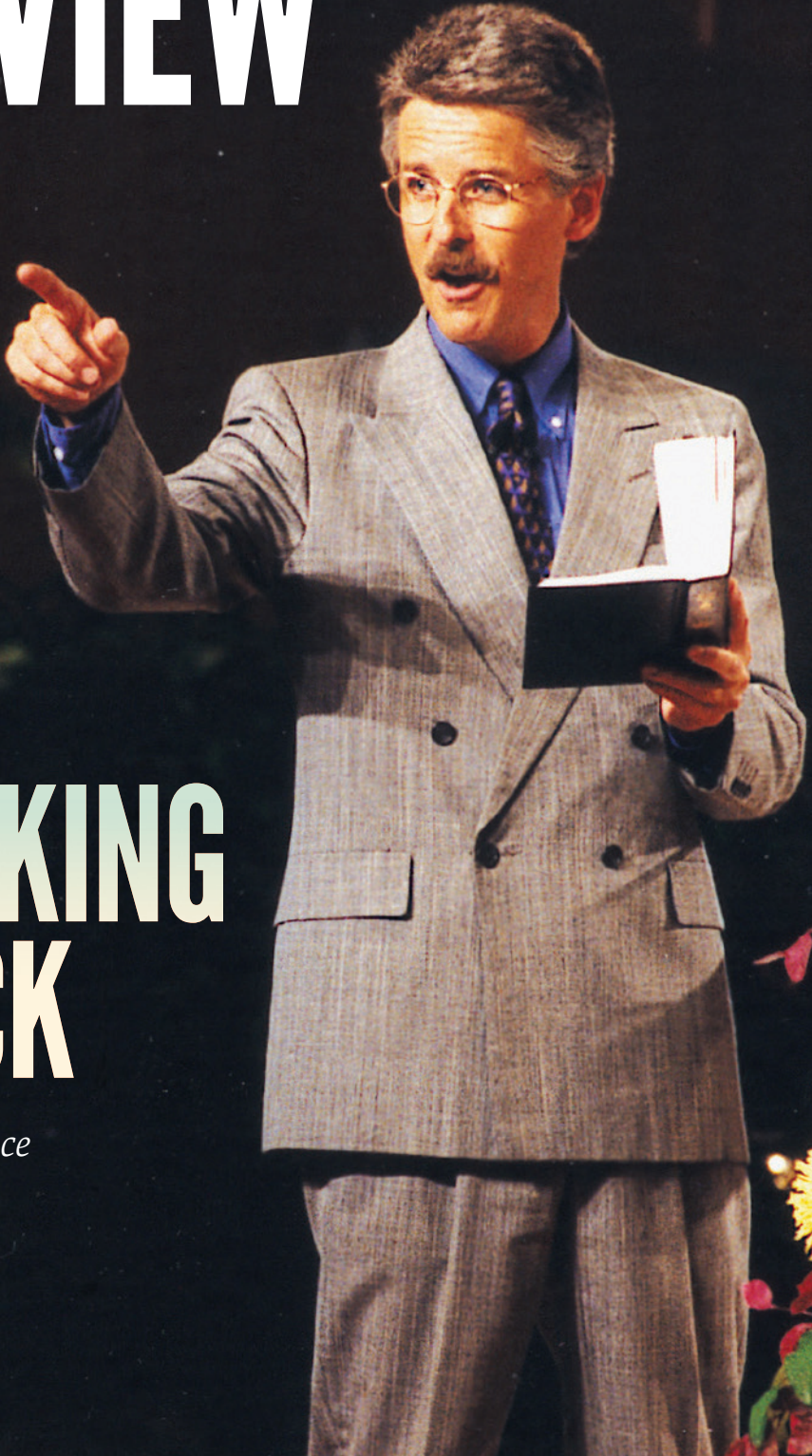


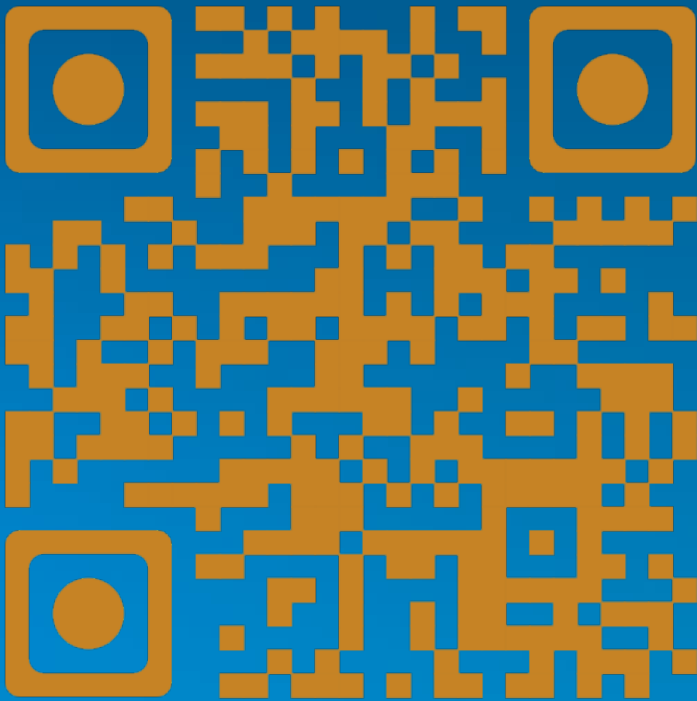
NOVEMBER 2023: IDENTITY IN CHRIST + SLURPY
CONVERSATIONS + SOMETIMES BITTEN + THE VISION
+ CHANGING THE CREW + LIVING THE DREAM

ADVENTIST REVIEW



LOOKING BACK

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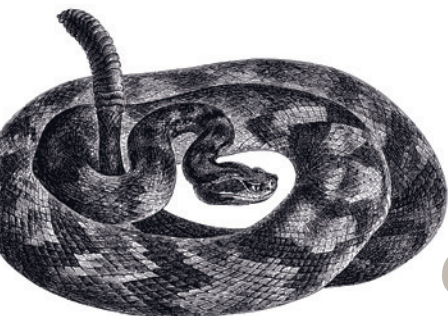
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THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

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The Final Good Night
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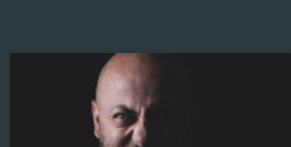
An Adventist Metaverse and
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Self-killing in Scripture
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How to Keep From Being Angry
by Wintley Phipps

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Overwhelmed by the Bible Teaching
on the Sanctuary? Try Again!
by Marcos Paseggi

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NO WALLS. NO BORDERS. NO LIMITS.



It is in the midst of boundaries that true expression, freedom, and identity are discovered.

What Sticky Keys Reveal About Our Spiritual Identity

Usually feet stomp, but boy could these hands stomp too. Two small pudgy hands “stomped,” not on the floor, but on precious ivory and ebony piano keys. They were the sticky, clammy hands of my younger toddler son, who, in his earnest desire to play the heirloom piano, slammed his palms on all 88 keys. He “played” the keyboard with giddy joy, bohemian freedom, and a full diaper, thinking he was composing the next unforgettable concerto. He played the high notes and the lows, the white keys and the black. It was a “baby grand” on another level. And after his “performance,” he looked up at me, scanning my face with his big eyes for some sign of approbation. I gave him a slight nod and breathed an impressed “huh” as best as I could muster, with a raised eyebrow and a one-sided smile.

Contrast this to my older son who practiced the piano daily. Though the songs he played were melodic, his attitude during practice time mimicked the dissonance of my younger son’s magnum opus. Just as his long line of ancestors kicked and screamed against their parents making them practice, he followed the Korean tradition of making his own parents miserable, claiming he was imprisoned, enslaved, and invoking claims of injustice, oppression, and out-

rage. Thanks to the forbearance and diligence of his mother though, he persevered through the pain of practicing, learning music theory, studying sight reading, and memorizing fingering charts, chords, and scales.

One day I saw him at our piano tinkering with the notes and creating his own tunes. He was playing with both hands and experimenting with harmonies, rhythms, and tones. For a while, he was trying to reproduce songs from church and school, but later he ventured out with his own musical originality. Now he continues the tinkering, but with his violin, ukulele, and recorder. I don’t know where his musicality will lead him but, for now, he enjoys the disciplined freedom of being a musician, and a good one at that.

Both boys experienced freedom, albeit in different ways and at different stages of their lives. One illustrates an anarchic freedom that is undisciplined, chaotic, even a bit violent. Disorder and anomie are understood as liberty, but really result in unfulfilled true potential and individuality. Though many may tolerate this type of freedom, it merely results in loud noise, sticky keys, and dirty diapers.

The second illustrates a freedom that emerges from discipline and defined boundaries. Habits must be overcome, igno-

rance dispelled through education, and inability overrun by repetition. But stopping here will surely result not in freedom, but education gone awry. Basic piano playing skills result in something much larger than the instrument itself. The objective is not to practice and learn the mechanics of music. Rather, it’s when the perseverance and hours of parenting pays off and your son learns the freedom of expression, creativity, communication, art, imagination, inspiration, originality, ingenuity, enthusiasm, emotion, and individuality! It is in the midst of boundaries that true expression, freedom, and identity are discovered.

In like manner, we have the opportunity to find our deepest forms of expression, freedom, and identity in our relationship with and service to God. Today under the banner of freedom and liberty, many seek to have their own identities, resulting in hands slamming down on keyboards to produce loud, dissonant chords. If we follow through with what the Lord intended for us, as revealed in Scripture, we will experience the joy of creating new melodies for Him. For some, this means finding ourselves to be beautifully created; for others, it means embracing the racial, gender, and sexual identities that God intended; and for all, it means finding purpose in ministry and service. ♣

EDITORS' PICKS

IT'S A KEEPER

Once I could stop my flow of tears, I laminated the one-page article “The Man on the Middle Cross,” by Julie Jenson (October 2023). My new personal witnessing question to others will be “How well do you know the Man on the middle cross?”

Like Todd, in the story, many others have been greatly blessed in the process of managing grief.

Linda Whicker

God With Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology

John C. Pechman, God With Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology (Sheridan Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2023). ISBN-13: 978-160122-01-8. Hardcover, 304 pages, US\$4.95. Reviewed by Garth Marjar, pastor, western Michigan.

The book people identify as “page turners” typically don’t have “theology” on the cover. The endearing aspect of this theological volume is it’s a beautiful narration of the most wonderful story ever told. The title shows the overarching theme of Scripture and Adventist theology: God’s desire to be with us. Each chapter uses the Bible to expound Adventist theology and engage opposing views and difficult questions in a way that is simple and easy to follow.

While the subtitle states that the book is an introduction to Adventist theology, it’s much more. Pechman keeps God central, and as the reader finds answers to some of life’s most difficult questions, they also find a relational God who’s been right there with them the whole time. His treatment of the trisane God speaks to this. Special care is taken to present the sanctuary message with clarity, not only focusing on the investigative judgment but also thoroughly explaining the importance of the vindication of God’s character.

An entire section explains the concept of sola scriptura, specifically in regard to the gift of prophecy and the ministry of Ellen White. Pechman masterfully explains this topic in a way that recognizes the importance of the authority of the Word of God and also fully appreciates her ministry and writings. He gives a fair treatment of last generation theology, albeit brief.

As a pastor, I have hoped for a book that contained a solid response to questions regarding the canonization of Scripture, the Trinity, the personhood of the Son and Holy Spirit, as well as the great controversy theme that would be equally accessible to lay members. This volume not only already attempts to address my own questions, but a useful guide to interacting with other Christians who may hold different beliefs. God With Us covers Adventist doctrine and doctrine-on-passage with respect to the rest of Christianity, complex with similarities and differences. Competing theories are clearly marked so the reader doesn’t get lost in distinguishing between the Adventist



position and the alternative Pechman gives a general explanation of other beliefs without delving too much into the complexities. Without attacking or trivializing them, he clearly presents the logic behind each of the competing theories and gives a critical analysis. I greatly appreciated the gentle yet covering narrative and spiritual thread every section.

While I understand that this book was written with the formal classroom in mind, I am excited about the potential offered to the local church. It will serve as a resource for discipling leaders, laypeople, friends, or family members who have been skeptical of the church and want an in-depth confusion of beliefs. I purchased a copy for each of my sisters. Within a few days they were blown away by its readability and easy-to-use content for answering questions. God With Us has taught me a seasoned Seventh-day Adventist, about how our beliefs flow together with the story of Scripture, and has inspired my ministry as a local pastor and soul winner. This book certainly deserves a spot on any Seventh-day Adventist’s bookshelf! #

be absent from Him. He knows our hearts. He knows. God bless.
Chrissie (via Facebook)

TRUE HOPE FOUND IN GOD

I am thankful that Laura Frary shared her experience in “The Final Good Night” (September 2023). It is a comfort to know that we have a loving, just, and merciful Creator who is in control and understands all things, and who can make the decisions necessary based on all the information. It takes faith to believe in something that we do not fully understand, yet through such faith by God’s grace we have true hope. I have lost two family members to suicide, and it has been hard to understand why these tragedies happened. But I am so grateful to God for the promises He has given to us in the Bible. I’m thankful for the reminder through this article that we can trust God to know what is right in all circumstances.

Jonathan Nilberg

PRAISE THE LORD

After reading “Ministry and Miracles in Mongolia” (September 2023), I praise the Lord that He is raising up dedicated young leaders there in Mongolia. I pray there will soon be a Hope Channel Mongolia, joining our

WELL-WRITTEN

I found “The Final Good Night,” by Laura Frary (September 2023), to be a well-written article about what is often a very sensitive (and divisive) subject matter.

And having lost three family members in this manner, I can easily empathize with Sister Frary.

Shalom aleichem!

M. Ross Nearon

HE KNOWS OUR HEARTS

As I reflect on “The Final Good Night” (September 2023), I honestly believe that God looks at where we’ve come from, our history, but also our genetics, and takes all of that into account when He affirms our decision for

eternity. We don’t know the end from the beginning. We can see only what is before us.

I believe that if we would be happy with Him for eternity, we will be with Him for eternity. If we would not be happy with Him for eternity, He is merciful and will not force us to be with Him. God is a God of love and will never tell someone they have to die eternally unless that is what they have decided for themselves. We talk about the wrath of God. I believe that wrath is toward sin and not His children. We get the fallout of that wrath when we choose sin rather than God. Out of love, He gives us our heart’s desire—to be with Him or

We don't know the end from the beginning.
We can only see what is before us.

CHRISSE

church's 82-channel global evangelistic media network.

Derek Morris

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO ANGER

Wintley Phipps, in "How to Keep From Being Angry" (September 2023), addresses anger. Anger in itself is not a sin. Rather it is one of the emotions given to us by God. A sin associated with anger involves how we react to our anger. In my reflection on my own anger, I have come to see it as stemming from either an actual loss or a presumed loss of something of value. From that perspective I have found it healing to deal with the root of my anger—my sense of loss. In our humanness we have emotions. They are a part of how we were created. They were given to us for a purpose. We can learn from them. They can be a source of growth.

Gregory Matthews

ONLY GOD CAN KNOW

Perhaps the most important point made in Angel Rodríguez' article "Self-killing in Scripture" found in the September 2023 issue of the *Review* is to not place our faulty judgment upon the desperate acts of others. Until we have faced the same circumstances ourselves, we can never fully understand what

drives someone over the edge of that precipice. Excruciating pain from an illness; an ignorance of options to resolve a situation; shame because of poor choices—these are not the same as the person who continues to smoke or drink or take drugs or live promiscuously after he or she has been made aware of the potential consequences. I have long believed that our brain chemistry can be so altered by stress that only God can know if a suicide was a selfish act.

James Plumley

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAMSON

Unfortunately, far too many Christians view Samson's death as a suicide. But Samson did not commit suicide. Although he was physically blind, and after grinding slowly at the millstone each day, Samson gained spiritual discernment and a true vision of God's love. That is why God

returned to him his prodigious strength. Knowing that everybody who was anybody would be present at the great feast and celebration to Dagon for defeating him, Samson recognized that with one strong effort he would be able to kill more Philistines than ever before.

Angel Rodríguez in "Self-killing in Scripture" (September 2023) correctly distinguishes between martyrdom and suicide. Samson's prayer (Judges 16:28) is definitely not the prayer of a man who believes his life has no value. That is a martyr's prayer. This is why the writer of Hebrews includes Samson in the great "cloud of witnesses" faithful to God (Heb. 12:1; 11:32, 33). Samson is put in the same group of faithful with David and Samuel. Will Samson be in heaven? You bet! So can we, despite our weaknesses and failings.

Josué Rosado

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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“God will help us encourage others to eat better.”

Javier Villamarin, p. 15

NEWS



Central California Conference digital missionaries training at Clovis Seventh-day Adventist Church in Clovis, California. PHOTO: COURTESY OF JUSTIN JOUNGHAN KIM, CENTRAL CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

PRAYER MEETS TECHNOLOGY TO WIN PEOPLE FOR JESUS

A SOCIAL MEDIA MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL EVANGELISM.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

As part of the 2023 Global Internet Evangelism Network (GAIN) Asia Conference, Seventh-day Adventist communicators from across Asia learned about the possibilities of digital evangelism through a recently implemented method that involves prayer, follow-up, and personal engagement using technology.

On September 14 Justin Jounghan Kim led more than 230 attendees gathered at the Northern Asia-Pacific Division Leadership Training Center in Jeju Island, Korea, to reflect on his recent experience as digital evangelism director of the Central California Conference (CCC). He shared how he and his team have enlisted the

help of tools already available and the support of the North American Division (NAD) and the General Conference (GC) Communication Department.

“The CCC is a region that includes Silicon Valley, the home of Google, Apple, Facebook, and many other large technological companies,” Kim told the audience. “That area also has the lowest population of Seventh-day Adventists in the NAD.”

He added that it also has a sizable population of atheists or people with seemingly no spiritual inclinations. It’s hardly surprising, then, that many Adventist churches in the area are struggling to reach people with the gospel.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL EVANGELISM

Digital evangelism is based on content creation to share and eventually engage others. Kim tried to share this idea with the churches in the area, but his early efforts seemed to go nowhere. “When I went around talking about it, I saw very low excitement, as if people were thinking, *This is not for us; it’s for some younger, tech-savvy people out there,*” he said.

Kim eventually found a project connected to the GC Communication Department, which includes posting ads on social media that simply offer people someone to pray for them. After a steady follow-up, those who desire it can receive ad-

When prayer meets technology, we can truly help to save souls.

ditional guidance to get acquainted with the Bible and its teachings.

It's a project that has already proved to be immensely successful in various regions around the world. Getting acquainted with it "was a 'eureka' moment for me," Kim said.

WHAT THE PROCESS ENTAILS

Kim explained that the process includes an online phase first, and then moves to an online and in-person second phase. When a person contacts them asking for prayer, they immediately pray with the assistance of a media response team. The next day someone in the team follows up on the person who contacted them. And they keep doing it for days, building a relationship with them.

This online pastoral-care phase has enlisted the support of the Andrews University-based Adventist Information Ministry (AIM), which employs seminarians studying to be ministers of the gospel to function as chaplains, offering spiritual care. A 24/7 ministry, AIM is the central contact center for Adventist media outreach in North America.

In the second phase there is community engagement, online small groups, and eventually a public evangelism meeting, he said. Kim explained that they discovered that people who have spiritual needs usually also have physical needs. That's where the community service and engagement component comes in. Then people start connecting with others through online small groups. "After three months we are usually at the point

where we can invite people to come to church," Kim said.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Kim and his team began to implement this program in the CCC. They selected a 10-mile radius around six congregations in the area, to target the communities with customized ads.

The first time, the CCC team used ads that have been used with amazing success rates in Brazil. "We did the same in Silicon Valley, and it was a disaster," Kim acknowledged.

Then the team decided to create ads more adapted to the style and ethos of Silicon Valley. The response was significantly better, but still not enough. "We were more successful when we prepared ads with the local pastors in their environment—for instance, in the case of Silicon Valley, in front of Google, telling them, 'I will pray for you; I am your neighbor,'" Kim said.

As of early September a pilot implementation of the initiative in just six local congregations has already led to 1,358 solid contacts—those that imply daily repeated connections—and 17 church visits and one baptism, Kim reported. "These are real people, real responses, real activity. . . . And this is something that had never happened."

FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL PASTORS

The initiative has not only benefited those who call requesting a prayer, Kim said. Local pastors have also come on board as they exper-

ience for themselves how simple but powerfully effective the prayer digital evangelism initiative is.

"Our church has made contact with more than 400 individuals through this project," Daniel Gouveia, pastor of the Central Fresno Adventist Church, said. "What's even more exciting is that many of these people are voluntarily stepping forward to be part of our community."

Mark Ferrell, pastor of the San Francisco Central Adventist Church, agreed. "During my ministry I've tried various methods of evangelism," Ferrell said. "Finally, I've found this digital approach to be the most effective way to reach out to our community in our modern times. It's truly transformative."

LOCAL CHURCHES INVOLVED

Local church members and leaders have been energized after finding out that the system works. More than 200 members recently signed up to attend a digital missionary training seminar. They are the ones who will be key to leading in the essential engaging part of the process.

