
○ 6/8				John 10:1-21	
○ 6/9					DA 476-484
○ 6/10	Matt. 19:1	Mark 10:1	Luke 9:51		
○ 6/11			Luke 17:11-19		DA 348
○ 6/12			Luke 9:52-56		DA 485-488
○ 6/13			Luke 10:1-24		DA 489-494
○ 6/14	Matt. 11:20-30				
○ 6/15					DA 328-332
○ 6/16			Luke 10:25-37		
○ 6/17					DA 497-505
○ 6/18					COL 376-380
○ 6/19					COL 381-385
○ 6/20					COL 386-389
○ 6/21			Luke 10:38-42		DA 524-525
○ 6/22			Luke 11:1-13		DA 495-496
○ 6/23					COL 139-143
○ 6/24					COL 144-149
○ 6/25				John 10:22-42	
○ 6/26			Luke 12:1-12		
○ 6/27			Luke 12:13-21		
○ 6/28					COL 252-255
○ 6/29					COL 256-259
○ 6/30			Luke 12:22-59		
○ 7/1			Luke 13:1-9		
○ 7/2					COL 212-218
○ 7/3			Luke 13:10-17		
○ 7/4			Luke 13:22-33		
○ 7/5			Luke 14:1-14		
○ 7/6			Luke 14:15-24		
○ 7/7					COL 219-223
○ 7/8					COL 224-228
○ 7/9					COL 229-233
○ 7/10					COL 234-237
○ 7/11			Luke 14:25-35		
○ 7/12			Luke 15:1-10		
○ 7/13					COL 185-189
○ 7/14					COL 190-193
○ 7/15					COL 194-197
○ 7/16			Luke 15:11-32		

○ 7/17					COL 198-202
○ 7/18					COL 203-207
○ 7/19					COL 208-211
○ 7/20			Luke 16:1-18		
○ 7/21					COL 366-370
○ 7/22					COL 371-375
○ 7/23			Luke 16:19-31		
○ 7/24					COL 260-263
○ 7/25					COL 264-268
○ 7/26					COL 269-271
○ 7/27			Luke 17:1-10		
○ 7/28			Luke 17:20-37		DA 506-510
○ 7/29			Luke 18:1-8		
○ 7/30					COL 164-168
○ 7/31					COL 169-172
○ 8/1					COL 173-176
○ 8/2					COL 177-180
○ 8/3			Luke 18:9-14		
○ 8/4					COL 150-155
○ 8/5					COL 156-159
○ 8/6					COL 160-163
○ 8/7	Matt. 19:3-15	Mark 10:2-16	Luke 18:15-17		
○ 8/8					DA 511-517
○ 8/9	Matt. 19:16-30	Mark 10:17-31			
○ 8/10			Luke 18:18-30		
○ 8/11					DA 518-523
○ 8/12					COL 390-395
○ 8/13	Matt. 20:1-16				
○ 8/14					COL 396-399
○ 8/15					COL 400-404
○ 8/16				John 11:1-46	
○ 8/17					DA 526-530
○ 8/18					DA 531-536
○ 8/19				John 11:47-54	
○ 8/20					DA 537-542
○ 8/21	Matt. 20:17-28	Mark 10:32-45	Luke 18:31-34		
○ 8/22					DA 547-551
○ 8/23	Matt. 20:29-34	Mark 10:46-52	Luke 18:35-43		
○ 8/24			Luke 19:1-10		
○ 8/25					DA 552-556
○ 8/26				John 11:55-57	

“Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).

THE LAST WEEK OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

SABBATH

○ 8/27	Matt. 26:6-13	Mark 14:3-9	Luke 7:36-50	John 12:1-11	
○ 8/28					DA 557-562
○ 8/29					DA 563-568

SUNDAY

○ 8/30	Matt. 21:1-11	Mark 11:1-11			
○ 8/31			Luke 19:29-44	John 12:14-19	
○ 9/1					DA 569-573
○ 9/2					DA 574-579

MONDAY

○ 9/3	Matt. 21:18-19	Mark 11:12-14			DA 580-583
○ 9/4	Matt. 21:12-17	Mark 11:15-19	Luke 19:45-48		DA 589-592
○ 9/5			Luke 21:37-38		

TUESDAY

○ 9/6	Matt. 21:20-22	Mark 11:20-25			DA 584-588
○ 9/7	Matt. 21:23-27	Mark 11:27-33	Luke 20:1-8		DA 593-594
○ 9/8	Matt. 21:28-32				DA 595
○ 9/9					COL 272-275
○ 9/10					COL 276-279
○ 9/11					COL 279-283
○ 9/12	Matt. 21:33-41	Mark 12:1-9	Luke 20:9-16		DA 596-597
○ 9/13					COL 284-287
○ 9/14					COL 288-291
○ 9/15					COL 292-295
○ 9/16					COL 296-300
○ 9/17					COL 301-306
○ 9/18	Matt. 21:42-46	Mark 12:10-12	Luke 20:17-19		DA 598-600
○ 9/19	Matt. 22:1-14				
○ 9/20					COL 307-311
○ 9/21					COL 312-315
○ 9/22					COL 316-319
○ 9/23	Matt. 22:15-22	Mark 12:13-17	Luke 20:20-26		DA 601-603
○ 9/24	Matt. 22:23-33	Mark 12:18-27	Luke 20:27-38		
○ 9/25					DA 604-606
○ 9/26	Matt. 22:34-46	Mark 12:28-37	Luke 20:39-44		
○ 9/27					DA 607-609
○ 9/28	Matt. 23:1-12	Mark 12:38-40	Luke 20:45-47		DA 610-613

○ 9/29	Matt. 23:13-36				
○ 9/30					DA 617-620
○ 10/1	Matt. 23:37-39		Luke 13:34-35		
○ 10/2		Mark 12:41-44	Luke 21:1-4		DA 614-616
○ 10/3	Matt. 24:1-22	Mark 13:1-20			
○ 10/4			Luke 21:5-24		
○ 10/5					DA 627-630
○ 10/6	Matt. 24:23-51				
○ 10/7		Mark 13:21-37			
○ 10/8			Luke 21:25-36		
○ 10/9					DA 631-636
○ 10/10	Matt. 25:1-13				
○ 10/11					COL 405-409
○ 10/12					COL 410-413
○ 10/13					COL 414-421
○ 10/14	Matt. 25:14-30		Luke 19:11-28		
○ 10/15					COL 325-328
○ 10/16					COL 329-331
○ 10/17					COL 332-335
○ 10/18					COL 336-339
○ 10/19					COL 340-343
○ 10/20					COL 344-348
○ 10/21					COL 349-353
○ 10/22					COL 354-358
○ 10/23					COL 359-362
○ 10/24					COL 363-365
○ 10/25	Matt 25:31-46				DA 637-641
○ 10/26			John 12:20-36		
○ 10/27					DA 621-626
○ 10/28	Matt. 26:1-5	Mark 14:1-2	Luke 22:1-2		
○ 10/29	Matt. 26:14-16	Mark 14:10-11	Luke 22:3-6		
○ 10/30				John 12:37-43	
○ 10/31				John 12:44-50	

WEDNESDAY (Jesus rests. Scripture does not indicate where He was on this day.)

THURSDAY

○ 11/1	Matt. 26:17-19	Mark 14:12-16	Luke 22:7-13	John 13:1-17	
○ 11/2					DA 642-646
○ 11/3					DA 647-651
○ 11/4	Matt.26:20-29	Mark 14:17-25	Luke 22:14-23	John 13:18-30	

○	11/5				DA 652-656
○	11/6				DA 657-661
○	11/7				
○	11/8		Luke 22:24-38	John 13:31-38	
○	11/9				DA 662-669
○	11/10			John 14:1-31	
○	11/11				DA 670-672
○	11/12	Matt. 26:30-35	Mark 14:26-31	Luke 22:39	DA 673-674
○	11/13			John 15:1-27	
○	11/14			John 16:1-33	
○	11/15			John 17:1-26	
○	11/16				DA 675-680
○	11/17	Matt. 26:36-46	Mark 14:32-42		
○	11/18		Luke 22:40-46	John 18:1	DA 685-693
○	11/19	Matt. 26:47-56	Mark 14:43-52		
○	11/20		Luke 22:47-53	John 18:2-11	
○	11/21				DA 694-697
○	11/22	Matt. 26:57-68	Mark 14:53-65		
○	11/23				DA 698-703
○	11/24				DA 704-710
○	11/25	Matt. 26:69-75	Mark 14:66-72	Luke 22:54-65	John 18:12-27
○	11/26				DA 711-715

FRIDAY

○	11/27	Matt. 27:1-10	Mark 15:1	Luke 22:66-71	
○	11/28				DA 716-719
○	11/29				DA 720-722
○	11/30	Matt. 27:11-30	Mark 15:2-19	Luke 23:1-25	John 18:28-40
○	12/1				John 19:1-16
○	12/2				DA 723-727
○	12/3				DA 728-733
○	12/4	Matt. 27:31-32	Mark 15:20-21		DA 734-740
○	12/5			Luke 23:26-33	John 19:17-18
○	12/6	Matt. 27:33-35	Mark 15:22-24	Luke 23:33	
○	12/7	Matt. 27:37-44	Mark 15:25-32	Luke 23:34-38	John 19:19-24
○	12/8			Luke 23:39-43	DA 750-752
○	12/9	Matt. 27:45-49	Mark 15:33-36	Luke 23:44-45	John 19:25-29
○	12/10				DA 753-757
○	12/11	Matt. 27:50-56	Mark 15:37-47		
○	12/12			Luke 23:46-49	John 19:30-37
○	12/13				DA 758-764

SABBATH

○	12/14	Matt. 27:57-65		Luke 23:50-56	John 19:38-42
○	12/15				DA 769-778

SUNDAY

○	12/16				DA 779-787
○	12/17	Matt. 28:1-15	Mark 16:1-11		
○	12/18			Luke 24:1-12	John 20:1-18
○	12/19				DA 788-794
○	12/20		Mark 16:12	Luke 24:13-32	
○	12/21				DA 795-801
○	12/22		Mark 16:13-14	Luke 24:33-48	John 20:19-25
○	12/23				DA 802-806

LATER

○	12/24				John 20:26-29	DA 807-808
○	12/25				John 21:1-24	
○	12/26					DA 809-817
○	12/27	Matt. 28:16-20	Mark 16:15-18			
○	12/28					DA 818-822
○	12/29		Mark 16:19-20	Luke 24:49-53		DA 823-828
○	12/30				John 20:30-31	DA 829-835
○	12/31				John 21:25	

¹ There are many versions available in order to read the Gospels chronologically. The one used as the base for these readings was produced by Rick Aschmann, with some modifications. You may be interested in his extensive work. Check it out at aschmann.net/BibleChronology/ChronologyOfTheFourGospels.pdf.