"As I see it, engagement must take place at local church and conference levels," Kim said. "When local members get involved, they can invite people, telling them, 'This is my church. Please, come!' If we manage to decentralize the process, we'll be able to multiply it. Because when prayer meets technology, we can truly help to save souls." ❖



Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary in Sri Lanka celebrated its centennial on its current campus in Mailapitiya, September 7-11. PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARY SINNIAH

SRI LANKA COLLEGE AND SEMINARY CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF MISSION AND SERVICE

THE SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO PREPARING STUDENTS TO SERVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.

EDWARD RODRIGUEZ, SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary in Sri Lanka celebrated its incredible journey to the century mark with a five-day celebration on its current campus in Mailapitiya, September 7-11. The commemoration served as a powerful symbol of the institution's unwavering dedication to its original goals, school leaders said.

The institution's centenary anniversary was a fitting tribute to its long heritage, leaders said. Many successful alumni have visited their alma mater to speak with current students and share their experiences. Southern Asia-Pacific Division president Roger Caderma and associate treasurer Sweetie Ritchil visited the school to inspire students and faculty.

School parades, cultural performances, and spiritual meetings were just some of the activities that guests engaged in over the course of the gathering. These served as a springboard for thinking about the institution's history and its potential in the present and future.

In his address to the institution, Caderma praised Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary for being true to its founding principles. "This institution has not only prepared students academically but has also instilled in them the

values of service and compassion. It is a beacon of hope and enlightenment in our region," he said.

Ritchil agreed, reiterating the importance of the school in developing future spiritual and civic leaders.

MISSION AND VISION

Preparing students to serve God and their neighbors is Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary's primary goal, school leaders said. Since its founding a century ago, this guiding idea has served as the cornerstone of the school's pedagogical approach.

The institution's mission also goes well beyond the scope of traditional academics. "Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary focuses equal value on academic rigor and the provision of vocational skills through work-study programs," school leaders reported. "This method provides students with the tools they need to become productive members of society."

A BRIEF LOOK BACK AT THE PAST

In 1923, in the town of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka, Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary opened its doors as a primary school. The organization has grown and changed over the years. Its cur-

rent location in Mailapitiya, Sri Lanka, is located in a 150-acre former coconut farm that was purchased by the government in 1952. The peaceful, verdant setting is conducive to study, and it also demonstrates the school's concern for the environment.

The modern Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary campus is well organized, with separate dormitories for boys and girls as well as housing for faculty and staff. The site has both academic buildings and several industrial buildings that are used for various vocational and technical education courses.

"Graduates from Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary will be well equipped for a wide range of careers and service opportunities thanks to the school's emphasis on a well-rounded education," school leaders said. "The school enters its second century with a renewed sense of purpose and dedication to its mission and vision. The centennial commemoration serves as a reminder that while the school has developed over time, its essential ideals and commitment to wholistic education remain intact. [The school] continues to equip students not just for academic success but also for lives of service, influence, and purpose as it looks to the future." ■



CHAINARONG PRASERTTHAI/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

SUICIDE PREVENTION COURSE IS A LIFELINE FOR CALLERS

ADVENTIST INFORMATION MINISTRY'S INITIATIVE IS TRAINING PEOPLE TO RESPOND.

CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

When Mari Bowerman began working at Adventist Information Ministry (AIM) as operations supervisor in 2022, she noticed the ministry was receiving “quite a bit of calls” from people struggling with depression. “COVID and its impact increased the level of depression across the board,” she noted.

AIM was established in 1982 and is the epicenter for managing evangelistic interests from Adventist media and other entities in the North American Division of the Adventist Church. It is staffed by customer service representatives, referral chaplains, and digital evangelism specialists. Recently director Brent Hardinge took a critical step toward meeting callers’ wholistic needs by appointing Marshall McKenzie as assistant director for pastoral care. Keying in on the mental health aspect, Bowerman sought out training so AIM staff could better respond to callers exhibiting signs of depression and high risk of suicide.

Bowerman soon engaged Dustin Young, licensed clinical social worker and assistant professor of social work at Andrews University, to design a suicide prevention and de-escalation course. This training teaches AIM staff how to validate a caller, de-escalate intense emotion, and watch or listen for signs of depression or suicidal ideation. It also offers steps to take when

they suspect someone is in danger, including initiating that often uncomfortable conversation beginning with “Are you OK?”

This training is geared toward AIM customer service representatives taking calls; these are primarily student workers from various majors, or chaplains, typically seminarians, with whom such callers may also connect for prayer. Young specified that the training does not prepare people to offer treatment; instead, it equips them to direct high-risk individuals to further resources. These include such on-campus resources as student counseling, community counseling, and a new telehealth-based mental health support for all students, staff, and faculty. It also points trainees to the 988 phone number, an external North America-wide suicide hotline or crisis text line.

The mental health training comprises three key elements, which are streamlined into 90-minute sessions. In part one students discuss why suicide is a problem. They learn about rising suicide rates worldwide (since AIM takes calls from around the world) and the fact that in the 20 countries where attempting suicide is illegal, even talking about it could be a risk.

In part two they discuss how to talk about it. Students learn which questions to ask to determine someone’s level of risk and how

to hand a caller off to a mental health professional.

Finally, in part three students discuss how to manage what they hear. Since helpers are at a higher risk of burnout or compassion fatigue, this critical segment teaches them how to metabolize (or process) that exposure without being unduly impacted.

Young came to Andrews from the clinical world, with all her previous work involving frontline crisis intervention. Furthermore, she is trained in several suicide prevention training models, including Soul Shop, a training specific to faith communities offered through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. “Faith communities hold a vital role in providing connection and community support for those struggling to hold on to a glimmer of hope in dark and distressing times,” she said.

Young is thrilled to bring her different experiences to the forefront in this training, which she created in 30-40 hours over nine months, researching and tailoring it to AIM’s needs.

An acronym Young has integrated into this course from her own suicide prevention training is CALL, which stands for the following: Commit to your safety and disclosures; Ask the question about safety; Listen for the answers and to the individual in general; and

Lead them to safe providers or professionals who can take it from there.

Young observed that while it might be easier to say, “Just pass [at-risk callers] off to a counselor,” counselors will often ask, “Who are your connections and supports?” She stated, “I wish everybody had suicide prevention training, because sometimes it’s just a conversation. Other times you get to that therapist. But many times it’s those listening and holding the conversations that keep people alive,” she noted.

COURSE HAS POTENTIAL FOR WIDE REACH

The course is already being used with new AIM workers and making a difference. In the summer Young adjusted what they had recorded for the course and used it for a five-hour suicide and crisis response training with seminary students and chaplains. She will also introduce a version of this course to churches in October. Young noted, “It is vital to train pastors and faith leaders, as it is more likely that a person will approach a pastor than a counselor. If pastors know how to respond, it also provides support for the pastors’ health in the helping process.”



Maranatha leaders, supporters, and Southeast Dominican Conference president Gabriel Paulino (fifth from left) pose for a group photo in Santo Domingo. PHOTO: MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

MARANATHA'S FOOTPRINT HIGHLIGHTS THE POWER OF ADVENTIST SYNERGY

SUPPORTING MINISTRIES AND CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS ARE MAKING AN IMPACT FOR GOD.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

The footprint of Maranatha Volunteers International, a supporting ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that builds churches, schools, and water wells around the world, became clear during a recent church celebration in the Dominican Republic.

Thousands of church members, leaders, supporting ministries, and community invitees gathered in Santo Domingo on August 26 to celebrate 25 years of steady growth in the Adventist Church’s Southeast Dominican Conference (ADOSE). Church members and special guests attending the convocation thanked God for His care and blessings during the past quarter of a century.

At the same time, regional church leaders and members committed to redoubling their efforts to share the gospel message. The event included biblical messages, songs of praise, a baptismal ceremony, and special moments to honor those whose involvement has been instrumental in this development.

As part of the celebration, regional church leaders honored the three decades of Maranatha’s work, which, leaders said, has left a tangible footprint in the area. Church leaders estimate that the dozens of Adventist church buildings either funded or facilitated by Maranatha in the territory since 1992 amount to 30 percent of the approximately 370 churches in the Santo Domingo metropolitan area.

“Maranatha builds churches, and then we fill them,” a regional church leader said.

MEASURABLE IMPACT

The massive celebration highlighted another aspect of Adventist mission drive: the power of synergy between lay-led supporting ministries and church officers working together in various capacities with the same goal, church leaders acknowledged.

During the August 25-26 weekend Maranatha’s leaders and a group of donors toured current initiatives in the Santo Domingo area, which include dozens of church buildings and a larger project called Ciudad del Cielo (“City of Heaven”), an Adventist campus, expected to be inaugurated by 2025, that will include a spacious Education and Evangelism Center, a building with multiple classrooms, offices, bathrooms, and an

Soul winning in this country is a lifestyle.

auditorium, plus a large church for more than 400 people.

The visiting group toured some of the church buildings recently opened and participated in the inauguration of three more, besides attending the 25-year anniversary celebrations.

On August 25 the Maranatha delegation stopped at the ADOSE headquarters, where a wall-to-wall map of Santo Domingo and its surroundings marks the exact place of every Maranatha-facilitated church building in the area since 1992. ADOSE president Gabriel Paulino explained how, from one Maranatha-funded church building three decades ago, other churches sprang up across the city and beyond. Those new congregations, called “daughter churches,” soon spread across the growing city, to eventually facilitate the launch of still new churches. During Maranatha’s latest stint in the country, the ministry inaugurated at least one “fourth generation” congregation, the “great-granddaughter” of the original church built by Maranatha in 1992.

A LESSON IN SYNERGY

Not every ministry works with bulldozers, blocks, and beams, however. The August 26 celebration of ADOSE’s 25 years also highlighted how other ministries of the Adventist Church have provided workers to preach, teach, and reach out to Santo Domingo’s neighbors with Bible truth.

The anniversary celebration in-

cluded a keynote message by Henry Beras, vice president of the Atlantic Union Conference (AUC) in the United States. Beras, a native of Dominican Republic, was part of an AUC team that preached at venues across the city and beyond to support around 40 evangelistic series in the country.

It Is Written (IIW), another ministry, in this case of the North American Division, also provided preachers for the evangelistic drive in July and August. During the August 26 ceremony, regional church leaders recognized their work in the person of IIW evangelism director Wes Peppers. IIW support included General Conference associate Ministerial secretary Robert Costa, who is also speaker/director of Escrito está, IIW’s Spanish channel.

The support from abroad, however, wouldn’t have been enough but for the buy-in on the ground, leaders acknowledged. “The fervor and commitment of local pastors and laypeople toward fulfilling God’s mission was contagious,” Costa said at the end of a series of meetings. “Soul winning in this country is a lifestyle.” According to regional church leaders, ADOSE welcomed more than 1,400 members between July and August.

GOD’S GUIDANCE AND MEMBERS’ BUY-IN

During the August 26 celebration ADOSE leaders acknowledged this synergy by honoring IIW, Maranatha, and others who stepped up to support the church growth across

the region. Above all, and despite all human efforts, leaders acknowledged God’s guidance and providence all along.

“What has happened here during the past 25 years is not simply the result of hard work and planning, nor the product of great churches, but is based completely on the miracle that comes from the gifts of God,” Maranatha’s president, Don Noble, said during the ceremony. At the same time, Noble, who in 31 years has made 75 trips to the Dominican Republic, acknowledged the local support of their endeavors. “We get excited about building in this country for this one reason: You are so friendly and loving and caring for others,” he said.

Before and after honoring those who committed time, effort, and funds to support the Adventist Church in Santo Domingo, a baptism, dedicatory prayer, and music crowned the moments of spiritual reflection. A local choir sang their hearts out as they called people to reflect on the connection between God’s involvement and human effort. “Through God we will do great things,” they sang. 🦋



More than 100 Seventh-day Adventist pastors and church members in Bogotá, Colombia, met for the inauguration of Green Food, a vegan restaurant. PHOTO: UPPER MAGDALENA CONFERENCE

ADVENTIST CHURCH IN COLOMBIA LAUNCHES VEGAN RESTAURANT IN BOGOTÁ

LEADERS HOPE THE FACILITY WILL SOON BECOME A CENTER OF INFLUENCE.

Laura Acosta and Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division News

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Colombia recently inaugurated a newly renovated restaurant in the capital city of Bogotá. Dozens of church leaders and members toured the restaurant and sampled the healthy dishes on September 5.

Named Green Food, the restaurant's focus on vegan dishes and healthy bites is part of the Upper Magdalena Conference's strategy to highlight a healthy lifestyle with a spiritual ambiance, church leaders said.

"This launch is about the continual commitment of the Adventist Church here to promote wellness and conscious eating," Roberto Carvajal, project director of the Upper Magdalena Conference, said.

The church opened the vegetarian restaurant 26 years ago in the same location, but after studying, refocusing, and restructuring it, conference leaders decided to invest funds to expand, renovate, and convert it into a vegan restaurant with gluten-free, lactose-free, and sugar-free offerings.

"For us as a conference it is very important to have developed this project, because we want to eventually turn it into a center of influence where the entire membership in Bogotá can bring their friends,"

Fredy Martínez, president of the Upper Magdalena Conference, said. Leaders are dreaming of expanding the space to include a healthy lifestyle center, he said.

Abner De Los Santos, vice president of the General Conference, and Roberto Herrera, Stewardship director of the Inter-American Division, participated in the inaugural ceremony and congratulated the church leadership for the visionary healthy lifestyle impact that will make a difference in the life of the city.

GREEN FOOD LEADERS

The restaurant is run by a married couple, Marta Zabala and Javier Villamarín, both vegan chefs. "We want for everyone who visits the restaurant to learn what is the proper diet because sometimes it's not about the quantity but the quality of food," Zabala said. She has helped restructure the menu and incorporate diverse and nutritional flavors during the four months of the restaurant's reconstruction and remodeling. "The idea is for customers to find different options each day. We don't generally repeat the menu," Zabala added.

"Green Food offers a buffet-style menu, an à la carte menu, daily specials, and fast dishes like pizza,

hamburgers, and desserts," Villamarín said. "God will help us encourage others to eat better," he said. The restaurant is designed to have several spaces to promote family togetherness and spiritual enrichment, leaders said.

In just the few days that the restaurant has been running, customers have shared how much they love the food, Martínez said. "People say that this is the best vegan restaurant in Bogotá, and we are very proud of all the investment made in it and are excited about the message it carries with respect to the mission we must fulfill as a church body."

The restaurant is the only church-operated restaurant in Bogotá. The dream is to have a full-time chaplain onsite every week as church leaders move forward to impact the lives of thousands of people in the coming months and years.

"This rebirth of this Adventist restaurant represents a renewed commitment to a healthy lifestyle, hospitality, and the mission to positively impact the community," Carvajal said. "We want to continue being a center of influence and a space where we can daily share the values of love, health, and well-being." ▀

Adventist Family Ministries director Willie Oliver (left) hands the Spalding Medallion for Distinguished Service to Roberto Iannò on September 9. PHOTO: HOPE MEDIA ITALIA



ITALIAN FAMILY MINISTRIES LEADER AWARDED THE SPALDING MEDALLION

ROBERTO IANNÒ HAS CREATED RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FAMILIES.

LINA FERRARA, HOPE MEDIA ITALIA, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Adventist Family Ministries at the General Conference (GC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church conferred the Arthur and Maud Spalding Medallion for Distinguished Service on Roberto Iannò of the Italian Union of Churches Conference (IUCC) during the pastoral families' convention in Lignano Sabbiadoro, Udine, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, on September 9.

"We usually give this award to an individual who has been outstanding, distinguished in his service; not all directors receive it," Adventist Family Ministries director Willie Oliver said at the ceremony. "Roberto has exemplified what it means to be a family ministries director of high quality. He has been very methodical in his leadership. Simply outstanding," he added.

Iannò has been serving as IUCC Family Ministries director since 2014, and he is also pastor of a local church. Over the years he has raised awareness among churches and local family ministries leaders to implement programs aimed at nurturing families. His department translates the annual Adventist Family Ministries resource book, promotes Adventist Marriage Encounter weekends, organizes the Helping Relationships Convention (now in its sixth year) and the family camp in summer, and imple-

ments other programs and local activities.

His ways of consistently putting into practice many diverse projects addressed to the various segments of the department—families, couples, parents, churches, and so on—led the Family Ministries world leaders to honor Iannò with the highest award given by Adventist Family Ministries. Iannò received the forty-ninth medal conferred on an individual or a couple in four decades. He is also the first Italian to be given this award.

"I thank my wife, Anna, for her valuable and willing support in our common calling to serve families," Iannò said. "I also thank the associate director, M. Antonietta Calà, for her professional contribution to the department, also enriched by the help of her husband, Patrizio Calliari."

AN EXTENSIVE CAREER

Iannò graduated from the University of Florence with bachelor's and master's degrees in education, from Newbold College with a master's in religion, and from the University of Padua with a master's in family counseling. He also earned from Andrews University a Doctor of Ministry degree in family ministry.

He has served as the Italian Union executive secretary, edu-

cation director, president of the Ethics Commission, and associate professor of Christian education at the Italian Adventist University Villa Aurora. He was also the speaker for the Italian Union satellite evangelistic campaign in 2000.

Iannò is an ordained minister who, besides being pastor of a local church, currently serves as Family Ministries director for the Italian Union and associate professor of theology of marriage and family at the Italian Adventist University.

He has lectured in the Psychology Department of the University of Padua and published several scholarly articles in the field of family relationships and premarital education. He has also published articles on family topics in *Il Messaggero Avventista*, the Italian denominational magazine, and in the General Conference Family Ministries resource book.

Iannò is married to Anna, a kindergarten teacher, and they have two children: Gianluca, married to Alessia, and Daniele.

He is certified as a Prepare/Enrich presenter and trainer in Italy, as an International Partner and licensee. He and his wife also started the Adventist faith expression of Worldwide Marriage Encounter in Italy, under the mentorship of John and Carolyn Wilt. ♣



ADVENTIST YOUTH IN PANAMA PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST COUNTRY-WIDE YOUTH CONGRESS. More than 1,700 Seventh-day Adventist young people from across Panama met to jumpstart their relationship with Jesus. Dozens of young people from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia also attended the three-day event in Panama City, August 18-20. Young people took part in general sessions and seminars on mental health, leadership development, digital discipleship, youth society leadership, Bible journaling, mission service, lettering, and more.



EIGHTY MUSICIANS REACH NEW HEIGHTS AT SPECIAL SUMMER CAMP IN CROATIA. The Music Summer Camp, now in its eighth year, is a masterclass for various musical instruments and music theory enthusiasts in Croatia. Held this year from August 20 to 23 in Maruševec, the camp brought together 80 young players of piano, violin, cello, accordion, flute, and saxophone, among other musical instruments. The camp is organized by the Youth Ministry Department of the Adriatic Union Conference.



GRENADA'S SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE URGES LEADERS TO SERVE FAITHFULLY. The Honorable Leo Cato recently urged Seventh-day Adventist leaders and young people not to be distracted from the church's mission and to be prepared for service when God calls. More than 140 Adventist leaders were gathered at the St. George's Seventh-day Adventist Church as part of the organization's Sixth Quadrennial Session of the Grenada Conference, which began its business meetings on August 23.



SOUTH PACIFIC GOVERNMENT LEADERS VISIT ADVENTIST SCHOOL IN TONGA. Beulah Adventist Primary School in Tonga was in the international spotlight in early September when a delegation of South Pacific government leaders paid a visit to see the impact on students of the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) program. Visitors to the Tongan school included Australia's assistant mental health minister Emma McBride; New Zealand's associate health minister Aupito William Sio; and Palau's health minister Gaafar Uherbelau.



HOSPITALS REWORK CAFETERIA MENUS TO OFFER MORE HEALTHY CHOICES. UChicago Medicine AdventHealth is making changes to the food served at its cafés and Grab and Go stands. The decision sprang from a desire to adhere more closely to an AdventHealth concept of CREATION Life, a Bible-based plan for building a life based on choice, rest, environment, activity, trust, interpersonal relationships, outlook, and nutrition. The food and service staff added more fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as more plant-based, vegan, and organic entrées.



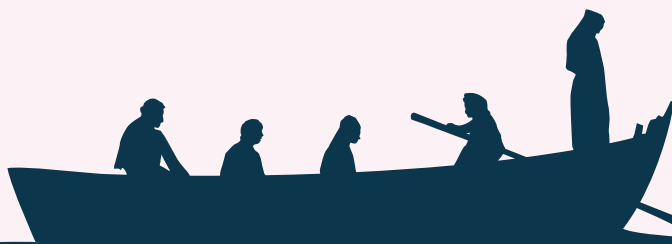
EDUCATOR'S BIBLE WILL HELP DEEPEN FAITH ACROSS SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION SCHOOLS. Adventist education has rolled out 8,000 copies of a special Abide Bible across the South Pacific Division (SPD) designed for all staff in Adventist schools. The two-year project was supported and funded by the SPD and its four union conferences. The Abide Bible contains extra resources created and compiled by Murray Hunter, Australian Union Conference associate Ministerial secretary for chaplaincy and media coordinator.