² There are many printings of both these books. The page numbers listed are from the Ellen G. White writings website, which follows the standard pagination for *The Desire of Ages* and *Christ's Object Lessons*. If you follow through the entire year, you will have completed reading all the Gospels as well as both these books. You may find both Ellen White books at egwritings.org.

Merle Poirier is the operations manager for Adventist Review Ministries.

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THE ASEITY OF GOD

God doesn't need you. He doesn't need me. In fact, He doesn't need anyone or anything, because He was before we were and will be after we've expired.

When I say "need," I mean circumstances in which something is essential for one's well-being and survival. So don't be misled by incorrect theology in lyrics of popular worship songs such as "What a Beautiful Name." I cringe every time I hear these words: "You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down. My sin was great. Your love was greater. What could separate us now?"*

What? Jesus, who is God in person, appears to be so needy that He is, in Himself, somehow deficient, less than complete, and only we, His people, can fill up what He lacks.

Such lyrics paint a portrait of a God so desperate for a relationship with sinners that He came down from heaven to earth to eliminate His loneliness instead of to rescue and save us from sin.

God isn't dependent on the world for His existence or sustenance. He possesses life and knowledge in and of Himself because He is the fullness of life in and of Himself. He's not dependent on us for His self-fulfillment. He created us, not because He "needed" us to prevent Him from being lonely, but in order to share His nature, as described in Galatians 5:22, 23.

The idea or concept of divine aseity (self-existence) is one of God's amazing attributes. *Aseity* means "all the glory and perfection of God's holy being." It expresses what makes God different from humans and any creaturely thing. Aseity, the theological nickname given to this

doctrine, or teaching, about God's independent self-sufficiency, is an attribute of all three members of the holy Trinity, for God and God alone exists by His own power.

Many misunderstandings have sometimes arisen over God's aseity, or independence. It's mind-boggling to consider how He can "be" from or of Himself, perfectly adequate for His own existence, essence, and operation. Did He cause Himself to be? For, as the absolute first cause of all created things, God is not to be counted among the things that are caused. Thus, if God were caused, He would not be the absolute first cause, for something or someone greater would have preceded Him in being. We are human beings, because we are caused, or created, by God; but He is not caused by anyone or anything.

"Causing" is an operation that requires the existence of the operator as a necessary precondition, meaning that a thing cannot be the cause of itself in any strict sense of the word. Consequently, God's nature should be known as simplicity or the condition of being plain or natural, while ours is complexity because of the many parts that often need medical or psychological attention.

The amazing attribute of aseity is that God is not conditioned by that which is finite, limited, and changeable. He alone is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. Thus, because of His aseity, we should not think of Him as remote or distant from His creatures, because according to Acts 17:28, in Him we live, move, and have our being.

* <https://hillsong.com/lyrics/what-a-beautiful-name/>

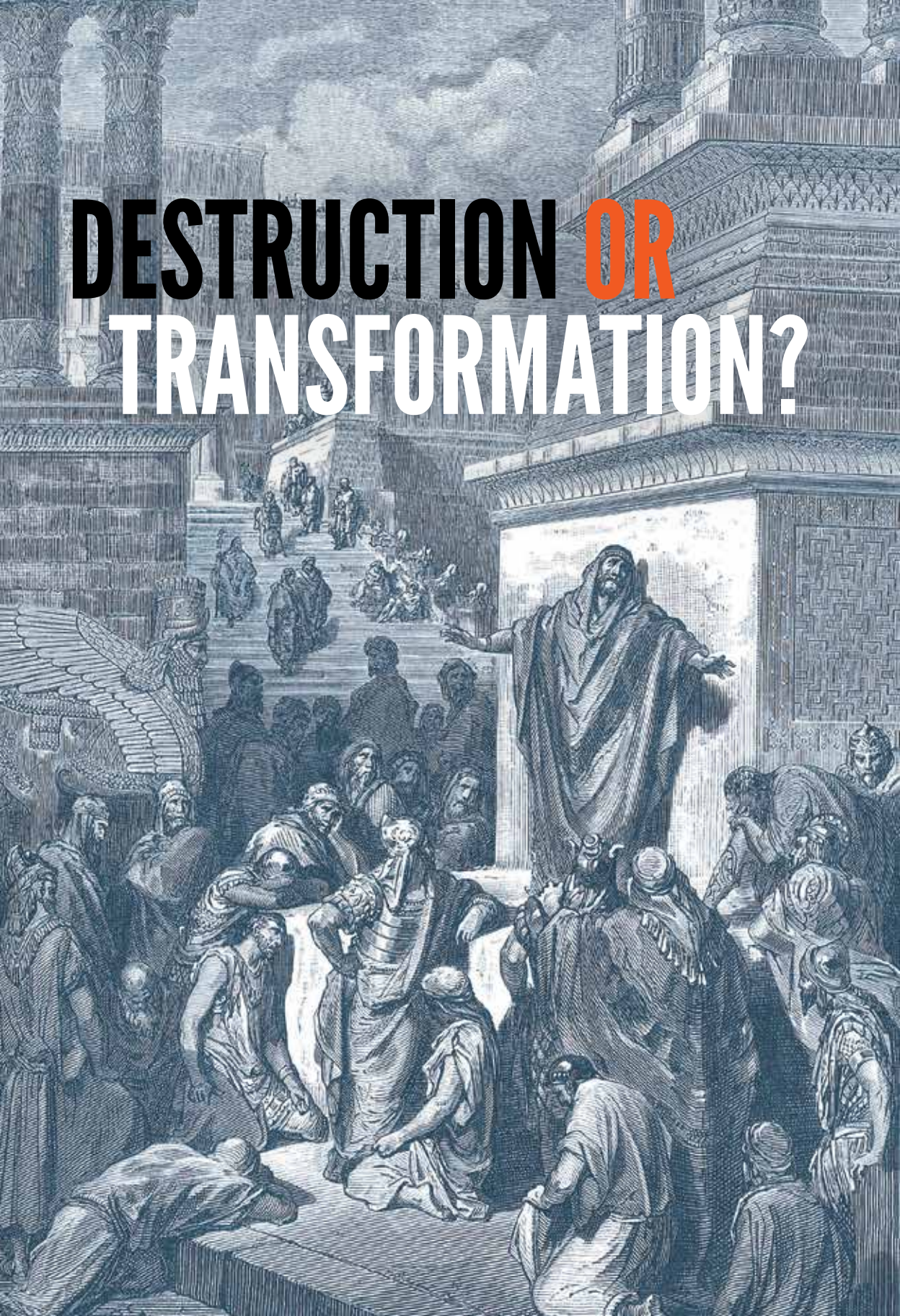
Hyveth Williams is a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

**CURE FOR THE
COMMON LIFE**
**HYVETH
WILLIAMS**



**IT'S MIND-BOGGLING
TO CONSIDER HOW
GOD CAN "BE" FROM
OR OF HIMSELF,
PERFECTLY
ADEQUATE FOR HIS
OWN EXISTENCE,
ESSENCE, AND
OPERATION.**

DESTRUCTION OR TRANSFORMATION?





*God's mighty
acts of
salvation
in the book
of Jonah*

LUIZ GUSTAVO ASSIS

The story of Jonah the prophet is undoubtedly one of the most well-known stories of the Old Testament. The book's plot can entertain little children during Bible readings at home and puzzle biblical scholars poring over the Hebrew text. There is much more in this book than the story of a stubborn prophet swallowed by a big fish. In this article I will discuss two issues related to Jonah's book, namely, first, God's plan to reach Nineveh, and, second, the meaning and fulfillment (or lack thereof) of God's prophecy in Jonah 3.

GOD'S PLAN TO REACH THE NINEVITES

The opening words in the book introduce our prophet, Jonah, as the son of Amittai. According to 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah served as a prophet in the court of Jeroboam II of Israel during the first half of the eighth century B.C.¹ This chronological information situates the book of Jonah in a crucial period in Assyrian history, the territory in which Nineveh was a prominent city. During the first half of the eighth century B.C., the Assyrian Empire faced several problems, both foreign and domestic. During that time, Assyrian rulers were concerned with the northern borders of their realm, fighting against the kingdom of Urartu. Urartu is known in the Old Testament as the "land of Ararat" (2 Kings 19:37; Isa. 37:38). It encompassed an area that roughly corresponds to modern-day Armenia and adjacent territories of eastern Turkey, northwest Iran, and a small portion of northern Iraq. The sparse information about the Urartian kingdom available until now is mainly from Assyrian archives and royal inscriptions. According to these documents, this nation played a significant political role in the region from the ninth to the sixth centuries B.C. In the first half of the eighth century B.C., the time of Jonah, the son of Amittai, Assyria experienced a period of political instability. The Urartian king Sarduri II took advantage of this weakness and defeated the Assyrian king Ashur-Nirari V (754-746 B.C.). The mighty Assyrians were now a weak polity in the region.

A second problem affected the Assyrians during that time. Mesopotamian scribes registered an eclipse on July 15, 763 B.C., precisely during the time of Jeroboam II and the prophet Jonah. The scholarly community of ancient Mesopotamia treated eclipses as divine warnings to humanity. Many of these astronomical omens were cataloged and became part of an extensive collection of cuneiform tablets known as *Enuma Anu Enlil*. Some of the interpretations of eclipses in this series have a very dark tone and must have alarmed the Assyrian audience. Here are some examples: "The king shall be deposed and killed, and a worthless fellow will seize the throne"; "The king will die, and rain from heaven will flood the land; there will be famine"; "A deity will strike the king and fire will consume the land"; "The city wall will be destroyed."² In other words, there was an intense feeling of uncertainty among the Assyrians. They expected disaster at any moment.

It is against this background that we should read God's commissioning of Jonah to preach to the Ninevites. The God of the Bible controls history and the universe and is deeply interested in saving not just His people, but "the world." He used the geopolitics of the ancient Near East and contemporary astronomical events that were so important for the Assyrians to prepare their minds and hearts for Jonah's preaching. No wonder people

There was a feeling of uncertainty among the Assyrians. They expected disaster at any moment.

were receptive to Jonah's message, as we find in chapter 3 of his book.