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IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Who we become when we are with Christ

FÉLIX H. CORTEZ

Identity refers to the total sum of conditions (biological, psychological, sociological, historical, religious, etc.) that make us who we are. That is, identity is the sum of things that make us different from any other person. Identity in Christ refers to everything we become when we are with Christ. Identity in Christ designates a person that has been *transformed* and *empowered* by Christ.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of transformation of those who are in Christ is what the rulers saw in Peter and John after they healed the paralytic (Acts 4:13-22). Peter and John came from humble beginnings, without formal education, riches, or power. After jailing them for a night and accusing them of deceiving the people, a crime deserving death (Deut. 13:1-5), the rulers expected to find Peter and John chastened, intimidated by the court, and willing to pay attention. Instead, they found them undaunted, articulate, and authoritative. Their astonishing transformation was most evident in the boldness, or confidence (*parrësia*), with which they spoke. In the opinion of the council, the boldness of Peter and John, and of the disciples in general (Acts 4:29-31), was a distinctive sign they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF OUR MINDS

The boldness of the disciples was the result of a change in their understanding of God, Jesus, and themselves. Allow me to briefly explain the kind of changes they experienced.

Like other Jews, the disciples believed there is only one God. The disciples probably recited the *Shema*—which affirms that God is one and should be loved above all things—twice a day, just as other Jews.¹ Jesus Himself quoted the *Shema* as the most

important of the commandments (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; cf. Luke 10:27). This was the distinctive fundamental Jewish belief.² The disciples recognized, however, that there was “some sort of plurality *within* the one God of the *Shema*,” which implied a reconfiguration of their Jewish belief.³ In other words, the disciples recognized that the one God of Israel, YHWH, should somehow be understood as including more than one divine person.

Beyond the ways the disciples discerned the marks of divinity in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, their belief in His divinity was also the result of an eschatological insight. The disciples understood that Jesus’ coming had fulfilled the promise of YHWH, the one God of Israel, that He would return to His temple (e.g., Eze. 48:35; Haggai 2:7; Zech. 2:4, 5, 10; Mal. 3:1, 2; cf. Eze. 10).⁴ Therefore, the New Testament describes Jesus as the fulfillment of that prophecy. John the Baptist was the herald that appeared in the desert to “prepare the way of the Lord,” YHWH, who was returning to Israel to reveal His glory and announce the forgiveness and consolation of Israel (Isa. 40:1-5).⁵

The disciples also held the foundational Jewish belief that the law played a central role in the life and the institutions of the Jewish people. Deuteronomy made clear that the Torah was central to the covenant between God and the nation. Thus, the Torah provided the constitution of the nation and the foundation for all its institutions, including its political parties. The Torah, Alan F. Segal writes, was “the root metaphor of Israelite society.”⁶

Eventually, however, the law became an expression of the distinctiveness of the Jewish nation as God’s people and served as a boundary separating them from other nations. Early Judaism, in its

effort to avoid the idolatry and unfaithfulness that caused their exile, had come to use the law as a means of separation from other peoples.⁷ This reaction is understandable in the context of some of God's instructions to Israel to keep themselves separate from other nations (Lev. 20:26). The law also became a source of privilege and pride relative to being God's chosen nation, favored with knowledge and the law (Rom. 9:4, 5; Deut. 4:32-40).

Despite this, Jesus did not reject the law but transformed the people's understanding of it. The Gospels describe Jesus as a law-observant Jew. He wore the tassels required by the law in the four corners of His outer garment,⁸ instructed the cleansed leper to go and show himself to the priests, as the law required,⁹ and reminded the rich young ruler that it was necessary to observe the law if he wanted to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:19). According to Matthew, however, Jesus came to reveal and actively demonstrate the law's true meaning (see Matt. 5:17-20).

Jesus' response to the *lex talionis* (the "eye for an eye" principle) and Moses' permission for divorce did not abrogate the law, but returned to the law's deeper intention and original purpose.¹⁰ Similarly, Jesus did not abrogate the difference between clean and unclean foods, but rejected human traditions that obscured the greater importance of inner over outward purity.¹¹ The debate between Jesus and the Pharisees about the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28) was not whether the Sabbath should be observed, but *how* it should be observed.

The disciples also held the Jewish belief that the temple was the center of Israel's national and religious life. It was the place God had chosen for His name to dwell, the place of God's throne (Deut. 12:11; 1 Kings 9:3; Ps. 87:1-4; Isa. 49:14-16; Eze. 43:6, 7; Sirach 36:18) and the place God would gather His children from all over the earth (1 Kings 8:48; Neh. 1:9). It was also the place where the priestly mediation and sacrifices, that is, all the means for atonement, were located. According to the prophets, Jerusalem would be the religious center for all the earth (Isa. 2:1-4). The first-century Jewish historian Josephus argued that since there is only one God, there is only one temple.¹² Accordingly, the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo noted that Jewish "zeal for their holy temple is the most predominant, and vehement, and universal feeling throughout the whole nation."¹³

Jesus, however, announced that the temple's symbolic function and rituals were fulfilled in His own person and ministry (Matt. 5:17-20; 12:6; John 1:29). Thus, Jesus offered forgiveness to sinners independently from the temple authorities and without reference to the temple cult (sacrifices). He also referred to the temple as "made with hands," which suggested the temple had become an idol, an assertion Stephen also made later (Acts 7:48; cf. Acts 6:11-14).¹⁴ The temple had become a source of pride and means of exclusion. Jewish zeal for the temple's purity threatened the Gentiles with death (cf. Acts 21:27-32) and financial abuse in the temple courts—which Jesus characterized as theft—alienated the poor (Luke 19:45, 46). Jesus envisioned a temple "not made with hands," that is, not marred by idolatry, where the blind and the lame would be healed (Mark 14:58; Matt. 21:13, 14), "a house of prayer for all the nations," where the foreigner and the eunuch would minister to God and be joyful (Mark 11:15-17; Isa. 56:3-7).

The disciples also embraced the hope for the eschatological restoration of Israel. This included several aspects: the gathering of the 12 tribes from the land of their dispersion, the subjugation or conversion of the nations, the purification of the temple and Jerusalem, and the transformation of Israel into a pure and righteous people.¹⁵ This hope was expressed in the question the disciples asked right before Jesus' ascension: "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The disciples differed from other early Jews, however, in that they believed Israel's restoration had begun already with Jesus. John the Baptist had announced and prepared the way for the fulfillment of this restoration (Matt. 17:11; Mark 9:12). Jesus had chosen 12 apostles—signaling the beginning of the gathering of the 12 tribes of Israel—and announced the coming of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30). They understood the restoration of Israel inaugurated by Jesus launched a new stage in God's purpose for the world. The Israelites who had been redeemed should now become God's witnesses to the nations so that God's salvation would reach the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6; Isa. 43:10, 12; 44:8; 42:6, 7). Therefore, Jesus instructed His disciples to be His witnesses and announce God's salvation to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8; cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; 2 Cor. 2:14).



JACOBBLUND/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

I am in Christ when the only way in which others can understand me is by understanding my relationship with Him.

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

As you can see, Jesus did not destroy the identity of His disciples in order to create a new one. Instead, He *cleansed their identity* by ridding them of wrong ideas and detrimental practices. He also *empowered their identity* by infusing them with a new sense of worth and purpose. He showed God was not distant and exacting. He had come to live with them, eat their food, heal their wounds, and pay their debts. They were not humble fishermen anymore, whose concern for subsistence left little time for loftier pursuits. They were now fishers of men, envoys of the ruler of the world with a message of salvation for all (Acts 4:12). They were not intimidated by the power of the Sanhedrin, because they walked in the presence of the one who sits at the right hand of God. They spoke with clarity and conviction because they had witnessed what they proclaimed (Acts 3:15), and the healing of the lame man in Jesus' name provided irrefutable evidence of the truth of their message. They had *walked with Christ* for many days, and now they *were in Him*.

What does it mean to be “in Christ”? A person is *in Christ* when the sense of who that person is—one's hopes and joys and the purpose and

direction of one's life—finds its explanation *in one's relationship with Jesus*. I am in Christ when the only way in which others can understand me is by understanding my relationship with Him.

The transformational power of Jesus does not reside primarily in His ability to teach me what to believe and how to act, but by being with Him I may learn *who Jesus is, and who I am in relationship to Him*.¹

¹ Deut. 6:4-7; Mishnah Tamid 5:1; Mishnah Berakhot 1:1, 2.

² For example, Judith 8:18; Sibylline Oracles 3.629; Wisdom of Solomon 11-15; Letter of Aristeas 132-137; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 5.112; Philo, *The Decalogue* 65.

³ Brant Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John A. Kincaid, *Paul, A New Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), p. 128.

⁴ See N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), pp. 104-106, 653, 654.

⁵ Matt. 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 3:2-6; John 1:19-23; see also Luke 1:76-79; 2:25, 30.

⁶ Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 38.

⁷ Letter of Aristeas 139, 142; Book of Jubilees 22:16.

⁸ Num. 15:38, 39; Deut. 22:12; Mark 6:56; Matt. 9:20; 14:36; Luke 8:44.

⁹ Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14.

¹⁰ *Lex talionis*: Matt. 5:38-42; cf. Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21. Divorce: Mark 10:2-9; cf. Deut. 24:1; Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:3-9.

¹¹ Mark 7:14-23; Matt 15:1-20.

¹² Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.193.

¹³ Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* 210.

¹⁴ The LXX often refers to idols as “made with hands” (Lev. 26:1; Isa. 2:18; 10:11; 19:1; Dan. 5:4, 23).

¹⁵ References to the four aspects of Israel's restoration can be found in Isaiah 49:6; 54:12; 60:6, 12, 21.

Félix H. Cortez is a professor of New Testament literature at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.



WHO AM I?

*How do I find my
flourishing place?*

JENNIFER JILL SCHWIRZER

I could tell you that you're a beloved child of the everlasting Father, a member of the eternal family.

I could tell you you're dead to sin and alive to God, approved, sanctified, established, triumphant, faithful, chosen, redeemed, rejoicing, called, and perfect in Him.

I could tell you all the things you are in Christ, according to Scripture, and it would be not only true but wonderfully true.

But let other scholars and writers cover those themes. I will be bringing the conversation down to terra firma, to the spot where you become a functioning member of the human family. I'll be asking, How do we figure out who we are here on earth, in the day-to-day? How do we find our flourishing place?

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17:7, 8).

The answer to this question plays heavily into our well-being. Our sense of identity can make or break us. I recently spoke to a teen who felt pressured to choose an alternate sexual identity in order not to be in the "oppressor" category. Soon after, a young adult told me of an unsupportive workplace, wondering how she could start over when her position had become a large part of who she was. Then a newly retired friend said he'd gone from "Who's Who" to "Who's that?" because people didn't seem to know him since he'd left his position. People everywhere struggle with a sense of their social identity.

We all want to matter, to have significance, and to contribute something of value. And we want that value to be seen by others. This is not prideful or selfish. It's actually normal, even healthy. A relational God made us in His image, and we derive satisfaction from meaningful mutually beneficial interaction with other people. With this in mind, I propose a simple formula for finding our place: trust, serve, and grow.

TRUST

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5, 6).

The world pressures us to plan a monumental life full of noteworthy accomplishments. We look at the great people of the world, hear their speeches at award events, and feel washed out in comparison. But when we take on the world's standard of greatness, we fret ourselves out of God's hands. "Too many, in planning for a brilliant future, make an utter failure."¹

We must remind ourselves that it's not up to us to make ourselves great. God defines greatness differently than we do, by the love we pour out to others rather than the praise others pour out for us. To find this place of flourishing in love, we follow a God who sees the end from the beginning and has a plan for our lives—a plan He reveals step by step as we follow. The One who died for us wants our happiness and fulfillment more than we do, for "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (Ps. 25:10).

The wise man of Ecclesiastes said, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccl. 9:10). What task lies nearest, of which you can build toward your flourishing place? Here is a series of questions to get the process of discovery started.

What need presents itself for which I may be uniquely qualified to help?

What human condition leaps out at me, begging to be addressed?

What are my gifts; what abilities come naturally?

What skills and assets have I already acquired?

What are my passions? What lights a fire under me?

What do I love to do? (Yes, God cares about that!)

What do I feel a moral responsibility toward?

What painful losses have I experienced that uniquely qualify me for ministry?

Is there something the Spirit has called me to do that I have not acted on?

On that last point, when we respond to the Spirit's prompting, new doors of opportunity open up before us. I got started in my writing career by writing letters of encouragement to people. I noticed that I loved expressing ideas on paper. From there the possibility of writing articles and books opened up.

SERVE

"Through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

When I first started reading Ellen White's writings, I balked at her word "useful." I thought it made people sound like vacuum cleaners. But now I get it. To be useful is to be of service to the greater

We all want to matter, to have significance, and to contribute something of value.

good. Here's a useful gem using that word: "There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."²

Did you get that? There is *no limit* to our usefulness when we follow God fully. An essential paradigm shift for those seeking to find their flourishing place is from being great to being a great blessing. We live, not to best others through competition, but to bless them through service. My friend David excelled at every sport he tried. He had started down the road toward professional skateboarding, but when he gave his heart to Christ, his direction changed. He started out by giving Bible studies to his friends, which led to preaching locally, which led to preaching globally. Once we choose to live a life of service, infinite possibilities open to our view. This is why we do what lies *nearest*—there is so much from which to choose! Serving those within our sphere creates a wave of influence that opens more and more doors and opportunities.

GROW

"Those who dwell under His shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain and grow like a vine" (Hosea 14:7).

It is a beautiful thing to throw ourselves into the furrow of the world's need; but this surrender to the greater good of humanity must be balanced with good stewardship of ourselves.

A friend quit a frustrating, unproductive ministry position only to be told, "You let the devil win!"

"Oh, no," she said, "The devil didn't win *me*. I'm going back to school." This person's graduate training increased her income, her credibility, and ultimately her usefulness. But it required her to climb out of the trenches for a time. Take in this beautiful truth: "Our first duty toward God and our fellow beings is that of self-development. Every faculty with which the Creator has endowed us should be cultivated to the

highest degree of perfection, that we may be able to do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable."³

Self-improvement is not selfish, it is duty. Sometimes our service to God takes on the look of wordless animals plodding along under a yoke of bondage. Sometimes we ask God, "What should I do?" expecting Him to drive us forward like brute beasts. But . . . and this is important . . . God cares how we feel about things! When we ask, "What should I do?" He just might ask, "What do you *want* to do?" While He has a plan for our lives, He would like our enthusiastic consent to that plan, as opposed to mere compliance. As He unfolds to us a vision of who we can be, He would love us to catch that vision and pursue it *from our own free will*.

"All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."⁴

This self-development in usefulness will continue throughout life. "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). As we grow in wisdom and compassion, our relevance increases rather than decreases. My friend Vashti had lived through the civil rights movement, had marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., and had a small museum in her home with an authentic poster advertising a slave for \$50. Each week she'd come to church a little more bent over, but do you know what? We learned from her till she died. In the world we lose relevance as we age, but in the Lord we accumulate it throughout life.

Then, just as we stand at the apex of our spiritual growth, we breathe our last. But the moment Jesus calls us forth we begin again that life of service and growth we began here on earth. 🍀

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 479.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 19.

³ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 107.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 668.

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, LPC, is an author, speaker, TV host, professional counselor, musician, wife, mother, lover of Jesus, and a friend to many.

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WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

*Answering to our
God-given identity*

JANICE WATSON

Many women today struggle to answer the bigger questions. What does it mean to be a woman? Should I marry? How should I spend my time and energy: career, home, or both? Who am I if my children are grown or my husband is gone? The most critical questions, however, deal with our identity: Who am I? Why am I here? Am I enough? The answers to these three philosophical questions have practical implications for all aspects of daily lives and for our destiny. Our identity forms the bedrock for all our relationships.

Society suggests we base our identity on several different and sometimes competing sources: the roles we play, our appearance, our educational or financial status, and our gifts and abilities. A glance at the news reveals clashes over which group memberships should have preeminence in the way we see ourselves: race, ethnicity, nationality, political affiliation, etc. Within the church, definitions of biblical womanhood or femininity often lead us to believe that our identity depends on our clothing choices, our marital status, or our submission.

As a result, many of us find ourselves in an identity crisis: confused about our God-given identity. Identity has been defined as the fact of being who or what a person is. I like to think of it as that permanent part of who we are that remains when all else disappears. Ellen G. White tells us: "Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection."¹





Our God-given identity is not defined by other people's perception of us. It is not tied to our personalities. Our core identity underlies and outlasts our roles and affiliations.

Our identity as Christian women lies not so much in what we think about ourselves as in what God thinks and says about us. The theologian A. W. Tozer famously said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."² To which C. S. Lewis responded, "How God thinks of us is not only more important but infinitely more important."³ Both are vitally important. Our God-given identity depends not just on who we believe God is, but also on who we believe we are to Him. In exploring our identity as godly women, we can benefit from looking more closely at what God thinks of us.

We build our identities as Christians on three aspects of how God looks at us and therefore how we should look at ourselves. I identify each of these pillars of our core identity with a name God associates with us.

WHO WE ARE FROM THE BEGINNING: GOD CALLS YOU BEAUTY

In Genesis 1:27 the Bible tells us God created us in His own image; male and female He created us. When He had finished His work, He pronounced His creations "very good." What does it mean to us as women that we are created in the image of God? that we carry His image? When God created you, He created a beauty in His image. Yes, decades have marred the image, yet we remain "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). God is beautiful. We continue to be His image bearers. When He looks at us, He sees reflections of His beauty.

Professor Julie Foster conducted an experiment captured in her short YouTube video *Come Sunday*.⁴ She asked her participants to close their eyes and imagine something beautiful. People thought of nature and other kinds of beauty. As they opened their eyes, she showed them a reflection of their own faces. Many looked shocked and amazed as they realized someone had just called *them* beautiful. Like them, we may struggle to see ourselves as God sees us. Others may judge our beauty on our physical characteristics: a body shaped to the current ideal, the right hairstyle or outfit, our display of our physical assets. But God uses a different standard. He sees us as beautiful.

Like the participants in Professor Foster's study, acknowledging ourselves as beautiful changes the way we operate in the world. We no longer feel the need to create our own beauty physically or spiritually. We can simply rejoice in the wonder of the woman God has created—who she is today and whom she is blossoming into under His care.

WHO WE ARE THROUGH THE BLOOD: GOD CALLS YOU BELOVED

Despite all the changes to the status of women over the past five or six decades, women still struggle to determine their value in society and in the world. Debates within the Christian community often center on the value of being a homemaker versus having a career, being single versus married. Many of us struggle with feeling "less than." The value we place on ourselves forms part of our identity.

Our God-given identity is based not just on our origin but also on the price paid for us. Some years ago my aunt gifted me with a beautiful bag—an orange leather bag roomy enough to hold my daily work paraphernalia and professional enough to take to meetings. I used it a lot and enjoyed it as a gift from someone who loved me. My bag drew an unusual number of comments. Curious about all the attention, I looked the bag up online. My jaw dropped. I could never have afforded a bag like that. I enjoyed it because of the source of the gift, but my students noticed it because they knew how much it cost.

Our worth as Christian women is based on how much we cost. I grew up believing Proverbs 31 set the standard for my worth as a Christian woman. It seemed she was worth far more than rubies because of all the things that she accomplished. One day I realized how wrong I was. Those things made her rightfully precious to her husband and her children because through those acts she demonstrated her love for them. Those things, however, did not determine or indicate her worth. Our worth as Christian women does not come from us. We cannot earn our worth with our modesty, our obedience, or our submission. Our worth is measured by the price God is willing to pay for us: Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. At the cross, Christ restored to us the value that we seemed to have lost in the Fall. Calvary makes us priceless.

Christ's death on Calvary gives us the right to the name Beloved (John 3:16). I found an interesting comment on the Internet: "Beloved should



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only be used in formal writing/poetry or when you are writing a very serious love letter."⁵ The Bible is God's serious love letter to us, His Beloved. In Isaiah 43:1-6 God talks about our worth. He calls us precious because He loves us (verse 4). He calls us by name, claims us as His, and promises us that He will ransom us even at the price of entire nations. God rescued us when the devil stole and enslaved us like women stolen from their homes by sex traffickers. Our God-given identity comes from the fact that we were created in God's image, redeemed by His blood, and adopted back into His family.

WHO WE ARE THROUGH ADOPTION: GOD CALLS YOU DAUGHTER

In our age of travel, immigration, and competing identities, women often question "Where do I belong? Whom do I belong to?" In answer to these questions, God calls us daughter of God.

What does it mean to you when you say "God is my Father. I am God's daughter"? When we strayed from God, He not only rescued us, He reclaimed us. He adopted us. Adopting us means He chose us again. He chose you with all your imperfections, to be His—to be part of His family.

The Bible records only one example of Jesus calling a woman "daughter." The only woman Jesus directly calls "daughter" in His earthly ministry is

Our worth as Christian women does not come from us. We cannot earn our worth with our modesty, our obedience, or our submission.

the woman with the issue of blood—an unnamed woman outcast by society, ritually unclean. I imagine people had called her all sorts of names as they scurried to avoid touching even her clothes. After 12 years she must have gotten used to answering to the label “unclean,” seeing herself as ugly and unloved. No one called her Beautiful or Beloved. Yet in one word God restores her to her rightful place. No longer an outcast, she belongs—irrevocably claimed.