THE DOUBLE MEANING OF JONAH'S PROPHECY

The events described in Jonah 3 are straightforward. After Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish, God commissioned him a second time to preach His message to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:1, 2). This time the prophet obeyed the divine order and uttered God's prophetic word to the inhabitants of Nineveh (verses 3, 4). The prophetic message, at least as described in the biblical book, is concise: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (verse 4). Consequently, the Ninevites believed in God, and the ruler of Nineveh instituted several external signs of repentance (i.e., fasting, sackcloth) among the population (verses 5-9). When God saw how the Ninevites turned from their evil ways, He changed His mind about the punishment He intended to inflict upon the city.

To solve the apparent problem of God changing His mind and Jonah's "failed" prophecy, we explain this divine decision with such texts as Jeremiah 18:7-10. In these verses God explicitly tells Jeremiah that He conditioned some of His prophecies according to an audience's actions and reactions when receiving such a message. While this is true, we should be cautious in saying that Jonah's prophecy did not come to fruition. Even though his message to the Ninevites is short (Jonah 3:4), it has a deeper meaning than we often recognize. What did Jonah mean when he says, "Nineveh shall be overthrown"?

The Hebrew verb translated here as "overthrow" is *hapak*, a term repeatedly used to describe divine acts of destruction and judgment. For example, the verb *hapak* is used to describe God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:21, 25; Deut. 29:22). Isaiah and Jeremiah compare Babylon's destruction to what God did (*hapak*) to those two cities (Isa. 13:19, 20; Jer. 50:39, 40; see also Jer.

49:17, 18). The prophet Zephaniah also invokes the divine action against these two cities when describing the punishment that will come upon Moab (Zeph. 2:9). There is no doubt that *hapak* indicates destruction. But this is not the only meaning of the verb *hapak*. The same verb is used to describe what God did to the waters of the Nile river, "turning" (*hapak*) them into blood (Ex. 7:17, 20), and the sun "turning" into darkness (Joel 2:31). This is also the same verb used to describe God's emotions with regard to Israel in Hosea 11:8, moving from judgment to compassion. Finally, *hapak* is used to describe the change in Saul's behavior in 1 Samuel 10:6 and 9. In this passage the newly appointed king of Israel receives the Spirit of God and is "turned" (*hapak*) into another man.

Thus, God's prophecy to Jonah had a double meaning. It pointed both to the potential destruction of the city, while at the same time also referencing the possible transformation (or "turning") of the Ninevites.

Should we understand this as a "failed" prophecy? It depends on whom you ask. Jonah, based on his mindset that becomes visible in his dialogue with God, would most likely have answered yes, since he anticipated the first meaning of *hapak*, namely destruction (Jonah 4:1-5). But God would answer no. The Ninevites did change their behavior and turned from their evil ways, as indicated in the second meaning of the verb *hapak*.

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT GOD?

These comments about the book of Jonah should remind us that God controls history, and He can use, to His purposes, world events we deem as insignificant. Furthermore, when we talk about end-time prophecies, we should be careful with dogmatic positions regarding their fulfillment. Instead, intellectual modesty and spiritual humility are warranted. As Jonah, some of us might expect the unfolding of end-time events in a particular way, and yet God may act in a manner that will catch many of us off guard. God will bring these prophecies to fruition—even if He is doing it in unexpected ways that may surprise us. 🍃

¹ The reign of Jeroboam II has been dated 782-753 B.C.

² Donald J. Wiseman, "Jonah's Nineveh," *Tyndale Bulletin* 30 (1979): 46.

Luiz Gustavo Assis is a Ph.D. candidate in biblical studies (Hebrew Bible) at Boston College and lives with his family in Riverside, California.

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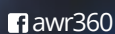
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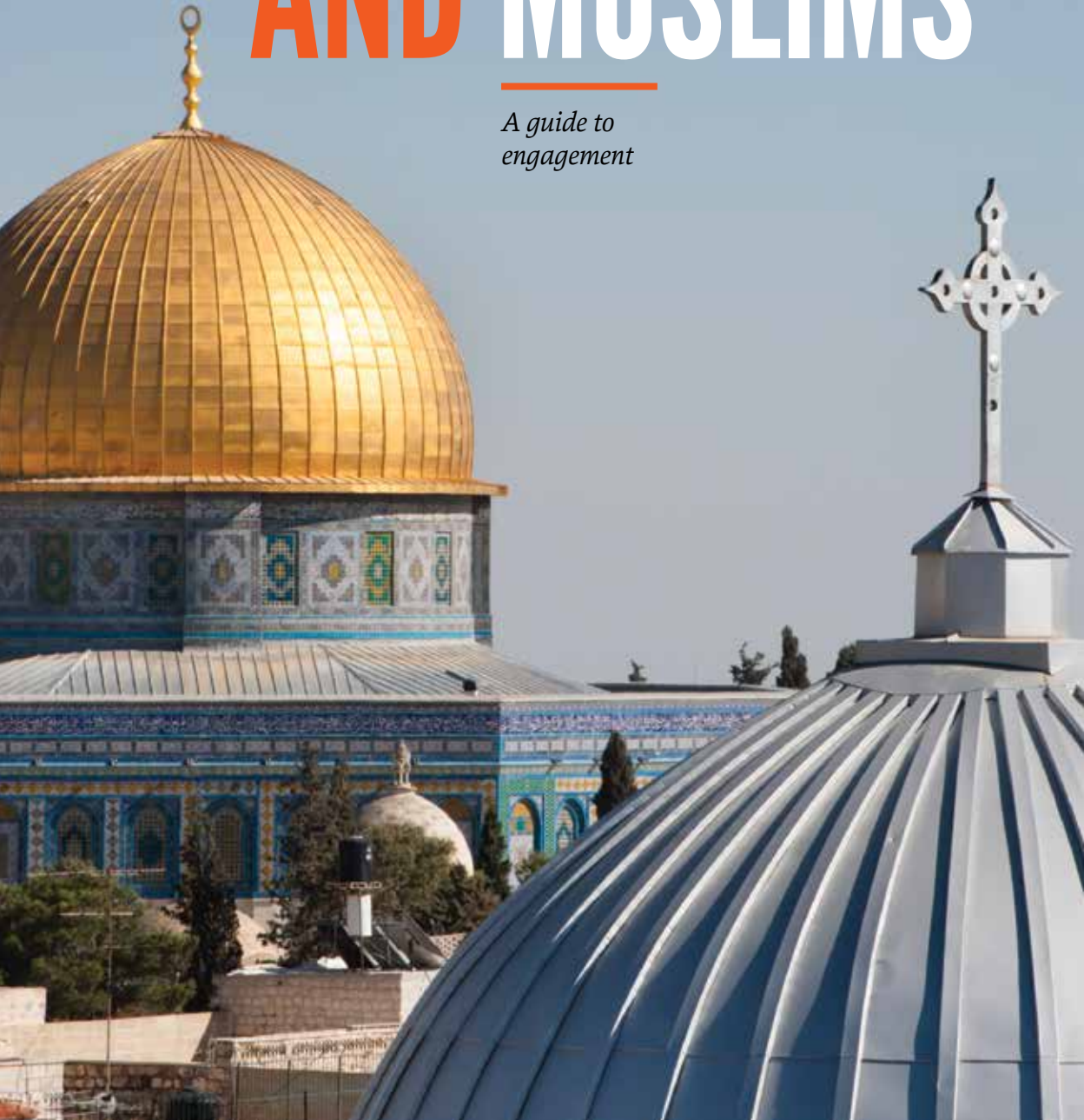
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ADVENTISTS AND MUSLIMS

*A guide to
engagement*



This article appeared first in our exclusive Premium online content channel and is part of a series focusing on Seventh-day Adventism's relationship with those of other world religions. We reprint it here as a service to our subscribers.—Editors.

PAUL DYBDAHL AND GABRIELA PHILLIPS

He was an Egyptian imam named Mohamed, and if an email can exude warmth, his did. “We welcome all visitors, Muslim and non-Muslim,” he wrote. Any lingering questions I had about the openness of his mosque dissolved as I continued to read. “Welcome again to you, your friends, your family, and anyone who would like to come with you. I am so happy that I will have a new friend. . . . Like it is said, ‘Friendship is a treasure.’”

This Muslim man’s hospitable response to a Seventh-day Adventist might be surprising to some of us. Many Christians believe that Islam is antagonistic toward Christianity and that Christians and Muslims would struggle to find common ground. Some might even suggest that the imam’s friendly response was deceptive and hid sinister motives.

A thoughtful Adventist who isn’t very familiar with Islam should probably step back, however, and ask themselves at least two questions. First, what do Muslims actually believe? Second, how should a faithful Seventh-day Adventist build relationships with the Muslims around them? This article will provide introductory answers to these two questions.¹

As we begin, however, it’s important to remind ourselves that Islam is a diverse faith, practiced in very different ways in different parts of the world. It is also a religion with depth that cannot be easily described or appreciated by outsiders. So we will proceed with caution, reminding ourselves that a brief article cannot cover everything that is important. We should also remind ourselves that if we really want to know what an individual Muslim believes, we should ask them!

WHO ARE MUSLIMS, AND WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

Islam is the fastest growing of the major world religions. Experts predict that it will overtake Christianity as the largest world religion within the next 50 years. Presently, about one fourth of the world identifies as Muslim.² “Islam” and “Muslim” both come from the same Arabic root word, which carries the dual meaning of “submission” and “peace.” Based simply on the name, then, a Muslim is one who lives peacefully and in submission to God.

Muslims believe there is only one God. He created our world in six days and rules the universe with justice and compassion. God is greater than anything we can imagine, and nothing can be compared to Him. He is near to us and hears and responds to our prayers. Muslims, along with Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians, all refer to God with the same title, *Allah*, which literally means “the God” in Arabic.

According to Islam, God has sent many messengers and prophets to humanity throughout history. Many of the men recognized as prophets in Islam are familiar to Jews and Christians. For example, Muslims accept Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus as prophets of God. For Muslims, Muhammad (A.D. 570-632) is the last of God’s messengers.

Like Christians, Muslims believe that Jesus was born to the virgin Mary. They also believe that Jesus was a great healer who gave sight to the blind, healed lepers, and raised the dead. While Muslims believe that Jesus is the Messiah, they do not view Jesus as the divine Son of God.



RODRIGUEZ / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

Experts predict that Islam will overtake Christianity as the largest world religion within the next 50 years.