A second adoption account, in Ezekiel 16:1-14, moves me to tears each time I read it. God finds us, an abandoned baby, dirty and kicking in its own blood in a field. God looks at the child with love. He sees in this baby the beautiful woman she will become. He rescues her and takes her home. He washes her, dresses, nourishes, and nurtures her as she grows. He adorns her as His princess. Eventually others can see her beauty too. Our adoption means more than simply giving us the family name. Our adoption connects us permanently to God. Paul uses the analogy of a limb grafted onto a vine. As they grow together, they become permanently bonded.

Even though we are adopted, sometimes we don't feel beautiful, beloved, or belonging. We still worry about our place in the world. Perhaps it is because of the name you answer to. The devil is a liar. He calls us by names that are not truly ours. Society seeks to label us in ways that don't match God's view of us. Ralph Abernathy is quoted as saying “What matters is not what others call us, it is the name we answer to.”⁶

Under difficult circumstances we may forget our God-given identity and change our own names. After Naomi lost everything, she refused to answer to her real name. She chose another name, Mara (bitterness), that she felt reflected who she had become. She confused her circumstances with her identity and forgot that God could change her circumstances. We don't have to wait for our circumstances to change, until we get married, finish our degree, get our dream job, or become holier to answer to our God-given name and walk in our God-given identity. It is OK to answer proudly to our roles (wife, mother, director,

doctor, daughter) or to acknowledge our racial, ethnic, national and political identities, as long as those roles, those other identities, do not conflict with our core identity—our God-given name.

CLAIMING OUR GOD-GIVEN IDENTITY: ANSWER TO YOUR NAME

A friend challenged me to an experiment, to choose a nickname that reflected a character trait I wanted to develop, and to use that nickname when called in public. Struggling to accept God's view of me, I chose “Beauty.” The first few times someone called me Beauty I didn't answer. I didn't recognize my name. The next few times, I responded, sheepishly looking around to see if anyone noticed that my name didn't match my face and my figure. Eventually I remembered. God-given beauty is “baked into” our DNA. It cannot be removed. Hidden—yes. Distorted—perhaps. But never removed.

As godly women, we need to assert our God-given identities at every opportunity—to ourselves and to others. Claim your name over and over, Beautiful, Beloved Daughter, created in His image, redeemed by His blood, permanently irrevocably adopted as His child. Our view of ourselves will show in the way we carry ourselves, in the way we dress, in the way we treat others, and be reflected in all our roles. All our other identities will reflect our core identity: created, redeemed, and adopted. May God help us live our names. ✨

¹ Ellen G. White, *Maranatha* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), p. 301.

² A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), p. 1.

³ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 10, quoted in C.S. Lewis Institute, “Reflections: Standing Before God,” *Reflections* (blog), Mar. 1, 2010,

<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/reflections-march-2010/>.

⁴ Julie Foster, *Come Sunday*, YouTube, Mar. 4, 2018, video, https://youtu.be/MqF80lo_904.

⁵ Murray Hill, “How and When Do You Use the Word Beloved,” *Quora*, <https://www.quora.com/How-and-when-do-you-use-the-word-beloved>, accessed Sept. 8, 2023.

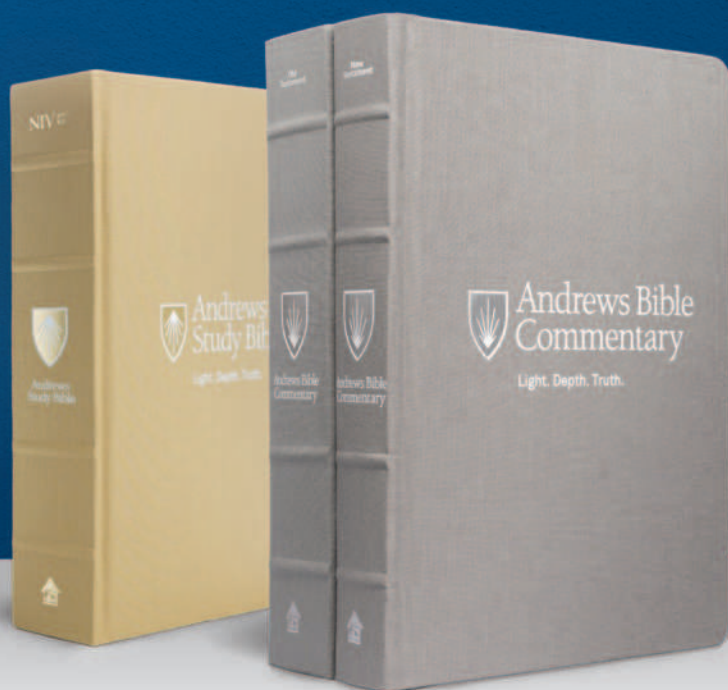
⁶ Ralph Abernathy, quoted in “Top 15 Ralph Abernathy Quotes,” *Quote Fancy* (blog), <https://quote fancy.com/ralph-abernathy-quotes>, accessed Aug. 30, 2023.

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THE VISION

What follows is something that I have rarely talked about, and, when reading it, you will understand why.

In 1979, just before my twenty-fourth birthday, I was told by God that if I wanted to follow Him, I needed to burn the book that I had been working on for more than two years. After some intense divine-human wrestling, I put the manuscript on a two-burner hot plate in my room and burned it.

As I sat there, the smoke clearing, it flashed in, it flashed out, it flashed in, it flashed out, but God gave me a vision of heaven. I saw it. Perhaps no more than three hours earlier I wasn't sure that God existed. I knew nothing about the prophetic gift, nothing about inspiration, and nothing about the Bible other than whatever nonsense I had dredged up from *The Late Great Planet Earth*. And yet I never doubted what I saw.

I then began studying with Seventh-day Adventists, and though trying to tell them what I had seen, I could never find the right word to describe it. Before long, I stopped trying. With my life having been turned upside down and inside out, I pretty much forgot about it anyway.

Until a few months later, when, still skeptical about this Ellen White woman, whom they often quoted, I was reading about her in vision, and that at times she would cry out, "Glory!"

That was it! Stretched out on a bed, I jumped up, grabbed the phone on the wall, and called my Adventist friends to tell them that I had found the word, *glory*, to describe what I had seen. Which was?

It was as if I were looking across a lake. I could see the horizon, and everything was shimmering—and glorious. And that

was that. I don't think the whole thing lasted four seconds.

Nothing like it has happened to me since. As far as I can tell, too, the experience has not impacted my faith in any way. When (usually during my own devotional time) I do recall the night that I burned my book, I rarely think about the vision, though it remains vivid in my mind when I do. And when giving my testimony, I never mention it.

So why, 44 years later, write about it? Perhaps because I am now 68 years old and so, with the bulk of this sorry narrative over anyway, I figured, *Why not?* It happened, and the Lord must have done it for a reason.

Which was? I don't know. As I said, it has changed nothing in my life or my present experience with God. What I do know is that I am a sinner deserving eternal death, and that whatever in me reflects the character of Jesus comes only by the same grace that covers me in Christ's righteousness, "the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). I know, too, that my only hope rests in what Jesus did for me, outside of me, in place of me, 2,000 years ago at the cross.

And I need no vision to tell me that. 🍂

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

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN




GOD GAVE
ME A VISION
OF HEAVEN.

SLURPY CONVERSATIONS

STEVEN CONWAY





Addressing ourselves to the topic of race

One of the more difficult conversations to have in a Western context is the discussion about race.¹ Despite our challenges in this area, perhaps now more than ever we need to learn to steer through these waters. The incoming generation of leaders want to engage in difficult discussions. They represent the vanguard of those who've had access to more information at their fingertips than any previous generation. In their cell phones they can quickly find any recipe, have a thousand reviews of a restaurant, see a picture of their destination before leaving and decide if they still want to go. So imagine the chagrin of these men and women when they hear, "We can't talk about that. It's too sensitive."

According to Douglas Stone in his book *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*,² difficult conversations are actually three different conversations in one: a "what happened?" conversation, a "feelings" conversation, and an "identity" conversation. Having effective difficult conversations usually involves learning how to navigate these three different areas.

A "WHAT HAPPENED?" CONVERSATION

Having difficult discussions begins with listening and researching what happened. This is not about our opinions but rather investigating what happened from as many perspectives as possible. History is elusive. Not because it can't be known, but because there are so many perspectives on it. Yet still, the potential revisions of history shouldn't keep us from exploring its lessons, for "those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it."³

Early Adventists were part of an abolitionist movement that consisted of at least three persuasions. Conservatives believed slavery was morally neutral and a secular matter, while moderates believed slavery was evil, yet were in favor of gradually emancipating slaves and were against agitation on the matter. Finally, there were radicals who believed slavery to be a sin to be repented of and forsaken. Most Adventists were radicals, though their reasoning was different from their Evangelical counterparts, most of whom were seeking to establish a millennium of peace on earth prior to Christ's return. Instead, Adventist saw an eschatological link to the prophecies of Revelation 13; they believed the second beast from the land was the United

The history does not magically disappear and neither do the feelings change any more than the color of our skin. The fundamental identity question, however, rises to the fore.

States. Slavery was a clear indication of the characteristic “he . . . spoke like a dragon” (verse 11).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized just prior to the end of the Civil War. The Southern states then offered a burgeoning mission field for a fledgling church, though strong cultural tensions existed. During the General Conference sessions of 1877 and 1885, “the question of whether or not to bow to Southern prejudices by establishing separate work and separate churches for blacks was debated. Most speakers believed that to do so would be a denial of true Christianity since God was no respecter of persons.” Eventually, in 1890, the recommendation to separate the work in the South prevailed, “but the policy was never defended on grounds other than those of expediency.”⁴

Enter Ellen White with what, for newly converted Blacks, may have seemed like an about-face when compared with some of her other statements. “Let as little as possible be said about the color line, and let the colored people work chiefly for those of their own race. In regard to white and colored people worshiping in the same building, this cannot be followed as a general custom with profit to either party—especially in the South. . . . Let the colored believers be provided with neat, tasteful houses of worship. Let them be shown that this is done not to exclude them from worshiping with white people, because they are black, but in order that the progress of the truth may be advanced. Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way.”⁵

This is the same Ellen White who had written, “No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation.”⁶ God’s ideals, as expressed by Ellen White, had come face to face with the stubborn, unregenerate human heart. The result was the church’s first foray into contextualization. Their belief was that

God was no respecter of persons. Their reality was that to live out this belief in the context of a post-Civil War America (*specifically in the South*) could mean the death of their missionaries, converts, and ultimately the work in the South. Period.

With the words “until the Lord shows us a better way” Ellen White all but acknowledged the tension between what she was counseling and what she believed.

A “FEELINGS” CONVERSATION

We have a difficult time expressing our feelings in a nonjudgmental way. Yet if by God’s grace we could master this skill, we’d be on our way to healthy, healing conversations.

My family was preparing dinner, and I’d come late to the kitchen but was enjoying the time with them as I always did. My wife, Tamara, and I got carried away into a deep conversation while the children finished the meal prep and began to eat. I distinctly remember being irritated by my oldest son’s noodle slurping while he enjoyed the hot dish.

When Tamara and I took a breather from solving the world’s problems, she went to serve herself, only to discover there was a paltry amount of food left. Still irritated by the slurping I’d endured during my conversation with my wife, I turned to remind my son of what it means to think of others before himself. He left the room only to return with tears in his eyes. He explained that they had prepared the meal for us to spend time and enjoy together. He had gathered everyone and chosen the meal with me in mind.

My feelings were misinformed. All that slurping at the table had fueled a narrative in my mind of what was driving my son’s behavior, but I was wrong. So very wrong!

Our feelings are fueled by the slurping of conversations around the dinner table, things whispered in our homogeneous groups as though they are absolute fact. Perhaps we don’t speak about our feelings because we’re ashamed. Not ashamed to



think and feel the way we do, but ashamed to have other people see us as anything less than the patient, loving, accepting, ready-for-translation Adventist Christians we all want to be. Here is the genius of Douglas Stone’s suggestion. The “what happened?” conversation informs the “feelings” conversation. By ignoring the “what happened?” we give permission for uninformed feelings to dominate the way we think about others.

In his book *Weep With Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation*,⁷ Mark Vroegop tells a story about coming to realize a different perspective. Making a case for America as the land of opportunities, he recounted the story of his Dutch grandfather to an African American pastor. “I’m sure your grandfather worked hard,” the pastor responded. “But here’s the thing: your grandfather was able to get a job in the 1940s. The color of his skin didn’t create any barriers. Do you think my black grandfather could have been hired

for the same job as your white grandfather in the 1940s?” He paused, waiting for my answer. My mind quickly ran through the history of my hometown. I knew the division. I heard the jokes. I knew the mantra ‘If you’re not Dutch, you’re not much.’ The answer was obvious. ‘No, sir, he would not,’ I quietly replied.”

AN “IDENTITY” CONVERSATION

I’ll never forget visiting my family in Cincinnati, Ohio, as a child. I was always perplexed by how different we sounded, though we lived in the same state and only four hours away. Children and teens asking each other to say common words, which would incite uncontrollable laughter. “I like your accent” or “Your accent sounds funny.” What accent? Herein lies the complexity of conversations about ethnocentrism. We don’t see or hear ourselves. We’ve been living, breathing, thinking, feeling, and laughing in our own skin for so long

Embracing our identity in Christ means we inherit a legacy of unity and broken-down walls that once separated us.

that we are oblivious to our cultural influences. It would be wonderful if, as heavenly citizens, we were unaffected by the world we live in, but that is not the case.

For Bible-believing Christians, how do we see ourselves?

First, the believers' baptism identifies them with Christ (see Rom. 6:1-3; Col. 3:1-3). Furthermore, baptism allows the believer into a union with Christ so intimate that their flesh/natural identity is surpassed by the new Christ identity (Gal. 3:27, 28). The Galatians being one in Christ superseded all the categorizations of the ancient Roman world, including male/female, free/slave, and Jew/Greek. Instead of seeing ourselves primarily in any of these categories, Christians self-identify primarily in Christ.

Let's face it, we live in a context of division though we were created for unity in Christ. Linguistically, nationally, politically, socially, ethnically, economically, and theologically the very heartbeat of this world pushes and pulls apart while the Spirit of God draws to Himself, thus pressing us together.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

Identifying oneself other than by one's ethnicity may seem to some equivalent to denying what one is. Is this what Paul counsels us to do in Philippians 3:4-8? Are the Christians from Pusan or Port of Spain to forget their ethnicity? Not at all.

Paul is not arguing his Jewishness out of existence as much as he is arguing it out of a place of priority. In other words, he is saying "I used to believe my ethnicity advantaged me, but now for the sake of Christ I count it as a detriment." Not that ethnicities are a detriment in and of themselves, but when they usurp the Christ identity with its corresponding righteousness, Paul sees

them as utterly worthless. The result is a change in how Paul identifies himself. Note that he is still a Christian Jew (cf. Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1), but this no longer has preeminence in how he identifies himself. If he had to choose between Christ and his ethnicity, Paul would choose Christ. So it should be with all believers.

We need not hate our ethnicity. We simply must love God more (cf. Matt. 10:37).

We need the conversation about ethnocentrism, but the "what happened?" and the "feelings" conversations must be overshadowed by the "identity in Christ" conversation. These other conversations don't go away when Christ takes the primacy. The history does not magically disappear and neither do the feelings change any more than the color of our skin. The fundamental identity question, however, rises to the fore.

As real as is our union with Christ in death through the ordinance of baptism is the fact that Christ has broken down every wall that separated us (Eph. 2:14). Embracing our identity in Christ means we inherit a legacy of unity and broken-down walls that once separated us. We have lost much because we have not made Christ our starting point. But just think of what could be if we did! 🍌

¹ The Bible doesn't use the word "race." Instead, we find *ethnos*, often translated nations or Gentiles. Many argue race is a social construct, meaning an idea that has been created and accepted by the people in a society. Something existing as a social construct doesn't remove it from the reality of the societies we live in.

² Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

³ Some suggested reading to educate ourselves on the conversation surrounding race would include Gregory and Carol Allen, *Christ Has Welcomed You: A Case for Relational Unity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*; Calvin Rock, *Protest and Progress*; Harold L. Lee and Benjamin Baker, C.D.: *The Man Behind the Message*; the website "blacksdahistory.org"; and Ellen White's *Testimonies for the Church*, volumes 1, 7, and 9, and *The Southern Work*.

⁴ Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1979), p. 234, quoted in Gregory and Carol Allen, *Christ Has Welcomed You: A Case for Relational Unity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Kindle edition.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, pp. 206, 207.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 386.

⁷ Mark Vroegop, *Weep With Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2020).

Steven Conway is senior pastor of the Troy Seventh-day Adventist Church in Troy, Michigan. He and his wife, Tamara, have four children: Israel, Abigail, Gabriel, and Angel.

Called to Serve: Kimberly Cruz, MSW

My love for children began at a young age. I am the oldest of two, and my parents served as foster parents for several years in my early adolescence. I enjoyed having extra siblings, if only for a moment.

After high school, I took a year off before going to college because, unlike most young people fresh after graduation, I did not have any plans to pursue higher education. Many of my junior high and high school teachers only focused on areas of my academics where I was average or below average. They rarely highlighted areas where I excelled. The result was that I believed the lie that I just didn't have the smarts to make it in college. Also, my dream was to be a wife and a mother, so I didn't think college was necessary. However, with the guidance of some family members and friends, I was encouraged to pursue a degree.

Still, I struggled to find my niche because I had not received the necessary support I needed to find my foundation, identify other interests, or hone my skills and talents. I thought about being an early childhood development teacher or home-based pre-school teacher, but those paths were short-lived. Then, while completing my associate degree in medical transcribing, God impressed me to work at summer camp during my summer breaks. I instantly loved the idea! Horses and children? Yes, please!

As an adolescent, I had attended Cowboy Camp at Leoni Meadows in northern California, and I treasured those memories. It was my haven away from the chaos at home, and it was there that I was given a chance to learn what I was truly capable of, with the love and support I needed and craved. I thrived at camp, so the idea of returning as staff just made sense.

Summer of 2002 was my first summer working at Leoni Meadows as a girl's counselor at Cowboy Camp. I had such a wonderful time bonding with my campers each week. My favorite part was sharing with my teen campers my testimony of

coming from a tumultuous home and learning how to trust God amidst the uncertainty and pain. I also shared about my love for Jesus.

In 2004, I spent my third summer at Camp Wawona, this time as the assistant director of the Cowboy Outpost. While there, one of my teen campers from Leoni Meadows ended up coming to Wawona for wrangler-in-training week. All the spots at Leoni had filled up, so she was forced to switch. She arrived to Wawona very disappointed, but the moment she saw me, her face lit up, and she hooted with glee! It was my first experience seeing the impact I unknowingly had on a young life, and it was God's way of showing me that my influence carried Kingdom weight.

Later that summer, she wrote to let me know that she had made the decision to be baptized, and it was all because of my testimony that I had shared with her and the rest of her wagon mates at Leoni Meadows during my first summer working there. I cried with joy and gratefulness for God's power to save.

By the end of summer 2004, I was already in my early, almost mid-20s, and I was being pressured to get a "real" job. However, nothing lit up my heart the way that working with young people at camp had. I prayed, "Lord, how can I combine my love for children and my love for horses? Nothing else makes sense to me."

Well, that prayer wouldn't be answered for another 20 years...



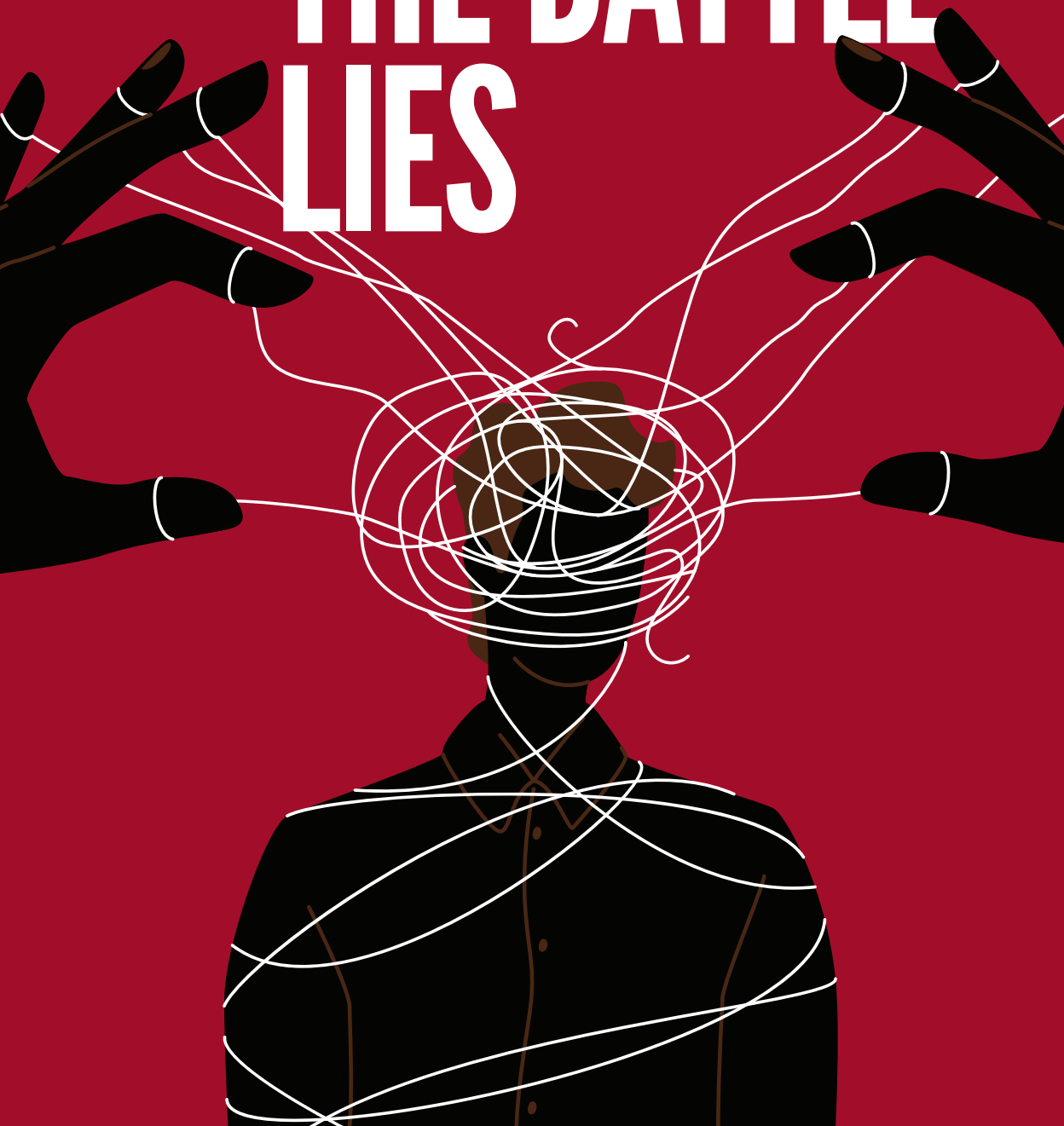
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WHERE THE BATTLE LIES



Addressing alternative identities and the church's responsibility

MICHAEL CARDUCCI

In a world where the concept of identity has evolved and diversified, it is essential to explore the profound Christian perspective on identity through the Word of God, particularly in the context of Jesus Christ. Today individuals often grapple with diverse identities, including those related to gender and sexuality, which go beyond the male and female challenge of traditional understanding.

As the church, it is our responsibility to provide spiritual guidance and to help individuals discover their true identity, rooted in the Bible and the image of God. In Genesis 1:27, 28, we read, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (KJV). This biblical passage underscores the foundational truth that God created humanity in His image and called them to multiply and steward the earth. Today, however, various alternative identities and lifestyles have emerged that challenge this divine design. It is essential for the church to address these challenges and provide a biblical perspective. Many of our members are becoming confused because there is a growing acceptance of popular culture in our church rather than a dependence on the Scriptures.

THE BATTLE FOR IDENTITY

Satan, the fallen angel who aspired to be in the place of God, is central to the battle over identity. Isaiah 14:12-15 reveals his rebellious intentions, and it's important to note that Satan, as an angel, was created higher than humans (Ps. 8:5).

His deep-seated resentment toward (among other things) humanity's ability to procreate, as those who reflect God's image, has driven him to seek the destruction of the "image of God" in humans. Already through the fall, aberrations in God's design were introduced in nature. Christ died on the cross to restore all creation to God's ideal.

From mothers and fathers to sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, any sexual behavior that deviates from the confines of intimacy between one man and one woman in a committed, lifelong marriage relationship distorts or misrepresents this precious image. This includes practices such as pornography, premarital sex, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, and licentiousness.

In the face of these challenges, the church must heed the wisdom found in the quote "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil." The church cannot remain silent in hopes of providing stability and continuity, but must boldly proclaim the truth found in the Scriptures regarding God's design for human identity and sexuality.

FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Psalms 139 provides a profound insight into God's intricate involvement in the creation of each individual. It declares, "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well" (verses 13, 14). This passage reminds us that God is intimately involved in the formation of humans, shaping them with care and purpose.

The psalmist continues: "My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret" (verse 15). This verse emphasizes that nothing about our creation is hidden from God. He knows us intimately, even before we are born. He adds, "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they were all written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (verse 16).

God has a plan and a purpose for each person, meticulously crafting them with love and intentionality. It's as if God has a cookbook for all His created beings. On a specific page I was formulated: my eye color, hair color, my fingers and toes, even my sexual organs, right down to my DNA, which is found in every cell of my body. Despite what

some Christians may assert with the notion that gender is left up to chance and not linked to biology, leading only to compounded confusion, I was not left to chance, and I wasn't a mistake.

There are those who have experienced bullying related to their sexuality at the hands of friends and loved ones. Perhaps their parents wanted a child of the other sex; maybe they were rejected by the same-sex parent, or they received rejection from the same-sex children in school. Perhaps a combination of all these influences made them feel that they are inadequate or that they don't measure up to the biological sex they were born into.

The psalmist marvels, in verses 17 and 18, at the depth of God's thoughts, declaring, "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand." God's thoughts and plans for each individual are too numerous to fathom, highlighting the value and uniqueness of every human life. God's opinion of me is the one that matters! Instead of my relying on others to affirm or approve of me, I can go to my Creator and Redeemer and ask Him, "Who do You say I am?" And God is quick to remind me through His Word that before the earth was formed, He knew me, and that He was the one that knit my delicate parts together in my mother's womb.

ADDRESSING IDENTITY CONFUSION

There are individuals who experience identity confusion and do not connect with their biological sex or gender. The Bible provides a path for addressing this confusion: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (verses 23, 24). This passage invites individuals to seek God's guidance and wisdom in understanding and reconciling their identity. It emphasizes the role of an all-loving and powerful God in restoring "right thinking" as we submit to His divine plan.

Going beyond the notion of being "born this way," we recognize that we are all "brought forth in iniquity" and born "in sin" (Ps. 51:5). Human nature is inherently flawed, and our identities can be influenced by a fallen world and its created identities and social constructs. Through faith in Jesus Christ, however, we have the opportunity to be transformed and renewed in our identity.

The battle for identity is rooted in the spiritual realm, as Satan seeks to distort and destroy the “image of God” in every created being.

How does He do that? By beholding, we become changed.

A young woman began to believe she was a man. The voice in her head said that she shouldn't have breasts and smooth skin, that she needed to have larger muscles and facial hair. She bought the ideology that a sex change was the answer. Then that voice inside her head began telling her that she would never be accepted and that no one would ever love her. The devil whispered to her that she should just kill herself. In desperation she called the only person that she thought would be there for her. It happened to be a Christian friend that lived several states away. Her friend paid for her ticket to come. Her friend didn't judge her, but she prayed and also helped her to take care of her health and read the Word of God (Ps. 139).

Her very first prayer was “God, how do You see me?” The next thought that came to her mind after she uttered that prayer was of a woman with long hair and a long dress praising God. She quickly dismissed that thought. But as she continued reading and praying, she began to see God as loving, kind, and all-caring. She started to let her hair grow. And as it grew back, she began replacing the clothes in her wardrobe. Instead of men's flannel shirts, and men's shoes and jeans, she bought flowered prints and women's articles.

The transformation was accomplished through Jesus Christ. She claimed the salvation He had already secured for her on the cross, and as she embraced His sacrifice for her it had a *transforming* effect. Had she gone through with the procedure to change her sex, mutilating her female reproductive system or removing her breasts, she would never have known the fullest aspect of her healing. She was blessed to get married and have two children that she delivered and nursed on her own, because she didn't comply with what society and her mind told her she was.

CONCLUSION

Though the world proliferates alternative identities and lifestyles, the church has a crucial responsibility to provide the continuity in message, give truth to the flock, and to assist to restore individuals' identity as intended by God at creation (Gen. 1:27, 28) and made possible again at the cross. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” In Galatians 2:20 we read, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” The battle for identity is rooted in the spiritual realm, as Satan seeks to distort and destroy the “image of God” in every created being. Psalm 139 reminds us that God fearfully and wonderfully made each of us, with a plan for our identity and who He knew us to be.

The church's role is not to condemn, but to guide individuals toward discovering their true identity in Jesus. As Paul writes: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation [the rescue] for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). Salvation is available for all, offering the opportunity to overcome hereditary and cultivated tendencies that are contrary to God's design. Through faith and a relationship with Christ, we can find a satisfying and transformative identity that surpasses anything we could create for ourselves. In these times of identity crisis, the church must stand as a beacon of truth, love, and continuity in churches, schools, and homes, offering hope and redemption to those who seek their true identity in Jesus. 🍀

Michael Carducci is senior speaker and cofounder of Coming Out Ministries.

TO ALL NATIONS AND TRIBES

Meeting the unreached close to home

JIM LANDELIUS



The Christian Church has taken seriously the words of Jesus found in Matthew 28:18, 19, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (NASB).

Indigenous work in North America has not been easy for a variety of reasons including wars, the government's attempt to assimilate the indigenous population, and efforts to eliminate Native American languages.

The result is a general lack of trust by nonindigenous people and a scarcity of hope among

Native American people. Their fight with the U.S. government resulted in Native areas turned into "reservations," many of which are economically disadvantaged. But Native Americans have not surrendered their fight to keep their culture alive.

SOMETHING IN COMMON

Indigenous people in North America share more spiritual beliefs with Seventh-day Adventists than any other religious entity.

If people read the actual diary of Christopher Columbus, and notes of people who first landed on the shores of North America, indigenous peoples were described as having no religion. Having no religion to Europeans meant they had no temples, no idols, and no required meetings. All diaries record, however, that several times a day the indigenous people raised their hands to the Creator in "praise and thanksgiving." The indigenous peoples were generous "to a fault." Christopher Columbus said there was no disease, the people were healthy with ruddy skin. He describes fruits and vegetables never seen before that people grew in mountainous areas.

In the contiguous United States there is a Seventh-day Adventist Church within 25 miles of all of the 573 federally recognized tribes. Adventists are logistically close to this mission field, but most of the people of these tribes are still unreached with the true gospel of Christ.

ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

Unfortunately, in the past, far too many Christians in their effort to share the good news

did not take to heart an important statement made by the apostle Paul. Writing to the church in Corinth, he said, “. . . I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some” (I Cor. 9:22). In their enthusiasm to share the gospel, many have forgotten that Paul’s work was successful because—without compromising the core concepts of Christianity—he presented Jesus in the culture of the people he worked with.

For too long, missionary work among Native peoples involved forbidding their language, customs, dress, and anything else that tied them to the culture they were born with in favor of western-based Christian practices. Anything Native was described with words such as “savage,” “heathen,” or “pagan.” To be Native was too often presented as being less than human with the abandonment of anything pertaining to one’s heritage the only hope of being considered worthy of salvation.

The Native Ministries Department has rejected this approach to ministry. Sharing the blessed hope with indigenous peoples throughout Canada and the United States in large measure teaches people how they can be Native and Christian rather than choosing one to the exclusion of the other. As much as possible, conference and union Native Ministries leaders in the North American Division (NAD) are tribal members.

Elders Robert Burnette, Monte Church, Ed Dunn, and Fred Rogers are among the pioneers of the Native Work in the United States and Canada. Their leadership through the years has been enhanced by the familial ties they have with the communities they have served. In addition, their ministry has served as a template for those who are serving after them today.

UNIQUE RESOURCES

Native New Day is a first-of-a-kind Bible study series produced especially for Native people and narrated by Native storyteller, Church, of the Mohican Nation. Filmed outdoors, the viewer hears and sees inspiring stories and testimonies of Native people from across North America and Canada. The beautiful truths of Scripture are put in a context that many Native individuals can relate to.

Having served as assistant to the president of the NAD and director of Native Ministries for several unions and conferences, Burnette has used health ministry as an “opening wedge” for sharing

The NAD Native Ministries Department has come a long way, but there is still much to be done.

the gospel. Following Jesus’ example of healing more than speaking, Burnette has poured his life into improving the everyday health of both Native and non-Native people across the United States. Partnering with both AdventHealth (CREATION Life) and Life and Health (Diabetes Undone), he has supported programs that lead peoples of all nationalities to a healthier life. This, combined with free dental and vision clinics, has helped relieve suffering that hinders the ability to hear and understand Jesus’ love for all.

Native New Health is an innovative series of health programs designed for Native people by Native people. This series addresses several health topics of special concern to Native people. Each episode has been designed to generate discussion and assist the viewer in making positive lifestyle choices. Co-hosted by Dunn, a Canadian with Ojibway Nation ancestry from Northern Ontario, these programs address health topics, such as diabetes, which affect Native Americans at a disproportionately higher rate, as well as other general topics.

BUILDING ON THE LEGACY

After many years of service, Burnette, Church, Dunn and Rogers’ legacies are seen in those who have followed in their footsteps. Campbell Paige, director of Native Ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada; Nancy Crosby, Native Ministries director for the Pacific Union, and other union and conference Native Ministries directors meet each year, typically in the fall. They share what is happening in their field and relate their successes and challenges to win more souls for the kingdom of heaven.

The NAD Native Ministries Department has come a long way, but there is still much to be done. Until the three angels’ messages have gone to “. . . every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,” Native Ministries will continue the work of sharing the Gospel in the culture and language of the people they minister to. 🦋

Jim Landelius is the assistant director of Native Ministries in the Oklahoma Conference.



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A LESSON IN THANKFULNESS

JOAN MC NAUGHTON

JP VALERY

Have you ever thought that others are far more blessed than you? I'm ashamed to admit it, but I have. Not long ago I lay in bed suffering from the debilitating symptoms of lupus. I was so overwhelmed. I couldn't think of a single thing for which to be thankful.

Dark thoughts played across my mind. I was depressed! Having lupus has changed my life drastically. There are restrictions. I must avoid or limit my time in the sun. I spend more time resting in bed than being up and about. I cannot travel. I no longer spend the amount of carefree time I would like in nature, hiking my neighborhood trails, because of chronic fatigue. Oh, how I miss my old self, which I long took for granted!

It is embarrassing to admit there are times it has taken a tragedy, someone's expression of gratitude, or my escaping a potentially fatal close call to awaken within me a spirit of gratitude, reminding me how blessed I am despite having lupus.

One such incident happened on my commute to work one lovely summer morning. I had caught the late express bus and was pleasantly surprised to find an empty seat next to a colleague I had not seen recently. After a bit of small talk our conversation turned to her two teenage sons.

Like most proud parents she excitedly mentioned that her sons were attending a Christian boarding school. She seldom saw them, but they were doing well. She mentioned that she was now divorced and had been raising them singlehandedly. As a result, she had to work two jobs to support them. She emphasized that they were "good boys," and she was grateful they adhered to the values and morals she had instilled in them. She had not encountered the

problems most divorced single parents had with their children, and she was grateful to God for His watchcare over them.

She then made a statement I hope I never forget: "Sometimes I am so thankful to God that I do not ask anything of Him. All I can do is thank Him!"

Her inspiring words shone the spotlight on my own ingratitude. I realized then that I had spent much of my life asking God for favors while neglecting to thank Him for His blessings. I am thankful for that chance encounter.

Looking back at that incident today has helped me realize how blessed I am. Most people suffering from lupus are far worse off than I am. That reminds me that regardless of my circumstances, I can always find something for which to be thankful. ♣

Joan McNaughton writes from Canada.



THANKFUL HEARTS

*Showing our
gratitude especially
at Thanksgiving*

ELLEN G. WHITE

The Lord sends His blessing and manifests His love to the children of men. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," and yet how rarely is the Lord thanked, how seldom is His praise upon human lips! How few are found to testify to His loving-kindness, and to acknowledge His mercies to the children of men! How many families fail to retain God in their knowledge! The blessings of the Lord surround parents and children, and they are provided with temporal necessities, yet they do not accept them as gifts in trust, nor do they regard themselves as stewards of the grace of Christ. They do not respond to God's liberality, and return to the Lord a portion of His intrusted goods in tithes, gifts, and offerings, thus acknowledging their dependence upon God, and manifesting gratitude for His wonderful mercies toward them. Every earthly wish may be gratified, and yet men pass on as did the ungrateful lepers who had been cleansed and healed of their obnoxious disease. These lepers had been restored to health by Christ, and the parts that had been destroyed by the disease were re-created; but only one, on finding himself made whole, returned to give God glory, and Christ asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

BLESS THE LORD ALWAYS

Why does not every converted soul speak forth the praise of God? Why is it that the recipients of God's continual favors do not give more ready expression to their gratitude? Why is it that the heart is not pure, and filled with thankfulness to God? David says: "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." "Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord

the glory due unto his name; . . . worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High." "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations." "Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed."

We are under obligation, because of the relation in which we stand to God and to one another, to display the grace of God for the salvation that has been brought within our reach at infinite cost. God has given His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He has given the Holy Spirit to enlighten, renew, and sanctify the soul, and this should call forth thanksgiving and praise from every human heart. Children and youth should be educated to make God first in their thoughts, and thus a revenue of gifts and offerings, like little rivulets, would flow into the treasury of the Lord. But parents have failed to educate their children to act in an unselfish way, and have cooperated with the enemy in educating them according to a false standard. All heaven is looking upon our churches, upon parents and children, and asking, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

GOD'S GIFT IS INCOMPARABLE

The lesson which is recorded concerning the ten lepers should awaken in every heart a most earnest desire to change the existing order of ingratitude into one of praise and thanksgiving. Let the professed people of God stop murmuring and complaining. Let us remember who is the first great Giver of all our blessings. We are fed and clothed, and sustained in life, and should we not educate ourselves and our children to respond with gratitude to our heavenly Father, by giving gifts and offerings for the support of His cause? Christ has commanded His disciples, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." But how is this work to be accomplished? It is to be done through the cooperation of human agencies with heavenly intelligences. We are to be earnest laborers together with God.

Let us remember who is the first great Giver of all our blessings.

Parents are to bring up and educate and train their children in habits of self-control and self-denial. They are ever to keep before them their obligation to obey the word of God and to live for the purpose of serving Jesus. They are to educate their children that there is need of living in accordance with simple habits in their daily life, and to avoid expensive dress, expensive diet, expensive houses, and expensive furniture. The terms upon which eternal life will be ours are set forth in these words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbor as thyself"

SING OF GOD'S GOODNESS

Parents have not taught their children the precepts of the law as God has commanded them. They have educated them in selfish habits. They have taught them to regard their birthdays and holidays as occasions when they expect to receive gifts, and to follow the habits and customs of the world. These occasions, which should serve to increase the knowledge of God and to awaken thankfulness of heart for His mercy and love in preserving their lives for another year are turned into occasions for self-pleasing, for the gratification and glorification of the children. They have been kept by the power of God through every moment of their life, and yet parents do not teach their children to think of this, and to express thanksgiving for His mercy toward them. If children and youth had been properly instructed in this age of the world, what honor, what praise and thanksgiving, would flow from their lips to God! What a revenue of small gifts would be brought from the hands of the little ones to be put into His treasury as thank offerings! God would be remembered instead of forgotten. ♣

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from the *Review and Herald*, Nov. 13, 1894.

WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT!

*Some personal reflections on
NET '98 25 years later*

DWIGHT K. NELSON



The story really isn't mine to tell. But what I can tell you is the story still has God's fingerprints all over it. In the first electronic words transmitted by the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse: "What hath God wrought!" (Num. 23:23, KJV).¹ But in this story the satellite transmits God's miracle.

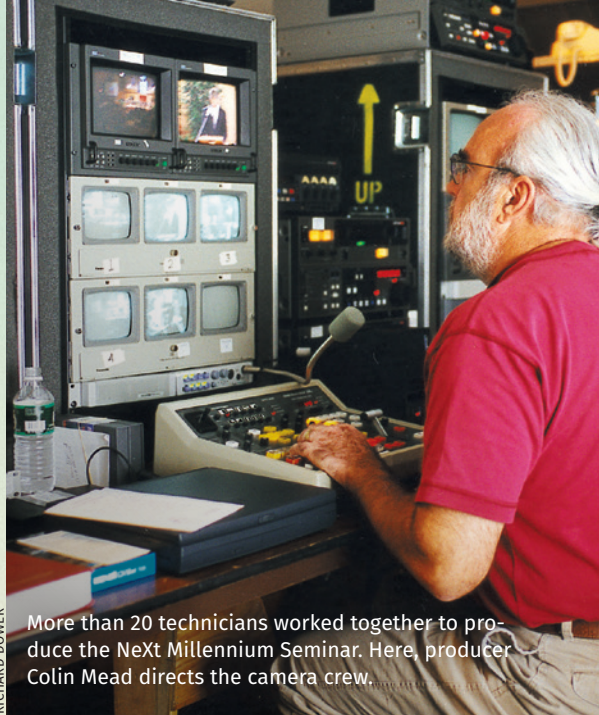
GOD'S FINGERPRINTS

How else can you explain that concerned group huddled in a Denver hotel room in 1993? Their earnest petition: "God, ignite the church again with Your fiery gospel commission." Powerful prayer, but how? Russell Burrill (former North American Division Evangelism Institute director) recalls: "One of us, I don't remember who, made the wild suggestion that we hold a large public meeting and uplink it by satellite so that it could be downloaded all over North America. We all laughed. It sounded ridiculous, but the more we talked, the more we became convinced that this was an idea sent from heaven."² Fingerprints of God.