Islam teaches that God has revealed His will through holy books. These include the Torah (given to Moses), the Psalms (given to David), the Gospel (given to Jesus), and the Qur'an (given to Muhammad). Of these four holy books, most Muslims view the Qur'an as the only revelation that remains uncorrupted. They see it as the literal, perfect word of God. Christians who read the Qur'an are often surprised to find that approximately one third of the Qur'an deals with characters and stories that are also recorded in the Bible.

Islam teaches that our world is moving toward a final and fearful day of judgment. Muslims expect there to be a time of trouble, with various signs indicating the approach of the last day. These signs include the appearance of a false messiah and the return of Jesus. Then, on the last day, the sky will be split, a trumpet will sound, and those who have died will be raised with new bodies to be judged. Those who have submitted to God, believed in the oneness of the Creator, and practiced good deeds will be welcomed into Paradise, while unbelievers will be sent to a fiery hell.

While the beliefs we have just introduced are important to Muslims, the more central focus of daily life is the faithful practice of what are called the Five Pillars of Islam.

One: Recitation of the Creed

Conversion to Islam takes place when someone, with sincerity, states the central confession of faith: "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His messenger." This recitation articulates the essence of Islam and is recited 17 times each day by a devout Muslim.

Two: Prayer

Muslims are expected to pause for prayer at five specified times each day. Prior to prayer they must perform a ritual washing of hands, mouth, nose, face, ears, and feet. Then for the prayer to be valid, they must face the Ka'bah (a small cubical structure in Mecca) and follow a prescribed sequence of movements (standing, kneeling, bowing) and recitations.

Three: Charity

Islam's emphasis on caring for widows, orphans, and poor people is demonstrated by the requirement that all Muslims give a minimum of 2.5 percent of their assets (not their income) to charity each year.

Four: Fasting

Muslims believe that Gabriel revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad in a series of revelations. In remembrance of the first of these revelations, Muslims are expected to fast from all food and liquids during daylight hours for the entire lunar month of Ramadan.

Five: Pilgrimage

All Muslims, if health and finances allow, are expected to go to the holy city of Mecca before they die. This pilgrimage takes place during the last month in the Muslim calendar and involves a reenactment of various events from the lives of Abraham and Muhammad. During the pilgrimage rich and poor all wear a simple garment, demonstrating the equality and unity of all who follow the God of Abraham.

This quick overview of Islam may have brought a few surprises. While there are many points of difference between Islam and Christianity, there is also much that is shared, especially between Muslims and Adventists. Adventist scholar William Johnsson noted some of these areas of similarity and argued that these commonalities "uniquely position Adventists" to build meaningful friendships with Muslims.³

So now that we've briefly described some of the beliefs and practices of Muslims, we must address specifically how these meaningful friendships can be built.

HOW CAN AN ADVENTIST BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUSLIMS?

The first and most important step is to pray. We can ask for God to give us a genuine love for everyone, including Muslims. We can also pray for discernment, the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, humility, and the gift of hospitality.

Second, we should remember that actions speak louder than words. This is especially true in a Muslim context. A Muslim who takes their faith seriously will feel more at home with us if we also clearly place God at the center of our lives. Muslims expect that a godly person will pray regularly, be generous to poor individuals, give wise advice, dress modestly, know their scriptures, speak about God and the prophets with respect, and be hospitable. Such a person is seen as honorable, and this then forms the basis of a godly friendship.

Third, it is important to establish a clear identity. This may seem like a simple task, but when one speaks with a Muslim, it may be confusing and even misleading to identify as a Christian. In the minds of many Muslims, Christians worship three gods, drink alcohol, eat pork, are immodest, and use “grace” as an excuse to ignore God’s law and live immoral lives.

So instead of immediately using the title “Christian,” we might consider more detailed and accurate ways of identifying ourselves to Muslims. For example, we might say, “I am an Adventist. We are a worldwide movement that believes Jesus will return to earth soon. We believe in God and in the last days. We abstain from that which is impure, such as alcohol and pork, and we believe our lives should be lived in submission to God and His will.” This response will likely bring joy to Muslims and open doors for future conversations because *these are all points of commonality between Muslims and Adventists!*

Fourth, if we seek friendships with Muslims, we might consider visiting a local mosque. It is wise to contact them beforehand to ask if it is appropriate. If we do this, we may even be greeted and hosted by the imam or another senior community member. We should dress modestly and nicely, cover our head with a scarf if we are a woman, and prepare for our visit by doing some preliminary research on typical practices and expectations associated with a mosque. While at the mosque, we may appropriately ask our hosts what they believe about the return of Jesus and how we can prepare to receive Him.

Fifth, we must be willing to give and receive hospitality. Hospitality is a central value in Islam and in the Bible. We are told to “show hospitality to strangers” (Heb. 13:2, ESV). We should note that this is not a call to receive friends or to invite

fellow Adventists for lunch after church. It is a countercultural call to welcome, feed, nurture, and give of ourselves so that the alien, or stranger, feels welcomed and honored. But how can we be good hosts—and good guests? Adventists, particularly in the so-called Western world, may need special help in this area.

TIPS FOR SHOWING HOSPITALITY TO MUSLIMS

- Pray before the meal, and also send your guests home with a prayer of blessing.
- Be generous, both with the size of the food dishes and the variety. Haystacks, as wonderful as they are, may not be a good idea, because they are thought of as snack food rather than “real” food. It is best to serve the food rather than telling the guests to “help themselves.”
- If we plan to serve meat, remember that strict Muslims eat only halal meat, which means meat that has been butchered in a specific way and drained of blood. Meat substitutes may also be confusing for our guests.
- If our guests are in our home during the time of ritual prayer, we may need to provide them with a place to pray. Any clean room will do, except for a bathroom. Since we may not have a prayer rug, we can offer a large, clean towel or even a blanket.
- The saliva of dogs is considered unclean by Muslims. If it touches them, they are required to wash themselves or their clothing before they can pray. So it is best to keep dogs in a separate room, away from our guests.
- We may guide the conversation toward biblical values, nurturing faith, health, etc., but we shouldn’t assume the role of teacher. Remember that Muslims share Abraham as a spiritual father and that they too believe in God! We will have opportunities to share, certainly, but we should also be prepared to listen and be blessed.⁴

TIPS FOR RECEIVING HOSPITALITY FROM MUSLIMS

- Be gracious to our hosts. This means at least two things. First, greet everyone when we enter. A sample greeting might be to say, “It is an honor for us to be here. May God bless you for your kindness to us.” Second, when the food is served, we should thank the host family several times.
- Remember to avoid physical contact between genders. Men should greet men, and women

Some of the commonalities between Muslims and Adventists uniquely position Adventists to build meaningful friendships with Muslims.

should greet women. If you are a man, avoid asking your male host about his wife. Instead, we can ask, “How is your family doing?”

- Use the right hand to eat, touch, and present or receive gifts. In many cultures the left hand is considered unclean.
- Generally speaking, it is wise to bring a simple gift (such as flowers, dates, or home-baked food) as a token of appreciation for our hosts.
- Remove our shoes as we enter the host’s home, unless told otherwise.
- Dress in a way that shows that this encounter matters to us. Men should not wear shorts, and women should not wear short sleeves or sleeveless dresses.
- If we are a vegetarian, we should let the host know that beforehand, otherwise most meals will be made with lamb or chicken. If we have neglected to make prior arrangements, we can pray for the courage to eat what is set before us, and even for the ability to enjoy it!
- If we eat everything on our plate, our hosts may assume we did not have enough. Leaving a bit of food symbolizes abundance and serves to compliment our host.
- Before we leave, it is appropriate to say, “You have blessed us with your hospitality. We would like to ask a blessing from God on your home. Is this OK with you?” If they agree, we can then ask, “Is there anything you would like us to pray for?”

While these practical tips for engaging with Muslims may seem overwhelming, we shouldn’t feel intimidated. When I asked a Muslim woman what she wanted Christians to know, she said, “That we need them. I want to encourage them to speak to us, even if their questions may seem offensive. We want to speak—this is the only way to break the cycle of fear among us. We will love to have them for tea and to show them another face of Islam.”⁵

A HOPEFUL FUTURE

I met John on one of my trips. I had been asked to speak to Christians who were dealing with the influx of Muslims in their city. John was visibly

upset by what was happening. “Those people don’t belong here!” he said at least three times.

Finally I responded. “John, what if ‘those people’ are guests of God?”

A year later we met again. John eagerly shared that after our first conversation, he felt convicted to seek God’s forgiveness and confront his own fear. Then he reached out to a Pakistani family that he had been avoiding even though they lived next door. A beautiful friendship blossomed on the spot, where distrust and fear had previously prevailed. John described his journey of reconciliation as a move from seeing Muslims as “others” to accepting them as “brothers.”

Later in the friendship the Muslim family confessed to John how surprised they were that he prayed before meals. They were also shocked to discover that Jesus never commanded anyone to worship His mother, Mary. John had seen them as threatening intruders. They had seen him as an immoral idol worshipper. What a joy it was for both to discover that they were wrong!

Clearly God can work through us despite our imperfections and our fears. Let us ask God to fill our hearts with love for all people. Let us practice biblical hospitality. Let us learn, share, and listen. And may our gracious God continue to make a way for enemies to become friends, because what the imam said in his email is true: Friendship is a treasure. 🍀

¹ This jointly authored article draws freely from a more comprehensive and detailed book by the same authors that is available through *AdventSource*. See Paul Dybdahl and Gabriela Phillips, *Islam: Facts, Fictions, and Familiarities* (Lincoln, Nebr.: *AdventSource*, 2018).

² Pew Research, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050,” Apr. 2, 2015, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>, accessed Aug. 30, 2022.

³ William G. Johnsson, “Adventists and Muslims: Five Convictions,” *Adventist World—NAD*, February 2010, p. 12.

⁴ For more information on how to respond to some of the challenging questions Muslims ask Christians, see Dybdahl and Phillips, pp. 71–75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Paul Dybdahl is professor of mission and New Testament in the School of Theology at Walla Walla University, Walla Walla, Washington, United States. **Gabriela Phillips** is director of Adventist-Muslim relations for the North American Division.

A NEW MINDSET FOR COURAGEOUS WITNESSING

While working a temporary job at a department store, I decided that if I treated customers warmly, they would return the favor.

That proved to be true until the night when a mother and daughter walked up to my register, each with a full cart, right at closing. At first things went well. I greeted them warmly, and they seemed to respond. Despite being very tired, I stuck to my philosophy of treating these women as if they were long-lost best friends.

But then my weary eyes read the daughter's receipt incorrectly.

"What's wrong with the world is that there are people like you," the mother spouted off. She seemed to forget all the kindness I'd already shown them.