But how could local churches possibly navigate the complexity of locating a geostationary satellite 22,500 miles above earth? Warren Judd and his Adventist Media Productions team took on that immense technological challenge. He eventually secured one of only two 40-channel audio/video mixers in existence in the world capable of sending out UN-style translations in 39 languages simultaneously. Only CNN had similar capabilities at the time. God's fingerprints.

Thus, despite such complexity, "it was clear," Glenn Aufderhar (North American Division-appointed coordinator/director of NET '98) recalls, "God wanted [satellite evangelism] to happen. The vote to proceed was unanimous."³ God united the church in a single missional event. His fingerprints. Again.

The rest is history—compelled by the Holy Spirit, propelled by the evangelistic preaching of Mark Finley, beheld by congregations on large white screens in sanctuaries or fellowship halls or Sabbath School rooms. They called it "NET '95." I well remember gathering with the Pioneer Memorial church congregation to witness Mark preach his



RICHARD DOWDER

More than 20 technicians worked together to produce the NeXt Millennium Seminar. Here, producer Colin Mead directs the camera crew.



RICHARD DOWDER

Translators Manuel Ferro of Portugal and Julian Nam of Korea visit with Brad and Kandus Thorp, then Adventist Global Communication Network coordinators.



ADVENTIST REVIEW

Huddersfield, United Kingdom, members and guests listen closely to Dwight Nelson's midweek message.

Are we settling for chump change and tiddlywinks when we could be dealing with huge drafts of heaven's currency in a supernatural storehouse we have yet to draw from?

heart out, appealing to people he couldn't even see in nearly 700 congregations across North America! Then came NET '96 with Finley again. With each NET event the proficiency in satellite technology and evangelism deepened.

So when Alfred McClure, then president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD), called me in 1996 to convey the invitation to be the next NET event speaker, the operative word for me was "intimidating." Who was I—the still-young pastor of Pioneer Memorial church—to follow such a gifted evangelist?

I needed to quickly learn: "Whatever is to be done at [God's] command may be accomplished in His strength. *All His biddings are enablings.*"⁴ As Burrill observed: "The task was colossal and herculean," but God pulled it off.

COMMITTED TO THE CALL

We called it "NET '98: The NeXt Millennium Seminar." Why the capital X? A few summers earlier I had spent a sabbatical studying how to reach "Generation X" (Gen X—born between 1965 and 1980). It was clear the Adventist Church needed to find a way not only to reach the Gen Xers for Christ, but to mobilize them for the kingdom. NET '98 could be that perfect opportunity—not just at Andrews University, but around the world.

A team of Pioneer Memorial church leaders worked with Skip MacCarty, pastor for evangelism, to identify 43 ministry areas needed for our local event, and recruited 1,500 volunteers (including many Andrews University students) to staff them.⁵ As every local pastor and church knows, the commitment and caliber of volunteers, ignited by the Holy Spirit, make the critical difference for any public evangelistic endeavor.

One such Pioneer volunteer, Donna Habenicht (well-known child psychologist at Andrews University), designed and wrote an entire children's program curriculum for all five NET '98 children's divisions, so young families could attend the satellite presentations.

One of God's gifts was the two-year interim between the 1996 and 1998 NET events. We needed every day of those 24 months. In May 1997 NET '98 coordinators from every world division gathered at Pioneer for three days of training for this live global satellite mission. There was no playbook—it would be live, with no retakes! Each of the 7,700 local downlink sites would be crucial to the success of NET '98's ambitious kingdom mission. We prayed much during those three days.

The messages for NET '98 needed to be written and edited the summer of 1997. To provide time for materials to be printed and ready for opening night, the 31 messages (27 nights and four Sabbath mornings) needed to be translated into 39 languages a year in advance.

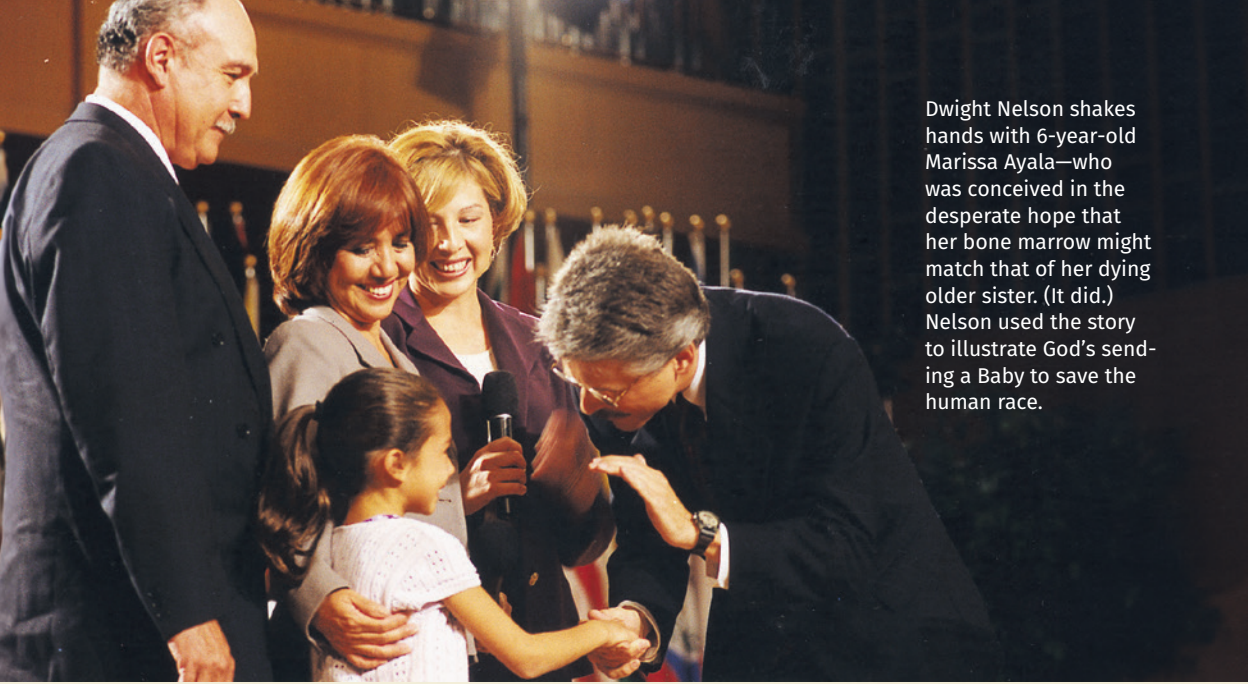
So on July 1, 1997, I sat in a quiet room and pounded out a "philosophical/thematic/development" guide for the messages. I began:

"The character of God. This obviously is the central paradigm around which all truth clusters. In harmony with COL 4:15 ["The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of (God's) character of love"],⁶ NET '98 will construct a relational portrait/paradigm of God and His character of undying love. In a world of brokenness, there is Someone who offers deep, existential healing. Someone to run to, not run from. Someone to be a friend of, not afraid of."

This became the byline of NET '98: "*God isn't somebody to be afraid of—He is someone to be a friend of!*" We called it "Finding a Forever Friendship With God," our truly "Forever Friend." Twenty-five years later it remains the shining summation of Scripture.

PROGRESS THROUGH PRAYER

But the story of NET '98 cannot be told without recalling the central place of prayer in the entire evangelistic endeavor. Ruthie Jacobsen, former prayer coordinator for the NAD, set a goal of enlisting 100,000 prayer partners for this event. Like the leaves of autumn, her colorfully designed bookmarks spread across the continent. She and



Dwight Nelson shakes hands with 6-year-old Marissa Ayala—who was conceived in the desperate hope that her bone marrow might match that of her dying older sister. (It did.) Nelson used the story to illustrate God’s sending a Baby to save the human race.

RICHARD DOWER

her prayer team organized teen and adult prayer conferences around the division, highlighting the rallying call: “It is never too late for God. No battle is too nearly lost for God to win. No combination of opposing forces is too strong or too numerous for God. Forward on your knees!”⁸

That’s why Alfred McClure, NAD president, wrote to the churches and pastors of this division appealing for a day of fasting and prayer on behalf of NET ‘98 in North America: “I especially hope every NET ‘98 pastor and volunteer team will be present for that prayer dedication service [uplinked live on Sabbath, September 26, 1998], all of us united in prayer by the Spirit and satellite, going to our knees on the eve of our going to the world.”⁹ Forward on our knees indeed!

“Forward on Our Knees” remained our rallying cry at Pioneer. Under the prayer leadership of John and Millie Youngberg, prayer teams were organized and trained, support intercessors assigned to all 40 preachers (39 translators and me), and a 24-hour on-site prayer vigil conducted two days before opening night. Through their indefatigable prayer ministry the Youngbergs led us to move with the Spirit, “forward on our knees.”

Opening night was electric—for the two young hosts, Shasta Burr and Bernie Anderson (both Gen Xers), for me, for everyone. Even behind closed doors you could hear, feel the buzz of anticipation from more than 3,000 attendees crowded into Pioneer’s sanctuary, the youth chapel, the seminary chapel, and eventually Johnson Gym.

Outside, giant satellite trucks and dishes clustered, pointing toward the stars, everyone awaiting the director’s cue to throw the switch that would transmit (at the speed of light) the everlasting gospel 22,500 miles up to a hovering satellite and in the next split second back to earth and eventually 7,700 sites on every inhabited continent. You can’t make up a story like this!

Take the *Reader’s Digest* cover story of the Ayala family—whose teen daughter, dying of an incurable disease and desperately needing a rare bone marrow transplant, was saved by the birth of her baby sister, intentionally conceived by their parents in hopes of procreating a lifesaving genetic match. Opening weekend I interviewed them before that world audience, and when I asked 6-year-old Marissa what it felt like being the one who saved her older sister’s life, she burst into tears. That moment on camera—illustrating the profound truth it took the birth of a Baby for God to save the human race—set the course for this global event. We never looked back.

THE RESPONSE

The *Adventist Review* carried a cover story on NET ‘98 in December 1998, summing up the event:

To understand the scope of NET ‘98, maybe a little math is in order: six continents, 12 satellite feeds, 25 broadcast technicians, five cameras, 22 floodlights, 1,500 host site volunteers, 31 programs, 7,600 sites (2,000 in North America), 100-plus countries, millions of potential viewers, one

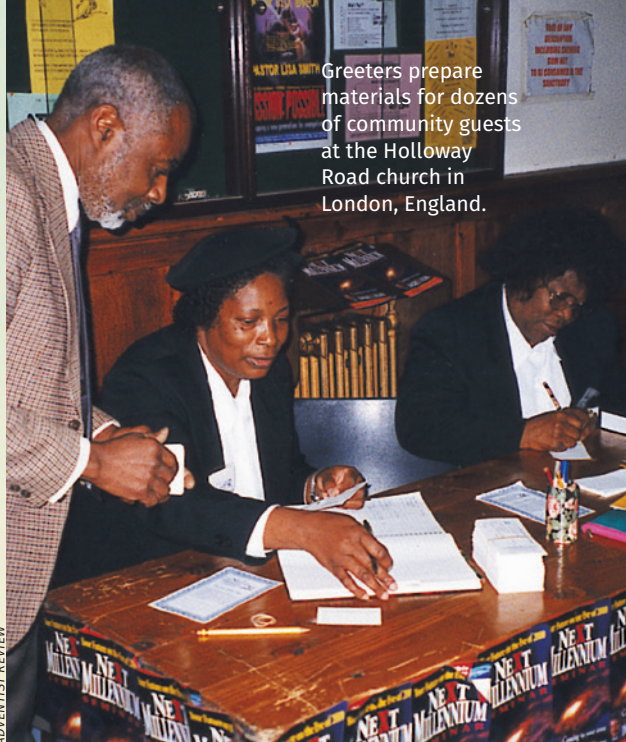
message, one world, one God. All told, a global adventure that brought the Adventist message to a world audience as never before.¹⁰

NAD president Al McClure responded: “The NeXt Millennium Seminar united the church in ways we’ve never seen before. And the unique thing was that around the world Adventists and their guests heard the gospel presented in the same way.”¹¹

Brad Thorp (then director of Adventist Global Communication Network/AGCN) later estimated totals of 7,700 global sites with a cumulative audience of 1.3 to 1.5 million viewers (including live-event and post-event showings).¹² In her book on satellite NET events, Candace Thorp reported: “God blessed NET ‘98 with more than 25,000 baptisms [100 at Pioneer], an electrified university campus, changed lives, renewed commitment, hearts mended, and a broadened vision.”¹³

“What hath God wrought!” indeed. But then, who can measure Calvary’s estimate of our daily, quiet, living-for-Jesus witness to strangers and friends alike?

I think of that pack of skinheads in Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic. Rosta Klima, a Seventh-day Adventist youth, wondered how he might reach them—dyed hair, earrings, leather jackets, and all. He started by playing volleyball with them. That led to conversations, five people at first. But by the time NET ‘98 started,



Greeters prepare materials for dozens of community guests at the Holloway Road church in London, England.

ADVENTIST REVIEW

17 of them were meeting. Rosta told his new friends about the NeXt Millennium Seminar. They began to watch the programs live (via Internet) at 1:30 a.m.—in English! They grew from 17 to 25, meeting in apartments around the city. More friends joined. Parents, suspicious of what their kids were watching in the middle of the night, were soon watching NET ‘98 themselves. The group grew to 37 strong. After a live altar call from Pioneer in the middle of the night, 17 skinheads

WORTH REPEATING (AGAIN)

NET ‘98 was big news in 1998. While something similar had been done in previous years, it had never been global, extending to eight regions of the world. A six-page feature in the December 1998 *Adventist Review* featured a full report of the meetings. Included was this sidebar of a few of Dwight K. Nelson’s most memorable lines from his NET ‘98 sermon series that ran from October 9 through November 14, 1998.

“God is not someone to be afraid of. He’s someone to be a friend of.”

—October 9 and throughout the series

“Love that will not let you say no is not love. It’s called rape.”

—October 10, on the freedom God offers

“I can assure you that right now I’m sweating on both sides of my face.”

—October 16, during a difficult lecture on Darwinism, responding to a fax from Africa saying that Nelson seemed to sweat on just one side of his face

“Even the friends of Jesus get sick and die.”

—October 23, on Lazarus

“Human sincerity can never be a substitute for divine truth.”

—October 27

gave their hearts to Jesus.¹⁴ All because one young Adventist reached out.

“What hath God wrought!” Twenty-five thousand, 1.5 million, one Adventist with a heart to share their faith—what does it matter? When God leaves His fingerprints all over your story, the number that matters most to Him is one—it is you.

So I ask you: 25 years later, where do we go from here? As I have reflected on those halcyon days and nights of satellite evangelism, I wonder—is there a gospel vision left to ignite the hearts of this new generation? Or are we so ideologically divided that this sort of global collaboration would now be impossible? I keep brooding over a comment Russell Burrill made: “[NET ’98] brought the SDA Church together in unity as nothing has ever done before or since. . . . What impresses me about my reflections is [that] this unity . . . happened when *we all came together to accomplish something enormous*.”¹⁵

Have we lost a vision for the enormous nature of our divine mandate? Are we settling for chump change and tiddlywinks when we could be dealing with huge drafts of heaven’s currency in a supernatural storehouse we have yet to draw from?

Robert Browning is right: “Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”¹⁶ Or have we abandoned the kind of reach and stretch those persons in that Denver hotel room were led by God to make? Who among us will cast the next vision? If we wait much longer, how much

of this nation and world will be reachable?

“Now to him who is *able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine*, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:20, 21, NIV).

It is high time to say again, “What hath God wrought!”¹⁷

¹ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/what-hath-god-wrought>, accessed Aug. 28, 2023.

² Russell Burrill, *Reaping the Harvest* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Books, 2007), p. 84.

³ Glenn Aufderhar, emailed reflections, Aug. 24, 2023.

⁴ Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 333. (Italics supplied.)

⁵ Skip MacCarty, emailed reflections, Aug. 24, 2023.

⁶ E. G. White, p. 415.

⁷ Dwight K. Nelson, unpublished paper, “Philosophical/Thematic/Development for NET ’98,” July 1, 1997.

⁸ Wesley Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Asbury Press, 1990), p. 236.

⁹ Skip MacCarty, emailed reflections, Aug. 24, 2023; ACN News Bulletin, September 1998.

¹⁰ Jack Stenger, “The NeXt Level: Responding to Fresh, Relation-based Evangelism, Thousands Find a Forever Friendship With God,” *Adventist Review*, North American Edition, December 1998, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Brad Thorp, emailed post-event AGCN report, Mar. 5, 1999.

¹³ Candace Thorp, *Miracle Factor: Awesome Stories of Satellite Evangelism* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2005), p. 111.

¹⁴ Betty Cooney, emailed report from Daniel Duda, ministerial secretary, Czecho-Slovakian Union, October 1998.

¹⁵ Russell Burrill, email reflections, Aug. 22, 2023. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁶ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43745/andrea-del-sarto>

Dwight K. Nelson is the former lead pastor of Pioneer Memorial church at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

“They steal heart
in the fear of . . .
They also steal
fear in the heart
of every American.
See, I get nervous
even talking about
them.”

—October 28, on the Internal Revenue Service

“Now you get to call Him ‘Dad.’”
—October 30, on joining the family of God

“Revelation 12:17 is
not an apocalyptic
call to arrogance. It’s
a prophetic call to
faithfulness.”

—November 7

“Too many of us have
been sin-centered
rather than Savior-
centered.”

—November 14, on prayer

And finally, here’s a quote, not by the NET ’98 speaker, but about him: “Now I know why they call him ‘Wight Nelson. It’s because of his hair.’”

—a child viewer in the Oudtshoorn church, George, South Africa



GROWING CLOSER TOGETHER

Making cozy moments

There's something about the cool, crisp weather of winter months that invites us to huddle together and find cozy moments. So step away from your devices for a while and plan some simple, fun activities that will help you grow closer together as a family. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Choose activities that help you get to know each other better, such as working on your family tree and sharing family stories. Or ask each person to write questions on separate index cards and take turns picking a card for everyone to answer.

Make kindness tags by cutting hearts from cardstock, decorating them, and writing "Kindness Alert!" on them. Each person starts with several tags and places them wherever they have done a secret act of kindness.

Whoever finds a tag does another act of kindness within 24 hours to keep the kindness growing.

When we appreciate others, we are less likely to argue with them! Stick a photo of each person at the center of a sheet of cardstock. Pass the picture around the family and invite each person to write two things they appreciate about the person around the edge of the photo. Or start a gratitude board on which each person writes a short thank-you note to everyone else in the home every week.

Invite children to choose a cookie or dessert recipe and involve everyone in making the treat. Design a simple greeting card and make them together for everyone on your mailing list. Purchase a simple craft kit for making holiday decorations, and spend an evening crafting together, or set yourself the challenge of making all your decorations from recycled materials. Search online for hundreds of ways to make simple things from unwanted books, scrap plastic, and leftover fabrics.

LAUGHING AND WORKING TOGETHER

Provide a stack of copy paper and ask each person to create an imaginary gift for everyone else in the family. These can be things they would love to give if they had the money, or even things that haven't been invented yet! Have a time of imaginary gift sharing, telling each other what you made and why you chose it.

Ask each person to draw or create an imaginary machine using junk or construction toys. This machine is one that will

help you to solve a family problem. Introduce your designs and say why you chose this machine. Maybe it will stimulate some creative solutions for your everyday problems!

Tackle a family task as a team. It's much more fun doing something together than on your own, and it grows trust and love. Put on some uplifting music as you clean up, decorate one of your rooms, gather your unwanted clothing and belongings to share with others, or clear the yard or garage. Celebrate by making pizzas together and continue the teamwork!

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

When everyone's busy, some no-prep worship ideas can bring you together. The more our experience of God's love is expanded, the more we can share His love with those around us.

Send everyone on a scavenger hunt to find three things in the house that remind them of God's love. Bring them back together and describe how each item helps you understand something about God's wonderful love. Ask each person to share a time they experienced God's love, or the love of someone else, during the day.

Gather your craft materials. Read Psalm 103. Write a list of the ways that God loves you based on this psalm. Then each make something to remind you of God's love. Display your creativity as part of your seasonal decor.

Write the alphabet down the side of a sheet of paper. List as many adjectives as you can to describe God's love beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Praise Him for His love together.

Print placemats with worship-focused activities for family mealtimes from <https://ted.adventist.org/family/spirituality/worship-placemats/>.

BLESSING YOUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Every winter the Johnson family creates a window of light with a heartwarming message for their neighbors. They use tissue paper and black cardstock to create a "stained glass" design, sharing a message of hope, love, or gratitude. Sketch out a simple design on paper. Use computer fonts and a printer to make patterns for the letters. Cut out the shapes together and fill the whole window with your design. Use colored tissue to bring life to the design. Leave the light on to shine your message to the community.

Plan some simple, fun activities that will help you grow closer together as a family.

One church advertised their "Lights of Hope" project to the community. Families drove around, looking for the decorated windows in their town, and completing a worksheet to show which ones they found. Participants were invited to a celebration at the church with refreshments, and an opportunity to make a small window decoration to take away. One year the church told the story of Jesus' birth through their window designs, and revealed a different window each day of Advent to make a community Advent calendar.

SHARING LOVE TOGETHER

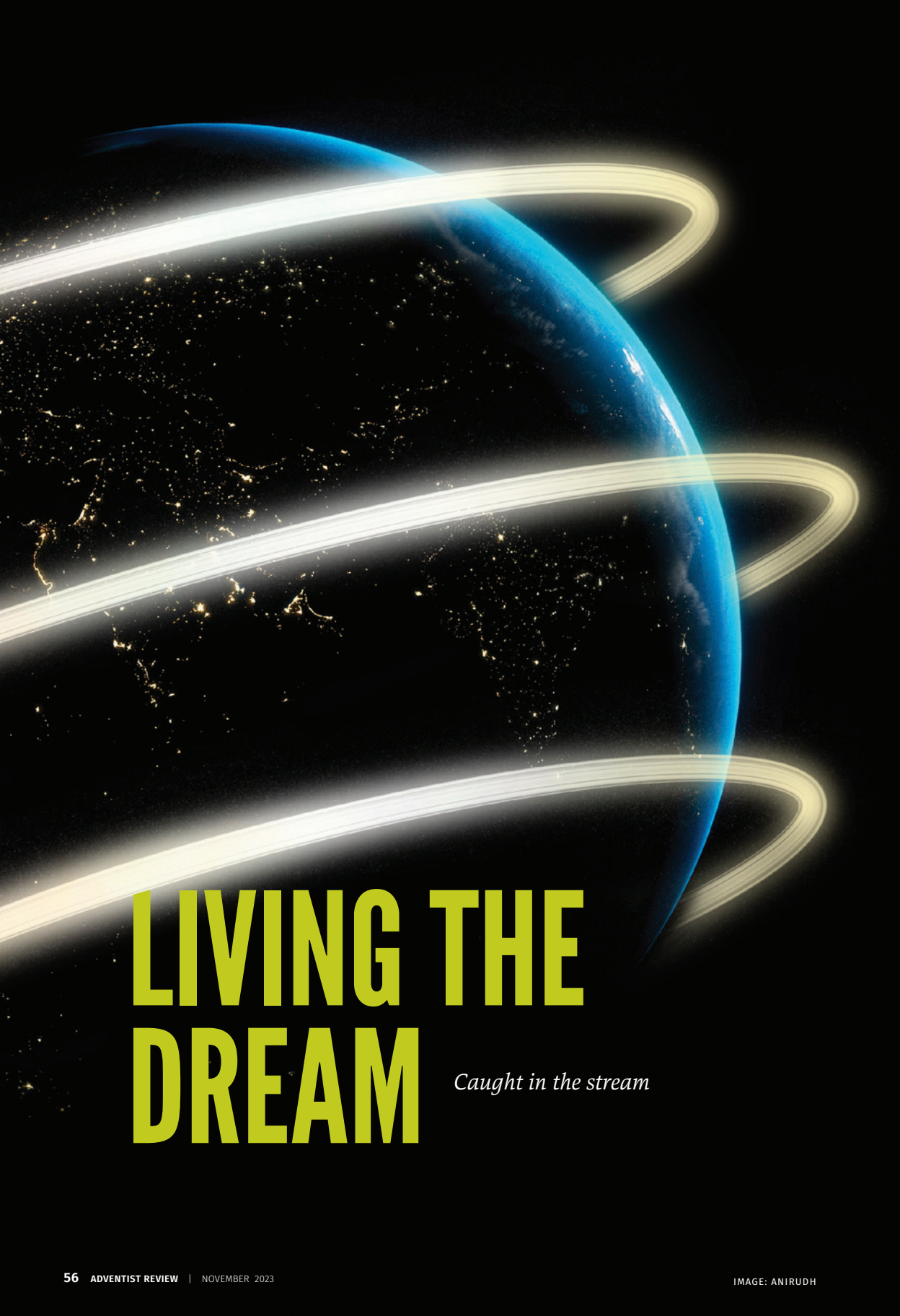
During the winter months the Muller family regularly visit the neighbors on their street. They make small gifts, such as bags of roasted nuts, cookies, candles, or candies, and visit each home in turn. Dad plays the guitar, and the children sing a song on the doorstep, give the gifts, and ask how they can help. This year the Mullers are also inviting people to come to their home for an evening of cookies, hot chocolate, and a movie, or games.

CLOSING THE DAY TOGETHER

End your days with warm and encouraging conversations. List three things that went well, and thank God for the successes. Tell each other which character strengths you have seen in each other during the day (visit www.viacharacter.org for a list of the top 24 character strengths). Ask where each person saw Jesus at work during the day, and what filled them with wonder. Ask what hurt during the day, and comfort each other with loving words and prayers. Make sure that everyone goes to sleep knowing that God loves them and that their family loves them too.

The colder months might just end up being the warmest time of the year! 🍂

Karen Holford is a family therapist based in London and the Family, Children's, and Women's Ministries director for the Trans-European Division.



LIVING THE DREAM

Caught in the stream

The fervor of the Millerite movement ended in 1844 when Jesus did not come as expected, but a small group remained committed. Times were challenging because their unique and unpopular beliefs invited ridicule. They believed in a new interpretation of the cleansing of the sanctuary; that the seventh-day Sabbath is the right day of worship; and in the visions of a young woman in her late teens.

November 1848 was a pivotal moment for the “little flock.” Ellen White had another vision in which she received divine instruction to be shared with her husband, James. “I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world.”¹

This would be the beginning not only of a magazine but a denomination, which emerged through prayerful study and debate. Long-serving *Review* editor F. D. Nichol described the magazine in 1949 (100 years later) as the “church paper of the Advent Movement”; the story of the paper as well as the church “will quicken your pulse, stir your loyalties, and renew your conviction that God is with us.”²

In 1999 editor William G. Johnsson put it this way: “The *Review* is the leading edge of the church. The *Review* seeks to represent the church, to advance the church, and to articulate the church. And as Adventists still seek to be open to ‘present truth,’ the *Review* challenges the church to the vision splendid, the light on the hill that the Lord of the church holds out for the church. . . . The *Review* is the paper for the entire church, a place where readers learn, interact, have their say, and help shape our feisty fellowship.”³

It has been 175 years since that vision and the heavenly directive to start a “little paper.” The *Review* staff has not faltered in fulfilling its God-given task. “A human network of dozens of editors, translators, designers, and proofreaders now circles the globe, supported by hundreds of press personnel in eight publishing houses from Indonesia to Korea to the United States to Germany,” wrote recent editor Bill Knott in 2010. “Except when Sabbath makes its welcome visit in each time zone, someone is working on *Adventist Review* or *Adventist World* every hour of every day of every week all year long”⁴

This month I also celebrate my 22-year anniversary working for the *Adventist Review*. I’ve worked directly with three editors, and knew a fourth well. When you realize there have been only 12 editors in its history, that’s a bit of a feat.

For years three paintings by Harry Anderson hung in the *Review* office. The first was of the 1848 vision of Ellen White, with the earth encircled by “streams of light” in the top right corner. The second depicted James White, head resting on his hand, as he contemplated what to write for the first edition while his wife, Ellen, stood by his side, encouraging his efforts. The last again showed James White, this time walking from the printer carrying a carpetbag stuffed with the

“From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world.”

first edition of *The Present Truth* (the forerunner of the *Review*, which would go through multiple name changes over the years).

Through the years as I looked at those paintings and saw the streams of light encircling the globe, I recognized that I and my colleagues were somewhere within those swirls of energy foretold 175 years ago. We are still committed to fulfilling the vision and the mission. It no longer is simply a “little paper” printed in English, but now exists in multiple languages, editions, websites, and audio and visual media. We are God-directed. God-sustained. Living the dream, caught in the stream. ▀

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Publishing Ministry* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), p. 16.

² F. D. Nichol, in *Review and Herald*, May 5, 1949, p. 3.

³ William G. Johnsson, in *Adventist Review*, July 29, 1999, p. 3.

⁴ Bill Knott, in *Adventist Review*, Oct. 28, 2010, p. 6.

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THE EUPHORIA OF LAWLESSNESS AND THE ALLURE OF THE GOSPEL

During the past month I've become friends with a number of people in my community who come from diverse religious backgrounds yet who, nevertheless, have a fairly common story.

There's Naya, a woman from Jordan, who has rejected the Muslim faith of her childhood; Toby, originally from eastern Tennessee, who grew up in a strict Christian family but who's now a self-identified pagan; and Michael, who was raised in a nominal Catholic home in Maine but who is now an avowed atheist.¹

There are others, but they all represent a cross-section of people in America, and especially my part of America, who are joining the ranks of that ever-growing group known as religious "nones"—those who check the "none" box when asked about religious affiliation.

There are, no doubt, myriad reasons as to why people reject organized religion. But the common theme I most often detect goes like this: people are tired of having others tell them what to do, and they experience feelings of euphoria when they step into a life free from rules and regulations handed down from an all-seeing deity or that deity's earthly representatives.

These people are, in other words, the classic postmodern relativists we hear so much about, who are allergic to absolute truth and believe everyone should be free to determine right and wrong for themselves.

It's tempting, of course, to conclude that such people simply want to rebel against God because they have sin in their lives they don't want to surrender. This is, no doubt, true for some—perhaps even many.

But I think, by and large, something else is often going on that may not be as obvious

to those of us who relate to these people from a distance: many are rightfully rebelling against religious systems whose primary currency is guilt, shame, control, and coercion—religious systems that strictly enforce human-made rules, and are absent the motivating power of the gospel.

This is precisely what Jesus confronted head-on in His day, criticizing religious leaders for binding "heavy burdens" that were "hard to bear," laying them on people's "shoulders" (Matt. 23:4). They were "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9), which, according to Ellen White, causes people to reject and rebel against not only the rules of humans but also the commandments of God.²

Simply put, lawlessness feels like ecstasy when you've been harassed by people trying to control you through regulations they attribute to God. Rebellion feels like liberation in response to fear-based coercion.

And *this* is the context the book of Revelation lays out regarding the last days.

I'm not sure the answer is to give people the "right" rules. Rules, even the right ones, aren't attractive to those who've been burned by shame-based and law-centric religion. It just feels like more of the same.

What they instead need is Jesus—the only person who can give them rest and *truly* deliver them from their guilt and shame.

Indeed, in the words of Ellen White: "Only by love is love awakened."³

So let's give them love. 🍷

¹ Not their real names.

² See Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Sept. 11, 1893.

³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 22.

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



REBELLION FEELS
LIKE LIBERATION IN
RESPONSE TO FEAR-
BASED COERCION.

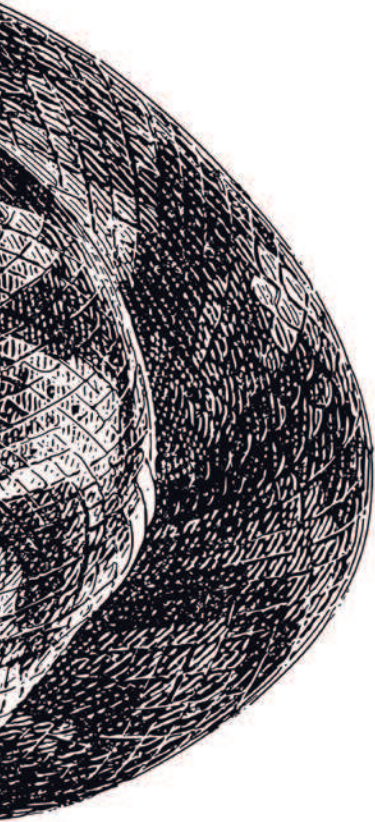


SOMETIMES

BITTEN

Dealing with toxic people

The toxic person is like a magnet, taking time, funds, and emotional energy from others without a reciprocal return.



DICK STENBAKKEN

B UZZZZZZzzzzzz! "What's that?" "Look out! It's a rattlesnake! Keep your distance!"

Rattlers typically give you a warning before they strike. The bite is painful, toxic, and deadly. Unfortunately, toxic people don't come with warnings. They just show up, and unfortunately, there is no shortage of toxic folk.

When something or someone is toxic, they are potentially dangerous to the point of being poisonous and deadly. Discernment dictates caution when encountering toxins in physical, emotional, or spiritual realms if one wants a full and enjoyable life.

To be safe in the presence of toxins requires recognition of the toxin and its deadly potential. As an example, if I encounter a snake when out for a hike, knowing the difference between a harmless bull snake and a deadly rattlesnake can save my life. A rattlesnake is what it is: dangerous and deadly. Toxic. Neither ignorance nor avoidance of reality will give me protection, but ignorance or denial can bring me great harm. The same is true of toxic people or toxic relationships.

Unlike the rattlesnake, people are not born toxic. Toxic people become that way by absorbing external toxicity from internalizing their own trauma, anger, hurt, or experiences. Pure water starts fresh from a spring, but as it flows through the environment, it can pick up toxins that turn purity to toxicity. People are no different. How people become toxic is not an excuse for their behavior, however. Behavior is a choice.

RECOGNITION

The first step in dealing with toxic people is the ability to see the toxicity for what it actually is. Toxic behavioral traits may give you a gnawing feeling of discomfort when around the toxic person, coupled with an ongoing need to excuse, explain, or defend their toxic behaviors. Typically, toxic people are subtly or overtly driven by a need to control people and situations around them. This control need is relentless. Being around toxic people engenders stress, confusion, and anxiety that can be damaging. Those behaviors trigger internal, visceral responses in the form of muscle tightening, increased heart rate, clenched teeth, and other physical responses that are warning flags from the body, signaling conflict and danger. The toxic person is like a magnet, taking time, funds, and emotional energy from others without a reciprocal return.

Toxic people often enjoy upheaval and chaotic stress because this gives them a way to control, if not overtly, covertly. They appear to constantly stir the pot of discontent. Continuous conflict becomes the norm. Those around them feel uncomfortable, always looking for, or expecting, an apology for the toxic behavior. The apology never comes, but the toxic behavior continues to sow discomfort.

When discomfort becomes so intolerable that those in the toxic person's realm share their pain with others, it is not uncommon for others to say, "Just pray about it." Prayer is powerful and needed

by all, but praying over a rattler will not turn it into a playful puppy. Another tactic is to try to ignore the obvious. That does not work either. The only productive way to deal with toxic people is to intervene. Without intervention, the relationship will not heal. It will only worsen over time.

There are two amazing stories of dealing with toxins in Elisha's life. Second Kings 2:19-21 relates how the prophet healed a poisonous spring with salt. In 2 Kings 4:38-44 there is the story of toxic gourds in the stew. It was all good until someone cried out, "There is death in the pot!" (verse 40). When Elisha intervened, as he did in chapter 2, things changed. Note that first there was recognition of the problem, then there was intervention

to change the toxicity. Both were needed to get positive results from negative situations. Those two elements are vital when dealing with toxic people. Recognition and intervention make a difference.

INTERVENTION

As followers of Jesus, we want to heed the admonition of Paul in Romans 12:17, 18: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (NIV).

So just how does that work when dealing with toxic people? The admonition is clear: we don't return toxic behavior by becoming toxic in our response. What we can do is help break the toxic and destructive cycle by wise and well-planned intervention. If the cycle is not broken, the toxic behaviors will continue to spin out of control and cause increasing damage. Intervention offers healing. Nonintervention, "just leave it alone," is nonproductive and increases the short-term and long-term damaging effects. If I am bitten by a toxic reptile, intervention is by far the best option.

The first feature of intervention in toxic relationships is to honestly recognize and admit that problems exist. The next step is to have a clear plan to address the toxic person or relationship. These steps can be uncomfortable, but they are vital if there is to be any chance of change and healing.

ADDRESSING TOXIC BEHAVIORS

Once toxic behaviors are recognized, the next step is to communicate with the toxic person about a need for change. Communication is key to success in building a nontoxic relationship. Using "I messages" allows me to express how the toxic behaviors affect me and our relationship. As an example, saying, "I really feel uncomfortable when I hear negative comments about my choices. I feel angry, and that isn't helpful for our relationship" is far more productive than a "you message," such as "You make me angry when you are so negative!" "You messages" prompt immediate pushback, resistance, and defensive attacks because they come across as blaming. "I messages," on the other hand, allow me to be up-front with how a specific behavior impacts me personally. It's not an attack; it's an honest



The first feature of intervention in toxic relationships is to honestly recognize and admit that problems exist.

risk-taking sharing of how the behavior impacts the relationship.

Yes, risk taking. Deep sharing is a willingness to take a risk to help build a better relationship. Jesus set the example by His seven “I am” statements in the New Testament.* Was it a risk? Certainly. Was it effective? Yes indeed.

The next step in addressing toxic people is to set clear boundaries. Having and maintaining boundaries is a way of showing respect. These boundaries can include verbal communications and words used, such as, “In the future when we talk, put-downs and name-calling will not be part of the conversation. If so, the conversation will immediately cease.”

Boundaries can also include time: “When we talk about issues, we will spend only 15 minutes on the subject, then we will drop it. If we need more discussion, we will mutually set another time to do so.” Other boundaries might include location, who else is around (or not), physical contact, threats, or other behaviors. *Here* is a great place for the “pray about it” advice some will give.

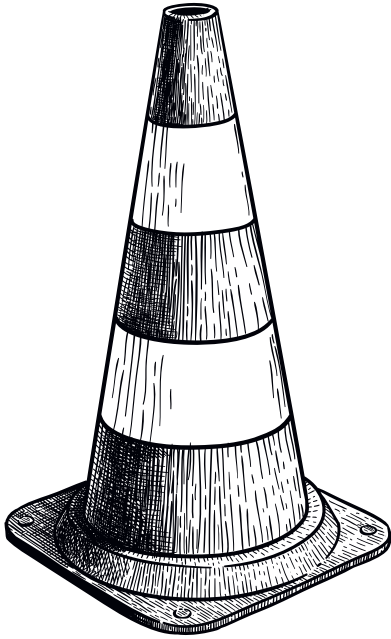
Be sure, boundaries will be tested. Remember the drive for control? Boundaries will really test that. If boundaries are *not* kept, there is little or

no chance to end the toxicity, and an increased likelihood of ending the relationship. If someone is unwilling to respect boundaries, they are dangerously toxic.

“But boundaries sound so harsh,” some will say. “Shouldn’t we be flexible and open?” Take a serious look at boundaries in the Bible. Boundaries are clearly set in Genesis 2:16, 17: “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’” (NIV). Not only are there boundaries, but there are also consequences for violating those boundaries. If there are no consequences for boundary violation, there is no sense in setting a boundary at all. The same is true in dealing with toxic people.

Linking boundaries, consequences, and “I messages” produces a statement such as: “If I hear name-calling, threats, or swearing, the discussion will cease, and we will not converse again until a set time two days from now.” Or “If there is any physical violence or abuse, I will report it to the authorities, and we will no longer meet privately. We will meet only in the presence of a third party.”

Setting and maintaining boundaries is essential



Setting and maintaining boundaries is essential and clearly biblical.

and clearly biblical. Both Deuteronomy 19:14 and Proverbs 23:10 warn against moving or violating boundaries. In Deuteronomy 27:17 it is recorded: “Cursed is anyone who moves their neighbor’s boundary stone. Then all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’” (NIV).

Respecting physical, emotional, and other boundaries is not a suggestion in Scripture; it is a mandate. This is especially true in dealing with toxic people.

OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

Dealing with toxic people or relationships requires recognition of the toxic behaviors and intervention. The final step is to clearly define the desired outcomes. Those desired results must be clearly stated, measurable, realistic, and within a

specific time frame. They are best not only discussed mutually but, even better, put in writing. That way there is no way to waffle about what the goals are, and by when they are to be evidenced.

Now it comes down to where the rubber meets the road: choices. That, too, is a biblical concept. All of life, and even eternal life, comes down to what we choose. If the toxic person violates boundaries, refuses to cooperate, will not make a choice to build the relationship, they have made a choice. Perhaps the only response can be “When you choose to discuss our relationship, respect boundaries, and work together, I will be delighted. Let me know when you are there. Until then, we will not talk to each other. I care about you, and I care about myself and my family. I would like nothing better than a positive relationship. Let me know when that is also your choice.” Choices have consequences.

Dealing with toxic people is not fun. Not dealing with them hurts everyone. Toxic behavior does not disappear magically, but it can change with appropriate intervention. In some cases, seeking guidance from a professional is necessary to have clarity and courage to confront toxic people. Sometimes people are toxic as a way to distance themselves from others as a protective device to stave off more pain. Unfortunately, they only increase their own pain and that of others.