Unsure of what I could do to rectify the situation, I suggested that the daughter go to customer service to resolve the issue.

Even with the daughter gone, the mother grumbled throughout the rest of her transaction. And once the daughter's problem was resolved, she made the trek back to my register on the opposite side of the store to berate me for not solving her problem myself.

Though this was the worst case of customer abuse I experienced during my short stint as a cashier, it affected the way I treated every single customer I served during the rest of my employment. Every time a customer came to my register, I found myself flinching and my heart racing. Even before I said hello, I was already trying to protect myself in case that customer would decide to treat me with the same spitefulness as the mother-daughter team had done.

It's this same kind of reflex that causes some of us to experience anxiety in various social situations. We've been hurt in the past and fear being hurt again, so we put up a barrier to protect ourselves—and that barrier affects the way we behave. Our fear keeps us from welcoming potential friends into our lives. This same fear also prevents us from speaking up for Jesus.

Recently I was offered some advice that has given me new strength when it comes to social situations: "Assume that everybody likes you." We don't really know what other people are thinking, so we might as well assume the best—especially since most people are more prone to liking rather than disliking others.

With this advice fresh in my mind, I recently joined a group of people whom I'd previously assumed didn't like me. With my new mindset, I had the courage to speak up and join the conversation. Turns out this was a great group of people!

When it comes to witnessing, I've added a few words to this mindset. "Assume everybody likes you and wants to hear about Jesus." Would you like to join me in trying this? I'd love to hear your stories of how this way of thinking helps you to become a more courageous witness!

To respond to Lori with stories of how adopting the mindset of assuming everyone wants to hear about Jesus affected your witnessing experiences, email her at lori.futcher@gmail.com.

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

WITNESSING
FOR
INTROVERTS
LORI FUTCHER



ALTHOUGH THIS
WAS THE WORST
CASE OF CUSTOMER
ABUSE I
EXPERIENCED, IT
AFFECTED THE WAY I
TREATED FUTURE
CUSTOMERS.



A Treasured

MICHAEL GEE

After I gave my heart to Jesus and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I enrolled at Southern Adventist University and participated in their student mission program. My calling took me to the jungles of Nicaragua.

One day during a rainstorm, as I was sitting in a hammock hung up on the porch of my little hut and reading the Gospel of Matthew, I came across the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:8-15:

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done." *Yes, Lord!*

"On earth as it is in heaven." *Yes!*

"Give us this day our daily bread." *Yes, please!*

"And forgive us our debts." *Absolutely!*

"As we forgive our debtors." *OK, sure.*

"And do not lead us into temptation." *Yes again.*

"But deliver us from the evil one." *For sure.*

But then Jesus did something unexpected. He expounded on one part—and one part only—of His model prayer.

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

When I first read it, I thought, *I'm a pretty forgiving person. I don't hold a grudge.* But then it dawned on me. There was something from my past that I was holding on to; and in some respects, it was holding on to me, too.

STRUGGLING TO FORGIVE

It's harder to forgive when we've been hurt. And in my experience the difficulty of extend-

ing forgiveness is proportionate to the pain the event caused in my life.

For a moment I was no longer in the middle of the jungle stuck in a rainstorm. I was instantly in the head and heart of that scared and wounded little boy from my youth.

About 14 years before, a seemingly innocent sleepover turned into the worst memory of my childhood. I can only speculate as to what influenced the actions of that night, but by the next morning I would know what it meant to be molested. I had never known such a sickening and dirty feeling before. I was ashamed of what had happened, too ashamed to tell anyone about it.

Those feelings of sickness and shame slowly turned into frustration, anger, and complete hatred for the two "friends" of mine who molested me. And as the years went by, they both eventually moved away with their families, and the memory slowly began to collect dust.

That is, until Jesus said I had to forgive them.

Forgive them? How can I do that? Jesus, don't You know what happened to me? After all, they've never asked for forgiveness. And I hope they're eternally punished for what they did.

But Jesus pressed in. I realized that I was

**Forgive them?
How can I do
that? Jesus,
don't You know
what happened
to me?**

Chain

*A story about the
power of forgiveness*

holding on to this. Then it hit me: this bitterness, resentment, and hatred were doing nothing good for me.

In that rainstorm I looked to Jesus, and He pointed to the cross. I saw Jesus dying for *my* sins. Paying the price for all the wrongs that I had committed. It never occurred to me that I could ask Him to take the pain caused by the sins committed against me as well.

Even though it's important to know what forgiveness is, it's also vital to understand what forgiveness is not.

“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted” (Isa. 53:4, NIV).

Jesus didn't die only for the sins I committed, but for the sins that were committed against me. Sin committed against us manifests itself as pain in our lives.

As a recent convert I was eager to allow Jesus to take away the guilt of my sin, yet I found myself holding on to this pain and “justified” anger with a death grip.

I asked myself, “Why am I holding on to this?”

I'd carried this wound around with me for 14 years. It was my right to be angry, wasn't it? They don't deserve forgiveness—right?

WHAT FORGIVENESS MEANS

I learned that forgiveness does not mean justice. Those are two separate things. Some wrongs committed against us will never be righted on this earth. People will evade justice. Yet that doesn't mean that I need to carry that weight around with me the rest of my life.

I realized that if I didn't forgive those two guys, then they still had power over me. And I was tired of being the victim; I was ready to

allow Jesus to give me victory.

But how do I forgive them? Call them up? I'm in the jungle of Nicaragua. I can't even call my parents!

Here's the key. Forgiveness doesn't begin with your voice; rather, it starts in the heart. I can say all I want, but until it has happened in my heart, my words mean nothing.

Forgiveness is a decision to grow. When we allow Jesus to take that pain from us and to allow forgiveness to flow through us, then we can be freed from the power of our pain.

So there I was back in my hammock on the porch of my hut in a rainstorm. I asked Jesus to forgive these individuals *through* me, and for the first time in my life I experienced peace regarding that event. A weight slid off me that I didn't even know was there. I was free!

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

Even though it's important to know what forgiveness is, it's also vital to understand what forgiveness is not.

Forgiving someone doesn't mean we have to enter back into a relationship, especially if it was abusive or manipulative. Forgiveness, however, always precedes true reconciliation.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. Some pains are so deep that it's truly an act of God to free you from them. If we base forgiveness on our feelings, the most painful things will continue to rule over us.

Forgiveness is not justice. When we choose to forgive, that doesn't mean the wrong has been righted. Sometimes justice will never take place this side of heaven.

Forgiveness does not mean covering up abuse. If an abuser says “Please forgive me, but please don't tell anyone” or something similar, you can still forgive while at the same time hold someone accountable for their actions. Make sure you have some trusted people to walk with you through this process.

Forgiveness is not weakness; it is strength. When someone has not and probably will not ask for forgiveness, extending it anyway is a sign of great strength.

A WARTIME EXAMPLE

One of the most telling stories of forgiveness is found in Corrie ten Boom's book *The Hiding Place*,¹ in which she recounts her experiences during World War II in Holland and Germany.

During the German occupation, Corrie's family worked with the Resistance by hiding Jews and others in their home. They had an architect build a secret room, "the hiding place," which could hold up to six people. Eventually the police raided the Ten Boom family residence and arrested the family and all those in the house for working with the Resistance, yet the six individuals in the hiding place were never found.

The next 10 months of Corrie's life was a trying and heart-wrenching experience. Shortly after being arrested, her father died in prison. Corrie was in solitary confinement for three months. Later Corrie and her sister, Betsie, were moved to another prison, and then finally transferred to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. On December 16, 1944, Betsie died there. Corrie's world had turned into a nightmare. And yet Betsie's words rang clear in Corrie's mind: "There is no pit so deep that He [God] is not deeper still."²

Twelve days after Betsie died, Corrie was released from Ravensbrück, and she set off to find whatever remained of her home.

While in Ravensbrück, Corrie and Betsie would often dream and talk about life after the war. The dream that Corrie set off to build in Holland was a rehabilitation center for concentration camp survivors.

The rehab work taught Corrie some incredible lessons on forgiveness. She found that the victims of Nazi brutality who were able to forgive their former enemies were also able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness, however, remained invalids.

For Corrie, however, the lesson would change from theory to experience on a preaching trip to postwar Germany in 1946. She knew that God's forgiveness needed to be shared with the Germans, so she preached her heart out, letting her audience know how God throws our sins

into the depth of the sea when He forgives us (see Micah 7:19).

It was at the end of a sermon, as the audience silently walked out the door, that she saw him. It was the familiar face of a guard from Ravensbrück. Instantly the emotions and memories of that place vividly returned to her. The former guard approached Corrie and thanked her for her sermon and that he was grateful to hear how God throws our sins into the depth of the sea. He went on to tell her that he had been a guard in Ravensbrück, and then what happened next was a curveball for Corrie. He stuck out his hand and asked her for forgiveness.

This is what she recounts in *The Hiding Place*: "His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. . . . *Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.*

"I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again, I breathed a silent prayer. *Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.*

"As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder, along my arm and through my hand, a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

"And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."³

Jesus wants to give each one of us freedom from the pain and prison of bitterness. By asking Jesus to forgive through us, we empower Him to bring about healing and freedom in our lives. These are not burdens we were designed to carry. Let's give them to Jesus, for He wants to carry them for us. 🍀

¹ Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Pub., 1971).

² *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

Michael Gee is pastor of the Meridian and Emmett Seventh-day Adventist churches in Idaho.



THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDER



*Pay attention
to the field
you've been
assigned.*

JULIA VERNON

Farmer Celestial dreamed of a bumper wheat crop. He spared no expense—got the best seed, the best equipment, had a soil analysis done to find out what kind of fertilizer he needed. Everything was done to ensure the best wheat harvest ever.

After the work of planting was done, Farmer Celestial turned in for a well-deserved night's sleep. That night on a blighted farm down the road, Farmer Adversary was biding his time until Farmer Celestial was asleep. He would get even with Celestial for having a better farm, a happier life, and more influence than he had. So that night he crept into Farmer Celestial's fields and planted weeds—not just any weeds, but tares: poisonous plants. Tares look just like wheat when they are growing. It is only in the last few days before harvesttime that anyone can tell the difference between them, because the ripe tare seeds turn black.

One of the farmhands noticed some black wheatlike seeds along the edges of the field. He got to poking around and found more of them mixed with the wheat seeds in the field. Rushing back to tell the boss, he asked, "How did tare seeds get in here? I thought you planted the premium-quality seed. Do you want us to start pulling up the tares when they sprout?"

"No. Leave them alone. Let them grow up with the wheat. We'll sort it out at the harvest, because if we do it any sooner, we might accidentally pull up some of the wheat, too," said Farmer Celestial.

Things went along like that for several weeks. Then some of the plants in the field began coming in to talk with the farmer. "Sir, there are tares in my field. Since I live right there in that field, I'm volunteering to weed out the tares. I'll pick them out, tell you just what they are like, and we'll pull them up by the roots."

The farmer put them off tactfully, assuring them that he had made provisions to take care of the problem at a later date.

The plants settled down, and things were calm for a while. But the tares got out of hand and began destroying the field. For the sake of the real wheat, the tares had to be destroyed.

Come harvesttime, there wasn't much good grain left in the field. Grief-stricken, the farmer called the remaining wheat over to him. "What happened out here?" They told him of the good care they had taken of his field, weeding out the tares. Sadly he answered, "I called you to grow and flourish. I called you to be fruitful. I called you to show others the love and beauty of my farm. I called you to enjoy the safety of my silo after the harvest. I never called you to be weeders, because I knew you couldn't tell the difference between wheat and tares. That job was for the harvesters. Much good grain has been lost."

WHAT IS OUR REAL CALLING?

There are many jobs for us to do in God's field. Paul gives us an impressive list of the job descriptions found in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Study as we might, "weeder" never appears among the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

There's a reason for this omission. We're human, and God understands that. He understands that we cannot see the "thoughts and intents of the heart" as He can. He understands that we can make judgments only on the limited information we get from our five senses. The girl who sleeps

Love is the best light by which to weed.

around may have a heart that is yearning toward God as she encounters Him in Sabbath School. The man with the silver knob through his pierced tongue may, in time, become a great evangelist. The music one group fears is too lively may be the only way another group will hear the gospel. The woman in the immodest dress may be wearing her best to honor the God she is just coming to trust. Heaven help His people if they turn on her and paint a new picture of God as untrustworthy after all.

If we want to do some weeding, there is one place God allows it. Paul tells us about it in 2 Corinthians 13:5: “Examine *yourselves* to see whether you are in the faith” (NIV). When we find the wrong plants in ourselves, it is there that we can weed to our heart’s content.

SELF-WEEDING

There is some wonderful news about this kind of weeding. God Himself will give us the tools we need to do this job correctly and will work by our side while we weed. Second Corinthians 10:3-5 assures us of our tools, for though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Let’s face ourselves honestly. Our minds are often our worst enemies, for as the saying goes, “My mind is a dangerous neighborhood. I never go there alone.” Arguments, resentments, grudges, and flattering pretensions easily set up house-keeping in the field of our brains. And before we realize it, our thoughts have strayed from the path of obedience. Thus God equips us with the tools to weed out those worldly thoughts and bring our minds back to healthy obedience.

Never forget the help we have while we’re in there working. Romans 5:5 fills us in on the light God brings with Him when he comes to our weeding session: “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (KJV).

Love is the best light by which to weed. When we weed by love, we won’t beat ourselves up with

mistaken guilt, feel that we are not persons of worth because we do not live up to society’s worldly ideals, or come to the conclusion that even God couldn’t love us. We won’t weed out our sense of worth in God’s sight or an honest acknowledgment of the assets He has given us. And we won’t uproot our confidence or throw our childlike trust on the compost pile.

USE HIS LIGHT

There’s one other very important benefit of weeding by the light of God’s love. We won’t lose our way in the dark and find ourselves weeding God’s field instead of our hearts. We can be very sure that when we are weeding in God’s field we have been working in darkness, and our “love light,” our companionship with the Holy Spirit, needs to be rekindled.

Proverbs 3:5, 6 points us to the expertise we can rely on: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (KJV).

If your life depends on finding edible plants instead of poisonous ones, which would you rather rely on—a guidebook put out by a noted naturalist, or your prejudices about what looks nice? Trust the Author of the guidebook. Acknowledge His directions and live by them. Give Him the first place in any debates your mind has with you. When your will is surrendered to Him, He will not only lead you to the weeds you need to pull, but will also nurture the good plants in your heart garden.

It would be a shame to look over God’s field on that great resurrection morning and see piles of dead wheat pulled up before it could flourish because we weeded where we shouldn’t have. Sadly, we run that risk every time we decide we know who in our congregation is a real Christian and who is not; who has been saved and who needs more work; who is in tune with God’s Spirit and who is not. God has indeed given us a field to weed—not His, but ours. Let’s go into our hearts with the company of the Holy Spirit and labor there. In the end we’ll have some delightful surprises when that great day comes. 🌱

Julia Vernon wrote this while living in the beautiful state of Utah.

“The soul that
gives is always

refreshed.”

—Ray Hartwell

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(Trust Services, Stewardship)
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A Prayer for Pickett

Sharing Jesus with a new friend

SHENALYN PAGE

Congratulations! You've found it!"

I stared at the smiling woman through the car window. *Huh?*

"You've found the most beautiful campsite in all of Colorado!" A gray jacket half-hid her khaki shirt and baggy blue jeans. Shoulder-length hair that might have been blond at one time hung beneath her ball cap. "Pickett," said the tag pinned to the front of her jacket. *Is that really her name?* I wondered.

"We're here for a picnic lunch," my husband explained. "My parents talked to you yesterday."

"Oh yes! They were funny!" Her eyes brightened. "In that case, I saved the best campsite for you. Number 11. Up the road on the right."

Our kids took off to clamber down the steep bank to the river. My husband lit a fire while my mother-in-law and I pulled out our Big Franks to roast. Then Pickett ambled into our camp, a polka-dot umbrella in one hand and a glass water bottle in the other. She sat down on a stump.

"Hungry?" Dad asked. "We have plenty of vegetarian hot dogs."

"No thanks."

"Tell us about yourself," Mom started right in. She's great at getting people talking. "Where did you grow up?"

Turns out her name is really Hanna, but she has always been called Pickett. She's packed more adventure into one lifetime than most people even dream of doing. She grew up as a wealthy New York City heir, but was destitute by the age of 21. She married a carpenter, and they built houses. A series of four miscarriages led the couple to try to adopt.

"We hadn't been attending church regularly, so we were denied," Pickett stated matter-of-factly, but a hint of disappointment tinged her voice. Our kids were back now and listening, wide-eyed.

"Really?" I said, shocked. It always hits me like a gut punch when I hear of injustices done in the name of God.

"Yes, that's the way it was back then. We divorced so he could have a family and I could travel."

Travel she did. She went to Costa Rica to learn to surf. Then she did a walking tour of Central America. At one point she spent seven years in India absorbing the ideals of Hinduism and Buddhism. She pulled up her sleeve, revealing a tattoo of Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god. "I chose him because he is always serving god," Pickett explained.

"Now your turn," she said. "Tell me about you all."

"But wait," Mom protested. "You haven't told us all your story. How did you pay for your travels?"

"I'd come back to the United States, work for a while, save all my money, then travel some more," she explained.

We spent the next hour trading stories of travel and adventure. We learned of her "far-left" political beliefs, her "staunch" brother who stole the remnant of her inheritance, her work as a servant for a wealthy family in Aspen, Colorado, and now her nomadic life as a retiree living on \$500 a month. "Everything I own is in the back of my pickup," she said. "I've learned it doesn't matter how much money you have. I'm happy."

How do we share Jesus with her? I wondered. I told Pickett about growing up in Singapore and Taiwan as a missionary kid, and of a narrow escape I had in Eastern Europe as a student missionary. God is part of those stories, and I didn't leave Him out, but I didn't bring out those parts of the story as much as sometimes. *Will she understand what it means to pray and seek God's guidance? Do answers to prayer mean anything to her?* I wondered.

Then my father-in-law shared his testimony—simply, quietly, honestly. "I grew up in the church but had a lot of the same questions you did," he began. "I never really knew Jesus, so I left it all and just about lost everything in drugs." He went on to tell how Jesus had won him back and he'd

We had loved her for an hour; Jesus has been loving her for 70 years and more.

become a pastor, traveling the world to help people know Jesus personally.

"We believe each person is on a journey with God, and we're not here to judge anyone," he stated, his hands open and relaxed, a gentle smile on his face.

"I could tell that," Pickett responded. "You're not like some Christians."

PLANTING SEEDS

I wasn't the only one wondering about how to share Jesus with Pickett. Later that day our family talked about our experience with her. "We can't hide who we are," Dad said. "But we don't want to just blast people with Jesus without building trust. That's why Mom kept asking her questions—so we could get to know her."

That night I lay awake, revisiting her fascinating stories and praying for her. *Had we shared Jesus with Pickett? Would she want to know Him because of meeting us? Had the Holy Spirit been able to plant seeds of faith in her heart through our time with her?* I prayed so.

"Pickett's been heavy on my heart," Mom said the next morning. "I was awake praying for her a lot last night. She's so alone in this world. I gave her our contact information, but I doubt we'll ever hear from her."

"I know. I keep wondering if we should have given her some sort of literature," I said. But the truth was that I'd forgotten to bring any pamphlets on this vacation. *Had we failed?*

"Let's pray for Pickett!" our kids said.

"There's no doubt Jesus put her in our path," my husband said.

"I know," I said. "But did we do all we should have to share Jesus with her?"

"You're asking a question we can't answer. That's in Jesus' hands."

He's right, I know. We had shared our testimonies; the results were up to Jesus. We had loved her for an hour; Jesus has been loving her for 70 years and more. We tried to plant seeds of truth; the growth of those seeds will be the result of the Spirit's working.

The next day I came across this passage and was encouraged. "The life which the Creator has implanted, He alone can call forth. . . . For a time the good seed may lie unnoticed in the heart, giving no evidence that it has taken root; but afterward, as the Spirit of God breathes on the soul, the hidden seed springs up, and at last brings forth fruit. In our lifework we know not which shall prosper, this or that. This question it is not for us to settle. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand' (Eccl. 11:6, KJV)."

A PRAYER FOR PEACE AND LOVE

"Peace and love," Pickett had said, flashing us the two-fingered peace sign when we drove out of her campground.

Yes, peace and love, Pickett. That is our prayer for you.

Oh, Father God,

Please come close to Pickett.

Surround Your precious daughter with Your peace and love.

Open her eyes to see that You are their true source.

Heal her broken, adventurous, loving heart.

May she come to know and serve You, the true God.

And Father, please bless our stumbling efforts to share Jesus with her.

Water the seeds we tried to plant; cause them to grow and bear fruit.

We long to meet her again in heaven. I know You want her there too.

Thank You for giving us a little peek into what You are doing in her life.