The good news is that we are God’s children. He can heal and help us change. Just ask Him. Then follow through. He can turn toxicity into triumph. That is the good news of the gospel. It isn’t easy, but it is possible. ♣

*The seven “I Am” statements of Jesus can be found in John 6:35; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1. It is interesting that in two of the statements Jesus says He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5). What we need to stop toxic cycles is His light to see each other as real valid equals rather than lopsided, one-way relationships leading to toxic, abusive, attempts at overpowering others. In fact, these are a pattern in John’s Gospel showing the reality of who Jesus is . . . authentic, real, present, counted. “I statements” do the same for us: they validate that I am present and real, and have value. Disrespecting who I am by not accepting me as a whole person with boundaries is actually a rejection of any potential relationship. If someone rejects me as having reality and rights, we can’t have a mutual relationship. It’s that simple and yet complicated. If I treat others as having no value, no recognition, no needs, no boundaries . . . there is no hope of any fulfilling relationship.

Dick Stenbakken, Ed.D., is retired and living in Loveland, Colorado. He is a pastor, retired U.S. Army chaplain, former director of General Conference Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, author, speaker, teacher, and, in his spare time, a first-person presenter of 70-plus Bible characters.

THERE FOR THE HARD STUFF: THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY

In 2014 I had a miscarriage. It was my third pregnancy; the first two had gone well and resulted in two healthy, beautiful babies, and there was no explanation as to why the third had not happened the same way. I know now that one in five pregnancies end in miscarriage, but nine years ago all I knew was that the baby I was supposed to eventually hold in my arms, and name, and snuggle, and teach to eat and walk and talk would never do any of those things. It broke my heart.

We found out two days before my birthday; two days before Sabbath. I remember skipping church that week and going to the lake instead, trying to add “fun” and “happy” to what felt like an impossibly bleak, gray moment in time. I remember celebrating my birthday with my coworkers, wanting to appreciate the effort they’d put in, and instead feeling like a mannequin brought to life.

I remember the following weekend, stepping into church and seeing my friend across the lobby, pregnant belly on full display. Immediately I turned around and left the building to pull myself together.

For about a week I didn’t talk about the miscarriage. I wasn’t sure what to say; the baby had been only 8 weeks along, and it felt a bit dramatic mourning something that small and unknown. I knew so many other parents whose lives had been turned completely upside-down when they lost a baby at 36 weeks, 18 months, 2 years, 15 years, 18 years. What right did I have to grieve my early term loss?

But I’m a writer, and I process thoughts through written words, and so I had to

write. Even if no one read it, I had to tell my story. I wrote a series of blog posts as I staggered through the weeks following that doctor’s visit forever seared into my memory. I poured my grief into every word I wrote, sharing my journey with all the raw honesty I could muster.

What shocked me were the responses to my story. Message after message landed in my inbox from friends who’d experienced the same type of loss, and I’d never known. Most admitted they didn’t talk about it, keeping their pain to themselves, unsure how to express it.

And every single one of them thanked me for sharing my grief publicly. They hadn’t shared theirs because they thought people didn’t want to hear the hard stuff. They shouldered their sorrow alone.

We aren’t meant to go through life alone. We are meant to live in community and share our joys *and* our sorrows. Galatians 6:2 instructs us to “carry each other’s burdens,”* and Proverbs 17:17 tells us that “a brother is born for a time of adversity.” Paul wrote in Romans 1, “I long to see you so that . . . you and I may be mutually encouraged” (verses 11, 12).

This is the purpose of community—to support each other and share the load of life’s many challenges. I implore you to do two things. First, take advantage of your community and let them know when you’re struggling so they can lift you up; and second, make sure to *be* the community for others when they need you.

We are one body, and “if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). ♣

*Bible texts are from the New International Version.

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

THE FAITH-FULL LIFE
BECKY ST. CLAIR



I WASN'T SURE WHAT TO SAY; THE BABY HAD ONLY BEEN EIGHT WEEKS ALONG, AND IT FELT A BIT DRAMATIC MOURNING SOMETHING THAT SMALL AND UNKNOWN.

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

MINDING YOUR MIND

Reducing Your Risk of Dementia

Q: My father has dementia, and we, his adult children, are concerned that we may be at high risk. What can we do to prevent dementia?

A: Dementia, a decline in thinking, memory, and decision-making, affects one new person every three seconds worldwide. None of us wants to be in that lineup. Not all types of dementia are family-linked, and not everyone with a family history of dementia and is at increased risk will develop the condition. Proactively taking brain-healthy steps and adopting a healthy lifestyle can offset some of the risk in family members of individuals with dementia.

If you or any of your loved ones begin to experience cognitive decline or dementia-related symptoms, we strongly recommend that you seek a comprehensive evaluation by a health-care professional, or specialist in geriatric medicine or neurology, or consult with a dementia specialist. Every day researchers uncover more about the genetic and environmental factors that contribute to dementia, so personalized risk assessments and interventions are becoming available.

Staving off dementia and maintaining robust cognitive health involves a combination of lifestyle choices and behaviors. Here are 10:

Stay Mentally Active: Engage in mentally stimulating activities, such as puzzles, or learning a new language or skill. Read regularly and challenge your mind.

Stay Physically Active: Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week, along with strength training and flexibility. Exercise positively impacts brain health through better blood flow and stimulation of brain cell regeneration.

Prioritize Adequate Sleep: Aim for seven to eight hours of restful sleep per night. Sleep is essential for memory consolidation, brain hygiene, and overall brain health.

Eat Healthily: Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. The carbs should not be heavily processed, the proteins lean, and the fats healthy. Include foods high in antioxidants, such as berries, leafy greens, and nuts, while limiting added sugars and processed foods.

Manage Stress: Prayer, meditating on God’s Word, deep breathing, taking brisk walks, and practicing self-talk based on reality and truth may all be helpful stress busters.

Engage Socially and Spiritually: Stay socially active; cultivate and maintain healthy, appropriate relationships; join clubs or groups that interest you to stay socially engaged.

Protect Your Head: Prevent head injuries by wearing helmets during sports and using seat belts in vehicles.

Omit Alcohol: Alcohol consumption can increase the risk of dementia.

Take Care of Comorbid Health Conditions: Manage blood pressure, cholesterol levels, body weight, depression, anxiety, and diabetes.

Don’t Use Tobacco in Any Form!

Curiously, a recently published study showed that religious attendance, beyond merely being social interaction, is associated with better cognitive function and neuropsychiatric symptoms.* Perhaps “not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25, NIV) is better advice than we could have imagined. 📌

* *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 5 (Feb. 28, 2023): 4300.

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

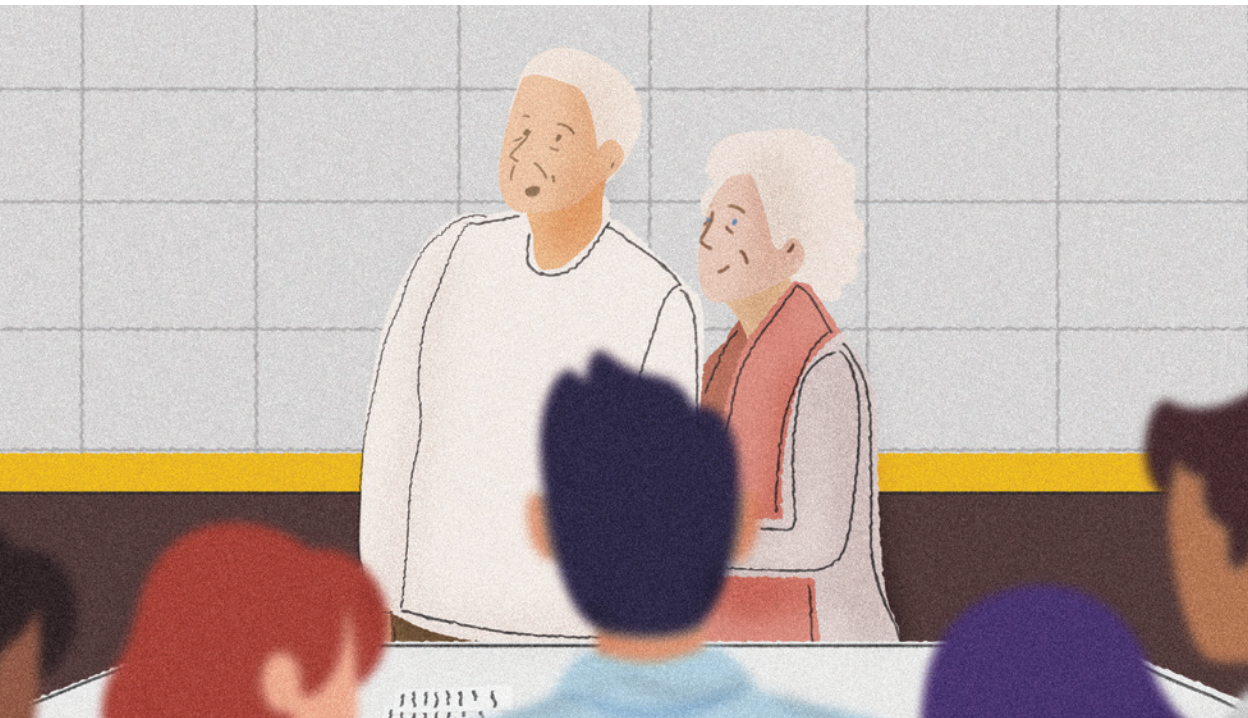
Jim and Donna

are in good health,

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



To learn more about Jim and Donna's journey—
scan the QR code or visit willplan.org/JimandDonna



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MY SPIRIT OF JUDGMENT

The women sat, tucked into every available seat, some even on the floor, as they spilled into the adjoining rooms. We'd been at an outdoor women's retreat, spending time in the Word of God and in fellowship with each other. Just as we started our late-afternoon time together, the gathering storm forced us inside. Tonight's topic was on forgiveness and praise, and I wished I could see all their faces at once. For me, it's much easier to speak when you can see the nuances of emotion on people's faces. When I turned one way, my back was to the others, and I'd have to step into another room to see even more faces.

"God, help me," I breathed. All day, between meetings, I'd heard their stories, their own journey of life. They'd buried children, battled debilitating diseases, endured the ridicule of husbands who didn't walk with God, and faced uncertainty over whether they themselves even wanted to make a commitment to Jesus.

Tonight, as we started, I asked the women to write down one thing they wished they could change about themselves. Nobody put their name; typically, the more anonymous we can be, the more honest we are.

I collected them and saw how we're surprisingly similar, as much as we like to think we're different. Their words sparked a familiar theme in those issues we often keep hidden: fear, depression, anger, worry, lack of love, and this one—"I want to focus on my own growth, rather than others' sins." In fact, multiple women put the word "judgment" as the one issue they'd like to change the most about themselves.

Did the spirit of judgment originate in the garden, when Adam blamed his wife, and Eve blamed the serpent? Did it multiply when Korah and company murmured against the leader God had given to Israel? Did it spread when the Israelites decided the judges weren't good enough and they needed a king? Did it culminate when the Jews sought to release Barabbas, and instead insisted on sending an innocent Man to His death?

Probably not, because the spirit of judgment surely lives on. It sneaks into churches and gets paraded across the table when company comes for lunch. It surfaces when not even a word is spoken, but thoughts are indulged on someone else's unfit fitness for ministry, or their choice of a spouse or words or food or lifestyle. We compare every speaker to our favorite and our spouse, children, or friends to some perfect version of what we think they ought to become.

All the while, we refuse to look at ourselves.

I love the authenticity of this woman, who chose to focus on her own growth, rather than others' sins. How quick I can be to judge, yet slow to forgive. How speedy in jumping to conclusions, while my own heart is full of selfishness, just waiting to be uncovered.

God, please show me my own heart and my desperate need of You. Remove the spirit of judgment from me. 📌

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

JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



"I WANT TO FOCUS
ON MY OWN
GROWTH, RATHER
THAN OTHERS'
SINS."

EDITORS' PICKS

God With Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology

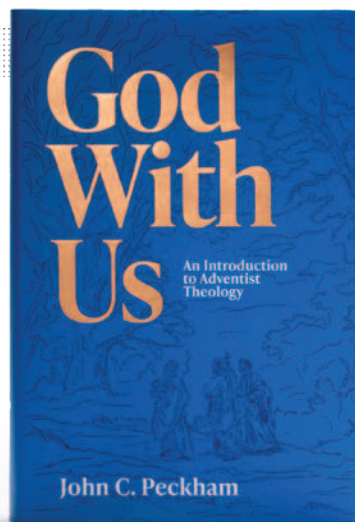
John C. Peckham, *God With Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2023), ISBN-13 978-1-940980-32-4 (hardcover), 800 pages, US\$46.75. Reviewed by Garhett Morgan, pastor, western Michigan.

The books people identify as “page turners” typically don’t have “theology” on the cover. The endearing aspect of this theological volume is it’s a beautiful narration of the most wonderful story ever told. The title shares the overarching theme of Scripture and Adventist theology, God’s desire to be with us. Each chapter uses the Bible to exposit Adventist theology and engage opposing views and difficult questions in a way that is simple and easy to follow.

While the subtitle states that the book is an introduction to Adventist theology, it’s much more. Peckham keeps God central, and as the reader finds answers to some of life’s most difficult questions, they also find a relational God who’s been right there with them the whole time. His treatment of the triune God speaks to this. Special care is taken to present the sanctuary message with clarity, not only focusing on the investigative judgment but also thoroughly explaining the importance of the vindication of God’s character.

An entire section explains the concept of *sola scriptura*, specifically in regard to the gift of prophecy and the ministry of Ellen White. Peckham masterfully explores this topic in a way that recognizes the importance of the authority of the Word of God and also fully appreciates her ministry and writings. He gives a fair treatment of last generation theology, albeit brief.

As a pastor I have hoped for a book that contained a solid response to questions regarding the canonization of Scripture, the Trinity, the personhood of the Son and Holy Spirit, as well as the great controversy theme that would be equally accessible to lay members. This volume is not only a handy resource to address my own questions, but a useful guide to interacting with other Christians who may hold different beliefs. *God With Us* covers Adventist doctrine and delineates our position with respect to the rest of Christianity, complete with similarities and differences. Competing theories are clearly marked so the reader doesn’t get lost in distinguishing between the Adventist



position and the alternative. Peckham gives a general explanation of other beliefs without delving too much into the complexities. Without attacking or trivializing them, he clearly presents the logic behind each of the competing theories and gives a critical analysis. I greatly appreciated the gentle yet convicting narrative and appeal that closed every section.

While I understand that this book was written with the formal classroom in mind, I am excited about the potential offered to the local church. It will serve as a resource for discipling leaders, inquisitive minds, or family members who have been skeptical of the church and want an in-depth confession of beliefs. I purchased a copy for each of my elders. Within a few days they were blown away by its readability and easy-to-use content for answering questions. *God With Us* has taught me, a seasoned Seventh-day Adventist, about how our beliefs flow together with the story of Scripture, and has improved my ministry as a local pastor and soul winner. This book certainly deserves a spot on any Seventh-day Adventist’s bookshelf. ▀

LOOKING BACK

CONTINUED FROM P. 72

Said I to him, "If you do so here, I will tell you what I will do with you; I will call you down and send you below, and let your shipmates do your duty for you."

Dunn saw that such a course would disgrace him, and he said, "I will try, sir."

Another rule was that we should allow no washing nor mending clothes on Sundays. I said to the crew, "I have a good assortment of books and papers which you may have access to every Sunday. I shall also endeavor to instruct you, that we may keep that day holy unto the Lord. You shall have every Saturday afternoon to wash and mend your clothes, both at sea and in harbor, and I shall expect you to appear every Sunday morning with clean clothes. When we arrive in port, you may have the same Saturday afternoon in your turn to go on shore and see the place, and get what you wish. We shall observe the Sabbath on board in port, and not grant any liberty on shore Sunday."*

At this, Dunn remarked again, "That's the sailor's privilege, and I have always had the liberty of going on shore Sundays, and—"

"I know that very well," said I, interrupting him, "but I cannot give you that liberty," and endeavored to show the crew how wrong it was to violate God's holy day, and how much better they would enjoy themselves in reading and improving their minds than in joining in all the wickedness that sailors were in the habit of indulging in at a foreign port on that day.

A DRY SHIP

"Another thing is that we have no liquor, or intoxicating drinks, on board. I here strictly forbid any of you to bring anything of the kind on board when you have liberty to go on shore in foreign ports. And I would that I could persuade you never to drink it when on shore. When you are called to do duty during your watch below, we shall expect you to come up readily and cheerfully, and you shall retire again as soon as the work is performed, and also have your forenoon watch below. If you adhere to these rules, and behave yourselves like men, you shall be kindly treated, and our voyage will prove a pleasant one."

I then knelt down and commended ourselves to the great God, whose tender mercies are over all the works of His hands, to protect and guide

us on our way over the ocean to our destined port.

The next morning, all but the man at the helm were invited into the cabin to join with us in our morning prayer. We told them that this would be our practice morning and evening, and we should be pleased to have them all with us, that we might pray with and for them. Also, to further encourage the crew to read and inform their minds, we proposed to issue a paper twice a week during the voyage. Before sailing, I had prepared a stock of books, with the latest newspapers, also the last volume of an interesting religious weekly paper, published in Boston, called *Zion's Herald*.

The novel idea of a semi-weekly paper at sea interested the crew very much. Their interest in the paper continued throughout the entire voyage. I used to frequently walk forward, unobserved, and listen to some one of them reading aloud from their morning paper.

On Sundays, when the weather was suitable, we had religious worship on the quarterdeck, otherwise in the cabin, when we generally read a sermon, and a passage from the Bible. When in port we could not have their whole attention on Sunday as when at sea. It sometimes seemed hard for them to be deprived of the privilege of going ashore with other ship companies, but we enjoyed peace and quietness, while they were rioting in folly and drunkenness.

After a few weeks it was truly gratifying to see them selecting their books from our little library on Sunday morning, and reading them, and also their Bibles, to inform their minds—it was so different from their former course on shipboard. They also appeared cheerful and willing to obey when called upon, and so continued.

After a passage of 47 days, we arrived in safety at Paraiba, on the east coast of South America. ♣

*This was nearly 20 years prior to when Captain Bates learned of and began the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Joseph Bates (1792-1872) was a cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



This is one chapter from his autobiography. For more exciting stories in his life, read the entire book by scanning the QR code.

CHANGING THE CREW

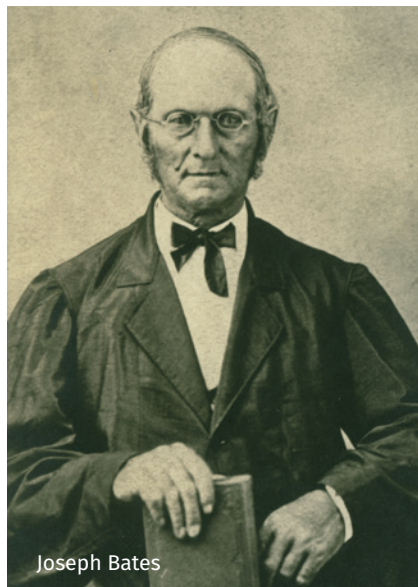
Joseph Bates, cofounder of the Adventist Church, was a sea captain. He discovered God and began reading his Bible at least 20 years prior, and when he did, he made changes in his life as well as life aboard his ship. This excerpt is adapted from his autobiography, Life of Joseph Bates, published in 1927.—Editors.

The *Empress* was soon loaded again with an assorted cargo under my command, and cleared for South America. We sailed from New Bedford [Massachusetts] on the morning of August 9, 1827.

I found it much more trying to part with my family and friends this time than ever before.

A strong breeze wafted us out into the boisterous ocean for a long voyage. As the night set in, all hands were called aft on the quarterdeck. All but one were strangers to me, as they had come from Boston the day before. I read our names and agreement to perform this voyage, and requested their attention while I stated the rules and regulations which I wished to be observed during our voyage.

I spoke of the importance of cultivating kind feelings toward each other while we were alone on the ocean. I stated that I had frequently seen bitter feelings and continued hatred arise on shipboard by not calling the men by their proper names. Said I, "Here is the name of William Jones; now let it be remembered while we are performing this voyage that we all call his name William. Here is John Robinson; call him John. Here is James Stubbs; call him James. We shall not allow any Bills, or Jacks, or Jims to be called



Joseph Bates

here." In like manner I read all their names, with those of the first and second mates, and requested them always to address one another in a respectful manner, and to call themselves by their proper names; and if the officers addressed them otherwise, I wished it reported to me.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL VOYAGE

Another rule was that I should allow no swearing during the voyage. Said William Dunn, "I have always had that privilege, sir!"

"Well," said I, "you cannot have it here," and quoted the third commandment, and was endeavoring to show how wicked it was to swear, when he said, "I can't help it, sir!"

I replied, "Then I will help you to help it!"

He said, "When I am called up in the night to reef topsails in bad weather, and things don't go right, I swear before I think of it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71

IF YOU ADHERE TO THESE RULES, AND BEHAVE YOURSELVES LIKE MEN, YOU SHALL BE KINDLY TREATED, AND OUR VOYAGE WILL PROVE A PLEASANT ONE.

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