Peace and love, Lord. Yes, please grant Pickett peace and love.

In Jesus' name, amen. 🙏

* Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), pp. 104, 105.

Shenalyn 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.

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

The Big Lunch and “Afternoon Sleeping Sickness”

Q: Why do I get so sleepy and tired after eating lunch, and what can I do about it?

A: You’re not alone! Your condition is shared by many and has been found in worms, snakes, rodents and other mammals, and even insects. This common occurrence is known medically as “postprandial sleepiness,” “the post-lunch dip,” and colloquially as “food coma.”

It’s usually no cause for concern except if it interferes with your work, school, or social life—especially when your after-meal activity requires high alertness, such as driving a car or operating potentially dangerous equipment. Excessive sleepiness may also be related to underlying health problems or sleep disorders, so please see your doctor to discuss your unique situation.

Here are some ideas to combat afternoon sleepiness that come from ongoing research:

Food coma is a circadian effect worsened by a poor night’s sleep. It’s an afternoon phenomenon since it usually occurs about 30 minutes after eating lunch. Some research points to post-meal changes in blood circulation. Blood flow to the intestines dramatically increases after we eat, and this provokes a corresponding decrease in blood flow to the brain, which could trigger feelings of fatigue and sleepiness. This may be particularly at play when we skip breakfast, have a large lunch, and engage in monotonous tasks after eating.

Other research indicates that blood sugar and insulin fluctuations after meals may stimulate after-meal drowsiness. Diets heavy in processed meat, fast food, and soft drinks have been shown to be associated with more daytime sleepiness in truck drivers, probably because of the combination of high animal fat and processed carbohydrates

along with high salt. Unhealthy diets have a disruptive effect on day-to-day body rhythms and are linked to post-meal fatigue through elevated cytokines such as interleukin-1 (IL-1), a marker of inflammation.

“Afternoon sleeping sickness” appears to be a “normal” response to certain kinds of meals, certain mealtime situations, how much food we eat, and our individual circumstances and inherited and cultivated tendencies. Overarching advice includes eating smaller, healthful vegetable-centric meals on a regular schedule and strolling after eating. A walk after eating has multiple beneficial effects on our digestion, metabolism, and weight management, so it’s a good habit to have.

If after-meal drowsiness significantly interferes with routine living or is accompanied by other symptoms, physician consultation is highly recommended. And remember: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

After-meal drowsiness may be affected by meal timing and regularity, meal quantity, and meal composition—not just your individual characteristics.

Tips for Food Coma

- Have a good breakfast.
- Eat smaller meals on schedule.
- Eat vegetables and natural plant fats.
- Take a 10- to 15-minute after-meal stroll.

If drowsy:

- Turn up the lights.
- Chew sugarless gum.
- Listen to your favorite upbeat music.
- Drink (and wash your face with) cold water.

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.

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HOLY PLACES

My sabbatical study tours this past year have taken me to the following holy places:

1. Jerusalem's Temple Mount (the holiest place to Jews)
2. Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque (the third-holiest place to Muslims)
3. Luxor's Karnak Temple (the holiest place to ancient Egyptian polytheists)
4. Thailand's Grand Palace/Wat Phra Kaew Temple (the holiest place to Thai Buddhists)

As I've walked these spiritual centers, I was struck anew by the tremendous influence they've had on tens of millions of common people.

Imagine being a simple pilgrim crossing the crest of the Mount of Olives—or the Nile or Chao Phraya rivers. How dazzled would you be to see a massive glistening holy place beyond your wildest imagination? (And how receptive would you be to whatever you were taught by the spiritual leaders at these spiritual places?)

For Christians, our holy places are different from those of other faiths. Jesus first revealed to a lonely woman at a well that someday soon, believers in God would no longer need to make a pilgrimage to a temple anywhere—instead, wherever they were, they could worship together in spirit and in truth.

And then He instituted the church.

Of all the special places I've visited this past year, my favorite place was a simple Adventist church in Bangkok, Thailand. On that Sabbath morning here's what we experienced:

- A robust Sabbath School discussion in a circle of believers, studying the same

subject that millions of others were studying that same day: "In the Crucible With Christ."

- A visiting Adventist youth choir from the Philippines. At one point in the mini-concert, the Filipino choir sang a Negro spiritual in English—while standing in Thailand. It felt like Pentecost.

- A delicious Thai potluck lunch, again in a circle of believers, talking and ministering to one another: the body of Christ doing together what Jesus did alone.

Not long after talking with the lonely woman at the well, Jesus sat in a circle of lonely people who weren't His family—and He told them that they were His family (Mark 3:33-35). Later He told these same people to do for others as He had done for them—become family together, meeting in His church living room every Sabbath morning.

Following a pandemic of isolation, many people have been slow to return to a church community. When and where there are personal health concerns, this is appropriate. But those able to return to church should return to church. Because you're not at church just for yourself, or even just for yourself and God—as strange as that might sound. Jesus instituted the church so that people could be there for others—the lonely hearts who may not have family of their own.

It's a new year. It's time for an old resolution: Let us not give up meeting together (Heb. 10:25).

Andy Nash (andynash5@gmail.com) is an Adventist pastor and professor who leads biblical study tours.

**THE LIFE
OF FAITH
ANDY
NASH**



**YOU'RE NOT AT
CHURCH JUST FOR
YOURSELF, OR EVEN
JUST FOR YOURSELF
AND GOD—AS
STRANGE AS THAT
MIGHT SOUND.**

CLOSER LOOK

Digging Deep and Finding Treasures

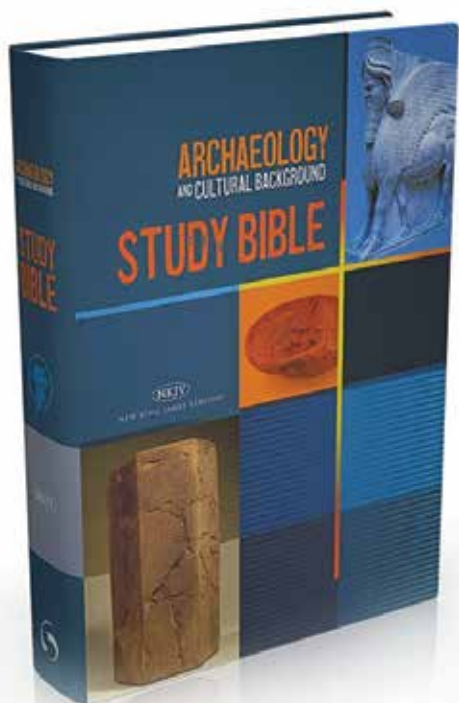
Archaeology and Cultural Background Study Bible, New King James Version (Madrid, Spain: Safeliz, 2022), xxx + 1,904 pages, flexible PU cover. US\$89.00, available on [SafelizBibles.com](https://www.SafelizBibles.com). Reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, associate editor, Adventist Review Ministries.*

The past decades have seen the publication of several study Bibles focusing either on archaeology or cultural backgrounds, but the newly released *Archaeology and Cultural Background Study Bible* from Adventist publisher Safeliz offers a more comprehensive perspective and seeks to bring both elements together. This is a helpful approach, for archaeological remains are always part of a material culture reflecting distinct cultural, religious, and social concepts and values prevalent in the ancient world.

In a concise foreword the publisher tells us that the study Bible includes articles, notes, and other input from 80 Adventist archaeologists and biblical scholars from around the world who contributed 700 peer-reviewed articles. Additionally, more than 130 videos introducing archaeological sites and different biblical lands were produced and can be accessed by readers either by using a QR code with a smartphone or by entering a short web address into a browser. Countless photos and illustrations accompany articles and the biblical text and are often gathered topically and printed on special paper offering a better quality than regular (and much thinner) paper used for printing Bibles. For example, after the text of Exodus 15, the reader is introduced on four pages to ancient scripts (and languages) and ancient texts (including examples of cuneiform tablets, Egyptian hieroglyphs, the trilingual Rosetta Stone inscription, and an image of the Hebrew Habakkuk *pesher* [or commentary] from Qumran). After the text of Joshua 1, the editors of the *Archaeology and Cultural Background Study Bible* included four photographic pages introducing ancient altar forms and different major deities of the biblical world. Many of these special focused image collections are included throughout the study Bible.

As is to be expected in the genre of a study Bible, each biblical book contains an introduction discussing the title of the book, its author, the possible audience, the purpose and theme of the book, an outline, and relevant archaeological discoveries that have shed light on the particular biblical book. Theology and theological themes are less developed in the introduction.

Following the publisher's foreword (p. v), the Bible includes a tribute to Siegfried Horn (p. vii), professor of archaeology, Old Testament, and biblical languages at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and pioneer



Adventist archaeologist whose influence on Adventist scholarship and research in that field can still be felt. This is followed by a list of the contributors to the study Bible (curiously alphabetized by first names and not last names!) and three very helpful major indexes (general, topical, and alphabetical). Particularly the 14 different subdivisions of the topic index will help readers to dig deeper (e.g., focusing on ancient individuals, ancient texts and artifacts, beliefs and teachings, buildings and structures, daily life, etc.). Beginning with the text of Genesis 11, every page of the study Bible contains a header that situates the book historically and archaeologically. For example, when reading Judges, the reader can see a reference to Iron Age I (1200-1000 B.C.), while a look at Malachi suggests the Persian period (or 539-331 B.C.) as its historical background. These are helpful general directions, but may not always capture the complexity of collections, such as the Psalms or some of the historical writings, such as 1 and 2 Chronicles, 1 and 2 Kings, etc., that contain material from different periods.

The study Bible also contains 23 useful maps

and infographics, such as Canaan in Old Testament times (p. 381), Jerusalem in the lifetime of Hezekiah (p. 740), or the route of the Exodus (p. 172).

One additional feature of the study Bible should be highlighted here, namely, a significant number of introductory articles presenting, for example, the scope and importance of biblical archaeology, the origin of the alphabet, biblical languages, religions and cultures of ancient empires, the Dead Sea scrolls, the meaning of biblical names, the Septuagint, the intertestamental period, social classes in the biblical world, or life in the New Testament world, to mention a few. These helpful articles introduce readers to foundational topics that are referenced in the notes and articles focusing on more specific issues.

The *Archaeology and Cultural Background Study Bible* fills a significant void in the growing portfolio of Adventist biblical scholarship and offers readers interested in the archaeology and culture of the ancient world in which the biblical texts developed a good entry point to better understand the profound connections of the texts of the Bible to their surrounding cultures. At the same time, familiarity with the cultural and historical context of the biblical texts will also clearly highlight the remarkable differences of the biblical message to the message of the religions of the peoples and cultures that surrounded God's people. Readers will appreciate the value-added resources (both printed in the Bible, as well as available digitally) that the *Archaeology and Cultural Background Study Bible* offers. More time in the Word is always time well spent—and those who invest in this resource will surely spend more time in the presence of Him who spoke to the world in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—and continues to speak in English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Bahasa, and any other language into which the Bible has been translated. 📖

* In the spirit of transparency, it should be disclosed that I have contributed to the publication of the study Bible but am not benefiting from its sale.

TAKING IT PERSONALLY

When we read Scripture, it can be easy to disconnect ourselves from the personal potential of a text. It's normal to read a verse and see its general application to believers as a whole, but the beauty of the Word of God is that it applies to all of us. Could it be that God is indeed imparting a message that is especially for you and me? We asked readers to share their favorite Bible verses but reimagined as if God were speaking directly to them through that text. We invite you to try this exercise for yourself. Go to the Bible and rewrite a text in a way that makes it directly and pointedly for you from the Lord. We are sure you will be surprised by how that new message impacts your life.—Editors.

Psalm 46:1

THE REAL VERSE:

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

REIMAGINED:

God is with me in all situations of this life; I will not fear.

—**HOPEWELL MANDINA**

Jeremiah 33:3

THE REAL VERSE:

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

REIMAGINED:

Call unto Me, Karen, and I will answer, and show you great and mighty things that you didn't know.

—**KAREN CAPERS**

Proverbs 15:1, 2

THE REAL VERSES:

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly."

REIMAGINED:

Jamilah, this person is already infuriated. Answering with the same energy would be like throwing gasoline on a fire. Be the sand to a burning fire, instead of the gasoline that stirs the blaze.

—**JAMILAH READ**

John 3:13, 14, 16, KJV

THE REAL VERSES:

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

REIMAGINED:

The Only Begotten Son is Jesus because He is the only One who descended from heaven and became the Son of man. We are all God's sons and daughters, but we are not God's Only Begotten. Jesus is the only One because He is holy and we are not, and it is He who has seen the Father and knows Him. He set an example of His life for us by never committing a sin. The physically focused and materialistic people served the Ten Commandments, but without love. It is the Father's love for all of us that He self-sacrificed His only begotten son to save us unconditionally. There should not be a day when we forget this and spread not this eternal gospel message to everyone. It's all about Him and nothing about us.

—**V. KAMAL**



Isaiah 41:10, 13

THE REAL VERSES:

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” “For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”

REIMAGINED:

Pamela, fear not, for I am with you; Pamela, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Pamela. Yes, I will help you, Pamela. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, “Pamela, fear not; I will help you.”

—PAMELA RODRIGUEZ

2 Corinthians 3:16, 17

THE REAL VERSES:

“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

REIMAGINED:

Don't be discouraged or grow weak from fear. I the Lord win victory after victory and am always with you. I celebrate and sing because of you, and I will refresh your life with My love. I will lead you home, and with your own eyes, you will see Me bless you.

—LARISSA GREENWELL-SMITH

* Unless otherwise noted, verses are taken from the New International Version.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

THE REAL VERSE:

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

REIMAGINED:

Gloria,
I want you to give thanks for whatever is happening in your life right now: both the good and the challenging. *All* that concerns you has been discussed with Christ Jesus, your friend and Savior, and is My will for your life. Trust Me.

Love,

God

—GLORIA DORSEY



MORE THAN FRIENDS

It was the middle of April, and I was very ill; in fact, my body was toxic, but I didn't know. I'd received a phone call from my mom that Sunday morning inquiring about her week-old granddaughter and me. Because of a serious medical condition, she was unable to travel and be present for this birth, as we'd previously planned.

I remember telling my mom that I was so cold my teeth were chattering, even though the heat was on. My husband was running errands, and I was alone with the 3-year-old and the baby. Instinctively

Mom knew what was happening, but she quite calmly told me to get to the hospital as soon as possible. When my husband returned, he took one look at me and sprang into action.

He first called Pearl, one of our friends, and asked her to babysit while he took me to the hospital. Upon arrival, with the necessary preliminary information obtained, an IV port was immediately started, and I was hooked up to some saline bags. With my temperature at 104 degrees Fahrenheit and rising, I was in pain and becoming delirious—but my battle had just begun.

The blood tests indicated sepsis: foreign bacteria had invaded my body, invariably during the birthing process, and I was rapidly being poisoned. The doctors immediately ordered antibiotics to be administered intravenously. The ultimate job was to get the temperature down and flush the deadly bacteria out of my system.

I remember the nurse bringing in a small refrigerator with an assortment of juices, urging me to drink as much as I

could 24/7, while still receiving fluids intravenously. Additionally, I had to pump and discard my breast milk because it was toxic. But what of the other job? Who would care for my babies?

I stepped two precious angels of mercy, Pearl and Kay—two of the most beautiful, loving, and caring individuals one could ever find. At the time Pearl worked at Washington Adventist Hospital, and Kay was a speech pathology and audiology major at Howard University. These friends organized themselves so that one would stay with the babies at night and the other for the early part of the day, thus allowing my husband to keep his work schedule and briefly check in on me at the hospital.

I recall the intense heartache I experienced while “visiting” with my little family through the hospital window and praying that God would spare my life so that I could care for them. Knowing that my friends were there greatly reduced my anxiety. They maintained this regimen, with all its challenges, deferring their personal obligations, for 10 days until I came home.

Upon reflection, I know that we could never repay Aunt Pearl and Aunt Kay for their unselfish acts of love toward us at a critical time. I am, however, happy to record for posterity their special “love gift.”

The Bible text says, “Greater love hath no [man/woman] than this, that a [man/woman] lay down [his/her] life [take care of two babies, especially a newborn] for [his/her] friends” (John 15:13, KJV). Forever they'll remain more than friends, for they are family! 🍷

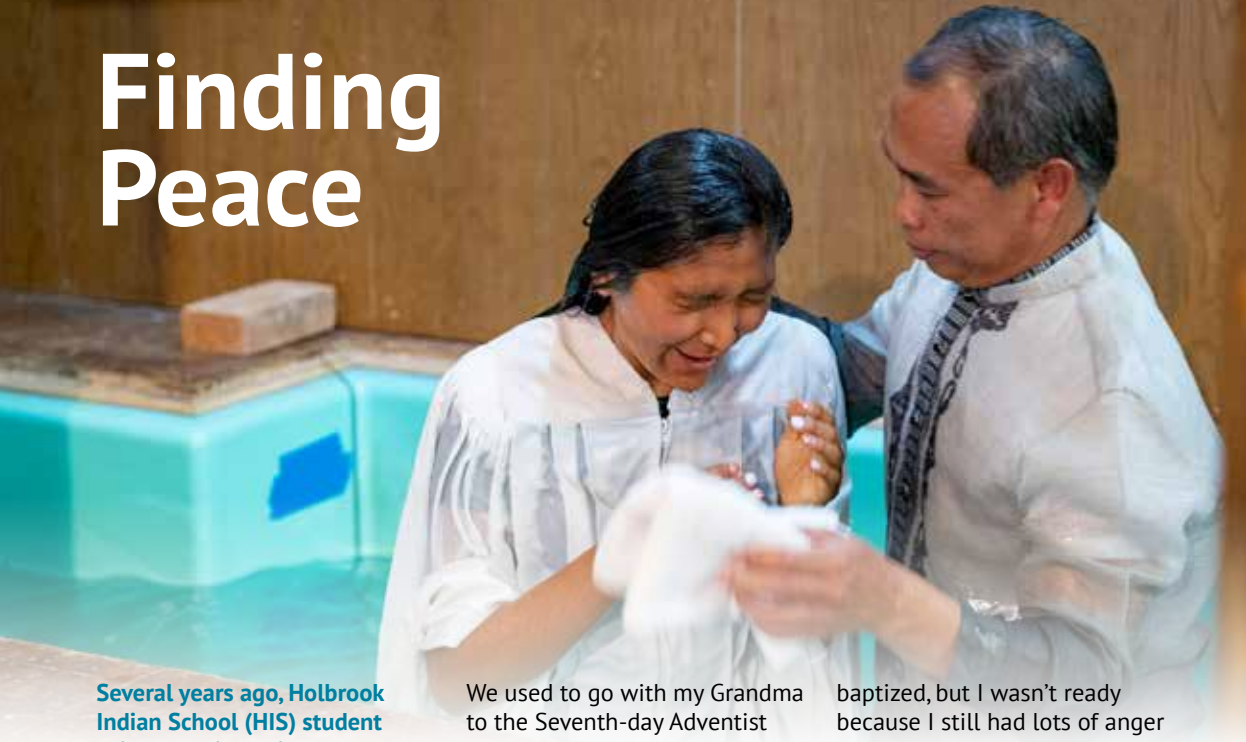
Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste is editorial assessment coordinator for Adventist Review Ministries.

TREASURING
FRIENDS WHO'LL
STICK CLOSER THAN
A BROTHER/SISTER



HIS Impact On Me

Finding Peace



Several years ago, Holbrook Indian School (HIS) student Ariana had intentions to be baptized, but a deep internal struggle caused by an external family tragedy complicated her commitment. She had just lost two sisters in a car accident and was really struggling to navigate the experience and her feelings during that time.

Ariana, now a senior, shares how spiritual life at HIS helped her come to find the loving character of God, His peace in the midst of pain, and ultimately fulfilling her desire to be baptized before leaving high school.

We used to go with my Grandma to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Kinlichee [on the Navajo Reservation]. My mom, at one point, stopped believing in God because her two youngest daughters (my sisters) passed away, and it was really hard for her. She didn't want us to go to public schools because of the influence there, and that's why she sent us to HIS. She told me it was up to me if I wanted to be Christian or not.

My cousin Adrian was attending as a senior when I first came. That helped me cope away from home. When I reached the 8th grade, I considered being

baptized, but I wasn't ready because I still had lots of anger for losing my sisters.

Last year I just felt tired of being angry and all of the emotions, so I decided to try praying to God. I felt I was getting answers to my prayers, which made me feel comforted and ok in trusting my life to Him.

When Mr. Mahinay would share in Bible class about the promise of Jesus' second coming and seeing our loved ones again, I took comfort in that. I also fell in love with Jesus' character from what I learned in dorm worship.

You can help other students like Ariana find God's peace, despite their circumstances. To make a gift, visit HolbrookIndianSchool.org/donate.



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